

Hon. Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response
By email: c.hipkins@ministers.govt.nz

Monday 11 October, 2021

Dear Minister,

RE: MIQ emergency allocations

I write urging you to expand the criteria for emergency MIQ allocations to include expectant parents.

Presently the criteria stated on the MBIE website say that an emergency allocation can be granted if a New Zealand citizen or resident is: “requiring access to time-critical medical treatment for the applicant or their dependant... or, 1b) Where urgent travel is required to ensure a child is provided with appropriate care and protection.”¹

There are currently two cases I’m aware of where an expectant mother needs their partner to return to New Zealand to support them through pregnancy and childbirth. I understand that in both cases the partner cannot return due to a lack of Emergency MIQ space. I understand they have applied under criteria 1b but have been refused.

It appears that the Government may not have intended to exclude people from emergency allocations under these circumstances. The Joint Head of Managed Isolation and Quarantine, Megan Main, has been reported as saying that people in such circumstances should apply for an emergency allocation on the grounds of caring for a dependent.² The Minister for Women has been reported as being sympathetic to women in “this very difficult situation”.³ However, the Government is not addressing this difficulty in a sympathetic way. They remain excluded.

I understand that the Government’s position is now being challenged in court. This is a very unfortunate development. People should not have to seek judicial review for such a straightforward humanitarian cause.

¹ <https://www.miq.govt.nz/travel-to-new-zealand/secure-your-place-in-managed-isolation/emergency-allocation-requests/?fbclid=IwAR3NKLSRItxm-54Tm5YvEEeKGQ4yi4FGdabt4uDTZQPvqEu9CtFnd4hfCJM>

² <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/126576113/pregnant-auckland-woman-lodges-miq-legal-challenge-to-get-stranded-husband-home>

³ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/126598255/how-will-i-manage-pregnant-womans-fears-after-husbands-miq-denial>

There has been public uproar in the past about parents who are in New Zealand being separated shortly after and even during delivery due to Alert Level restrictions. It is particularly galling that expectant parents are now being separated by a lack of MIQ space, given the range of well publicised special MIQ allocations that have been made.

My simple question to you is whether you will amend the Emergency Allocation criteria for MIQ by adding a category for expectant parents who are separated by one parent being outside New Zealand and unable to acquire a standard MIQ space in time for a birth?

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'BW', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Brooke van Velden
Deputy Leader and Health Spokesperson