

6 April 2021

[REDACTED] Redacted to protect personal privacy

Dear [REDACTED] Redacted to protect personal privacy

I refer to your request dated 4 March 2021, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982, seeking the following briefing:

1. International Connections and the Border – Travel Pass and “Green Travellers”

With respect to this briefing, some information is withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), and 9(2)(a) of the Act, relating to prejudice to the international relations of the New Zealand Government, prejudice to the confidential entrusting of information to the New Zealand Government by other governments, and personal privacy, respectively.

We also note, in relation to this briefing, that it reflects early thinking in what is an evolving area.

In regard to the information that has been withheld under section 9 of the Act, I am of the opinion that there are no countervailing considerations that make it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act to make a complaint about the withholding of information to the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsmen  
P O Box 10-152  
**WELLINGTON**

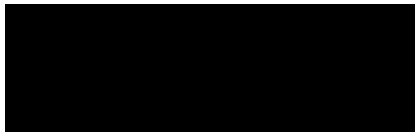
[www.transport.govt.nz](http://www.transport.govt.nz)

**HEAD OFFICE:** PO BOX 3175, Wellington 6140, New Zealand. TEL: +64 4 439 9000

**AUCKLAND OFFICE:** NZ Government Auckland Policy Office, PO BOX 106483, Auckland 1143, New Zealand. TEL +64 9 985 4800

The Ministry publishes our Official Information Act responses and the information contained in our reply to you will be published on the Ministry website. Before publishing we will remove any personal or identifiable information.

Yours sincerely



Redacted to protect personal privacy

**Brent Johnston**  
Acting Policy Director  
**Ministry of Transport - Te Manatū Waka**  
*On behalf of the Chief Executive*

28 January 2021

OC210035

**Hon Michael Wood**  
**Minister of Transport****Action required by:**  
Friday, 29 January 2021

## **INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS AND THE BORDER - TRAVEL PASS AND “GREEN TRAVELLERS”**

### **Purpose**

Provide information to you, the Prime Minister and the Minister for COVID-19 Response, on the International Air Transport Association (IATA)’s Travel Pass, in response to a request from the Prime Minister. The briefing also covers work being started by a Government agency group on the concept of health certificates to facilitate “green travellers” in and out of New Zealand more broadly.

### **Key points**

- A significant amount of work is underway on developing international standards for approving vaccines, accreditation and certification.
- Internationally there is a growing expectation that travellers will be required to present evidence (a “travel pass” or certificate) that they meet a country’s testing and vaccinations standards as a pre-requisite for entry to another country. These passes could also be used for evidence of pre-departure tests, and for any future health pandemics.
- A cross-agency group is starting work on the policy and operational settings for future passenger facilitation and how travel passes could be implemented in New Zealand. This work will sit under the “Keep it out” pillar of the Elimination Strategy and be overseen by the Border Executive Board. It involves the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Health, the Department of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, New Zealand Customs Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Currently the evidence around a vaccinated traveller’s ability to transmit the virus is unclear. Some results around testing of virus transmission by vaccine developers may come out over the next few months.
- The broad aim of this work is to position New Zealand to be ready to allow higher levels of travel by vaccinated people (or “green travellers”) in and out of New Zealand when a) the health science indicates it is safe to do so, and b) the Government is comfortable with the level of risk and any health measures. In the initial stages, it could also be used to verify that people meet pre-departure testing requirements in an efficient way.

## IN CONFIDENCE

- An important part of this work will be engagement in international processes to understand developments and what they mean for New Zealand.
- The goal is for vaccine certificates to be secure, globally interoperable, internationally verifiable – and simple for the traveller. Travel passes of this type are likely to be an enduring feature of international travel.
- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Withheld under section 6(a) of the Official Information Act 1982
- Agencies will work together over the next few weeks to shape the work programme. We will continue to update and seek direction from Ministers as the work evolves.

### Recommendations

We recommend you:

- 1 **forward** this briefing for information to the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, and Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response following your consideration. Yes / No

Bev Driscoll  
Manager Regulatory Policy

..... / ..... / .....

Hon Michael Wood  
Minister of Transport

..... / ..... / .....

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Seen by Minister

☐ Not seen by Minister

☐ Overtaken by events

Comments

### Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Kirstie Hewlett, Deputy Chief Executive, Regulatory and Data	[REDACTED]	✓
Bev Driscoll, Manager Regulatory Policy	[REDACTED]	
Melanie Beatson, Principal Adviser Regulatory Policy	[REDACTED]	

Withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982

IN CONFIDENCE

## INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS AND THE BORDER - TRAVEL PASS AND “GREEN TRAVELLERS”

### Cross-agency work is starting on verifying travellers’ vaccination status

- 1 The Prime Minister has asked for a briefing on the International Air Transport Association (IATA)’s Travel Pass.
- 2 Agencies are starting work on the policy and operational settings for “travel passes”. This work is at an early scoping stage. The broad aim of this work is to position New Zealand to be ready to allow higher levels of travel by vaccinated people in and out of New Zealand when a) the health science indicates it is safe to do so, and b) the Government is comfortable with the level of risk and any health measures. In the initial stages, it could also be used to verify that people meet pre-departure testing requirements in an efficient way.

### Traveller certification is expected to be a prerequisite for international travel and play a key role in global reintegration

- 3 Internationally there is a growing expectation that travellers will be required to present evidence (a “travel pass” or certificate) that they meet a country’s testing and vaccination standards as a pre-requisite for entry to another country – and that this will be key to support global reopening and reintegration.
- 4 IATA’s Travel Pass, which is one of many digital/app-based certificate solutions that are emerging. We understand its members (290 airlines) encouraged its development as other solutions were seen as not meeting their needs, or the needs of travellers. The Travel Pass has gained attention, with the advantage that IATA has a long history in the transmission of passenger information. (Note: Agencies have received media queries on whether or not we intend to use the Travel Pass when it is rolled out.)
- 5 Agencies’ interest in the Travel Pass, or other forms of “proof” for travellers, covers travel both to and from New Zealand:
  - 5.1 **Progressively opening our borders:** Our international connections will remain severely restricted as long as all/most people are required to go into managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) on arrival or until there is significant take up domestically of vaccinations. Currently the effect of vaccination on transmission is unclear, i.e. if the virus can still be transmitted; if there is very low risk of transmission, or no risk of transmission. Agencies are doing preparatory work so when the science on vaccines and transmission become clearer, which might be as soon as the next few months, New Zealand is well positioned to respond. This includes considering how travellers entering New Zealand could demonstrate that they meet vaccine and/or pre-departure testing requirements, in a way that gives the government confidence about their validity. If vaccines are proven to stop transmission, this could enable the opening up of borders to “green travellers” that meet vaccination requirements.
  - 5.2 **Enabling New Zealanders to travel:** Enabling people to travel out of New Zealand will be critical to our reintegration. New Zealanders will need to be able

to prove to other jurisdictions that they meet requirements for entry to other countries. This is likely to be an enduring legacy, with any mechanisms developed able to be used as a tool for managing future pandemics/health crises.

- 6 The work sits under the “Keep it Out” pillar of the Elimination Strategy and will be overseen by the Border Executive Board. We expect the scope of cross-agency work to cover:
- 6.1 identifying the role travel passes could play in the entry of people into New Zealand. That is, are there any situations in which the Government would be comfortable with the use of certificates to enable people to enter New Zealand without full 14-day quarantine, for example when there is no transmission or low transmission alongside other health measures (this will be heavily reliant on the emerging health evidence). Or, will these be a complementary measures in the future when New Zealand has broad vaccination
  - 6.2 identifying which vaccines would be acceptable as part of entry
  - 6.3 vaccine and health certification, and specifically how travellers can “prove” that they satisfy standards. This will involve engaging internationally, as elaborated below
  - 6.4 how vaccine health passes could be implemented by agencies at our border and for those travelling out of New Zealand
  - 6.5 what the technology and regulatory requirements may be
  - 6.6 engagement with Pacific and wider regional partners.
- 7 This work stream does not cover decisions on domestic vaccine approvals or how they are rolled out. This is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. It also does not cover domestic certification of vaccination, but could well feed into and inform relevant decisions, i.e. to help avoid the need to retrofit our vaccination certificates to international standards that develop.

### **Engagement on international standards and processes will be important...**

- 8 There is a significant amount of work underway internationally. This includes:
- World Health Organization (WHO) work on COVID-19 vaccination certificate standards. It aims to recommend international specifications and standards for issuing and verifying vaccination certificates, including in relation to interoperability, governance, and digital solutions. However, this will take time. (WHO has a long history with the “yellow card” paper-based system for recording yellow fever vaccinations.)
  - World Customs Organization (WCO) work on developing global customs and border standards for sharing passenger information, including Customs’ recognition of travellers’ COVID-19 vaccination status.



- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) proposal under consideration, sponsored by Spain, for a Covid-free international mobility initiative focused on an agreed protocol for mutual recognition of testing programmes and results.

- 9 The international focus has been on air travel, but there is recognition that solutions will also be required to facilitate the safe opening up of international maritime and land travel across international borders.
- 10 The goal is for vaccine certificates to be secure, globally interoperable and internationally verifiable – and simple for the traveller. New Zealand has a lot to benefit from drawing on international standards and processes for accreditation and certification. It will also be important to engage in the appropriate international and regional forums to shape the discussion, so that proposed standards meet New Zealand's needs and are implementable.

**...including working with key partners...**

- 11 Agencies are engaging [REDACTED] on vaccine standards and certification issues, and the possibility of working together in international bodies to set standards.

Withheld under section 6(a) of the Official Information Act 1982

- 12 [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Withheld under sections 6(a) and 6(b)(i) of the Official Information Act 1982, respectively

**We may have a role in supporting Pacific partners**

- 13 Our immediate focus is on New Zealand's domestic requirements. However, agencies may also have a role in working with Pacific partners to share lessons and support their own work towards progressive opening (alongside support to implement vaccination certificates). This would have the added benefit of promoting consistency in regional standards and approaches.

**We will report back to Ministers following engagement with agencies and industry**

- 14 Multiple agencies have an interest in, and responsibility for, aspects of this work and it will be imperative to work together over the coming months. Key agencies include:
- Ministry of Transport
  - Ministry of Health
  - New Zealand Customs Service
  - Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (Immigration and MIQ)
  - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
  - Department of Internal Affairs (Passports and digital travel credentials)
  - Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- 15 Engagement with airlines will also be important, given their engagement with IATA and the insights they can provide on implementation. Air New Zealand is also doing

its own work on IATA's Travel Pass, including seeking to be involved in IATA's subgroup to develop it further.

- 16 In the time available, we have not had the opportunity to consult with other agencies on this paper nor reflect their views. Over the next few weeks, agencies will work together to refine the objectives and scope of this work, identify key questions and develop the work programme. We will continue to update and seek direction from Ministers as the work evolves.

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