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# All District Health Boards

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## COVID-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs: EMPLOYEE ADVICE FOR QUARANTINE-FREE TRAVEL (QFT) Updated 30 April at 1600HRS

This advice is accurate as at **30 April 2021 at 1600HRS**.

It has been developed by 20 DHBs to provide clarity for front-line DHB managers on general employment-related questions that may arise in respect of Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT).

The advice will continue to be reviewed and may change rapidly given the nature of the Government and health system's response to COVID-19.

WE CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ZOOM/SKYPE TO CONDUCT BUSINESS RATHER THAN FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS.

### **Travel statement:**

From 19 April 2021, the Government has allowed [quarantine-free travel](#) (QFT) to and from Australia without having to enter managed isolation when you return to New Zealand if you meet the eligibility criteria. Quarantine-free travel is only available when the New Zealand Government's health preconditions have been met and when travel is low risk.

Those considering undertaking travel will do so under the principle of 'flyer beware' and that it is at-your-own-risk. People will need to plan for the possibility of having travel disrupted if there is an outbreak. You should also be aware that there are a limited number of managed isolation rooms available if the border shuts which may result in you having to remain in Australia for a prolonged period of time.

Isolation and other costs should be factored into any leave request for quarantine-free travel.

For more information on quarantine-free travel and Government travel advisories, please visit <https://covid19.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/>.

You might also wish to discuss your travel plans and associated risks with your Union.

### **What is the general principle around travel?**

If you are either directed to travel or personally decide to undertake quarantine free travel the general principle is where this travel is either directed or approved by the DHB that your travel (and any disruption) will be covered by the DHB. Where the travel is undertaken for personal reasons or not approved by the DHB then this travel is on a 'flyer beware' basis.

All travel for DHB purposes whether directed or for CME must be approved by the DHB before travel is undertaken.

You should read the following FAQs carefully which explain the various scenarios in more detail.

### **Can I travel to Australia for work-related activity if the trans-Tasman bubble is open?**

Yes, however given the possibility of having travel disrupted should there be an outbreak, we continue to encourage the use of zoom/skype to undertake these activities rather than attending face-to-face meetings requiring trans-Tasman travel.

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs

## EMPLOYEE RELATED FOR QUARANTINE-FREE TRAVEL (QFT)

There will be instances where work-related travel is unavoidable because there are no New Zealand-based alternatives, remote meeting options are unavailable or inappropriate (e.g. formal examinations mandated as part of training programmes; professional certification processes), or the purpose is non-deferrable.

Such travel will require approval in accordance with DHB policies and your employment agreement. Travel bookings should not be made until this approval is granted.

### **Can I use my continuing medical education (CME) or similar entitlements to undertake quarantine-free travel?**

The DHB appreciates that employees will be interested in accessing education opportunities that require quarantine free travel.

As with other work-related travel, we encourage you to attend CME or similar activity virtually where available (CME entitlements can be used to support virtual attendance).

Where CME-related travel is approved you should have a plan with your manager to manage the risk arising from overseas travel, including the risk of unexpected border closures, which may mean you cannot return home and resume work as expected.

### **What if I was booked to travel for work purposes and I incur cancellation charges not covered by insurance?**

Where the work-related travel has been approved by the DHB and there are cancellation costs not covered by vendors or DHB insurance, these will be met by the DHB.

If you are required to undertake a period of managed isolation on your return to New Zealand, the DHBs will meet the charges for the managed isolation room (as the first or only person in the room).

### **Can I travel to Australia for non-work related/personal reasons if the trans-Tasman bubble is open?**

Yes, however private/non-work-related quarantine-free travel should be considered with caution. Travellers are encouraged to be prepared that travel plans may be disrupted as the situation can change at any time, which includes the risk of community outbreak. This also means factoring in if you have sufficient leave and potential costs incurred.

Personal overseas travel is your own choice but we encourage you to discuss this with your manager and what your plans are if the border closes and you either cannot get home or need to isolate overseas or in NZ. This may impact on your ability to take leave (please see "What will be considered when I submit an annual leave request" below).

### **What will be considered when I submit an annual leave request?**

If the DHB has concerns about your ability to return from leave they will discuss this with you prior to approving the leave request, noting that approval cannot be unreasonably withheld. You may also want to discuss any leave plans with your Union.

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs

## EMPLOYEE RELATED FOR QUARANTINE-FREE TRAVEL (QFT)

**What happens if I travel to Australia and there is a community outbreak or the borders close while I'm overseas/in the air?**

It is not possible to predict if or when a new case might appear in any Australian state but there is a plan for how this would be handled. For more information, please see:

<https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/fact-sheets/COVID-19-How-a-COVID-19-case-in-Australia-would-be-managed.pdf>

If community cases occur in New Zealand or Australia, the government could pause quarantine-free travel for a time to assess the risk or it could suspend travel for a longer period of time.

If managed isolation is required to or from New Zealand, special leave will not apply unless there are exceptional circumstances by agreement with your manager or when the travel is directed by the employer for work-related activities. Other forms of leave and/or alternative working arrangements should be discussed with your line manager.

DHBs will not cover insurance or additional costs that are incurred if travel is disrupted unless the travel is directed by the employer for work-related activities.

If quarantine-free travel is paused while a plane is mid-air, the government of the country the plane lands in will decide what happens to travellers in this situation. You may be required to enter managed isolation until you are given permission to continue your journey.

**What leave will be available to me if my travel is disrupted and/or I am required to enter managed isolation when I return to New Zealand or quarantine in Australia?**

If you are unable to work remotely while you are in managed or self-isolation then the type of leave will depend on the basis of your travel.

If you were directed to travel by the DHB for work-related purposes the DHB will provide paid special leave of up to 14 days.

If you were travelling for personal reasons – e.g. annual leave – then you will need to take further annual leave or leave without pay. If you are unwell during your isolation period, you may use your paid sick leave entitlements.

**Can I use my CME to pay for managed isolation or other costs associated with the disruption of travel?**

If you are travelling for personal reasons, or without your DHB's approval, you cannot use any CME funding or entitlements to meet any costs of managed isolation or other costs associated with travel disruption.

If you are travelling for CME and are stuck overseas the costs associated with this and any leave taken will be deducted from your CME costs (in-line with your employment agreement). If you have exhausted the CME entitlements under your employment agreement any additional costs should be discussed with your manager and these costs will only be covered where approved on a case-by-case basis.

# **COVID-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs**

## **EMPLOYEE RELATED FOR QUARANTINE-FREE TRAVEL (QFT)**

### **What happens if I contract COVID-19 while I am in a quarantine-free travel country?**

You need to consider the impact on travel if you contract COVID-19 while visiting a quarantine-free travel country. We have provided the governments travel criteria below, which you will need to meet before being cleared to return to New Zealand:

- You need to spend the 14 days before you depart in either Australia or New Zealand;
- You have not had a positive COVID-19 test in the 14 days before you depart;
- You are not waiting for the results of a COVID-19 test taken in the past 14 days;
- You must complete a travel declaration when you book your flights. This declaration mainly asks you about your travel plans and contact details;
- You must answer questions about your health at departure — you will not be able to travel if you have cold or flu symptoms; and
- You meet immigration requirements.

You do not need a negative COVID-19 pre-departure test for travel to New Zealand on a quarantine-free flight however the Government has signalled that if there are community cases of COVID-19 in Australia and flights are paused, it may require returning people to get tested for COVID-19 before travelling.

### **Do I need the vaccine to travel to and from Australia?**

The Government has advised that there will be no vaccine requirement for travel under the quarantine-free travel.

### **Do I need a COVID test before I return to work?**

The DHBs are considering the requirement to undertake testing for high risk facilities.

### **What happens if I have returned to NZ without being required to observe managed isolation and a travel notice advises me to self-isolate?**

If when you return to NZ having no obligations placed on you to observe managed isolation on entry, and you are subsequently advised to self-isolate, the DHBs will support working from home arrangements or special leave.