



Dr Tony Holohan
Chief Medical Officer
Department of Health
Block 1, Miesian Plaza
50-58 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2

24 September 2021

Dear Dr Holohan,

As you are aware an expert advisory group on Travel (EAGT) was established on 1 March 2021. Following a Government Decision on 9 April, membership of this group was augmented to include expertise on border security, hotel quarantine logistics, international travel law and foreign relations. This entails official representation from the Department of Justice, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Defence. This revised composition allows for consultation with a wider group of stakeholders at an earlier point in the process.

A revised approach to travel was proposed by the technical advisory sub-group and agreed at the EAGT meeting of 27 August, recommending that the Beta (B.1.351), Gamma (P.1), Lambda (C.37) and Mu (B.1.621) variants be considered important for the purposes of the risk assessment process.

This approach was recommending pending the emergence of evidence relating to the Delta variant and its ability to compete with, and/or replace other variants. In consideration of the latter, the technical advisory sub-group presented a review at the EAGT meeting of 24 September, which, based on the most recent epidemiological intelligence, concluded that the Delta variant has demonstrated an ability to outcompete and replace other variants, such that the risk of other variants is now considered low.

In consideration of this evidence, the following recommendations were agreed by the EAGT:

- the use of mandatory hotel quarantine facilities is no longer considered appropriate; and that
- of states currently designated, such designation be revoked with immediate effect.

The technical advisory sub-group made a number of other recommendations in relation to travel policy and these were noted by the EAGT, viz:

- that a valid PCR test taken within 72 hours prior to arrival be required for those travelling without proof of immunity;
- rapid antigen testing should not be accepted for travel purposes;
- those travelling without a valid PCR test should undergo immediate testing on arrival;
- the requirement to undertake home quarantine, which may be exited with a not detected RT-PCR test taken no sooner than 5 days following arrival, for those travelling without proof of immunity, be restricted to those planning to enter a setting considered high-risk for the purposes of COVID-19;
- any individual that develops symptoms following travel should isolate immediately and undergo RT-PCR testing.

The group agreed that the technical report and review would be forwarded to the Chief Medical Officer to inform your advice to the Minister on the designation of Designated States, and approach to travel, under the Health Act 1947, where *"there is known to be a sustained human transmission of COVID-19 or any variant of concern or from which there is a high risk of importation of infection or contamination with COVID-19 or any variant of concern by travel from that state"*.

In making these recommendations it is recognised that the role of EAGT and the technical advisory sub-group will come to an end and consequently, I am proposing that both groups now be stood down.

I would like to place on record the EAGT's appreciation of the work of the technical advisory sub-group in ensuring that the designation and revocation process as required under the Health (Amendment) Act 2021 was strongly evidence-based and therefore enabled the MHQ system to achieve its objective of protecting the State from the importation of variants of concern and variants of interest during a critical period for the management of the disease and the operation of the vaccination programme. As Chair, I would also acknowledge the constructive and collaborative approach of the EAGT membership to discharging the Group's remit, since it was established in its present form.

Yours sincerely,



Fergal Goodman

Chair Expert Advisory Group on Travel