**Mandatory Hotel Quarantine - Cost Summary**

**6th January 2022**

## Background

i. Following Government decision S180/20/10/2587 of 17 February 2021 and the subsequent passage of the Health (Amendment) Bill 2021 through the Oireachtas, Mandatory Hotel Quarantine (MHQ) commenced in March 2021 as one element of Ireland's response to COVID-19. The MHQ system was introduced as an exceptional public health measure, given the serious risk of importation of variants of concern with the potential to overwhelm the health service and to undermine the national vaccination programme.

ii. MHQ was operational for 6 months between 26 March – 26 September 2021. It was scaled down progressively, as the designation of a large number of states was, over time, revoked in line with the Government's revised approach to international travel and the ever-increasing dominance of the Delta variant globally.

iii. In total, 10,398 people passed through the MHQ system. At the peak of the system's operation some 60 states were designated, with the greatest number of persons in MHQ at one time reaching 1,008 on 9 May 2021. At the time of highest demand, MHQ had a capacity of 1,607 rooms spread across 8 hotels. These facilities were contracted with an associated suite of services including security, transportation, and medical care. In addition, the State mobilised resources to enable testing of staff and residents, incident response and onsite 24/7 State Liaison Office (SLO) functions (the latter provided by teams of Defence Forces personnel).

iv. A MHQ resident experience survey was developed to further support the monitoring of processes and services being delivered under the MHQ system. In total, 2,125 former residents of MHQ, who had completed their period of quarantine between 22 May and 25 September, were invited to complete the survey. Of these former residents, 324 participated, representing a response rate of over 15%. Overall, the responses received from participants were positive, with an average of 84.6% (mean) / 88.73% (median) positive responses received.

## Establishment and Operation of Mandatory Hotel Quarantine

i. Given the extreme urgency, the MHQ system was legislated for, and designed and implemented in extremely tight timelines. The Minister for Health entered into a contract with Tifco Hotel Group on 16 March 2021 to take on the role of single service provider, and this arrangement, with contractual extensions, ran to the end of August 2021. Following an open tender competition for provision of MHQ services post the initial contract, the Minister entered into a new contract with Tifco Hotel Group on 1 September 2021 for the continued provision of MHQ services until 31 October 2021.

**Deferral of Payment Authorisations**

i. The majority of applicable travellers paid for Mandatory Hotel Quarantine in advance, with approximately €9.5m received from paying guests. However, a deferral of payment process was established for those travellers in financial hardship. Travellers were able to seek an authorisation to defer payment from the Embassies and Consulates abroad before they travelled, or from the State Liaison officer after arrival at the designated facility. Where a traveller was granted an authorisation to defer payment, they could subsequently apply to the Minister for an exemption from the obligation to pay the charges.

ii. The Department of Health has put arrangements in place to follow up cases where payment remains due.

**Financial Matters (Costs)**

i. The total cost to the State of operating the MHQ system to the end of October 2021, net of income received from paying guests, was approximately €24.75m. This includes the cost of operating (at peak) 1,607 rooms across 8 hotels (reduced to 6 hotels from 1st July). Also included is the cost of ground transportation to and from each of the seaports and airports to the designated quarantine facilities, 24/7 security in the hotels and on transportation, 24/7 GP-led healthcare provision in each of the hotels and weekly COVID-19 testing of all MHQ staff.

**ii.** Other costs incurred relate to the provision of the statutory appeals function, expert legal reports, public communications, facilities at ports of entry, and ICT equipment rental.

**<u>Table A</u>: Breakdown of MHQ Costs.**

| Description | Overall Total |
|---|---|
| MHQ Accommodation | € 12,284,793.13 |
| MHQ Medical | € 5,152,569.30 |
| MHQ Security | € 5,464,057.68 |
| MHQ Transport | € 817,661.90 |
| MHQ Internal Appeals Process (DoJ) | € 725,399.57 |
| Expert Reports (Legal) | € 13,970.00 |
| Communications | € 181,389.83 |
| Equipment Rental | € 79,522.29 |
| Facilities at Ports | € 30,165.73 |
| **Total** | **€ 24,749,529.43** |

*Please note that there may be some invoices yet to be received, however, the overall cost is not expected to change significantly.