



# Aide-Memoire

## COVID-19 GROUP BUDGET DETAIL

To	Minister of Finance (Hon Grant Robertson)	Report No	DPMC-2021/22-804
cc.	Minister for COVID-19 Response (Hon Chris Hipkins)		
From	Amber Bill, Head of System Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Date	12/11/2021

### Purpose

1. You have asked for more information on the DPMC COVID-19 Group budget in relation to the current funding package for the COVID-19 response.
2. The Group is seeking funding to continue to support the all of government response throughout 2022/23 [DPMC-2021/22-746 T2021/2682 refers]. Currently funding expires at the end of June 2022.
3. We understand that you are particularly interested in gaining clarity of the Group's expenditure on communications and engagement and so we have provided specific detail on that budget for 2022/23.

### Background

4. For the year ahead, funding is sought to enable all the Group's functions to continue. Management of New Zealand's ongoing response has required a bespoke and unprecedented central coordination to ensure the response across multiple agencies is effective. This continues to be the case as the country transitions through to the new COVID-19 Protection Framework, Reconnecting New Zealand, and in shaping future strategic stages of the response.
5. Regarding public engagement and communications, the current outbreak has resulted in higher than expected expenditure. This has been, and continues to be, critical to providing clear information to New Zealanders during the COVID-19 response, in an environment which has become increasingly complex and nuanced. Key communications include the Unite Against Covid-19 website and supporting channels, public information campaigns including paid advertising media (TV, radio, press, billboards and digital) and targeted community activity. You are supportive of the new funding required to cover these costs in 2021/22.

## Comment

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6. The scale and complexity of the response includes strategy and policy, system readiness and planning, insights and reporting, risk and assurance, and communications and engagement. Costs associated with the delivery of these functions are primarily staff costs, except for the communications and public engagement delivery budget. The COVID-19 group as a whole comprises around 80 FTE, a mix of secondees and fixed term employees.
7. Full year funding will enable the retention of critical skills in a tight labour market, and anything shorter or phased will make this challenging. Funding certainty and stability has been recommended in previous reviews of the all of government response.
8. Contracts can be set up in ways that allow for reduction or ceasing of some activities if required, with any unspent funding being returned to the Crown as a no-regrets option.
9. The communications and engagement budget for 2022/23 including staff costs is \$21.00 million. \$17.00 million is allocated to campaign, communications and engagement activities. This enables the following deliverables:
  - a. Development and maintenance of the Unite Against COVID-19 website and supporting platforms (\$0.700 million).
  - b. Translation of key messages into 26 languages and five alternate formats (\$0.800 million).
  - c. Printing of materials to support public information – including COVID-19 tracer booklet, posters, marae guidance (\$0.800 million).
  - d. Development of creative materials to ensure clear public information on the COVID-19 response and the actions people need to take and when (\$3 million).
  - e. Paid media - buying media for advertisements for television, radio, billboards, newspapers and digital (\$9 million).
  - f. Research to provide insights on public sentiment to ensure communications are effective and reach all parts of the community (\$0.300).
  - g. Other bespoke communications and campaigns, such as 'disruptive' messages to those travelling where arrangements have changed, and event activations. Tailored messages to specific groups and communities (\$2.400 million).
10. Clemenger (creative agency) and OMD (media buying agency) have been the agencies used by the National Response and subsequently DPMC since March 2020 and these agency costs are part of the advertising budget. They were initially awarded the work under emergency procurement and were re-contracted in May this year through a robust RFP process led by an independent procurement specialist. Contracts are in place until the end of the 2021/22 Financial Year and an appropriate contestable process would be run ahead of any new contracts.
11. Both Clemenger and OMD work with other specialist agencies including Bright Sunday (Pacific), Bananaworks (Asian), Collenso (event activations) and advertising production agencies which provide specialist advice and delivery. These agencies are contracted through Clemenger or OMD or separately, depending on the requirement or length of engagement.
12. We have also contracted Iwi Communications Collective to work closely with Clemenger to ensure effective communications with iwi/Maori.

13. It is not our first preference, but should you require additional assurance, the advertising components of the Group's budget could be funded in 6-month tranches, with joint Ministers to approve the second tranche against the CRRF. However, the need to retain and attract skilled people to the group requires full year funding.

### Recommendations

14. It is recommended that you note the contents of this aide-memoire.



From Amber Bill  
Head of System Assurance &  
Continuous Improvement  
COVID-19 Group

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<p>To Hon Grant Robertson Minister of Finance</p> <hr/> <p>Date:     /     /</p>

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