



# BRIEFING

## COVID-19 GROUP: COMMUNICATIONS EXPENDITURE UPDATE FOR QUARTER 2 2021/2022

To Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response			
Date	10/03/2022	Priority	Medium
Deadline	31/03/2022	Briefing Number	DPMC 2021/22-1680

### Purpose

1. When decisions were taken to extend the funding of the COVID-19 Group in December 2021 [DEV-21-MIN-0235 refers], the Minister of Finance requested regular assurance on the COVID-19 Group's approach to procurement and the effectiveness of the contracted vendors' services with regards to communications and publicity expenditure.
2. The Minister of Finance will have recently received a quarterly update on progress of funding allocated through the CRRF. This report supplements that update.
3. If you are happy with the information in this report, we will work with the Treasury to provide future updates as part of the quarterly CRFF reporting.


### Recommendations

- a) **Note** that the Minister of Finance has asked for regular assurance on the COVID-19 Group's approach to procurement and the effectiveness of the contracted vendors services with regards to communications and publicity expenditure
- b) **Review and approve** the update in relation to your COVID-19 Response portfolio (Attachment A)
- c) **Agree** that future updates are provided as part of DPMC's quarterly update on progress of funding allocated through the CRRF
- d) **Forward** a copy of this report to the Minister of Finance

YES /  NO


YES /  NO

YES /  NO



Cheryl Barnes  
Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Response

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Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister for COVID-19 Response

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Contact for telephone discussion if required:

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Cheryl Barnes]	Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Response	N/A	s9(2)(a) [redacted] ✓

Minister's office comments:

- Noted
- Seen
- Approved
- Needs change
- Withdrawn
- Not seen by Minister
- Overtaken by events
- Referred to

# COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE FOR Q2 2021/2022

## Background

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1. New Zealand's ongoing COVID-19 response has required sustained public engagement and communication strategies to maintain public trust and confidence in the country's approach.
2. Key to this has been the successful Unite Against COVID-19 public information campaign which has guided the public through the response for nearly two years, evolving as the shape of the response has changed, supporting through resurgences, Alert Level changes, introduction of new approaches and the launch of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF).
3. This was followed by activity to inform the public about the move to the new Covid-19 Protection Framework (CPF) in early December. This involved several elements including encouraging the uptake of My Vaccine Pass, introducing the CPF, informing regions what colour setting they were in, and the associated requirements, and providing the rationale behind the shift to the new system
4. The emergence of Delta in the community in August 2021 led to an extended response effort from August to November. There was a sustained public information campaign to support New Zealanders through the Alert Level changes, drive the appropriate health behaviours and keep the public informed about changes in policy settings such as mask wearing and scanning.
5. The emergence of Omicron in the community has been accompanied with expectations from Ministers of ongoing investment in public information campaigns to ensure public readiness for the next phase, plus continued vaccine and booster up-take (led by the Ministry of Health vaccination programmes).
6. The COVID-19 Group Communications and Public Engagement team and the Ministry of Health Vaccination Communication team use two key media agencies. These are the strategic and creative agency Clemenger BBDO and the media buying/placement agency OMD.
7. Clemenger BBDO and OMD were originally engaged in March 2020 through emergency procurement. In May 2021 a closed RFP was undertaken, and Clemenger BBDO and OMD were reappointed through to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. DPMC will be going to market for advertising and media services for July 2022 – June 2023 shortly.
8. The group also works with other specialist agencies including Bright Sunday, Bananaworks and Together.
9. Public information campaigns are multi-channel and include advertising (TV, radio, press, outdoor, social media and digital channels), and utilise the Unite Against COVID-19 and the Ministry of Health websites and their supporting social media channels. There is also targeted community and sector engagement activity.

### Expenditure on COVID-19 public relations and advertising

10. The vaccine public information campaign is run through the Ministry of Health vaccine team. Given the need for coherent communications across vaccines and other public information, DPMC administer some of this funding under an administration and use agreement. It is therefore reported separately to the Unite Against COVID-19 campaign.
11. The table below outlines public relations expenditure for the UAC and vaccine public information campaigns for Q1 and Q2 of 2021/2022 and forecast spend to the end of the financial year.
12. This expenditure includes:
- a) creative development – strategic advertising, concepting and production of advertisements and content;
  - b) media buy – purchase of media space in TV, radio, digital, outdoor, social media and press channels. This also covers on-the-ground activities and the use of influencers through social media channels; and
  - c) other public relations expenditure – this covers research, translations, delivering of digital platforms (web and social media) and printing and distribution of resources to stakeholders, businesses and community organisations.
13. **Table 1.** Expenditure (actual and forecast) on public relations and communications for the Unite Against COVID-19 campaign and the COVID-19 Vaccine campaign for 2022/23.

Campaign	Category	YTD to Dec \$million	Forecast Q3 \$million	Forecast Q4 \$million	Full year forecast \$million
Unite Against COVID-19	UAC: Creative development	2.164	0.758	0.650	3.572
	UAC: Media Buy	16.482	6.24	6.50	29.222
	UAC: Other	1.690	0.800	0.800	3.29
<b>UAC: TOTAL</b>		<b>20.336</b>	<b>7.798</b>	<b>7.95</b>	<b>36.084</b>
Vaccine Campaign	Vaccines: Creative Development	1.842	0.969	0.774	3.585
	Vaccines: Media Buy	18.556	9.41	8.165	36.131
	Vaccine: Other	0.219	0.075	0.075	0.369
<b>Vaccine TOTAL</b>		<b>20.617*</b>	<b>10.454</b>	<b>9.014</b>	<b>40.085</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>		<b>40.953</b>	<b>18.252</b>	<b>16.964</b>	<b>76.169</b>

\*Excl. personal

14. Key milestones achieved to date include:

- a) delivery of public information campaigns, including:
  - i) the ongoing Unite Against Covid-19 public health messages
  - ii) Alert level changes
  - iii) Vaccine campaign
  - iv) I Scan New Zealand
  - v) “Two shots for Summer”;
  - vi) “Cover for Each Other” (face masks on public transport);
  - vii) general health behaviours reminders including scanning, turn Bluetooth on, get a test, hygiene, and masks on public transport (continuous through the year);
  - viii) More to the COVID-19 Protection Framework
  - ix) Mask Scan Pass
  - x) Booster Vaccines
  - xi) 5-11-year-old vaccines
- b) Various in-person, on-the-ground initiatives designed to support public health behaviours and compliance with response settings, especially focussed on youth, those moving around the country over holiday periods, high foot traffic/risk locations such as large events malls and airports and businesses. For example, between 21 December 2021 – 14 January 2022 on-the-ground activations visited over 1900 businesses totalling over 300 live hours of activity.

**Effectiveness of the public relations and advertising spend**

- 15. The Unite Against Covid-19 brand and associated advertising and channels are highly trusted (37%) and recognised (61%), and advertising continues to be regarded by the public key source of information. (NB: *these are high ratings for a brand*)
- 16. Analysis of website metrics shows that Covid19.govt.nz continues to be a key source of information for people in New Zealand to get reliable, timely information about COVID-19.
  - a) Audience grew by more than 300% in 2021 when compared with 2020.
  - b) 141 million-page views in the 12 months to 24 February 2020
  - c) Peaks in traffic are experienced around key announcements: 1 million users over 17/18 August 2021 when New Zealand moved to Alert Level 4, and 1.1 million users when New Zealand moved to Red in the Traffic light system.

17. Since January 2021:
- a) Facebook followers have increased by 60%, from 194,000 followers to 311,000 followers.
  - b) Instagram followers have increased by 55%, from 60,000 followers to 93,000 followers.
  - c) Twitter has grown by 83%, from 24,000 followers to 44,000 followers.
  - d) TikTok followers have increased by 100% (start date August 2021) 13,000 followers.

**Planned expenditure on public information campaigns**

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18. The Government has indicated that further public information campaigns are desired in the coming weeks as the peak of Omicron approaches. This will include targeted communications to those communities who need additional support. A further campaign has been signalled for mid-2022 to help prepare New Zealanders as the country heads into winter.
19. Between 1 July - 31 December 2021 the combined average weekly media expenditure for public information campaigns for both Unite Against COVID-19 and Vaccine was \$1.57m. This period was dominated by the Delta outbreak and the move the COVID-19 Protection Framework.
20. Based on the current Omicron outbreak, we expect this rate of expenditure to continue until August 2022. After that, we expect that large-scale campaigns will decrease as the requirements of the public decrease.
21. Subject to other new variants or changes in the direction of the response, we forecast this is manageable within current funding allocation.
22. The Cabinet decision [CAB-21-MIN-0487] established that the advertising components of the Group's budget is funded in 6-month tranches, with joint Ministers to approve the second tranche against the CRRF. s9(2)(f)(iv)
23. Subject to your approval we will work with Treasury to seek to include this detailed information on publicity expenditure in future CRRF reporting.

Attachments:	
Attachment A:	Contracts over \$1.000 million for public relations and advertising for the COVID-19 Response

Withheld in full under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act