



# Community Panel Meeting Minutes

<b>Date</b>	2 February 2022
<b>Time</b>	6.00-8.00pm
<b>Venue</b>	Zoom
<b>Attendees</b>	Api Talemaitoga, Aram Kim, Hasfa Ahmed, Jordon Milroy, Michelle Mascoll, Margaret Brown, Sarah Sparks, Martin Rodgers (Secretariat), Louise Cox (Secretariat), Amber Bill (General Manager) and Ivan Lukatina (DPMC Policy)  Tanya Harvey, Director of Education, Tāmaki Makaurau, MoE; Georgina Muir, Group Manager, Strategy & Implementation, MoE; Tara Taylor-Jorgensen, National Manager, Curriculum, MoE; Lucy Te Moana, Chief Advisor, Strategy & Implementation, MoE; Serena Curtis, General Manager Pacific and Community Capability Programmes, MSD; Jesse Nichols, Director Service Delivery, MSD; Siân Roguski, Policy Director, Employment, Skills & Immigration Policy Branch, MBIE; and Kirsty Hutchison, Manager (Border and Funding) Immigration Policy, MBIE
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Sparks
<b>Minute taker</b>	Louise Cox
<b>Apologies</b>	Anthony Taueki, Callum Woodhouse, Rory McKenzie (DPMC Comms)

## Items 1-3: Welcome and confirmation of minutes

1. Sarah welcomed the Community Panel (the Panel) members, other attendees and facilitated introductions.
2. The minutes from the December 2021 meeting were confirmed.

## Item 4: DPMC update on the operational management of Omicron

*Refer Omicron Update community panel PowerPoint presentation.*

3. Ivan Lukatina from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's (DPMC) Policy team attended to present to the Panel on the operational management of Omicron.
4. Panel members raised the following matters and questions:
  - a. Smaller primary healthcare practices are unable to cohort staff, which risks closure. It was asked what plans are in place to support rural services, given it is often difficult for people to access services, which will be exacerbated by any clinic closures due to COVID-19 exposure.

- i. Ivan responded that the Ministry of Social Development's Care in the Community programme is intended to be the main port of call for people who need additional support. He added that policy is being put into place for critical workers (including healthcare workers) to allow them to return to work as soon as possible if they are close contacts through the Test to Return scheme.
- b. Members are hearing that people are avoiding measures such as scanning and testing due to the lengthy isolation requirements
  - i. Ivan responded that there is an intention to reduce the overlapping isolation timeframe for household contacts and to tighten the definitions of contacts (as has occurred for contacts on domestic flights)
- c. There is a lot of changing information and what communications avenues are being looked at? It was noted that communications are very digitally focussed, and that there is concern that people will be left behind with the pace of change.
  - i. Ivan responded that the DPMC Communications will be best placed to answer that question.

## **Item 5: Ministry of Education on COVID-19 related planning**

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*Refer DPMC Community Panel Distance Learning Bullet Points document.*

- 5. Tanya Harvey, Georgina Muir, Tara Taylor-Jorgensen and Lucy Te Moana from the Ministry of Education (MoE) attended to discuss COVID-19 related planning in the education sector and hear the Panel's perspectives. Tanya, Georgina, Tara, and Lucy introduced themselves, described their roles and teams and the areas of focus for MoE and COVID-19.
- 6. Sarah noted the scenarios that MoE had asked for feedback and opened discussion up to the Panel members. Panel members raised the following areas for attention:
  - a. pastoral support for at-home learning, noting the stress being placed on parents and teachers
  - b. children turning to home-schooling as they are not coping with masking
  - c. previously happy and positive children becoming withdrawn and anxious
  - d. children's fear of punishment if they take off their mask at school
  - e. whether the vaccination rollout has affected learning and student attendance
  - f. the practical aspects of masking when combined with a severe disability being almost impossible to manage
  - g. distance learning may not be practical for many disabled children due to their complex needs that require hands on support.
- 7. As a positive Sarah noted she is hearing that teachers are effectively supporting each other. She highlighted that knowing the local network, building relationships, leveraging trusted voices in the community, access to the tools and resources, and anticipation are all important.
- 8. Sarah thanked Tanya, Georgina, Tara and Lucy, and invited them to engage with the Panel in the future on areas where feedback would be of value.

## **Item 6: Ministry of Social Development update on Caring in the Community**

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9. Serena Curtis and Jesse Nichols from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) gave an overview of what community settings are being put into place for Caring in the Community, including funding arrangements and the use of on-the-ground 'community connectors'.
10. The Panel raised the following matters and questions:
  - a. What plans are being put in place in the event of connectors being impacted by Omicron and disruptions to supply chains, particularly in the rural localities?
    - i. Serena outlined work with the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment in the area of food supply, and areas of greater vulnerability. She noted that rurality is a key indicator in modelling and outlined efforts to improve food self-sufficiency for communities.
  - b. It was raised that some people do not qualify for supports for reasons such as being employed part-time. It was also noted that supermarket specific cards may be problematic in the event of stores closing down.
    - i. Serena responded that they have made debit-style cards available and clarified that the connectors have access to discretionary funding that can be used to support people in need who may not meet criteria for other supports.
11. It was raised that the flexibility of MSD contracts work well and suggested that MSD hold wānanga with other agencies to share good practice. It was also suggested that it would be useful to make available a map of connectors to help link people, putting forward that it will likely lessen pressure on MSD call centres, and that flow charts/scenarios will help people to understand and access support that is available for groups and communities.
  - i. Serena responded that she will put these suggestions into action.

## **Item 7: Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment update on potential immigration settings for Reconnecting New Zealanders**

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12. Siân Roguski and Kirsty Hutchinson from Immigration New Zealand informed the Panel about the proposed immigration settings for the phased reopening of borders through *Reconnecting New Zealanders*.
13. The Panel raised the following matters and questions:
  - a. What is being done to support those whose visas have expired but have been stranded in New Zealand?
    - i. Siân advised that tight border controls in other countries have presented issues but that the government has taken steps to ensure people remain lawful, and are working to repatriate people (with initial negotiations with Pacific nations)
  - b. The appearance of an ethnic based approach with the prioritisation of Australia and how countries are determined to be high risk. Members highlighted that parts of Australia have high numbers of cases and previously the media has portrayed countries such as India, and African nations as high risk but not countries such the USA.

- i. Siân advised that people from high-risk countries are able to return through the Managed Isolation and Quarantine system and that the Ministry of Health are constantly reviewing the risk status of countries against metrics to identify high-risk.
  - ii. The DPMC Secretariat will follow up for more information on settings and criteria.
- c. The need to clarify vaccination details for incoming travellers (such as; which vaccines are accepted, and the timing of vaccinations)
- d. That New Zealanders coming from Australia are treated differently (in that they are able to return earlier than others) when those living in other countries have the same rights. It was raised that the justification is less given the numbers of cases of COVID-19 in Australia.
- i. Siân noted that the situation in Australia looked very different when the advice was developed and that the Ministers are the ultimate decision makers here.
- e. That the phased approach will not help the horticultural and agricultural industries to address critical worker shortages, highlighting that animal welfare and crop wastage are critical issues being faced.
- i. Siân advised they are aware of the issue and are working with the Ministry for Primary Industries to address.
14. Sarah thanks Kirsty and Siân for their update.

#### **Item 8: Update on the approach to Communications**

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15. Item deferred due to time constraints.

#### **Item 9: Meeting closure and karakia**

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16. The meeting closed at 8.05pm with a closing karakia from Aram.
17. The next meeting will take place on 2 March 2022, 6.00 – 8.00pm.