

Briefing

INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE UNIT DUE TO COVID-19 RESURGENCE

To Minister for the COVID-19 Response (Hon Minister Hipkins); Minister of Finance (Hon Minister Robertson)

Date	5/03/2021	Priority	High
Deadline	8/03/2021	Briefing Number	DPMC-2020/21-612

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to seek an increase in funding for the COVID-19 Response Unit of \$2 million to be used for public information and community engagement in light of the recent COVID-19 resurgence in Auckland.

Recommendations

- Note** that increases in public information as a result of new community cases of COVID-19 in 2021 have to date been managed within the COVID-19 Response Unit's baseline
- Note** that the COVID-19 Response Unit wants to be able to extend engagement out to minority communities affected by the South Auckland resurgence that started on 14 February 2021
- Note** that the funding approved for the COVID-19 Response Unit in CAB-20-MIN-0503 included provision for funding of up to \$2 million per resurgence from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund, up to a total of \$6 million
- Note** that the COVID-19 Response Unit has not previously requested resurgence funding from this mechanism.
- Agree** to release \$2 million from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund to be used only for the public information campaign and community engagement as a result of the 14 February 2021 resurgence in Auckland.

YES NO

6. **Approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in recommendation 5 above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

Vote Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister for COVID-19 Response	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 & Outyears
Departmental Output Expense: COVID-19 All of Government Response (funded by revenue Crown)	2.000	-	-	-	-

7. **Agree** that the proposed change to appropriations for 2020/21 above be included in the 2020/21 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply;
8. **Agree** that that the expenses incurred under recommendation 6 above be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund established as part of Budget 2020.

Cheryl Barnes
 Cheryl Barnes
**Deputy Chief Executive
 COVID-19 Response Group**

5 / 3 / 21
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[Signature]
 Hon Minister Hipkins
Minister for the COVID-19 Response

09 / 03 / 21
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[Signature]
 Hon Minister Robertson
Minister of Finance

10 / 03 / 2021
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AGREED & APPROVED with the addition of two further recommendations -

***AGREE** that the COVID-19 Response Group provide a breakdown of the specific proposed initiatives to be funded through the above allocation to the Minister of Finance and Minister for COVID-19 Response as soon as possible

***AGREE** that the COVID-19 Response Group provide a report on expenditure under the above allocation to the Minister of Finance and Minister for COVID-19 Response by 30 April 2021.

Contact for telephone discussion if required:

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Cheryl Barnes	Deputy Chief Executive COVID-19 Response Group	s9(2)(a)	✓
Griere Cox	Chief of Staff, COVID-19 Response Group	s9(2)(a)	

Minister Hipkins' office comments:

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

Minister Robertson's office comments:

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

INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE UNIT DUE TO COVID-19 RESURGENCE

Purpose

1. The purpose of this document is to seek an increase in funding for the COVID-19 Response Unit of \$2 million to be used for public information and community engagement in light of the recent COVID-19 resurgence in Auckland.

Ministerial approval needed for additional funding for public information and community engagement as a result of COVID-19 resurgence

2. The COVID-19 Response Unit (the Unit) was formally established in December 2020 to ensure New Zealand's ongoing response to COVID-19 is effectively coordinated, and the response policy and strategy is integrated (CAB-20-MIN-0503 refers). The Unit was established as a business unit within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
3. As part of the New Zealand government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic an extensive public information campaign under the 'Unite Against COVID-19' brand was established.
4. One of the key functions of the Unit is leadership and coordination of public communications including the Unite Against COVID-19 campaign, and coordination of stakeholder and community engagement.
5. When funding and resourcing for the Unit was considered, this included \$22.681 million of funding for the Unite Against COVID-19 campaign in 2020/21. This amount was intended to fund the ongoing campaign.
6. CAB-20-MIN-0503 granted delegated authority to you as the Minister of the COVID-19 Response and the Minister of Finance, until 30 June 2022, to jointly approve further increases in funding of up to \$2 million per resurgence from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund, up to a total of \$6 million.
7. As a result of the resurgence that was detected in Auckland as of 14 February 2021, and the need to increase public communication and minority community engagement, the Unit is requesting to approval for an additional \$2 million in funding in accordance with your delegated authorities.
8. This funding will be used for additional public information resources across multiple channels including paid media, social media and web. In addition, the funding will be used for community engagement, and to support other agencies with community engagement (e.g. Office of Ethnic Communities etc.).
9. Any unspent funding will be returned to the centre in line with Cabinet's agreed rules for the use of the COVID Response and Recovery Fund.

Financial Implications

10. This paper seeks approval of an additional \$2 million from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund as per the delegated authority granted in December 2021 through CAB-20-MIN-0503. The leaves \$4 million remaining under the joint authority for up to \$6 million to be available from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to support additional publicity costs due to COVID-19 resurgence.
11. This funding will be monitored internally within DPMC to ensure it is applied solely to the purpose of increased public information and community engagement activity as described in paragraph 8 above.

Consultation

12. The Unit has been in contact with a number of agencies as part of the community engagement underway in relation to the February 14th resurgence. These including Ministry of Social Development, Department of Internal Affairs (including Office of Ethnic Communities).
13. These agencies have agreed with the need to ensure targeted community engagement with affected communities as part of the public information campaign.
14. The Treasury Vote team has been consulted in the preparation of this report and is comfortable with the recommendations.

Communications

15. Communications regarding this funding will be handled in line with the communications approach being used across the All of Government response to COVID-19. This may include the proactive release of this paper.