



Aide-Memoire

AIDE MEMOIRE: MEETING WITH THE COVID-19 INDEPENDENT CONTINUOUS REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ADVICE GROUP

To	Hon Chris Hipkins	Report No	DPMC-2020/21-848
From	Chappie Te Kani	Date	14/04/2021

Purpose

1. You are meeting with the COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group (the Group) Wednesday 14 April at 9.00pm to discuss the Group's review of the response to the February 2021 Auckland COVID-19 outbreak.
2. This aide-memoire is to provide you with high level background information for your meeting with the Group.

Background

3. You have asked the Group to review the response to the Auckland February clusters.
4. Members of the Group Dr Debbie Ryan, Professor Philip Hill and Sir Brian Roche are leading the review of the response. A number of interviews have been held to date with representatives of key agencies, organisations and other groups. Interviews are continuing throughout this week.

Comment

5. Interviews held to date have shown that there have been substantial improvements since previous outbreaks particularly with communications between central and operational agencies.
6. There have, however, been several systemic and operational issues that have emerged that may be raised in your conversation.
7. These issues are summarised briefly under the following themes.

Leadership

8. There is often a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities within the system. Questions have emerged on where responsibility for decisions should optimally sit between central and operational agencies where operational decisions are concerned.

Performance framework

9. The performance framework needs to be reviewed to ensure success criteria and measures remain fit-for-purpose in the changing COVID-19 landscape. Conversations are needed on what success looks like in the future within the context of continuous improvement.

System capacity

10. There are significant risks with current system capacity and investment levels in public health through core funding. If an outbreak occurred and cases rose substantially, or if there was to be an outbreak of another infectious disease such as measles, there is the real risk that capacity constraints may result in system failure.
11. The diversion of resource into the vaccination programme is compounding the system capacity risks.

Planning issues

12. Scenario planning as was recommended in an earlier review in 2020 has not been implemented. This type of planning would enable better early response to an outbreak, particularly were one to occur in a high risk setting such as prisons or retirement facilities.
13. Responsibility for scenario planning may better sit with operational agencies given their expertise in operational planning and implementation.

Communication and engagement disconnect

14. While, as noted, communications between central and operational agencies has improved there are still risks arising from communication and engagement disconnects across various parts of the system:
 - a. There is an increasingly complex eco system given the establishment of various groups without clear and transparent processes for engagement;
 - b. There is a disconnect between the timing of communications and what is needed to implement changes at an operational level;
 - c. There are gaps between when contacts receive test results and are released from self-isolation that may erode trust in the system.

Monitoring of surveillance testing programmes

15. While this topic is not one that has been raised in discussions on the response, it may come up given current circumstances surrounding the MIQ cases.
16. There is information emerging that points to inadequate quality assurance processes and monitoring of surveillance testing regularity, including from recently publicised cases such as Case B of the current small cluster.
17. Conclusions may not yet be able to be drawn from available information, but it highlights that more research should be done to look into the issue.

Parties interviewed by the Group

18. To date, the Group has interviewed representatives from the following agencies, organisations and groups:
 - Ministry of Health

- Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS)
- Northern Region Health Coordination Centre
- Ministry of Social Development
- Healthline
- Papatoetoe School
- South Auckland primary care providers
- Pasifika Futures
- Mangare Budgeting Services Trust.

19. The Group have meetings scheduled this week with the Waikato Public Health Unit, Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā, DPMC, and a follow up meeting with ARPHS. The DPMC Secretariat are seeking to arrange a meeting with New South Wales COVID-19 response representatives.

20. The Group have requested a follow up meeting with the Ministry of Health to discuss their internal review of the response. The DPMC Secretariat are waiting for the Ministry to release their review documentation before this meeting can take place.

Recommendations

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

Chappie Te Kani

Head of System Assurance and Continuous Improvement, and Caring for Communities Lead

COVID-19 Group

NOTED

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Date: / / 2018