



7 March 2022

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Ref: OIA-2021/22-0735

Dear [REDACTED]

**Official Information Act request relating to the costs of COVID-19 Public Information Campaigns.**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 7 December 2021. You requested:

- *“How much money has the government spent on advertising in relation to COVID 19? Please separate into money paid to media companies to advertise, and money spent on campaign development.*
- *How is advertising spending negotiated?*
- *Who is responsible for negotiating the advertising spend?”*

On 25 January 2022, the time limits for deciding on your request were extended by an additional 20 working days to allow for consultations on your request. On 23 February 2022 the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) contacted you to advise that due to the Department’s involvement in the government response to COVID-19, our timelines to respond to requests have been impacted. I apologise for the delay and am now in a position to respond.

We have interpreted your request to be for the costs for the Unite Against COVID-19 Campaign and the Vaccine Campaign, held by DPMC.

A total of \$87,657,993 has been spent by DPMC on public information campaigns in support of New Zealand’s COVID-19 response between 1 March 2020 and 31 December 2021. Please note that this includes funding for COVID-19 public information campaigns run by the National Crisis Management Centre before the COVID-19 Group was established within DPMC on 31 June 2020. This figure is made up of the costs of the Unite Against COVID-19 Campaign and the Vaccine Campaign, and includes strategy, advertising, video and script production, website maintenance, translation services, printing, and other associated costs.

We closely monitor this expenditure to ensure it is targeted to be as effective as possible and supports with the changing needs of New Zealand’s COVID-19 response. The Vaccine Campaign is developed and funded by the Ministry of Health, working in partnership with DPMC to ensure a complementary and holistic approach to campaign activity. DPMC administers the Vaccine Campaign budget.

These public information campaigns are targeted to reach all people in New Zealand, communicating vital information including setting and policy changes and the associated actions required by New Zealanders, as well as encouraging key public health behaviours.

Regarding the part of your request relating to negotiations, these campaigns have access to All-of-Government (AoG) advertising rates, which are supply agreements with approved advertising suppliers for selected common goods or services purchased across All-of-Government. Governance and oversight for the AoG framework as well as negotiations for AoG rates are run by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. For suppliers who are not part of AoG arrangements, rates are negotiated individually with those suppliers.

New Zealand's communication approach has been internationally recognised, and it is acknowledged as one of the pillars of the country's successful COVID-19 response. There has been a focus on ensuring the public receive clear information through key channels to guide them through the different phases of the pandemic, taking the actions required at given time. In 2021, this included a comprehensive, multifaceted campaign to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, ensuring communities across Aotearoa were well informed about the vaccine and motivated to protect themselves, their whānau, and community.

Regarding the part of your request for a breakdown of advertising expenditure by medium, because all media placement is via a contracted media agency, and DPMC does not place requests with media outlets directly, media costs are not broken down by individual media outlets in the DPMC financial system.

I am therefore refusing your request to have this information broken down by medium under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information is not held by the department and I do not believe that it is held by another public sector agency.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

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Yours sincerely



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