



## Proactive Release

The following documents have been proactively released by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), on behalf of Minister for COVID-19 Response, Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall:

### **COVID-19 - Briefing to the Incoming Minister**

The following documents have been included in this release:

**Title of Aide Memoire:** Briefing to the Incoming Minister for the COVID-19 Response

**Title of Report:** Briefing to the Incoming Minister for the COVID-19 Response – COVID-19 Group Overview

**Appendix 1:** Overview of current COVID-19 Orders

**Appendix 2:** Key Personnel at DPMC for COVID-19

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Where this is the case, the relevant section of the Act that would apply has been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

### **Key to redaction codes:**

- 9(2)(a) to protect privacy of natural persons; and
- 9(2)(f)(iv) to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

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# Aide-Memoire

## BRIEFING TO THE INCOMING MINISTER FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE

<b>To</b>	Hon Ayesha Verrall, Minister for COVID-19 Response	<b>Report No</b>	DPMC-2021/22-2332
<b>From</b>	Tony Lynch, Acting Chief Executive DPMC	<b>Date</b>	16/06/2022

### Purpose

1. This aide-memoire provides a Briefing to the Incoming Minister from the COVID-19 Group at DPMC.

### Comment

2. Welcome to your role as Minister for COVID-19 Response. The COVID-19 Group is here to support you to achieve your priorities.
3. The attached Briefing to the Incoming Minister (BIM) for COVID-19 Response provides you with a summary of:
  - an overview of the COVID-19 Group's purpose and mandates;
  - policy work currently underway;
  - the history and state of the Transition Plan; and
  - key contacts, our organisational structure and information on how we are funded.
4. Other key agencies involved in the COVID-19 response, such as Ministry of Health and the Managed Isolation and Quarantine unit of the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, will provide you with their own briefings on their COVID-19 responsibilities and work programmes. DPMC's BIM is design to complement those and therefore focuses on the context, role and functions of DPMC rather than covering the whole of government system response.
5. More information on specific work programmes and aspects of the COVID-19 response will be provided through a series of subject-specific follow-up briefings.
6. We look forward to working with you and discussing the most effective ways we can support and enable you to achieve your priorities as COVID-19 Response Minister.

## Recommendations

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



Tony Lynch  
**Acting Chief Executive,  
Department of the Prime  
Minister and Cabinet**

NOTED

Hon Ayesha Verrall <b>Minister for COVID-19 Response</b>
Date: 19/6/22

Attachment A Briefing to the Incoming Minister for COVID-19 Response

# ATTACHMENT A

Briefing to the Incoming Minister for COVID-19 Response

Proactively Released



# Briefing to the Incoming Minister

COVID-19 Group Overview

Proactively Released

**Date** 17 June 2022

**Priority** High

**Security classification** In-Confidence

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# Section 1: Group Overview

This briefing:

- Provides an overview of the COVID-19 Group at DPMC, the functions and legislative framework
- Briefs you on ongoing and upcoming policy decisions
- Explains the system transition work programme
- Explains the Advisory Groups for COVID-19

Further details on the work programmes of the Group will be provided in meetings with the relevant officials from the Group as required.

## Mandates

The COVID-19 Group housed in DPMC was established by Cabinet in July 2020 and is mandated and funded through to 30 June 2023. In the context of the Delta outbreak in August 2021, Cabinet agreed in November 2021 to extend the COVID-19 Group's funding by one year to June 2023.

The Group acts as a central COVID-19 response function responsible for oversight, integration and coordination of cross-agency response activities, and integration of advice about the response. The Group is responsible for assurance to Ministers and the identification of opportunities for continuous improvement in New Zealand's response.

The Group delivers five key functions:

- Policy and Strategy
- System Readiness and Planning
- Insights and Reporting
- Risk and Assurance
- Communications and Engagement

## Personnel Summary

The COVID-19 Group is led by Ruth Fairhall, Deputy Chief Executive. She has a senior leadership team who lead each of the core teams of the Group (see Appendix 2 for key personnel and contact details):

- Strategy and Policy
- Communications and Public Engagement
- System Assurance and Support
- System Readiness and Planning
- Insights and Reporting
- Office of the Deputy Chief Executive (COVID-19)

Staffing for the COVID-19 Group has tended to fluctuate based on the evolving requirements of the COVID-19 response. As of 31 May 2022, the Group had a total of 84 staff made up of 54 DPMC fixed term staff and 30 fixed term secondees.

The emergence of the Omicron variant has changed the Government's approach to managing COVID-19. Recent Cabinet decisions [CAB-22-MIN-0086] indicate a shift from high levels of centralised decision-making and intervention (lockdowns, restrictions, and mandate vaccinations for specific workforces), to a greater emphasis on responsibility sitting with businesses, providers, and individuals.

As a result, the COVID-19 Group are on a gradual trajectory of reducing the staffing, scope of functions and expenditure of the Group to ensure we remain fit for purpose. For example, over the past six months we have reduced our head count from 100 to 84, with a further managed step down expected from July 2022 and beyond as we adapt our operating model to fit the response and what's required of the Group.

## Finances

The appropriation for 2021/22 for the COVID-19 Group is \$80.907 million. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health enables DPMC to incur on their behalf up to \$50.852 million of costs for the vaccine campaign delivered through the Unite Against COVID-19 channels. This agreement ends on 30 June 2022.

The total appropriation for 2022/23 for the COVID-19 Group is \$37.990 million with Cabinet approving funding of \$21 million for public communications and engagement for 2022/23 [CAB-20-Min-0487].

DPMC continue to revise the projections for expenditure in the largest areas of the budget including publicity, campaigns, modelling and personnel. We expect expenditure to decline based on the working assumption that we continue to move away from a centralised response.

## Reporting

### Weekly Reports

The Insights and reporting team provide a Weekly Report to the COVID-19 Minister (which the team compiles by drawing on input from other agencies). The insights canvas a wide variety of COVID-19 related issues and integrate data from multiple sources, with topics selected to reflect system demand or to highlight long-term trends and/or global developments.

### Dashboard

The Insights and Reporting Team maintains an All of Government shared dashboard for COVID-19 related data, key elements of which it disseminates to senior officials. It also conducts geospatial analysis to support, among other things, COVID Protection Framework Traffic Light Options.

### Other Reports

The Ministry of Health produces a detailed daily report of the health situation. MFAT provides information on COVID-19 in other countries through its diplomatic reporting. MBIE provides daily updates on MIQ facilities. Then there are niche products for example, the Ministry of Health produces reports related to the intersection of COVID-19 and disinformation.



# COVID-19 Group Units

## Strategy and Policy

Lead: Alice Hume

This function provides coherent system level advice to Ministers that reflects an All-of Government view, the Crown's Te Tiriti obligations, and the significant economic, social, and fiscal aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic response. This includes advice on COVID-19 Protection Framework level changes that considers the impact of changes to the system (including settings, virus evolution, external factors etc). This function also provides support for the COVID-19 Ministerial Group.

The policy advice is informed by modelling. DPMC currently has a \$2 million contract with the University of Auckland for the provision of modelling services, via the consortium COVID-19 Modelling Aotearoa (CMA - formerly Te Pūnaha Matatini), which goes to 30 June 2022. CMA has maintained models that were developed in March 2020 such as the Branching Process and Network Contagion Modelling. In late 2021 the COVID-19 Group received funding for modelling for a further year. An open procurement process is currently underway for provision of modelling in 2022/23.

## Communications and Public Engagement

Lead: Fiona Weightman

This function is the Group's largest and consists of three teams - strategic communications, engagement, and campaign and channels. Their work includes delivering accessible public information through the Unite Against COVID-19 campaign in a way that is accurate, transparent, and easy to understand. The teams also coordinate strategic communications and media support, ensure the public and stakeholders can access accurate, transparent information and build public support for and compliance with public health measures.

The focus of campaigns in the coming year will be on both managing and preventing COVID i.e., communicating what households need to do if you or your family have COVID, as well as encouraging key health behaviours including mask wearing, staying home when sick, personal hygiene measures and using ventilation. For instance, a winter wellness campaign is currently running with an emphasis on protecting people from COVID-19 as well as other respiratory viruses such as flu.

## System Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Lead: Amber Bill

This function provides assurance to Ministers and Chief Executives that the COVID-19 response system settings are working as intended; and develops, implements and maintains a system wide risk management framework for the response and identifies areas for improvement across the response system. This function also engages with iwi, community and business regarding the response, thereby bringing a range of perspectives to the Group's advice.

The team provides secretariat support to the Advisory Groups mentioned later in this BIM, and also to the COVID-19 Chief Executives Board (CCB). The role of CCB is to provide system leadership in navigating New Zealand through the COVID-19 pandemic; ensuring that the system is informed; is doing what it needs to, at the pace required; and that risks are identified and mitigated. CCB is accountable for providing system assurance and oversight to Ministers.

The membership of CCB currently includes DPMC (Chair), Ministry of Health, New Zealand Customs Service, Treasury, Public Service Commission, Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Justice, Te Puni Kōkiri - the Ministry of Māori Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Social Development, Crown Law Office, Te Arawhiti, Ministry for Pacific Peoples.

In response to the changing context for the COVID-19 response there are several planned changes for the CCB include updating the membership, and reducing the frequency of the meeting from fortnightly to monthly whilst reserving the right to convene a meeting out of cycle if matters arise or there is a key milestone on the horizon.

## **System Readiness and Planning**

Lead: Aaron Wright

This function works across the system to respond to active cases, ensures system readiness to respond to cases or changes in policy settings, and develops and tests system-wide scenario-based plans (e.g. for resurgence). This function chairs an all-of-government National Response Group who meet fortnightly to share intelligence and discuss common issues regarding the COVID-19 response.

### **Variant preparedness**

DPMC is playing a lead role in supporting All-of-Government's preparedness to respond to new variants of concern, directly informed by the five scenarios developed by the Ministry of Health. The five scenarios provide a common framework to consider the tools and resources likely required for an effective response – whether this be the scaling up of existing activity or the reactivation of tools that are currently in reserve.

While the system is well prepared to continue to respond to a variant such as Omicron, further work is required to provide stronger assurance of preparedness to quickly activate response measures in a coordinated in response to a higher severity and/or higher immune escape variant, particularly in the context of COVID-19 function and health system transition. Current readiness work includes ensuring the system is briefed on (through the NRG) health system planning for variants of concern and the development of the "*Catalogue of COVID-19 Response Measures*". This includes ensuring that agencies are aware of their responsibilities should any of these measures be required in the future to respond to variants of concern. DPMC will support agencies to do undertake this work, including via leading an exercise to ensure system readiness to respond to a new variant of concern preceding any transition of All of Government response functions from DPMC to health entities. A report on this exercise will be provided to you.

## **Office of the Deputy Chief Executive (ODCE)**

Lead: Julie Knauf

Provides advisory, research and business support to the Deputy Chief Executive and the wider Group. The ODCE also provides financial management, contract and procurement services, ministerial advice and support, business services and administration of the public facing inbox.

## **Insights and Reporting (sits as a small team under the Chief of Staff)**

Lead: Sija Robertson-Stone

The Insights and Reporting team provides insights, geospatial information, and other reporting to the Minister for the COVID-19 Response, other Ministers, the Chief Executive of the COVID-19 All of Government Response, the Chief Executive of DPMC, and other senior officials across government.

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# Section 2: Policy Overview

## Long-term Strategy

s9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted content]

## COVID Protection Framework

### COVID-19 Public Health Response (Protection Framework) Order

As Minister for COVID-19 Response, you can amend the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Protection Framework) Order, pursuant to sections 11 and 15 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020. Before doing so, you must consult with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health. You may also consult with any other Minister you think fit. DPMC is responsible for this Order.

### Monthly review of colour and isolation and quarantine settings

DPMC provides monthly system-level advice via a briefing to COVID-19 Ministers with Power to Act to inform decisions about New Zealand's colour level and isolation and quarantine settings, and by exception changes to specific Framework settings. This system-level advice takes into account public health and wider health system advice provided by the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Assessment Committee, the non-health factors agreed by Cabinet, and advice from Crown Law.

This month's advice will be submitted to COVID-19 Ministers with Power to Act no later than Thursday 23 June. It will include recommendations on New Zealand's colour settings, isolation and quarantine requirements, and may include consideration of mask requirements in some settings.

## Reconnecting New Zealanders

In early May, Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministers considered key principles underpinning New Zealand's strategic approach at the border. These principles included a proportionate and justifiable approach at the border that supports simplicity, stability, and predictability for travellers, while aligning with international norms to capture the economic and social benefits of an open international border. The principles also noted the need for tools and measures to remain available to respond to significant increases in risk if required. Reflecting this, Ministers have since agreed to remove pre-departure testing requirements for arrivals at the air border, open the maritime border to foreign vessels from 31 July, and allow unvaccinated residence class holders to enter New Zealand.

The first Order you will receive for signing is an amendment to the Air Border Order to give effect to the Cabinet decision to remove pre-departure testing requirements from 11.59pm Monday 20 June. s9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

### Other

#### Testing innovation

DPMC is supporting the first phase of the Testing Innovation work programme, with a particular focus on the innovation and future workstream. Weekly updates on this work programme will continue and you will be provided with advice on phase 2 of this work in July.

#### Independent review or inquiry into COVID-19

The Prime Minister and former Minister for COVID-19 Response have indicated publicly that the Government would, at some future point, give consideration as to whether some form of independent review or inquiry was required in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. s9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted]


## Waitangi Tribunal's Haumaru COVID-19 Priority Report and action in response

From 6-10 December 2021, the Waitangi Tribunal (the Tribunal) held a priority hearing to inquire into the Crown's response to the COVID-19 pandemic based on claims brought by the New Zealand Māori Council (NZMC). The Tribunal considered:

- Whether the Crown's vaccination strategy and COVID-19 Protection Framework was consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles; and
- Whether there are changes required to ensure the Crown's vaccination strategy and COVID-19 Protection Framework are Tiriti compliant.


The Tribunal found breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of active protection, equity, options, tino rangatiratanga, and partnership.

s9(2)(f)(iv)



### COVID-19 Te Mahere Tiaki National Management Approach

An All-of-Government management plan to operationalise the response has been prepared and renewed quarterly for much of the response. The most recent edition (1 June 2022) outlines the high-level operational elements of the COVID-19 Protection Framework and the minimisation and protection strategy to manage COVID-19. It includes a summary of the active and latent emergency tools available for managing COVID-19 in New Zealand, agencies' roles and responsibilities, and all of government decision-making architecture. The next iteration is scheduled for quarter three of the 2022 calendar year, and will provide a high-level overview of New Zealand's operationalisation of our post-winter strategy and preparedness activities for new variants. s9(2)(f)(iv)



# Section 3: Transition Programme

## Overview

As our response to COVID-19 has evolved we have moved to a greater emphasis on responsibility lying with sectors and individuals. It is appropriate therefore to consider the COVID-19 infrastructure to ensure it remains fit for purpose. In addition, the health system reforms mean that many of the current COVID-19 functions in the Ministry of Health will move to new entities by 1 July 2022.

The DPMC COVID-19 Group has played an important role in ensuring a centralised, coordinated all of Government approach to our response and will be working to ensure the system continues to deliver and meet Ministerial expectations as it is reconfigured to support the new settings.

The Chief Executive COVID-19 All-of-Government Response has led an analysis of existing systems functions and governance structures with a view to transitioning the currently centralised all-of-government response led by DPMC to a more orthodox governance and operating model over the course of 2022/23. This work has been undertaken in close consultation with Public Service Chief Executives and has included meetings with Ministers, the COVID-19 Chief Executives Board and Public Service Commission; the Chief Executives of Health New Zealand and the Māori Health Authority; and the respective Chairs of the Independent COVID-19 Advisory Boards. s9(2)(f)(iv)

## Principles

The COVID-19 Chief Executives Board considered some principles to help guide this work. These include accountabilities transitioning to agencies best placed to deliver them; and the need to manage residual risk, retain lessons learned and institutional knowledge, and support business continuity. The principles also emphasise that while functions should be transferred as soon as practicable, the timing should be driven by the readiness of the receiving agency to take on those functions, and that the system should remain agile to enable it to scale up if needed to meet changes in the COVID-19 context.

## Upcoming Action

s9(2)(f)(iv)

Line agencies are also undertaking their own transition work with a view to 'right sizing' their in-house COVID-19 response functions to correspond with the post-winter phase of our response.

## Section 4: Independent Advisory Groups

### Overview

The response has been served well by Independent Advisory Groups and panels supported by DPMC, as well as by the engagement facilitated by Te Arawhiti with the National Iwi Chairs Forum (NICF), non ICF-affiliated Iwi, and Māori organisations. As the system is shifting to a less centralised structure and working to more orthodox arrangements, some of the groups and panels supported by DPMC are ending.

#### **COVID-19 Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group (CRIAG) and Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group (SPHAG)**

The COVID-19 Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group (Chair, Sir Brian Roche) has now finished. s9(2)(f)(iv)

The Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group (Chair, Sir David Skegg) is in the process of revising its Terms of Reference and extending through until 30 December 2022. This will include the appointment of a new Chair and members.

#### **Other Groups**

The Community Panel has supported the response through sharing a diverse range of lived experiences, and its final meeting is scheduled for 30 June. The response has also been supported by the Business Leaders Forum (Chairs, Rob Fyfe and Kirk Hope) and they may still be available to provide insights if required. Te Arawhiti continue to convene groups and meetings as required.



## Overview of current COVID-19 Orders

Current Orders	Measures enabled	Administering agency
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2021</a>	Specifies the conditions travellers must satisfy before, on, or after arrival with associated DG notices providing NZTD, vaccinations, PDT requirements and exemptions.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate) Order 2021</a>	Specifies eligibility and exemption criteria, processes for applying and issuing for COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Infringement Offences) Regulations 2021</a>	Defines and prescribes classes of infringement offences.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020</a>	Enables travellers to be required to isolate or be quarantined upon arrival into New Zealand (not currently in use) and, restricts entry to Managed isolation and quarantine facilities.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Managed Isolation and Quarantine Charges) Regulations 2020</a>	Prescribes charges to recover the costs of a person's stay in a managed isolation or quarantine facility.	Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Maritime Border) Order (No 2) 2020</a>	Specifies the classes of ships that are able to enter New Zealand and the arrival testing requirements for those who arrive by ship.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Point-of-care Tests) Order 2021</a>	Restricts importation, manufacture, supply, sale and use of point-of-care tests to authorised persons and associated exemptions	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Protection Framework) Order 2021</a>	Specifies the requirements within the COVID-19 Protection Framework at Red, Orange and Green. It also includes the requirements for crossing boundaries (inactive) and associated Orders which specify tests and provide exemptions.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing) Order 2020</a>	Specifies testing requirements for Border Workers.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Self-isolation Requirements and Permitted Work) Order 2022</a>	Specifies self-isolation periods and conditions for COVID-19 cases, their household contacts, and specified close contacts or critical workers for specified events.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Testing for COVID-19) Order 2022</a>	Allows the Director-General to specify requirements for persons undergoing testing for COVID-19 includes associated DG notice setting testing requirements.	Ministry of Health
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccination Assessment Tool) Regulations 2021</a>	Prescribes the assessment tool that PCBUs may use to ascertain whether it is reasonable to require workers of the PCBU not to carry out	Revoked 12 May 2022 Ministry of Business,

	work for the PCBU unless the workers are vaccinated.	Innovation, and Employment
<a href="#">COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021</a>	Requires border, health and disability, and prison workers to meet a specified standard of vaccination in order to carry out certain work.	Ministry of Health

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## Key Personnel at DPMC for COVID-19

Name	Position	Contact Number
<b>Tony Lynch</b>	Acting Chief Executive, DPMC*	s9(2)(a)
<b>Peter Mersi</b>	Chief Executive, COVID-19 All of Government Response (until 30 June 2022)*	s9(2)(a)
<b>Ruth Fairhall</b>	Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Group DPMC	s9(2)(a)
<b>Julie Knauf</b>	Chief of Staff, COVID-19 Group DPMC	s9(2)(a)
<b>Paul Emley</b>	Private Secretary, COVID-19 Response	s9(2)(a)
<b>Alice Hume</b>	Head of Strategy and Policy, COVID-19 Group DPMC	s9(2)(a)
<b>Amber Bill</b>	Head of System Assurance and Continuous Improvement, COVID-19 Group DPMC	s9(2)(a)
<b>Fiona Weightman</b>	Head of Public Engagement and Communications, COVID-19 Group DPMC	s9(2)(a)
<b>Aaron Wright</b>	Head of System Readiness and Planning, COVID-19 Group DPMC	s9(2)(a)
<b>Annabel Ritchie</b>	Chief Legal Advisor, DPMC	s9(2)(a)

\*The Chief Executive, COVID-19 All of Government Response is a new temporary role appointed by the Public Service Commissioner in March 2022 until end of June 2022 to oversee the entire Covid response, reporting directly to Covid-19 Response Minister. The oversight role will revert back to the Chief Executive, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 1 July.

The Chief Executive of DPMC is the appropriation administrator and employer. Both CE roles have a close working relationship with the COVID-19 Group.