



5 May 2022



Ref: OIA-2021/22-1088

Dear 

Official Information Act request relating to the handling of media requests

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 10 March 2022. You requested:

- *Copies of any communications sent since 1 January 2020 to your communications staff/ media advisors about their handling of media enquiries.*
- *Copies of any communications sent since 1 January 2020 to your communications staff about the handling of OIA requests from members of the media.*

On 4 April 2022, you clarified your request to be for the general guidance given to media advisors and communications staff about their handling of OIAs and media queries.

The time frame for responding to your request was extended under section 15A of the Act by 15 working days because consultations were needed before a decision could be made on the request. Following this extension, I am now in a position to respond.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed below, subject to information being withheld as noted under section 9(2)(k), to prevent disclosure or use for improper gain or advantage.

Item	Document Description/Subject
1.	Excerpt from <i>COVID-19 Communications & Public Engagement Team Sign off Process</i> - Media Releases and Responses
2.	Media advisor handover – February 2022

In making my decision, I have taken the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act into account.

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.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Chief Executive
COVID-19 Response

Media Releases and Responses

Overview

Responsibility	DPMC COVID-19 Media Lead
Purpose	Proactive and reactive media releases and responses
Required	Proactive media release for every major announcement. Reactive response to media queries from @COVIDMedia inbox or received on media phone.

Approval Checklist

Process	Review / approval
Draft	Media Advisor, using existing content / subject experts / other agencies
Review	Strategic Communications Manager (Chief Advisor if not available)
Sign-off	Head of Communications & Public Engagement (DPMC Communications & Engagement Director if not available)
Further approval	COVID-19 Group DCE AND cc DPMC Communications & Engagement Director – for high risk, emerging issues, or issues with reputational risk.
FYI	Minister's office (ALWAYS) / PMO / partner agencies

Approval process

0. Query received in the inbox or via media phone (021 199 2529). Request query via email if received on the phone.

Advisor to check: is this for DPMC, or another agency? Is it a joint response and who will coordinate/lead? Refer to [key agency contacts list](#).

Acknowledge / redirect query as soon as possible so reporter knows it is being looked at.

If DPMC query, enter in [media queries log](#).

1. If DPMC response: check the latest grid, UAC website and FAQ document for response. All material in grid/website/FAQs is already approved and does not need further sign off.

BUT consider if a heads up is required (does the query raise new issues or risks, even if the answer is ready to go?)

2. If answer is not known or available: consult with Policy and/or Legal to determine response. Loop in Strategic Communications lead where relevant. Ensure draft response approved by Policy/Legal.
3. Send draft response for **PEER REVIEW** to Strategic Communications Manager or 2IC, Chief Advisor if not available.
 - Include email topper: Media query – draft DPMC response for REVIEW / APPROVAL
 - **Topic:**
 - Reporter / contact:
 - Agencies contacted/info used for response: (i.e. response pulled from grid; response approved by Policy; MSD consulted on response)
 - **Deadline:**

Send for **APPROVAL** to Head of C&PE. CC Head of C&PE's EA. Text Head of C&PE to follow up if urgent.

Determine whether approval is also required from COVID-19 Group DCE. Include DPMC Communications & Engagement Director for awareness.

DPMC Communications & Engagement Director should see all responses related to misinformation, DPMC reputational matters, or other risky issues. DPMC Communications & Engagement Director can also act as back up when Head of C&PE unavailable.

Once response is approved internally, share with other agencies if it crosses into their work and give time for feedback. (This can be done concurrently if time is short).

Share final response with Minister's office (and PMO if required), give time for feedback and signal urgency if needed. Provide succinct context to help Minister's Office where helpful for them.

Send response to reporter, [log](#) response.

Media advisor handover

February 2022

Media phone – 021 199 2529

- Media phone passcode: s9(2)(k)
- Blackberry password: [REDACTED]
- Apple ID password: [REDACTED]
- Corporate password (when there are phone issues): s9(2)(k)
- Media email address: covid19media@dpmc.govt.nz
- Out of office message asks people to text outside of office hours (8:30am-5pm) with urgent queries

Daily rhythm

- Morning and evening media scans
- Handling media queries - ensure all queries are acknowledged, and forwarded to the relevant agency if it is not for the DPMC Covid-19 Group.
- Distributing MOH and other relevant press releases to the COVID-19 Group for awareness
- Media scanning throughout the day for emerging issues
- Coordinating Policy / Comms reviews and approvals for partner agencies (i.e. MBIE web copy, CPF-related media responses)

Weekend rhythm

- Keep an eye out for any Ministry of Health press releases and forward email to COVID-19Group-AllStaff@dpmc.govt.nz when received (or COVID-19Group-CommunicationandPublicEngagement@dpmc.govt.nz if not a major announcement)
- If any other significant PRs come through i.e. MIQ abscondee, relevant Government announcement, circulate as required.
- Ensure queries are acknowledged and dealt with promptly, or forwarded to relevant department if it is not for the DPMC Covid-19 Group.
- Refer to Friday's on call lists for Comms, Policy and Legal contacts – save in media inbox FYI folder for quick access.

Morning and evening media scans

- The morning scan should be sent out before 9am, and the evening scan should go out between 5pm and 6pm.
- The purpose is to provide the COVID-19 Group and Beehive/MOH colleagues a quick snapshot of the key stories and issues of the day. [See example here.](#)
- The scan goes to [this distribution list](#) - make sure to BCC the recipients.

Media queries

The media inbox should be monitored throughout the day, and checked after hours from the media phone. You can access the inbox on Outlook and your DPMC phone through IT.

Changes to the inbox / out of office message can be requested by emailing helpline@cass.govt.nz

Most communication with other agencies and media is done from the shared mailbox rather than personal DPMC email addresses, as this inbox should be the primary point of call for anything media related.

Many queries we receive require coordination with other agencies, usually MOH or MBIE, but also Police, WorkSafe, MIQ, MFAT, and transport/border agencies. Key agency contacts are available [here](#), and the main media team inbox is usually the best first point of contact.

When dealing with queries that raise reputational risks or emerging issues (whether for DPMC or the COVID-19 response generally) it is important there are no surprises for Ministers or other relevant agencies.

Process for media queries:

1. Query received in the inbox or via media phone (021 199 2529). Ask for the query via email if received on the phone.
2. Advisor to check: is this for DPMC, or another agency? Is it a joint response and who will coordinate/lead? Refer to [key agency contacts](#) list.

Acknowledge / redirect query as soon as possible so reporter knows it is being looked at.

3. If DPMC query, enter in [media queries log](#).
4. If DPMC response: check the latest grid, UAC website and FAQ document for response. All material in grid/website/FAQs is already approved and does not need further sign off.

BUT consider if a heads up is required (does the query raise new issues or risks, even if the answer is good to go?)

5. If answer is not known or available: consult with Policy and/or Legal to determine response. Loop in Strategic Communications lead where relevant. Ensure draft response approved by Policy/Legal.
6. Send draft response for **PEER REVIEW** to Strategic Communications Manager or Chief Advisor if SCM not available.

Include email topper:

- **Media query** – draft DPMC response for REVIEW / APPROVAL / AWARENESS
 - **Topic:**
 - **Reporter:**
 - **Agencies contacted/info used for response:** (i.e. response pulled from FAQ; response approved by Policy; MOH consulted on response)
 - **Deadline:**
7. Send for **APPROVAL** to Head of C&PE Heather Peacocke. CC Head of C&PE's EA Louise Snow. Text Head of C&PE to follow up if urgent.

8. Determine whether approval is also required from COVID-19 Group DCE Cheryl Barnes. *Include DPMC Communications & Engagement Director Catherine Delore for awareness, especially if response relates to misinformation, DPMC reputational matters, or other risky issues. Catherine can also act as back up when Heather is unavailable.*
10. Once response is approved internally, share with other agencies if it crosses into their work and give time for feedback. (This can be done concurrently if time is short).
11. Share final response with Minister's office* (and PMO) if required, give time for feedback (usually half an hour) and signal urgency if needed. Provide succinct context to help Minister's Office.
12. Send response to reporter, attributable to a DPMC COVID-19 Group spokesperson, and [log](#) response.

*Minister office press secretaries: Richard.Trow@parliament.govt.nz;
Charlotte.Gendall@parliament.govt.nz; Gia.Garrick@parliament.govt.nz

Always CC Covid19Media@dpmc.govt.nz for record keeping.

Media releases

- Media releases can be sent out using the email template [here](#). Elle or Patrick in the Design Team can update the template if needed.
- A general media distribution list is [here](#), which contains most Gallery media plus news desks.
- We also have the option of issuing updates as web statements only if appropriate, which the Web Team can help with: COVID19Web@dpmc.govt.nz
- See [template folder](#) for media plan, release and checklist templates, to help guide announcement planning.

Fuseworks media monitoring

- The Fuseworks monitoring service sends through several alerts throughout the day which are worth keeping an eye on for the scans and any emerging issues.
- The COVID 19 Group [login](#) is currently held by Wendy Schrijvers – username: s9(2)(k)
- You can update or edit the topics monitored by emailing s9(2)(k)

Misc

Emails from members of the public can be directed to the following inboxes:

- DPMC COVID-19 Group public enquiries (general correspondence about the COVID-19 response: COVID19Enquiries@dpmc.govt.nz)
- MOH's public enquiries (if about the vaccine, health issues etc): COVIDcomms@health.govt.nz
- OIA requests go to information@dpmc.govt.nz

We often get smaller media outlets and businesses/groups get in contact looking for UAC advertising materials and resources. People looking for resources can be directed [here](#), and the following message can go to people looking for advertisements:

Thank you very much for your email and for supporting us to get integral COVID-19 messaging out to the public.

You can find COVID-19 advertisements at the [COVID-19 resource toolkit](#).

Please take note of any expiry date in the description. We request that you stop using/playing and delete this asset by the expiry date, otherwise we risk giving the public incorrect and out of date information.

Our toolkit also has a range of other audio, AV and static assets. We encourage you to use these, as appropriate, on your other channels and public information sources. Again, please take note of the expiry dates in the description.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982