



20 May 2022



Ref: OIA-2021/22-1274

Dear 

Official Information Act request relating to influencers, social media campaigns and disinformation

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 21 April 2022.

You requested:

"Please advise:

- 1. How many social media influencers are employed by the Department, either directly or indirectly.*
- 2. How has this number increased over the past 5 years.*
- 3. Are these people employed for specific campaigns, such as Covid response, or for all government policy promotion.*
- 4. Are these people recruited through public advertising or through internal government memoranda.*
- 5. What qualifications and organisation memberships of these people are seen as beneficial to the role.*
- 6. What campaign briefs are these people provided.*
- 7. What remuneration do these people receive.*
- 8. How many hours per week worked are expected for these people.*
- 9. How are these people's performance measured.*
- 10. In respect of the 'Senior Analyst, Disinformation' position advertised by the Department in August 2021:*
 - i) is this person still employed;*
 - ii) have there been and are there others employed in similar positions;*
 - iii) who do they report to."*

An extensive public information campaign to support New Zealand's fight against COVID-19 – including the highly transmissible Omicron variant – has been a critical part of supporting and informing New Zealanders throughout the pandemic.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) does not employ social media influencers, but instead engages them via a contracted media agency.

DPMC is unable to provide the information requested in parts one to nine of your request as all media placements are placed via a contracted media agency, and DPMC does not place requests with media outlets directly. The media agency is also responsible for any

remuneration and contracts for people they use for services. Furthermore, the information requested in parts one to nine of your request is not held in the DPMC system.

Accordingly, parts one to nine of your request is refused 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.

However, DPMC can advise that 11 content creators were used to promote the vaccination message as part of the Super Saturday vaccination campaign. Those individuals were Louis Davis, Jackie Cheng, Tyla Nathan-Wong, Kirstie Stanway, Nicole Whippy, Aya Al-chalabi, Nicole Goldsworthy, Jared Jackson, Win Velasco, Michael Fergus and Daniel Rhodes. These content creators were engaged to make and share their own authentic vaccine-related content that was relevant to them and their followers.

For the Unite Against COVID-19 Campaign there were 9 content creators to promote the message as part of the Summer Campaign – Summer Influencers and Be Prepared Campaign – Isolation Influencers. Those individuals were Meagan Kerr, The Modern Singhs, Ralph Weekender, Janaye Henry, Jazz Thornton, Henry Waugh, James Roque, The Girls Uninterrupted and Haylee Clarke.

DPMC can also advise that a total of \$110,190,470 was spent by DPMC on public information campaigns in support of New Zealand's COVID-19 response between 1 March 2020 and 30 April 2022.

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 30 June 2020. This figure is made up of the advertising costs of the Unite Against COVID-19 Campaign and the Vaccine Campaign, which include 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 consistent with the changing needs with regard to the management of COVID-19.

The Vaccine Campaign is developed 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.

This campaign is targeted to reach all people in New Zealand, communicating vital information as well as encouraging key public health behaviours regarding vaccinations for COVID-19. This has included a comprehensive, multifaceted campaign to support the COVID-19 Vaccine rollout, ensuring communities across Aotearoa are well informed about the vaccine and motivated to protect themselves, their whānau, and community.

In respect of the *Senior Analyst, Disinformation* role advertised by DPMC in August 2021, an individual was employed in the *Senior Analyst, Disinformation* role on a fixed term contract.

There is currently a Senior Advisor employed whose role includes some cross-agency coordination of issues relating to COVID-19 disinformation, and that individual reports to the Manager of System Assurance & Continuous Improvement.

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



Ruth Fairhall
Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Group