



15 July 2022

[Redacted]

Ref: OIA-2021/22-1440

Dear [Redacted]

Official Information Act request relating to your previous request – OIA-2021/22-1310

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

You requested:

“In your response you say that you have no affiliation with media, internet providers either directly or via 3rd parties. If this is the case how does the program of work undertaken by the organisation acquire data?”

It has been reported in the media that the DPMC has working relationships with 3rd parties that function exactly as described such as Annalect. Do you still stand by your answer?

<https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nzherald.co.nz%2Fbusiness%2Fsocial-media-surveillance-included-kiwis-private-messages-sent-to-government%2F6YG3KCJJYPMOQF5HHHPEY6R5TI%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cinformation%40dpmc.govt.nz%7Cd3d9f003df484b6f1d0508da4e4cdeeb%7Ceea6053309ef4b7a94060f38551cc613%7C0%7C0%7C637908389765494602%7CUnknown%7CTWfpgZsb3d8eyJWljoimc4wLjAwMDAiLCJQljoiv2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C2000%7C%7C%7C&sd ata=%2Bx5glo6Q1qOU8DP26XtIBilZ%2FaAcsrfGEIDBMsWtjk%3D&reserved=0>

Can you please cite all of the methods that are used to acquire data for analysis by the DPMC and affiliates with regards to social media, websites, blogs, cellphone messaging applications (for example. telegram, signal, whatsapp, instagram, facebook messenger, but not limited to)

If any can you please cite any surveillance laws used to acquire these datasets.

If your response to the above questions is that this information was in the public domain and not privileged and private data, please publish the datasets in full.”

In the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet’s (DPMC) 26 May 2022 reply to you regarding your request for details of the role of *Senior Analyst, Disinformation*, we advised that “the position did not have any affiliations with media, internet platform providers, including through contract third parties or contain a budget for work programs”.

DPMC has interpreted your request to “cite all methods used to acquire data for analysis with regards to social media, websites, blogs, and cellphone messaging applications” in the context of your OIA request that was made on 3 May 2022 (ref: OIA-2021/22-1310) and the COVID-19 Group’s work around responding to disinformation.

As we explained in our response of 26 May 2022, the programme of work that the Senior Analyst, Disinformation undertook was to understand the work already underway in addressing and responding to disinformation about COVID-19, advise of any areas for improvement to help with a connected government approach to the provision of accurate information, and ensure that the public is well supported in building resilience to disinformation. That role no longer exists. We also advised that we currently have a Senior Advisor employed in the System Assurance and Continuous Improvement team whose role, in addition to other assurance and governance work, includes cross-agency coordination of issues relating to COVID-19 disinformation. This is in addition to roles which contribute to COVID-19 communications and insights reporting.

Please note, as the recipients of reports, we do not collect primary data nor carry out any data analysis of our own, thus the DPMC COVID-19 group do not hold any datasets. The data that underpins those reports would be held by the authors of the reports.

As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the documents alleged to contain the requested information do not exist.

From time to time to support this work, we have provided insights as to overall themes being observed on mainstream and social media. These insights synthesise reports received from other agencies and organisations which they have agreed to share, or are publicly available on existing websites, such as: NZ Herald, fullfact.org/health, thedisinfoproject.org/resources, voicesforfreedom.co.nz/blog. These reports were proactively released on the Unite Against COVID-19 website, which is available at: www.covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases/reviews-and-audits/.

The COVID-19 Group inhouse social media team also manage our own channels and, if there is any content around false information, will respond to in line with the community guidelines as published on the platform.

We note that you have referred to a New Zealand Herald article regarding the Annalect reports. DPMC continues to stand by our previous response that the role of *Senior Analyst, Disinformation* would not have had any affiliations with media. Any media queries are managed through the COVID-19 Group communications and engagement team.

With regards to DPMC’s working relationship with Annalect, I can advise that early in New Zealand’s pandemic response, a critical need was identified to understand how information provided about COVID-19 was being received and understood by the public. This was to help ensure public communications about the pandemic were effective.

To this end, DPMC commissioned regular research focusing on sentiment and behaviours towards COVID-19. As part of this, in April 2020, Annalect, the data analytics division of OMD New Zealand, which is the media buying agency for the COVID-19 response, began undertaking social media analysis for the COVID-19 Group. We did not have this capability ourselves and it would not have been economic to build it in-house. Therefore, external providers were sought. I can also advise that the Annalect social media listening reports were proactively released on the Unite Against COVID-19 website, which is publicly available at: www.covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases/research/.

We note that the Annalect reporting you have referenced has not been used as part of the COVID-19 work on responding to disinformation.

For future context and to give you full visibility, we have recently commissioned three research projects from suppliers on disinformation. Specifically, these are:

- trends in disinformation narratives and the impacts of these on the New Zealand public health response;
- New Zealanders' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours regarding COVID-19 misinformation; and
- best practice in scanning online, open-source material for the purposes of understanding the online information landscape.

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



Julie Knauf
**Acting Deputy Chief Executive
COVID-19 Group**