



Aide-Mémoire

Meeting with the Community Panel

To:	Hon Ayesha Verrall Minister for COVID-19 Response		
From:	Amber Bill, Head of System Assurance & Continuous Improvement	Date:	27/06/2022
Briefing Number:	DPMC-2021/22-2383	Security Level:	[IN CONFIDENCE]

Purpose

1. You are meeting with the Community Panel (Panel) during their final meeting on Thursday 30 June 2022.
2. This aide mémoire provides you with information about the Panel's work since its establishment in August 2021 to support your participation in the meeting.

Background and context

3. The Panel was established following a request from Cabinet that the COVID-19 Group engage with different communities.
4. The primary role of the COVID-19 Group has been to coordinate and integrate New Zealand's system-level COVID-19 response, supporting Ministers to evolve and improve the response, while clearly and consistently communicating to the public. Given this, the role of the Community Panel was to:
 - provide feedback and inputs into specific aspects of the Government's COVID-19 response
 - ensure that their voice represents those of their communities and those who are most disadvantaged through COVID-19
 - provide the Minister for COVID-19 Response with an opportunity to engage on matters of shared interest.
5. The Panel members have provided lived-experience insights from a diverse range of perspectives including rural, youth, disabled, Māori, Pasifika, LGBTQ+ and other ethnic groups which has assisted in informing the COVID-19 response, and as a forum to test the longer-term COVID-19 strategy. Brief biographies of the members are included in Appendix 1.



Amber Bill
Head of System Assurance &
Continuous Improvement

27 June 2022

Hon Ayesha Verrall
Minister for COVID-19 Response

...../...../2022

Contact for telephone discussion

Name

Position

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N/A

The Community Panel

The Community Panel was established in June 2021 by the COVID-19 Group within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to provide insights across the COVID-19 system from a community lens. The Panel brings lived experiences and deep community ties to provide a diverse range of perspectives on different aspects of the COVID-19 response. The Panel brings not only their own experiences but those from their communities to ensure issues such as equity are addressed across the system. The Panel members come from communities such as rural, youth/aged, disabled, Māori, Pacific, LGBTQ+ and other ethnic groups and they will bring a strong community-based perspective to test and iterate upon the medium- to long-term COVID-19 strategy.

The Community Panel is one of three panels that are being established to gain a wider range of perspectives into the cross-government response to COVID-19. The panels will look to improve our response and improve public trust and confidence by involving groups from different backgrounds in the response and providing the opportunity add value based on expertise, insights and direct experiences. The panel members are:

Photo	Name	Representation	Bio
	Sarah Sparks (Chair) (Auckland)	Urban Māori/ Faith	Sarah is the founder and Managing Director of markomPR and has more than 25 years of experience in marketing and communications. Sarah has worked with many government agencies on significant communications strategies and last year during the COVID-19 lockdown she worked across five Auckland marae to coordinate relief efforts for their communities. She identifies as Te Ātiawa and is originally from the South Island.
	Dr Api Talemaitoga (Auckland/ Christchurch)	LGBTQ+/ Health/Pacific	Dr Talemaitoga has helped to set up doctor practices in both Christchurch and Auckland and generally works with patients in the Manukau, Auckland practice. He worked in hospitals in Fiji for many years and was the preferred doctor to Fiji's leaders. Dr Talemaitoga was a founder of the Pacific Medical Association and was a Chief Advisor for Pacific Health to the Ministry of Health. He continues to provide advice to the Ministry of Health and other health sector agencies, provides health care services to inmates at Mt Eden Prison, chairs the Pasifika GP Network and previously chaired the Pacific Chapter of the Royal New

			Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP).
	Dr Aram Kim (Auckland)	Ethnic/Health	Dr Kim is a psychiatrist with a special interest in cross-cultural and perinatal psychiatry as well as health promotion, education, and advocacy. He has been involved with development of various eCALD resources as well as being a member of a cross cultural interest advisory group. He is an honorary academic at the University of Auckland and he serves in various roles with local and national church bodies. He is the current chair of Korean Community Wellness Society and is a board member of Asian Family Services.
	Callum Woodhouse (Waikato)	Youth/Rural	Callum has recently graduated from Lincoln University with a Bachelor of Agriculture focusing on Hill Country Sheep and Beef Production systems. Since February, he has been working at Halter, an AgTech startup that designs and builds advanced technology to remotely guide animals in the research and development area. Callum was previously the Chairperson of the Lincoln University Young Farmers Club during his studies and comes from a farming background, with his family owning a sheep and beef farm in Eketāhuna.
	Dr Hafsa Ahmed (Christchurch)	Ethnic/Faith	Dr Hafsa Ahmed is a Lecturer at Lincoln University with expertise in comprehending stakeholder ecosystems. She has professional work experience of over 20 years in private, public and not-for-profit sectors in India and New Zealand. Hafsa has also held board positions in different organisations in the not-for-profit sector over the past decade. She is the current Chair of Canterbury Interfaith Society and serves on the Board of Ako Ōtautahi – Learning City Christchurch. She is also the co-founder and trustee of Lady Khadija Charitable Trust.

	<p>Jordon Milroy (Auckland)</p>	<p>Pacific/Disability/ Youth</p>	<p>Jordon is a passionate human rights advocate, and in particular disabled people’s rights, and he is currently working as a Regional Quality Coordinator for CCS Disability Action. Jordon is Samoan born and has Cerebral Palsy which has motivated him to travel and implement practical solutions to inaccessibility issues that face people with disabilities. Jordon is a Paralympics sailing champion and previously represented Samoa at the Pacific Games. He was previously the Youth Manager for the Cerebral Palsy Society of New Zealand and he is on the Consumer Advisory Group as part of the Health and Disability Commissioner’s Office.</p>
	<p>Dr Margaret Brown (Palmerston North)</p>	<p>Rural</p>	<p>Dr Brown has been a Senior Social Scientist at AgResearch for over 15 years. She has a wide-ranging knowledge of the agricultural sector through ownership of a multi-faceted farming enterprise and through involvement in several agricultural organisations. She has a PhD in Educational Change and Innovation and she wrote the widely acclaimed ‘Heartland Strong-How rural New Zealand can change and thrive’ (2019) on farming and rural community resilience. Dr Brown led the Resilient Rural Communities research programme for 10 years.</p>
	<p>Michelle Mascoll (Auckland)</p>	<p>Ethnic/LGBTQ+</p>	<p>Michelle is a sound engineer and audio technician working for Plante FM as the Head of Production. She has nearly 30 years of industry experience spanning several countries, including previously working at the University of Auckland. Michelle was born in London and is of Afro-Caribbean heritage, she moved to New Zealand in 2005. Michelle founded Same, Same but Black and she has been active in the Caribbean and LGBTQ+ communities over the past 15 years in New Zealand and</p>

			she is a member of the Waitakere Ethnic Board.
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Community Panel summary of engagement

Meeting Date	Discussion	Summary Insights
August 2021	Inaugural meeting with DPMC	Panellists shared instances of prejudice and unconscious bias that lockdowns have highlighted; communities feeling that the response has lacked transparency which has led to misinformation, distrust of public organisations and inconsistencies in messaging; discussion on creating “COVID poverty”, where there are barriers to simple things like taking public transport because of not being able to afford a mask.
September 2021	Reconnecting New Zealand & Alert level 4 reflections (DPMC); Vaccination (MoH)	<p>Panellists shared a number of insights associated with Alert Level 4: mental health struggles/ limited access to support; support required for employees, not just businesses; increase in family violence seen during lockdowns; rules very difficult for disabled people to comply with and can lead to discrimination; limited access to online devices and reliable broadband for school at home and work; food supply access a key concern (many members of faith-based communities don't have access to suitable food (e.g., Halal options); difficulty accessing information in languages other than English; social licence for lockdowns slipping.</p> <p>On the vaccination programme discussion focussed on roll out to ethnic communities, this importance for community members to provide anonymous feedback on their vaccination experience; suggestion for mobile vaccination for those unable to wait in long lines; concerns raised around people being asked for Id to get a vaccination.</p>
October 2021	Reconnecting New Zealand & domestic vaccination certification (DPMC); Vaccination (MoH)	<p>The panel emphasised the importance of ensuring Te Tiriti obligations are met, described that there is some confusion around the rules for the ‘Traffic lights’, noted that the COVID app not very accessible to use for scanning for those with limited mobility, and raised concern that some people being asked to pay for vaccination certificates to be able to go back to their home countries.</p> <p>The panel also discussed the importance of supporting innovative ways to encourage people to get vaccinated, and how to boost Māori vaccination rates.</p>
November 2021	Engagement with Faith-based institutions (Panel Chair); Reconnecting New Zealand & COVID-19	<p>The Chair spoke about bringing together faith-based leaders to discuss vaccination uptake and faith-based gatherings under the new framework and an update on the Tāmaki Makaurau vaccination campaign: Ira Dot.</p> <p>There was discussion on resilience and wellbeing initiatives being seen in communities, including funding available</p>

	Protection Framework (DPMC)	<p>from the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, the Ethnic Communities Development Fund which is a multi-year fund available for ethnic communities to grow their skills, celebrate their culture and take part in society. It can also be used for communities dealing with COVID-19 related difficulties. Question asked around when alternative (non-Pfizer) vaccinations will be available for people who are concerned about its safety, and how to drive the 90% vaccination target to protect the vulnerable.</p> <p>Panellists shared that there needs to be further support for those that are needing to self-isolate because of either contact with a positive COVID case or when contracting the virus themselves. Central services are struggling to keep up with increasing case numbers so support and resources need to be provided to communities to support their people.</p>
December 2021	COVID-19 Protection Framework and sector guidance, update on My Vaccine Pass, & Reconnecting New Zealand (DPMC); Travel Health Declaration (Customs); Equity (MoH)	<p>Insights shared from meeting with the developers of the My Vaccine Pass verifier app. Potential privacy implications and issues around deadnaming/alternative names being used; issue raised around some community members receiving spam emails purporting to be from RealMe and a recommendation that further awareness should be done on cyber security to try and mitigate this. Agreed that some panellists would further engage with customs in testing the NZTD.</p> <p>General update from the equity workstream at MoH, and panellists emphasised that more work is needed in translating material and providing translation services.</p>
February 2022	Omicron update (DPMC); COVID-19 planning in education sector (MoE); update on Caring in the Community (MSD); Immigration settings for Reconnecting New Zealand (MBIE)	<p>Importance of support for rural healthcare raised; concern that people may not comply with measures such as scanning and testing to avoid isolation requirements; insights around what panel members are hearing with regard to school (e.g., challenges with face masks; distance learning; wellbeing impacts); discussion around caring in the community (e.g., qualification of support if in part-time employment, flexibility of contracts for connectors); discussion around immigration and different scenarios such as those whose visas have expired but are stranded in New Zealand, vaccination details for incoming travellers, and the pressure on horticultural and agricultural industries to address worker shortages.</p>
March 2022	Omicron update and communications; COVID-19 disinformation and online harm; approach to COVID-19 post-	<p>Panellists raised some of the challenges from their communities around communications (e.g., challenges with digital communications for the elderly, rural community staying home instead of going into town where they may have better access to information, the potential for farming magazines to reach rural sector, anxiety when working through online forms). Concern was expressed around the delays with communications for disabled communities,</p>

	Omicron wave (DPMC)	especially Māori and Pasifika. On disinformation the panel suggested that consideration is given to how information is circulated and noted that ethnic communities will use different platforms.
April 2022	COVID-19 strategy for the medium/long term (DPMC)	Feedback from the panel included recommendations to use terms that are already familiar to the public, simplicity in communicating changes, and the importance of conveying honesty, compassion and kindness followed with actions. Consideration of other language and accessible format requirements are needed, as well as messaging aimed at younger people. Insights to consider for the future approach included: a lack of rainbow-friendly policies and guidance which results in people experiencing homophobic behaviour when seeking support; inequitable access to resources e.g., RATs; lack of priority service e.g., disabled persons may not be able to wait on hold for an extended period of time to access phone-based call centres; better access to and use of data to develop nuanced approaches.
May 2022	Reflections from the Panel of their experience; modelling and data trends & communications update (DPMC)	<p>Members noted that there are ongoing concerns which relate to their communities, e.g., rainbow community members feeling unsafe with the way tests are administered, language challenges on the COVID-19 website landing page, not reporting RAT results especially if non-English speaking as is overwhelming to use the My Covid Record website. However, members felt it has been of value for them and their communities having their feedback and insights heard via this forum. The Chair observed that the opportunity to share first-hand experiences directly with system leaders is important and the importance of embedding these types of engagement mechanisms going forward.</p> <p>The panel had an update on the latest modelling and data trends and reflected that there are limits to the modelling, in particular around understanding different ethnicities and communities, and that a one-sized approach does not work.</p>
June 2022	Feedback on upcoming Cabinet paper on new COVID-19 variants (DPMC)	Discussion covered the importance of communities being able to undertake planning activities in advance of a new variant of concern emerging, how to engage with youth communities who are disengaging with the pandemic, the benefit of public and private sector collaboration, and the value of community connectors. Panellists encouraged DPMC to review the recommendations in the Haumarū COVID-19 Priority Report and emphasised relationships with Tangata Whenua are of utmost importance.