



15 February 2022

Erika Whittome
fyi-request-16933-8d67a218@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2021/22-0491

Dear Erika Whittome

Official Information Act request relating to the cost of COVID-19 and Vaccine advertising

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request transferred to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 27 October 2021. You requested:

“How much of the Covid-19 strategy spending is allocated to:

- vaccine marketing and advertising,*
- paid adverts to Youtube (Alphabet) and Facebook -other vaccine public relations, - contributions of cultural competence to the NZ Herald, Mediaworks, The Universities of Auckland and Otago, and RadioNZ,*
- number vaccine disinformation analysts, including salaries or contractor positions,*
- number of PR staff”*

On 24 November 2021, the time limits for deciding on your request were extended by an additional 20 working days to allow for consultations on your request. On 21 December 2021 the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) contacted you to advise that due its involvement in the government response to COVID-19, our timelines to respond to requests have been impacted. I apologise for the delay and am now in a position to respond.

We have interpreted your request to be for the costs for the COVID-19 Vaccine campaign held by DPMC.

A total of \$28,325,068 has been spent on the COVID-19 Vaccine campaign between 1 March 2021 and 31 December 2021. The costs of creative, advertising, content, website maintenance, translation services, printing, and other associated costs for the public information campaign are developed and funded by the Ministry of Health and delivered by DPMC through the Unite Against COVID-19 channels.

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.

Regarding the part of your request for a breakdown of advertising spend, media costs are not broken down by individual media outlets in the DPMC financial system. This is because all media placement is via a contracted media agency, and DPMC does not place requests with media outlets directly.

I am therefore refusing the part of your request to have this information broken down by medium 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.

Regarding the part of your request relating to staff and vaccine disinformation. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) leads a workstream alongside other agencies for the government to mitigate the consequences of false and misleading information. In 2021 DPMC established an interagency coordination group to consider current local and international trends, and to align interconnected work programmes across government agencies. Individual agencies remain responsible for addressing false and misleading information issues that relate to their specific portfolio areas.

The COVID-19 Response team has staff working in strategic communications and system assurance roles, part of which includes addressing mis and disinformation themes and online harms and supporting government agencies, the health sector and regional groups to help address misinformation.

Last year an analyst was appointed for a fixed term of eight weeks. The role of the analyst was to support work already underway to make sure communities have accurate information to make good decisions and stay safe while the COVID-19 Group reviewed further requirements for analysis around the impact of the spread of false information. The pay bracket, the Grade for this role was 17, which is a bracket of (NZ\$94,716-111,431).

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