

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the GE23 Programme team, Māori team, and the Chief Electoral Advisor for the period. It excludes the GE23 Programme or by-elections, which are reported on through separate channels.

Focus areas for the Māori advisory team over January have been advising and collaborating on key components within the community engagement plan GE23. Guidance has been provided on Māori engagement ensuring the unique rights as indigenous people of Aotearoa, are fully applied when engaging and supporting Māori to participate in our democracy. Whānau centric elector journeys have been conceptualised to strengthen this engagement.

Collateral translations for MEO (Māori Electoral Option) have been a priority focus. The use of Māori dialects fashions mana enhancing relations between Iwi and the Electoral Commission, this enables future growth resulting in better participation.

The MEO public engagement and the education campaign strategy is an area in which the advisory team continue to support and provide advice on engagement and stakeholder communications.

Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

- Part of the focus on the Manager, Programme Management Office, is to build programme manager and coordinator capability. Training for the coordinators in MS Project and programme coordinating has been booked for March and April.

Preparing for an election

- As per Ngā Maihi Strategy, the Māori team has been heavily involved in the translation of material (Te Ātiawa-HQ), and planning for communication in Māori dialects for the Māori electorates. The use of Māori dialects fashions mana-enhancing relations between Iwi and the Electoral Commission, and this enables future growth resulting in better participation.
- The team have given advice and guidance on key components within the community engagement plan GE23 submitted to the Board this month, confirming Māori rights as the indigenous people of Aotearoa, are appropriately recognised when engaging and supporting Māori to participate in our democracy. Whānau-centric elector journeys have been conceptualised to strengthen this engagement.

Preparing for the future

- The Māori team has been engaged in mahi across the business, whakatau (community engagement), planning and participating in Electoral Managers training (Voting Services) and HR assistance. Karakia and waiata sessions have been implemented and tikanga and reo support is ongoing.
- The Māori team assisted Peter Potaka in his endeavours to improve services to Māori and reaching out to communities to house reo Māori booths.
- The Māori team has participated in interviews for Community Organisations work, and key Māori personnel involved in MEO. The MEO public engagement and the education campaign strategy is an area in which the advisory team continue to support and provide advice on engagement and stakeholder communications.

Building relationships and understanding

- Work has been undertaken with the CE to foster relationships with Iwi Chairs forum. Part of the Reo Māori team was at Te Matatini, promoting MEO and GE2023.

Other progress

- n/a

Issues under management

- Māori translation work for MEO and GE2023: we have encountered barriers regarding quality translation work that meets our expectations. Time delays and multiple handling of collateral have put at risk our aspirations. PM have realigned our processes to enable adequate stages to complete the work in a timely manner and alleviate the time pressure risk.

Other news

- The programme management team now has a full complement of staff. The Manager, PMO and three project co-ordinators have been hired.
- The Senior Programme Coordinator is a contractor and will remain to see out the GE. Recruitment for a permanent position has not been successful and given the time between now and the election, it was decided to extend this contract as the person has a wealth of knowledge and is a crucial programme support position. Amongst other things, she is currently training the new PMO staff members.

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the group/business unit for the period. It excludes the GE23 Programme or by-elections, which are reported on through separate channels.

Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

Master Services Agreement for Catalyst has been approved and signed by the Board. This provides a sound basis for delivery of mission critical systems while maintaining a strategic ability for GE2023 and beyond.

Planning for the *SLG and All Staff Wānanga* has progressed with the SLG wānanga planned for 7 March and the date for the All Staff wānanga is still being finalised.

Phase 2 of the *FMIS project (Solver)* has gone live and training has been given to all budget managers. Budget templates for FY23/24 have gone to all budget managers and we are working towards a finalised budget by the end of March 2023. We have improved our mapping from our payroll system (AMS) to our FMIS (business central) which should reduce the time spent on our month end procedures.

Feedback has been received on the *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and we expect to incorporate this feedback and provide ELT with a revised policy soon. The *Procurement Policy* is now ready for the Board to review prior to wider Electoral Commission consultation.

Our *National Office Property Project* is progressing well, with all furniture required has been ordered and expected date for Level 4 to be reorganised is 20 March with a finalised date of 30 April 2023. We are now looking at how we can support the increase in people to National Office during the General Election.

We are assessing a *Visitor Management System* that will change the way we manage visitors at National Office. The Administration and IT teams are working together on this with support from Procurement.

Our team has developed an *Employee Database (in Excel)* to capture the status of our people due to have no HRIS and limited functionality in our payroll system. We are also looking at how we can improve capturing our staff contract details to ensure seamless internal communications, as part of our onboarding and for BCP purposes.

Preparing for an election

Systems

- MEO software development is proceeding well, on track for deployment at the end of March.
- Enhancements to Mike to support Diacritics, including the Māori macron, went live on Feb 15th.
- The teams are working to implement integration between SnapHire and downstream systems, significant achievements in February including end to end creation of staff.
- Certification and Accreditation for FMIS and ARTS Phase 1 is complete. Data platform and Enterprise Services Bus certification and accreditation is well underway with no issues found as yet.

Recruitment

- Progressed with the recruitment, appointment, onboarding and preparation of induction for the Electorate Managers
- The P&C Team prepared and supported training simulation and ARTS system testing.
- Building staff requirements to meet the increased demand of the election including what casual roles are required to support Enterprise Services during the leadup to and during the GE.

Other Areas

- *Health and Safety* - Progressed consultation and procurement of services for the delivery of field Health and Safety Training.
- *Contract Management* - Extending several existing contracts to ensure continuity of supply. Telnet, Print Advisor and Print Panel.
- *Electorate Manager Training* - Assisting with the preparation of the financial module for Electorate Managers to ensure they have all the financial delegations and access to cash to perform and understand their roles from a finance perspective.
- *Financials* - Work continues to understand the financial cost pressures as the year progresses, and how this will impact on the election year budget.

Preparing for the future

Across Enterprise Services we have *20 vacancies* – 11 in IT, 2 in Property and Procurement, 3 in finance, 3 in People and Culture and 1 in Enterprise Services. Currently we have 10 contractors in these roles. We are using Snaphire to recruit these roles and we are actively recruiting 9 of these roles.

We have completed the *procurement pipeline planning* with the business and now have an updated schedule of contracts for the Commission. This has been a huge effort by the team over the last 6 months.

Work has begun at looking at *FMIS Phase 3* which was descoped from Phase 1. Finance and procurement are currently working on this and will also bring IT into the discussion. There is continued improvements in the FMIS (Business Central) to ensure better financial reporting to enable more informed decisions.

Building relationships and understanding

People & Culture, Administration and IT are working together to *streamline onboarding and inductions* to provide a better employee experience.

A number of *external relationship* meetings have been held including with MBIE around AoG contracts, e.g. Banking, and new furniture panel, external auditors and other government agencies of similar sizes.

We are planning a suite of *training sessions* for the Commission to enhance the procurement and contract management capability of EC staff and financial literacy. This is in conjunction with the planned P&C leadership training modules.

Other progress

- Staff offering - Samsung Family Value Programme is being progressed. Continue engagement with Samsung to finalise a potential special offering to employees as well as potential discounts for car hire being made available to employees.
- We published the Commission's Pay Gap Action Plan on our external website ([Kia Toipoto Pay Gap Action Plan | Elections](#)) and updated links to the Public Services Commission's website on [this page](#).

Issues under management

- Retention of permanent staff is an issue in IT with two key members of the IT team departing overseas
- It is anticipated that the recruitment arena will continue to be very busy over the next few months, and the risk of not being able to secure quality candidates for roles is still a risk in the current market.

Other news

Our people movement over the last few months includes:

- Emma Gillard has accepted the permanent role of Manager Finance and Administration.
- [Withheld under s.9(2)(a)] has been promoted from the Service Desk and has been appointed to the role of Systems Analyst, a welcome addition to the team.
- [Withheld under s.9(2)(a)] is leaving the team on 24 February.
- [Withheld under s.9(2)(a)] has left, and we have 2 contactors backfilling the Business Partner roles while we recruit permanently into these roles.

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the group/business unit for the period. It excludes the GE2023 Programme or by-elections which are reported on through separate channels.

Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

- 6 proposed secondments from Justice from 12 June to 22 October to support the legal and policy team for the election

Preparing for an election

- Following the [Make It 16 Supreme Court judgement](#) in November 2022, the Government signalled an intention to introduce legislation in 2023 to reduce the voting age. Our team has been working with Ministry of Justice on draft legislation to reduce the voting age to 16 for parliamentary and/or local elections. Cabinet decisions are awaited on whether legislation will be introduced this year, but any changes would not come into force until well after the general election.
- Following the passing of the Electoral Amendment Bill 2022 in mid December the Candidate Handbook for the 2023 General Election was published on elections.nz, incorporating new guidance on candidate loans which came into force on 1 January. We have had to publish this guidance earlier than we would normally do so that candidates have information about this new obligation from the date this change came into force.
- The Party Portal has been updated with revised guidance for parties, including a new obligation to report donations over \$20,000 in an election year, which also came into force on 1 January. A new return form has been produced for this purpose. Parties were also sent a summary of the electoral finance changes with the December Party Secretary update.
- During January the Third Party Handbook for the 2023 General Election and the third party registration form for the general election and associated register page were published on elections.nz.
- The Scrutineer Handbook for the 2023 General Election was also published on elections.nz.
- All MPs were emailed a copy of the MP Handbook for the 2023 General Election during January. Kristina also presented at seminars for MP support staff at Parliament during November and December about the election advertising rules.
- The broadcasting allocation Gazette notice was prepared during January to invite parties to give notice of eligibility. The notice period runs from 1 February to 1 March. Nine eligibility notices have been received to date.
- We contacted the Broadcasting Standards Authority, the Advertising Standards Authority and the Media Council to line up briefings for parties and broadcasters, publishers and media for the election.
- The team had a half day planning session on 30 January to map out our work programme for the year ahead.
- A Party Secretary update was prepared during January, including key dates for parties for election year following the election day announcement. This was sent to parties in early February.

Preparing for the future

- Participating in the GE steering group, GE Programme Board, data stewardship group, and by-election working group.
- Preparing information for registered parties on the new responsibilities they will have under the Electoral Act to file financial statements from 2024 onwards. Information to be sent to each party during February with new information about financial statements to be incorporated into the Register of Political Parties on elections.nz later this year.
- Preparing a submission for the inquiry into the 2022 local body elections. Submissions close on 14 February 2023.
- Continuing work with the Communications Team on the development of election candidate hub animation resources for election on being a candidate, loans, donations, and advertising and expense. Scripts were finalised ready for voice recording.
- Providing comments to Ministry of Justice on the Constitution Amendment Bill re ministers warrants in an adjournment situation. Final Cabinet decisions on the timing of amendments to be confirmed.

Building relationships and understanding

- Starting work with StatsNZ and LINZ on planning for the next boundary review in 2025. An initial meeting took place in mid December, where we circulated a high level timetable. A further cross agency meeting will take place in late February to discuss the high level timetable further and budgets.
- Continuing meeting weekly with Ministry of Justice Policy team on legislative change and other electoral work. A team meeting with the Constitutional and Electoral team was planned for early February.
- Support to Independent Electoral Review Panel secretariat including working on a range of information requests, with input from staff in the Operations group.
- In December Dean presented at the Electoral Regulation Research Network Conference in Canberra on the New Zealand experience of enfranchising non-citizens. This was an opportunity to hear about, and share information about recent changes to electoral law and network with our Australian counterparts.
- Fed into preparations for the Justice select committee annual review of the Commission scheduled for mid February.

Other progress

- Dean continued to lead IRT during January. He will be handing over this role during February.
- Review of procurement templates being developed by the Enterprise Group.
- Continuing to review collateral being developed for the continuous Māori Electoral Option, which comes into force on 31 March.

Advisory opinions



We received five advisory requests during November, and a further ten requests during December. We have a new look advisory template for 2023. Eight requests were responded to in January.





Party administration and compliance

- Annual return forms for donations and loans for parties and the accompanying template representation letter were finalised during January and sent to all registered parties in readiness for 1 May 2023, when returns must be filed.
- Annual compliance information about party memberships and parties' intentions to contest elections were sent to parties with the return information. Each party must file a statutory declaration in compliance with section 71A of the Electoral Act by this deadline each year.
- Progressing logo applications for TOP, New Conservative and Freedom New Zealand parties after the writ for the Hamilton West by-election was returned. The Commission is not allowed to progress logo applications during a by-election.
- Board paper being prepared for the February meeting on the registration of Freedom New Zealand as a party.
- Progressing New Nation Party's application to register a party and logo.
- Responding to an increasing number of enquiries from prospective parties about the registration process.
- Police confirmed during January the trial of Billy Te Kahika for non disclosure of donations will be set down for July. Ben is scheduled to give evidence at the trial.

Official Information Act requests responded to in November to January

Requestor	Topic	Response Time
Withheld under s.9(2)(b) [Redacted]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission is asked to state whether or not it has ever received from a member of the public or any other party, other than its own staff, an objection to the occupation of slavery being listed on the Electoral roll. • The Commission is asked to identify how many people, in the last ten years, attempted to list their occupation as slave on enrolment documentation. (Other than myself) • The Commission is asked to identify how many people are currently listed on the Electoral Rolls with the occupation of slave as on the date of this request. • It is asked of the Commission that it identifies the names of all occupation titles that are not acceptable to the Commission as occupations when it comes to enrolment details. 	16WD
Withheld under s.9(2)(a) [Redacted]	Results from the Cannabis Control Referenda for each electoral seat and for this information to be displayed on your website	19WD
Withheld under s.9(2)(b) [Redacted]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total budget for your department's Christmas party/parties for 2022 and 2021. Please separate costs for each year. • The number of parties that were or will be held in each year. • The number of staff who attended (or are expected to attend) each year's party/parties. • The location of the venue/s for each year. • A breakdown of the costs by expense type for each year's party/parties, including (where applicable) but not limited to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Accommodation o Catering (e.g., beverages, crockery, food, glassware) o Consultation with relevant stakeholders o Decorations (e.g., Christmas tree, lights) o Entertainment (e.g., guest speaker/s, live music) 	17WD

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Planning o Travel to and from the venue (e.g., bus hire, flights) o Venue 	
<p>Withheld under s.9(2)</p> 	<p>Your website states “Anyone can look at or buy electoral rolls” and that certain “people and organisations can get lists of people who are enrolled to vote” including ...”state sector organisations.”. I am seeking the following information in relation to ‘state sector organisations’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The names of which state sector organisations can get these lists - specifically whether IRD is one of these organisations - What information these ‘lists of people include - Copies of any material (including but not limited to procedures, checklists, policies, memos etc) about how state sector organisations can get or access these lists of people and what purposes they are used for - If IRD is one of these state sector organisations - what lists of people has IRD had access to (if this is information you hold), including the date requested. - If it is possible I am interested in the period between 2006 and 2011 and any such archived lists that IRD had access to at that time (if it still exists) 	20WD
<p>Withheld under s.9(2)(a)</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please clarify how the Electoral Commission contacts prisoners and overseas voters as part of its Enrolment Update Campaign if the address used for enrolment is one the person no longer lives at (and one where no friends or family live who could receive mail on that person’s behalf)? 2. Are there any data sharing arrangements with Corrections to remove prisoners sentenced for longer than 3 years? If so, how frequently is that cross-referenced? 3. Similarly, are there any data sharing arrangements with Customs to remove people who haven’t visited New Zealand in the last 3 years? If so, how frequently is that cross-referenced? 4. What checks are undertaken by the Registrar of electors? 5. What, if any, checks done to confirm overseas voters are still alive? 6. What date were the 2022 electoral rolls printed (being the physical copies currently held by the National Library in Wellington)? 7. If someone is missing but not yet confirmed dead, do they stay on the electoral roll? 8. Is there a period of time after which the Electoral Commission assumes someone is dead and removes them from the electoral roll? For instance, if details have not been updated or confirmed after 80 years or if the date of birth is more than 100 years ago? 9. I note this press release from 2013 and another from 2014 about removing ‘gone no address’ returns to sender. How often does this happen and how many people have been removed as ‘gone no address’ during the last 10 years? 10. What is the prescribed fee for purchasing a copy of the electoral roll and the habitation index? 11. Are there any other sources of information used to confirm deaths and/or remove people from the electoral roll? If this happens, what are those other sources and how frequently does this happen? 12. Is there any way to find out when named individuals last verified their contact information? 13. Are people removed from the electoral roll for any reason not covered in the questions above? 14. Have there been any significant changes to any of these processes over time? 	20WD

<p>Withheld under s.9(2)(a)</p> 	<p>I was watching the vote count of the By-Election refreshing on my phone at electionresults.govt.nz The vote count on the NZ Outdoors and freedom party went up to 220 votes 100 votes ahead of the NCOP and it showed 300 + informal votes at the bottom of the screen When I refreshed the count it show only 39 informal votes (300 had disappeared and NZ Outdoors and Freedom Party dropped over 100 votes) Please explain why I saw this and please under official informations act provide me with all screen shots of the progres count updates placed on your website between 7pm and 9pm on the 10th of December, 2022. Additionally I have had phone calls now with several other people who witnessed what I did</p>	<p>19WD</p>
<p>Withheld under s.9(2)</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will the registered Parties and their candidates with their ranking on the party list be provided to the registered voters in the mail as it was consistently done for each MMP election apart from the last one? 2. What actions are you taking given the stories of the US government directing social media platforms and what are you aware of on these issues to date? 3. Given the role of New Zealand’s connection to the United States and other members of the Five Eyes Spy Networks along with other international arrangements NZ has, I am of the view that democracy is not operating through New Zealand media holding power to account given the US government involvement in affecting the narrative on many areas. Are you taking any action concerning my complaints with my alleged claims concerning search engines? 4. What legal advice have you had on this issue with respect to social media complaints by Parties and individuals and/or legal actions that you have threatened or taken concerning social media companies and/or organisations? 5. Complaints that have been made by individuals and Parties concerning General Elections and By-elections. 6. How are you going to address the issues that are raised in this emal. Have you already done or written reports on this? If so, please provide copies. 	<p>19WD</p>
<p>Withheld under s.9</p> 	<p>Any information the Commission holds regarding the percentage levels of the urban / rural divide in all of NZ's electorates.</p>	<p>17WD</p>
<p>Withheld under s.9(2)(a)</p> 	<p>Am I able please to request information you hold regarding any and all donations made to Andrew Little, The labour MP between 2012 and 2023?</p>	<p>14WD</p>

Parliamentary questions responded to November to January

Requestor	Question	Date of Response
<p>Simeon Brown MP</p>	<p>As at 28 October 2022, for each of the core Crown Agencies/Departments the Minister is responsible for, if any, how many staff, if any, who are paid \$100,000 or more a year, have</p>	<p>01/11/2022</p>

	received a pay increase since 28 April 2020 because of exceptional circumstances, if any?	
Simeon Brown MP	As at 1 November 2022, for each of the core Crown Agencies/Departments the Minister is responsible for, if any, how many staff, if any, have received payments that did not affect their base salary between 28 April 2020 and present day, and how much money, if any, do those payments add up to in total?	04/11/2022
Simeon Brown MP	For each of the core Crown Agencies/Departments the Minister is responsible for, if any, how many staff, if any, have received payments to refund or pay for union membership fees in 2021/22, and how does this compare with each of the previous five years, and how much money, if any, do those payments add up to in total for 2021/2022 and each of the previous five years?	21/11/2022

Issues under management

- SFO has sought leave to appeal re: NZ First Foundation case.
- Withheld under s.9(2)(f)(iv)
- We are continuing to work with the IT team on the solution needed for parties to access the nominations system via the Party Portal.

Other news

Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braedyn Freebairn joined the team as a Legal Advisor on 5 December on a fixed term to mid 2024. • Withheld under s.9(2)(a) tendered her resignation during January, and left on 10 February. • Recruitment is underway for a permanent Legal Advisor role.
------------	---

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the group/business unit for the period. It excludes the GE23 Programme or by-elections, which are reported on through separate channels.

Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

Te Kauhanga, our new data platform, has been through user acceptance testing and gone live for Enrolment dashboards. Training has been delivered online to all staff in the regions, followed by additional face-to-face sessions in Auckland, Central and Southern teams.

Staff appointments

Community Engagement Managers Rachael Bell (Central) and Dr Kate Sewell (Auckland) have started in their respective roles, working closely with their teams as recruitment for the MEO starts and GE planning continues.

Business Analyst Jessica Saladuray started on 16 January to primarily support the community engagement team in the post- regional review implementation.

Organisational communications

We have continued to focus on providing our people with the information and tools they need to do their job easily.

Support for the Incident Response Team has been a key focus and the delivery of communications to our people about recent extreme weather events in Auckland. There has also been ongoing support from the Communications team to communicate the Engagement Survey and to contribute to preparations for the Senior Leadership Group and all staff wānanga.

A new feature on ECHO has been launched, profiling our people each week so we can get to know each other better. Support for the fortnightly all staff meetings is ongoing and we continue to have a diverse range of speakers from across the organisation.

Information hubs on ECHO have been created as the source of all truth for the 2023 General Election and the Māori Electoral Option.

Preparing for an election

Election date announcement

Election year began with an announcement on 19 January that the 2023 General Election would be held on Saturday 14 October. Shortly after the Prime Minister's statement, we issued a media release from the Commission with a timetable of the key election dates and posted a link on our social media channels. A banner and 2023 General Election page were published on the website the same day, so that the public could find the information easily on both [vote.nz](https://www.vote.nz) and [elections.nz](https://www.elections.nz).

It was also important to make sure our people knew about the announcement. An email was prepared for the Chief Executive to send to all staff, and a story was published on ECHO.

Media coverage

The news that the election day had been set was quickly overtaken by Jacinda Ardern's announcement that she would stand down as Labour leader. Chris Hipkins was chosen as her successor and is now Prime Minister. Since then, there have been two significant weather events that have dominated news coverage.

The events of the year have meant that we have not featured in many media stories. Political coverage has so far focussed on party selections in various electorates as candidates line up for the election. We can expect more attention on our readiness to support the changes to the Māori Option and conduct the election as Parliament resumes and there is more of a focus on the electoral process.

Political commentators have looked at how the leadership change and the response to the cyclones might affect party fortunes going into the election. This has included musings on whether Labour could capitalise on a boost in the polls and call an early election, but this speculation has been limited.

Māori Electoral Option

The Electoral (Māori Electoral Option) Legislation Act 2022 received Royal assent on 18 November. The project approach and requirements have been revised to incorporate changes in the legislation, which mean voters will be unable to change roll type in the 3 months before a general election or the triennial local elections. Development work started with Catalyst in December and is progressing well.

Collateral required for packs to be sent to electors of Māori descent were developed with our creative agencies FCB and Run. These included a new ROE42 form, outbound and inbound envelopes and an information brochure about the Option. The information brochure required input from our creative agencies, Straker International, Write Group, and internal teams. Final designs provided to NZ Post and print suppliers for production.

A lock-up and overall creative direction for the campaign were developed and agreed, which has enabled work on other elements of the campaign to begin.

Updates to the ROE1 enrolment form have been completed, and include changes related to overseas elector eligibility for GE2023 as well as MEO.

Advertising for 32 fixed term community engagement staff across the regional offices was carried out in January. There is some risk in completing recruitment due to low response rates in some areas, this is being addressed by regional managers. A GETS process was also run, seeking community organisations to deliver the community engagement campaign in seven regions. Responses were received for all but two, potential organisations in these regions (Nelson and Dunedin) are being identified through our networks. A Project Lead – Partnerships and Contracts has now been appointed and starts on 20 February. Planning for training delivery is progressing well with trainers from the enrolment processing and community engagement teams.

The procurement of de-escalation training for community engagement and public enquiries staff is now in progress with P&C. Scenario planning is also in good progress for MEO training starting from 20 March.

Always on advertising activity

Always on activity was re-started after the holiday period. This activity targets transactional enrolment messages to people who have recently moved house, turned 18, eligible to enrol on the provisional roll and recently moved to New Zealand. Messages run across Google Search, digital

placements and social media. New messages reaching young people are being trialled for the first time on Tik Tok.

Websites

The communications team is supporting teams across the organisation to prepare online content about our services, including overseas voting and assisting with a trial of the new upload voting paper (UVP) system. The team is also supporting Legal and Policy on the development of the candidate hub.

Preparing for the future

Diacritics functionality in MIKE is now completed after almost two years of development effort. In addition to addresses, staff will be able to enter names with diacritics from the 16 February and training has been delivered online to all staff in the regions.

Contract management responsibilities for the Print Advisors have now transitioned to the Manager Business Enablement. Further development progress for the EOI and procurement plan for the 0800 services.

Building relationships and understanding

Stakeholder engagement

Kea New Zealand

Communications met with Kea New Zealand, a global network reaching New Zealanders who live and work overseas, to discuss how we can work together to share information about participating in this year's General Election and Māori Electoral Option.

TVNZ

Communications met with TVNZ to discuss support to deliver Vote Compass, which helps to promote voter participation. The Electoral Commission has supported this initiative since 2014. Head of News for One News expressed an interest in meeting with Karl Le Quesne to discuss Vote Compass and this could provide an opportunity to discuss the Commission's core messages for the General Election.

Census

Communications and Enrolment continue to meet with senior leaders for the 2023 Census to share information about preparations for the Census and General Election.

Communications to support integrity in elections

Work is continuing on communications activity focussed on integrity and building trust and confidence in elections. This work is aligned with activity led by the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer on integrity, security and trust and confidence in the election.

An Integrity Communications Plan has been drafted and progress has also been made on a suite of resources to be used proactively and reactively to share accurate information on elections with

the public. This includes a new video on how votes are counted filmed at the Tauranga by-election. The video will be hosted on our website and cutdowns shared on our social channels.

Work is underway on a set of reactive FAQs on facts about the election to support social media enquiries and comment; a content schedule for proactive communications on our social channels, and guidelines for community management on social media.

Strategic communications

Development of stakeholder engagement plans commenced with the stakeholder relationship leads for each stakeholder group. The purpose of the plans is to put some structure and processes around our engagement with key stakeholders and ensure we are meeting with them frequently and with purpose. A process for tracking of our engagement with stakeholders will also be developed.

The implementation plan is moving into the visibility raising stage as public interest in the election increases. Op-eds setting the scene for the year have been drafted for the Chief Electoral Officer and Chair of the Board. Karl's provides a more operational view and Marie's take a broader view of the environment we are operating in. Trust in elections is a key pillar of both op-eds.

Election Access Fund communications

Stakeholder engagement remains a key channel for raising awareness of the Election Access Fund. Prior to Christmas an email was sent to political parties and stakeholders with information about the Fund. Handbooks in English and te reo Māori on the application guidelines were printed and sent to all political parties and key stakeholders early in the new year. Messaging has also been included in the Party Secretary Newsletter.

Creative development for the advertising campaign to raise awareness of the Fund progressed with the scripts for radio and creative direction for print and digital ads. Candidate information in alternate formats (NZSL, Easy Read, audio, Braille and large print) was produced and uploaded to elections.nz

Social media

The communications team is working on a Best Practice Guidelines document, which details a how we will run our social media channels in the lead up to the General Election. Work has also started on a social media content calendar for 2023.

Moderation of social media comments and DMs is, and will continue to be, an ongoing job. The communications team is currently trialing a new community management tool called Agorapulse. This kind of tool is essential for ensuring the process of moderating comments and replying to social media enquiries is efficient and timely when the volume of comments increase during the public information campaign.

Other progress

Community Engagement team had two-day hui in December, bringing all regional staff together first time after the regional review implementation.

Issues under management

- Competing demands on resources for the delivery of the Māori Electoral Option and preparations for the General Election.

Other news

- DCE visit scheduled to Lower Hutt Enrolment and CE hub on 27 February 2023.
- With the announcement of the election day – there was an initial spike in enquiries the majority about voting from overseas and interested in working for Elections.
- Successful number of events attended for Waitangi Day celebrations and other summer events – such as Waitangi Day, Waka Ama and Chinese New Year celebrations.
- Focus now moving to other events including Polyfest, Te Matatini and the tertiary orientation programme.
- Interviews are underway for the Customer Services Manager.
- Recruitment for Senior Advisor Learning and Development is planned.
- Recruitment for a number of fixed term and permanent positions within the Communications and Education team has been a key focus.

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the group/business unit for the period. It excludes the GE23 Programme or by-elections, which are reported on through separate channels.

Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

- The data and insights team is preparing the Commission's new Tableau-based data platform, Te Kauhangaroa, for implementation in February. This will help us to share our data internally effectively and create a 'one-stop-shop' for our data needs.

Preparing for an election

- We have been discussing the Election year protocols for monitoring with MoJ. These will be finalised this month.

Preparing for the future

- Recruitment is underway for the Manager Strategy, Risk and Assurance who will then build the team to provide long term strategy. Risk, assurance, accountability and prioritisation support. Carol Slappendel has joined the team on a part time basis to continue the work on our strategic systems development.

Election Access Fund: Te Tomokanga – Pūtea Whakatapoko Pōtitanga

- Set up of the Election Access Fund is now complete. The suite of tools and guidelines is being tested and refined as they are used with live enquiries and applications.
- The Applications Panel processed its first application in January. The full amount requested for note taking and transport costs was granted. No further applications have been received at this time.
- All political parties and key disability stakeholders have been emailed reminders about the fund and copies of the Application Guidelines in A5 handbook form (in English and Te Reo Māori). The Communications Team continues to work with FCB on the creative media campaign to raise awareness of the fund through digital, radio and print advertising.
- A project closure report has been written to evaluate the fund's development, record lessons learned and provide a resource for future projects. The Steering Group will continue to meet until May to maintain oversight of communications and use of the fund.

Building relationships and understanding

- The International Business Unit had one staff deployment this month, with technical advisor Deidre Brookes travelling to Samoa from 21-29 January.
- Regular fortnightly meetings with the Commission's Ministry of Justice monitoring liaison have been re-started for 2023, commencing on 24 February.

Other progress

n/a

Issues under management

- The team is carrying a large number of vacancies which we are seeking to fill currently.
- One team member has been impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle, which is reducing capacity.

Other news

- The SGD team will hold its first team workshop at the Wellington Zoo on 17 February.
- Recruitment is underway to replace EA Withheld under s.9(2)(a), who will depart on 22 February.