

OC220154

7 April 2022

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 10 March 2022, requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

- Copies of any communications sent since 1 January 2020 to your communications staff/ media advisors about their handling of media enquiries.
- Copies of any communications sent since January 1 2020 to your communications staff about the handling of OIA requests from members of the media.”

I have interpreted this request as communications sent to the Engagement and Communications team that provides direction and advice on how to respond to OIA and enquiries from the media.

The following documents fall within the scope of your request and are enclosed:

Doc#	Date	Document	Decision on release
1	3 March 2020	<i>Coronavirus AOG Communications Protocol</i>	Released in Full
2	4 March 2020	<i>Email COVID-19 Update and request for information</i>	Some information withheld under Section 9(2)(a).
3	15 September 2021	<i>Email Inquiries on numbers of people in the office</i>	Some information withheld under Section 9(2)(a).

Certain information is withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.

With regard to the information that has been withheld under section 9 of the Act, I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding the information at this time are not outweighed by public interest considerations that would make it desirable to make the information available.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Ombudsman, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on the Ombudsman's website www.ombudsman.parliament.nz

The Ministry publishes our Official Information Act responses and the information contained in our reply to you may be published on the Ministry website. Before publishing we will remove any personal or identifiable information.

Handling of media queries

It's important to Te Manatū Waka that we have an open, honest and constructive relationship with media. Transparency and accountability is an important part of the role of the public service, and we have those principles at the forefront of our minds when working with the media.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Macleod', written in a cursive style.

James Macleod

Manager – Engagement and Communications

New Zealand Government

COVID-19

Coronavirus:

All-of-government

Communications Protocol

Approved by the Ministry of Health

Version: 1.0

Date: 3 March 2020

Context

The potential extent of the COVID-19 coronavirus situation remains uncertain, and New Zealand faces a range of possible scenarios – which could lead to significant health, social and economic impacts over a lengthy period of time.

It is critical government agencies are coordinated and consistent in their communications. This document lays out the practical protocols needed to achieve this, as set by the lead agency, the Ministry of Health.

This Protocol is not intended to restrain communications – agencies should actively consider ways to inform and engage their stakeholders. This Protocol only seeks to achieve this in a coordinated way.

It is intended to be distributed widely to communication and public information teams within government agencies.

This protocol supports the Ministry of Health, as lead agency, and the management model in the Influenza Pandemic Plan.

This Protocol remains in force until updated or revoked.

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RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Protocol 1: Standard communication principles

All agencies should adhere to these principles when communicating about COVID-19 coronavirus:

Transparent and timely

We instil confidence in the public by openly providing information about how we are preparing for and managing the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 coronavirus. An information vacuum will be filled by rumour. We give timely responses to queries, and we don't sit on new information unless there is good reason to.

Focus on facts

Uncertainty is abound, so we only say what we know to be true and confirmed. We are alert to misinformation in the public domain and seek to counter it directly. We don't overhype the problem, but we do show that we take it seriously. When talking about potential impacts in a range, we do so in the context of preparedness, taking care not to frame them as predictions and not focusing on extremes.

Health-driven

We highlight public health as the priority and the driver behind decisions being taken. At times, this may mean reassuring the public that an action or situation does not pose a public health risk. We continually encourage everyone to follow health guidance. In areas where laws or responsibilities may be ambiguous, our public information guidance should support what's best for public health, and encourage parties to be pragmatic.

Empowering

We help individuals and businesses feel in control of the situation, offering calm, practical and clear advice on action they can take to prepare and protect themselves. This advice will be proportionate to the level of risk. We seek to counter both panic and a sense of helplessness.

Economically inclusive

This impact is likely to be felt across the economy. We build economic solidarity and communicate with a whole-of-economy lens. When we talk about specific sector issues, we always frame it in the context of a government-wide response to an economy-wide issue.

Socially inclusive

We consider the diversity of our audiences and communicate in ways that meet their needs. We tackle xenophobia head on. We use imagery that showcases diversity in positive ways. We use inclusive language, and avoid terms that implicate a certain place or people.

Protocol 2: Coordinating public information

We have a single website portal for information

Many agencies will host information on their own websites. However the central portal for all information is www.govt.nz/coronavirus. This covers topics such as education, travel advice, tenancy laws, employment rights, and income support. NEMA, working with DIA as webmaster, will coordinate this content, which will be intuitive, engaging, and geared to the needs of the users rather than the functions of our agencies.

Two additional portals of information exist:

- For health advice and support: www.health.govt.nz/coronavirus. This is administered by MOH and allows for rapid updating of health-related matters.
- For business advice and support: www.business.govt.nz/coronavirus. This is administered by MBIE.

All agencies with public information should provide content to the all-of-government portal

To provide or update content:

1. Describe the intended audiences – e.g. students, tenants, or exporters.
2. Provide one link to where the full information will be held.
3. Provide a contact centre phone number for this.
4. Describe the information available at the link, in 150 words or less. If the information is unlikely to change frequently, provide a summary of what the page says. If the information will change, provide a description of what people can find at this link.
5. Provide an indication of how often this page is expected to be updated.
6. Detail what other languages the information is available in.

Send your content to:

- Content for www.govt.nz/coronavirus: emergency.management@nema.govt.nz.
- Content for www.business.govt.nz/coronavirus: digital@business.govt.nz.
- Content for www.health.govt.nz/coronavirus: NHCC_PIM@health.govt.nz.

If unclear which portal is best, please send to emergency.management@nema.govt.nz in the first instance.

All agencies should promote the all-of-government portal

The all-of-government portal will be promoted to the public, through central and local government agencies, social media, paid promotion, and through other channels and groups such as Neighbourhood Support, Grey Power and Plunket.

All agencies should consider ways to promote the portal. Every government website with COVID-19 coronavirus-related public information should have a prominent banner linking back to www.govt.nz/coronavirus.

Websites are our default sources, however phone advice is available

- For individual advice and support call 0800 779 997 – administered by MSD
- For health advice call 0800 358 5453 – administered by MOH

NEMA, as part of their content coordination, will assist the MSD call centre with where to find or direct callers.

We are not encouraging businesses to call for advice.

Protocol 3: Coordinating media engagement

Agencies are encouraged to proactively address issues

The COVID-19 coronavirus has the potential for a very wide impact. Agencies are asked to actively consider issues that emerge and whether they should be proactively addressed through the media.

This will be informed by intelligence measures (for example, a high proportion of call centre calls regarding COVID-19 coronavirus-related employment issues, police intelligence indicating increasing xenophobia, or media sentiment tracking showing strong economic anxiety).

Proactive media opportunities should be done in consultation with MOH

Any agency-led proactive media opportunities related to COVID-19 coronavirus should be done in consultation with MOH. This includes media releases or targeted pitching.

Agencies planning proactive media are asked to please:

- Provide a copy of the media release, key messages or other communications collateral prepared to support proactive media engagement.
- Provide any additional details on rationale for media engagement, and associated risks and opportunities.
- Indicate the urgency.

Please email this information to: media@health.govt.nz. You should also follow your standard process with your Minister's office.

There should be one all-of-government press conference

MOH leads a regular (often daily) press conference in Wellington (although it may take place in other locations if required), and this should be the main press conference for all government messages.

Any agency with an important message suitable for a wide audience should contact MOH to request to take part in the press conference. Please email your request: media@health.govt.nz. Agencies should be receptive to MOH requests for their presence at a press conference.

There may be a need for a different agency to lead a press conference, or for a separate press conference elsewhere in New Zealand to address local issues. Please consult with MOH first.

New Zealand Sign Language interpreters will be present at all press conferences, subject to availability.

Press conferences are not effective for reaching ethnic audiences. Agencies should also consider alternative channels in their proactive media engagement.

Media responses should be checked by MOH on a case-by-case basis

Agencies should be pragmatic in determining whether a media response requires MOH review. It is important to be connected, while not overloading the capacity of the lead agency.

Media responses with health information should be checked with MOH, unless they simply repeat up-to-date key messages. Please clearly mark your subject line with: *FOR REVIEW – [deadline] - [topic description]*.

Other media responses related to COVID-19 coronavirus should be sent to MOH as an FYI. Please clearly mark your subject line with: *FYI – [topic description]*.

Please email your responses to: media@health.govt.nz. Continue to work with other relevant agencies and inform Ministers under the 'no surprises' policy.

A cross-government effort is need to find a home for every query

There will be some queries with no logical home. Agencies are encouraged to be helpful and claim queries where it may be relevant to their work, or work together to provide a joint response. Journalists should only be passed on to agencies that have agreed to respond to the query.

If there's difficulty finding a home, refer to the Influenza Pandemic Plan workstreams (see Appendix One). Workstream leads are responsible for ensuring questions that may fall in their area are answered.

Appendix 1: Influenza Pandemic Plan Workstreams

Workstream	Lead agency	Media Team Email
Health	Ministry of Health	media@health.govt.nz
Biosecurity	Ministry for Primary Industries	media@mpi.govt.nz
Law and Order	New Zealand Police	media@police.govt.nz
Civil Defence and Emergency Services	National Emergency Management Agency	emergency.management@nema.govt.nz
Welfare	National Emergency Management Agency	emergency.management@nema.govt.nz
Education	Ministry of Education	media@education.govt.nz
Border	New Zealand Customs Service	media@customs.govt.nz
External	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	media@mfat.govt.nz
Economy	The Treasury	media@treasury.govt.nz
Infrastructure	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	media@mbie.govt.nz
Workplaces	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment / WorkSafe New Zealand	media@mbie.govt.nz media@worksafe.govt.nz

From: Justin Brownlie
Sent: Wednesday, 4 March 2020 10:57 am
To: Nicola Whale
Subject: FW: COVID-19 Update and Request for Information
Attachments: Coronavirus AOG Communications Protocol.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Communications [SSC] <SSCCommunications@ssc.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, 4 March 2020 10:43 AM
To: Out of Scope



Subject: COVID-19 Update and Request for Information

Kia ora all

Attached is a Communications Protocol that guides the coordination of public information on websites and through the media. Please share this with your teams.

The All-of-Government COVID-19 Coordination Team will shortly begin circulating cross-government key messages. You can subscribe to these here: <https://confirmsubscription.com/h/i/ADC3F2ED21BCFD3C>

We know there is a need for greater coordination of communications planning. Work is being done on this, including establishing communications coordinators for each of the 11 workstream leads in the Influenza Pandemic Plan (see Appendix 1 of the protocol).

More information on this will be provided shortly.

In the meantime we have a relatively urgent request.

By 10am tomorrow could you please email us back here at SSC Communications with the following information. Please note we are not looking for exhaustive lists. Just high level summary information to inform planning. (The workstream leads will be focused on collecting more detailed information.)

Please identify:

- Your key stakeholders
- The key channels you have to reach stakeholders
- Any information gaps you have identified for these stakeholders (ie is there a particular audience that a factsheet should be developed for?)

If you can send this information back in a table or spreadsheet form that would be helpful.

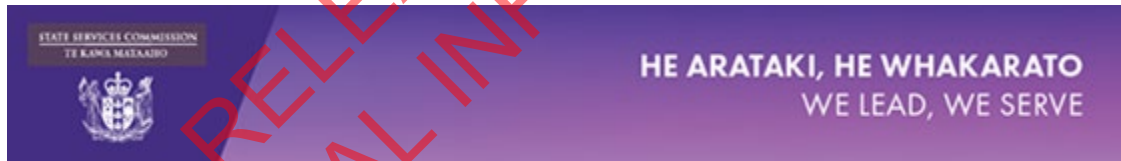
Many thanks, Ruth

Ruth Berry

Chief Communications Officer

Te Rōpū Whakawhiti Kōrero, Whakapā Tangata | Communications and Engagement

mobile: **Out of Scope** email: ruth.berry@ssc.govt.nz



Te Kawa Mataaho | State Services Commission
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Confidentiality notice: This email may be confidential or legally privileged. If you have received it by mistake, please tell the sender immediately by reply, remove this email and the reply from your system, and don't act on it in any other way. Ngā mihi.

From: James Macleod
Sent: Wednesday, 15 September 2021 3:02 pm
To: Sharyn Forty; Suzanne Williams
Cc: Nicola Whale
Subject: Re: Inquiries on numbers of people in the office

Ok thanks and noted Sharyn.

Nicola - FYR

From: Sharyn Forty <S.Forty@transport.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, September 15, 2021 2:58 PM
To: James Macleod; Suzanne Williams
Subject: Inquiries on numbers of people in the office

Hi Suzanne and James,

If we get any further media inquiries about numbers of people we have in the office could they be referred to Martin Kessick – martin.kessick@publicservice.govt.nz or their media line.

Thanks
S40

Sharyn Forty

Executive Assistant to Chief Executive

Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport

M: Out of Scope | E: s.forty@transport.govt.nz | transport.govt.nz



TE MANATŪ WAKA
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Hāpaitia ana ngā tāngata o Aotearoa kia eke
Enabling New Zealanders to flourish

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