



# Briefing

## INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE DUE TO COVID-19 RESURGENCE, AUGUST 2021

To Minister for the COVID-19 Response (Hon Minister Hipkins); Minister of Finance (Hon Minister Robertson)

Date	18/08/2021	Priority	High
Deadline	20/08/2021	Briefing Number	DPMC-2021/22-193

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to seek an increase in funding for the COVID-19 Response Unit of \$2 million to be used for public information and community engagement in light of the COVID-19 case identified in Auckland on 17 August 2021 and resulting national increase to Alert Level 4.

### Recommendations

- Note** that the funding approved for the COVID-19 Response Unit in CAB-20-MIN-0503 included provision for additional funding of up to \$2 million per resurgence from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund, up to a total of \$6 million
- Note** that the COVID-19 Response Unit accessed \$2 million in resurgence funding in March 2021 as a result of the 14 February 2021 resurgence in Auckland, leaving a remaining \$4 million in funding accessible to support the COVID-19 Response Unit to deliver public communications
- Agree** to release \$2 million from the remaining \$4 million earmarked in the COVID Response and Recovery Fund to be used for the public information campaign and community engagement as a result of the case identified on 17 August 2021 in Auckland, and resulting national increase to Alert Level 4
- Approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in recommendation 3 above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

YES / NO

INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE DUE TO COVID-19 RESURGENCE,  
AUGUST 2021

Report No.

Vote Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister for COVID-19 Response	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 & Outyears
Departmental Output Expense: COVID-19 All of Government Response (funded by revenue Crown)	2.000	-	-	-	-

- 5. **Agree** that the proposed change to appropriations for 2021/22 above be included in the 2021/22 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply;  YES /  NO
  
- 6. **Agree** that that the expenses incurred under recommendation 4 above be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund established as part of Budget 2020.  YES /  NO
  
- 7. **Note** that the COVID-19 Response Unit will track the use of this funding and will be prepared to return any unspent portion of this funding at the end of the financial year. It will also be reported on as part of the COVID Response and Recovery Fund reporting.

*Cheryl Barnes*

Cheryl Barnes  
Deputy Chief Executive  
COVID-19 Response Group

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18/08/2021

*[Signature]*

Hon Minister Hipkins  
Minister for the COVID-19 Response

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19/ 8 / 2021

Hon Minister Robertson  
Minister of Finance

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Contact for telephone discussion if required:

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Cheryl Barnes	Deputy Chief Executive COVID-19 Response Group	s9(2)(a)	✓
Griere Cox	Chief of Staff, COVID-19 Response Group	s9(2)(a)	

Minister Hipkins' office comments:

- Noted
- Seen
- Approved
- Needs change
- Withdrawn
- Not seen by Minister
- Overtaken by events
- Referred to

Minister Robertson's office comments:

- Noted
- Seen
- Approved
- Needs change
- Withdrawn
- Not seen by Minister
- Overtaken by events
- Referred to

Proactively Released

# INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE UNIT DUE TO COVID-19 RESURGENCE, AUGUST 2021

## Purpose

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1. The purpose of this document is to seek an increase in funding for the COVID-19 Response Unit of \$2 million to be used for public information and community engagement in light of the COVID-19 case identified in Auckland on 17 August 2021 and resulting national increase to Alert Level 4.

## Ministerial approval needed for additional funding for public information and community engagement as a result of COVID-19 resurgence

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2. The COVID-19 Response Unit (the Unit) and associated appropriation was formally established in December 2020 to ensure New Zealand's ongoing response to COVID-19 is effectively coordinated, and the response policy and strategy is integrated (CAB-20-MIN-0503 refers). The Unit was established as a business unit within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
3. As part of the New Zealand government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic an extensive public information campaign under the 'Unite Against COVID-19' brand was established.
4. One of the key functions of the Unit is leadership and coordination of public communications including the Unite Against COVID-19 campaign, and coordination of stakeholder and community engagement.
5. When funding and resourcing for the Unit was considered, this included \$22.681 million of funding for the Unite Against COVID-19 campaign in 2020/21. This amount was intended to fund the ongoing campaign.
6. CAB-20-MIN-0503 granted delegated authority to you as the Minister for the COVID-19 Response and the Minister of Finance, until 30 June 2022, to jointly approve further increases in funding of up to \$2 million per resurgence from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, up to a total of \$6 million.
7. As a result of the resurgence that was detected in Auckland as of 14 February 2021, and the need to increase public communication and minority community engagement, yourselves as Ministers of Finance and the COVID-19 Response agreed to an additional \$2 million in funding in accordance with your delegated authorities, leaving a remaining \$4 million in funding accessible to support the COVID-19 Response Unit's public communications activity during response.
8. A positive COVID-19 case was identified in Auckland on 17 August 2021, and as a result Ministers agreed to move all of New Zealand to Alert Level 4.

9. People in New Zealand have not experienced Alert Level 4 for a significant period of time, and therefore there is a need to ensure that people understand the Alert Level 4 measures and restrictions. To help support public compliance with Alert Level 4 measures and restrictions, an intensive public information messaging campaign including television, print, social media, push notifications etc. will support key Government announcements. This will include an initial four day spend of at least \$0.8 million in media spending, plus additional costs associated with creative, staffing to support communications announcements etc.
10. These communications will focus on informing the New Zealand public of the current Alert Levels, any changes to Alert Levels and public health behaviours required of them.
11. Any unspent funding will be returned to the centre in line with Cabinet's agreed rules for the use of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.

## **Financial Implications**

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12. This paper seeks approval of an additional \$2 million from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund as per the delegated authority granted in December 2021 through CAB-20-MIN-0503.
13. The leaves \$2 million remaining under the joint authority for up to \$6 million to be available from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to support additional publicity costs due to COVID-19 resurgence (\$2 million was also approved in March 2021).
14. This funding will be monitored internally within DPMC to ensure it is applied solely to the purpose of increased public information and community engagement activity as described in paragraph 9 above.

## **Consultation**

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15. The Treasury has been consulted in the preparation of this paper and supports the recommendations. No other agencies have been consulted.

## **Communications**

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16. Communications regarding this funding will be handled in line with the communications approach being used across the All of Government response to COVID-19. This may include the proactive release of this paper.