



16 March 2023

Wendy McGuinness
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Ref: OIA-2022/23-0627

Dear Wendy McGuinness

Official Information Act request for information on the overview of New Zealand's governance structure in relation to COVID-19

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 2 March 2023. You requested:

[See the request documents for the context of this request]

Figure 2: Our specific questions identified on Figure 2 are:

Question 1: Does the COVID-19 Ministerial Group still exist? If yes, does it report directly to the Prime Minister and Cabinet? If no, when was it disestablished?

Question 2: When was the ODESC established (the link was updated Oct 2020 but I think it is earlier)? Has it always had a role in the COVID-19 response? Please explain. Note: It was not in Figure 1, which was created with input from DPMC. We just want to get it correct.

Question 3: We have assumed the DPMC COVID-19 group is exactly the same as the earlier COVID-19 AOG – can you confirm? If yes, when was the name change. If no, what was the difference between COVID-19 AOG became the COVID-19 Group? Note: The above link (see top of page 3 in the 2020 document) – refers to 'DPMC COVID-19 group (previously known as COVID-19 All of Government Response Group, or AOG)'.

Other questions include:

Question 4: Does the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) still have a role? If yes, please explain. If not, when did that occur and for what reason? Note: Is does not appear on your Figure 3 above.

Question 5: If the governance structure has changed, can you advise how it has changed and the reasons for those changes? This might be discussed in a Cabinet Paper or another document. It would be great to receive any supporting cabinet papers, reports etc.

Question 6: Can you provide any other documents or links that might provide an insight into the government's current governance structure response?

Thank you for your help. Please be aware we are still thinking how best to illustrate the change over time (currently shown in Figure 2). If you have any suggestions on how this might be best illustrated, that would be terrific."

Thank you for your follow-up communications on 10 March 2023 requesting a response, if possible, by 15 March 2023 and requesting confirmation of the accuracy of the diagram: *Overview of New Zealand's governance structure in response to COVID-19*.

Question 1: Does the COVID-19 Ministerial Group still exist? If yes, does it report directly to the Prime Minister and Cabinet? If no, when was it disestablished?

The COVID-19 Ministerial Group (CMG) was a group of Cabinet Ministers with *Power to Act* for Cabinet when an urgent response was required. CMG was activated by the Prime Minister at various times throughout the response in order to make decisions on matters such as changing Alert Levels and responding to outbreaks. It would report back to Cabinet on any significant decisions.

Ministerial Groups are often established to have responsibility for a specific work programme or over a specific timeframe, when oversight at that level is needed. They are not typically, formally disestablished but will no longer meet when the business they were formed to respond to no longer needs such high-level oversight. CMG is not currently used as a decision-making forum for COVID-19 matters, and the Minister of Health is now responsible for most matters relating to the COVID-19 response. Gradually through 2021-22, Cabinet Committees such as the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee were used for Ministers to consider COVID-19 policies to refer to Cabinet for decision.

Question 2: When was the ODESC established (the link was updated Oct 2020 but I think it is earlier)? Has it always had a role in the COVID-19 response? Please explain. Note: It was not in Figure 1, which was created with input from DPMC. We just want to get it correct.

Information on the role and convening of ODESC is documented in Chapters 2 & 4 of the Controller and Auditor-General's report "*Co-ordination of the all-of-government response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020*." The report was presented to Parliament in December 2022. The report can be found on the website of the Controller and Auditor-General here: <https://oag.parliament.nz/2022/covid-19>.

Question 3: We have assumed the DPMC COVID-19 group is exactly the same as the earlier COVID-19 AOG – can you confirm? If yes, when was the name change. If no, what was the difference between COVID-19 AOG became the COVID-19 Group? Note: The above link (see top of page 3 in the 2020 document) – refers to 'DPMC COVID-19 group (previously known as COVID-19 All of Government Response Group, or AOG)'.

Information on the establishment and role of the COVID-19 All of Government Response Group / the COVID-19 Group is documented in Chapter 6 of the above report.

Other questions include:

Question 4: Does the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) still have a role? If yes, please explain. If not, when did that occur and for what reason? Note: It does not appear on your Figure 3 above.

Information on NCMC's role and duration during the response is documented in Chapter 5 of the above report.

Question 5: If the governance structure has changed, can you advise how it has changed and the reasons for those changes? This might be discussed in a Cabinet Paper or another document. It would be great to receive any supporting cabinet papers, reports etc.

Question 6: Can you provide any other documents or links that might provide an insight into the government's current governance structure response?

In response to questions 5 and 6, the following publicly available documents (linked below) would provide useful background and insights on the evolving nature of the structures the Government put in place throughout the response to COVID-19:

Title	Link
COVID-19 Response Paper 2 – Establishing a COVID-19 Response Unit	https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/Proactive-release-8-March-2021/2-Establishing-a-COVID-19-Response-Unit-Paper-2-1.pdf
COVID-19: Confirming a Strategy for a Highly Vaccinated New Zealand	https://dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-01/COVID-19-Confirming-a-strategy-for-a-highly-vaccinated-New-Zealand.pdf
COVID-19: Strategy for Post Winter	https://dpmc.govt.nz/publications/proactive-release-covid-19-strategy-post-winter
Rapid Review of Initial Operating Model and Organisational Arrangements for the National Response to COVID-19	https://dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-01/Rapid-Review-of-Initial-Operating-Model-and-Organisational-Arrangments-for-the-National-Response-to-COVID-19.pdf
Second rapid review of the COVID-19 all-of-government response	https://dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-01/Second-rapid-review-of-the-COVID-19-all-of-goverment-response.pdf

Finally, with regards to Figure 2, it would be a challenge to try and represent the governance structure of the entirety of the COVID-19 response in a single figure or diagram. Arrangements were put in place for a particular point in time only and not intended as enduring structures. We are, therefore, unable to confirm the accuracy of the diagram as currently depicted.

I hope this is some assistance. You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review this response under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely

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