

Briefing

PROGRESS REPORT: ACTIONS FOLLOWING THE FEBRUARY RESURGENCE

To: Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

Date	11/05/2021	Priority	Medium
Deadline	21/05/2021	Briefing Number	DPMC-2020/21-913

Purpose

This paper provides an update on lessons learnt and associated actions identified following the February cases of COVID-19 in Auckland. These actions will inform preparations for any future outbreak.

Recommendations

1. **Note** the progress agencies have made on the agreed actions and work streams following February resurgence in Auckland.
2. **Note** the report of the independent continuous review, improvement and advice group will be provided to you by the end of May.



Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Group

11./05/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

20./05/2021

Contact for telephone discussion if required:

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Minister's office comments:

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- Withdrawn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

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PROGRESS REPORT: ACTIONS FOLLOWING THE FEBRUARY RESURGENCE

Purpose

1. This paper provides you an update on the lessons learnt and associated actions identified following the February resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Auckland. These actions will assist us in preparations for any future outbreak.

Background

2. Recording and actioning lessons learnt from resurgence events is critical to the continuous improvement of the response system.
3. On 15 March 2021, the Prime Minister and Ministers held a debrief with officials following the February resurgence in Auckland.
4. Attendees agreed to several actions and work streams for agencies to address the issues identified. This report provides an update on the progress of each of these actions.

Progress Report

5. Attachment A contains the full list of the agreed actions from 15 March, and progress summaries for each.
6. The key points to note are:
 - a) The Ministry of Health have made a number of operational improvements to incorporate the lesson learnt particularly for tracing and communicating with members of the different affected communities.
 - b) The COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group, chaired by Sir Brian Roche, has completed a draft of its review and a final will be presented to you by the end of May.
 - c) Improvements in communications and public engagement have been made including more language translations of key information and the further development of stakeholder and subscriber lists.
 - d) The National Response plan has been updated to reflect the learnings from this resurgence and a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between NZ Police and New Zealand Defence Force for support to stand up checkpoints and regional boundaries.

Next Steps

7. As part of DPMCs oversight of the continuous improvement of the system and the need for accountability and transparency, reporting on recommendations and associated actions from any COVID-19 related reviews is being developed.

Consultation

8. The Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (Managed Isolation and Quarantine) and Ministry of Health have contributed to this paper.

Attachments:	
Attachment A:	Progress Report on Actions from 15 March
Attachment B:	Crown Law advice

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ATTACHMENT A: PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTIONS FROM 15 MARCH

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status	
A. CLOSE CONTACTS AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES						
i	Genome sequencing	Timing of result for first identified community case associated with a potential new cluster or border incursion within a day of test result notification and sharing of ESR analysis.	Agree to timings and processes detailed in HR 2021 0199 attached.	MOH	Operational procedures are kept under regular review, all recommendations from proposed HR are operationalised.	Completed
ii	Definition and treatment of different types of contacts	Confusion around new definitions used and isolating requirements with additional close plus category [on top of: close, casual, casual plus] when they were communicated.	Ministry of Health [MoH] has commenced an internal review with ARPHs, Healthline and other key responders.	MOH	As part of the learnings from the February outbreak, changes were made to the guidance for the management of contacts to strengthen advice to Public Health Units and others in the sector, including updates to the advice related to Close Plus contacts. The latest guidance was approved and released to the sector on 7 April 2021.	Completed

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status	
ii	Definition and treatment of different types of contacts	Confusion around new definitions used and isolating requirements with additional close plus category [on top of: close, casual, casual plus] when they were communicated.	COVID-19 independent continuous review, improvement and advice group will also pick this up as a rapid work stream.	DPMC	The COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review and Improvement and Advice group have completed the Draft report on the Review of the Auckland February 2021 outbreak. This will be presented to the Minister by the end of May.	Ongoing
ii	Definition and treatment of different types of contacts	Confusion around new definitions used and isolating requirements with additional close plus category [on top of: close, casual, casual plus] when they were communicated.	Internal investigation of Facebook post completed	DPMC	The internal review was completed. DPMC increased the short-term resource in the COVID-19 Response Group's social media team and changed protocols to ensure there is no addressing individual circumstances in the future.	Completed
iii	Contact tracing service process	Case J had 9 phone calls and four texts from the 15th – 21st February from public health to get tested. Identified a need for clarity on the protocol timeframes between NITC, finder services, Healthline and	Agree to timings and processes detailed in attached A3.	MOH	As part of the revised guidance for contact management, a detailed escalation process has been developed, including clarity around protocol timeframes. In addition, ARPHS has developed a standard operating procedure for community outreach escalation, which involves physical visits to case and contacts. This procedure is now being reviewed to become part of the national suite of procedures.	Completed

		Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
		ARPHs and when a follow up door knock is required.				
iv	Contact tracing processes in school settings	Timely contact tracing and consistent communications to diverse communities.	Health, DIA and Education updating the March 2020 protocol on Tuesday to include - - Support from schools supported by the Ministry of Education to help Health to monitor students compliance with public health instructions - Translation of key public health messages for ethnic communities that can then be disseminated to families via the Ministry of Education and school networks.	MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHUs engage with Māori and Pacific health leaders, iwi, hāpu and their communities to determine appropriate local solutions and support is in place to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori and Pacific communities. • The Pae Ora model, developed within ARPHS, supports Māori staff to be directly involved in contact tracing for Māori. • In addition, the Ministry has contracted a Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency to enable access to alternative contact details for Pacific contacts in the community and to provide wraparound manaaki/welfare services. • The NITC has an enhanced third-party provider capability that has increased the diversity of the workforce and has enabled matching callers with based on ethnicity of contact when known. • There have been increased manaaki/welfare requirements identified due to the demographics of both the August 2020 and February Auckland 2021 outbreaks. Following a hui held with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in January 2021, an equity reference group was established to support the COVID-19 public health strategic and operational work programme, that combines public health projects across the COVID-19 directorate, the Population Health and Prevention directorate and the public health transformation programme. The reference 	Ongoing

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status	
				<p>group meets regularly to provide feedback and input into planned workstreams and identifies how equity can be strengthened. An example of this input has been seen in the service specification that forms the basis of contracts with PHUs, and how they can increase contact tracing capacity for COVID-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have the Māori COVID-19 plan and the Pacific plan. The COVID-19 directorate has developed its Equity Plan and has received feedback through various hui and engagements that have helped us to better understand how we can continue to support Māori and Pacific communities. Pathways are now in place with each PHU to ensure the provision of assistance with the focus on Māori, Pacific and vulnerable populations. 		
v	Readiness of PHUs beyond Auckland	ARPHS is the only PHU who has had significant experience in dealing with outbreaks that involve different communities, a variety of scenarios (new variants, apartment blocks and schools etc.) Potential for the wheel to be reinvented with	MoH to provide an HR this week on deployment of IMT response into regions outside of Auckland. MoH deployment of staff in ARPHS to get outbreak experience.	MOH	<p>Actions taken are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working through identifying potential needs and capacity gaps is an ongoing process that is been undertaken by both individual PHUs and the IMT itself for some time now. In some previous responses there has been some 'cross pollination' between PHUs when cases/contacts have been located outside of Auckland and information sharing and coordination is required. External PHUs have also provided additional support to ARPHS in some instances, which has given them an opportunity to experience the process first-hand. Post-incident debriefs and additional face to face meetings with ARPHS are a continual occurrence 	Ongoing

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status	
	regards to the response in other regions			<p>– both to firm up on processes and opportunities to improve both their/IMT's response, and to look at ways to support responses outside of that region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons identified are shared on a regular basis with all PHUs and a weekly national PHU meeting is chaired by one of the IMT Clinical Advisors which provides a forum to raise relevant questions or facilitate educational sessions involving response workstreams, e.g. testing, contact tracing etc. • Canterbury DHB has run a response previously and have shared their lessons learnt from that matter. • IMT members meet with Southern DHB colleagues (in Queenstown) as part of an ongoing series of conversations around potential border cases when flight come into Queenstown. This has been a fruitful exercise and has given more assurance around their ability to respond to outbreaks. • Previous table-top exercises have also provided agencies outside of ARPHS with some experience and identified areas of focus within their own region. 		
v	Readiness of PHUs beyond Auckland	ARPHS is the only PHU who has had significant experience in dealing with outbreaks that involve different communities, a	COVID-19 independent continuous review, improvement and advice group will also be requested to look into	DPMC	<p>The DPMC COVID-19 Planning and Readiness function and MoH COVID-19 Directorate will develop and run scenario testing for regional responses outside of Auckland.</p> <p>The COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice group was requested to</p>	Ongoing

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
	variety of scenarios (new variants, apartment blocks and schools etc.) Potential for the wheel to be reinvented with regards to the response in other regions.	progress on scenario planning as part of lessons from the rapid review into contact tracing during the August outbreak.		cover scenario planning in their review. The report due by the end of May is expected to address this.	

B. LEGAL POWERS

s9(2)(h)



	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
		s9(2)(h)			
s9(2)(h)					
C. Alert Levels					

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	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status	
i	Checklist for what is required for Cabinet to take a decision	Lack of a clear checklist of advice on factors that lead to public health and Cabinet [based on public health advice] make the decision to go up an alert level.	MOH	Memo to DG from Dr McElnay/Dr Town to be shared with relevant offices to support first Boardroom meeting after a community case is identified.	This action will occur on an as needed basis if a community case is identified.	Ongoing
i	Checklist for what is required for Cabinet to take a decision	Lack of a clear checklist of advice on factors that lead to public health and Cabinet [based on public health advice] make the decision to go up an alert level.	DPMC	COVID-19 response business unit and MOH to work with offices on checklist protocol for alert level papers	An initial review of the checklist was undertaken by officials and Ministers' offices. Your office has commissioned a Cabinet paper seeking approval for changes to the public health considerations for changing alert levels. A paper is expected to Cabinet in June.	Ongoing
D. REGIONAL BOUNDARY						
i	Economic documentation	Over 30,000 QR codes were downloaded which raises questions whether the definitions and processes are working	Review of economic travel documentation provided for crossing the boundary including whether QRs being downloaded accurately reflect	MBIE	MBIE Briefing completed and accepted by Ministers.	Completed

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
		the types of businesses and services that should be accessing them (MBIE underway)			
ii	Transiting through areas at a higher alert level	Disproportionate effect of Auckland transit provisions on Northland on the ability of residents to undertake travel (e.g. for funerals in Auckland when we allow exemptions for economic purposes	DPMC	Advice provided to Minister for COVID-19 Response 26 March. s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]	Ongoing
iii	Standing up and location of boundaries and checkpoints	Public confusion around the location of where police check points are being stood up and where boundaries are. Timing of defence being able to attend checkpoints.	DPMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEMA developed an app to show testing locations and locations of interest, that is hosted on the UAC website, to be used in a future response. Workshops with stakeholders completed in Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Canterbury and Wellington regions. Draft maps of possible Alert Level boundaries to be finalised for inclusion in the next iteration of the National Response Plan. The Plan is updated quarterly and reflects lessons learnt from prior resurgences. A NZ Police and NZDF MOU has been signed for NZDF support of checkpoints. s9(2)(g)(i) [REDACTED] 	Completed

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New process used on 27 February successfully, including communications protocols - There is an ongoing work plan to create 'draft' regional boundaries for Wellington, Christchurch and Waikato (DPMC underway). 			
iv	Entering higher Alert Level regions to return home	Queue at southern boundary for people to return to Auckland resulted in some people waiting a long time to enter the region.	s9(2)(g)(i) DPMC	Advice provided to Minister for COVID-19 Response 26 March. s9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]	Ongoing

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
		- This could be incorporated into scenario planning in the National Resurgence Response Plan.			
E. COMMUNICATIONS					
Preparation of alert level material in multiple languages	Delay in communications around key alert level information in different languages s9(2)(g)(i)	There is an opportunity for Ministry of Education to work with DIA. Education have a system and process for languages and process could synchronise better with DIA (DPMC) s9(2)(g)(i)	DPMC	<p>Communication of Alert Level changes</p> <p>Procedures and templates have been prepared and documented in the Resurgence Grab & Go Kit (April 2021). This Kit has been workshopped with key communications staff in key agencies for future use.</p> <p>Public Health Messaging</p> <p>DPMC have developed information about key Public Health measures in 24 written languages and New Zealand Sign Language. These include pages about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face coverings and masks • Testing • Contact Tracing • Turn on Bluetooth tracing <p>Translated pages are also available on accessing support, QFT, pre-departure testing and other key areas.</p>	Ongoing

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
		<p>- Pre-drafting of communications (including translations) for Alert Level changes could minimise translation delays.</p>		<p>Research</p> <p>In March, DPMC commissioned two pieces of research to look into the sentiment in Auckland, especially South Auckland given the Alert Level changes over February and through into March.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moana Research was commissioned to look specifically in to ethnic communities in the South Auckland area, due to their connections into these communities. 2. TRA, who have done a number of research projects for the COVID-19 response team over the last year, undertook a qualitative survey. The results of which were able to be compared with previous surveys to see how attitudes and behaviours are changing over time. <p>An action plan is being developed to use these results, which will include reviewing alert level change campaign messaging, and working with other agencies such as MOH and MSD on how to utilise insights.</p> <p>DPMC are also working with Maori Media Network and other ethnic media outlets to gain insights that will help us improve our messaging and processes in relation to getting campaign messages to those communities.</p> <p>Stakeholder and subscriber lists</p> <p>DPMC have developed, and continue to update, a CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) communities stakeholder list who are sent key</p>	

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
				<p>COVID-19 related updates and notifications. This list includes key community groups, sports groups, religious groups, business councils, chambers of commerce, student associations, and multicultural associations, etc. The updates are tailored depending on the event.</p> <p>DPMC have a subscriber service that the public can sign up to receive alerts in their own language when any new translated material is published. Sign-ups are in their own language and content is sent in their own language. Templates are being developed for QFT and alert level changes to ensure this process is as fast as possible.</p> <p>DPMC have established an interagency working group that includes representatives from MOH, DHBs, OEC, Ministry of Education, MSD, Police and others. The group meets fortnightly to continue to discuss and improve mechanisms for reaching diverse communities.</p> <p>The Ministry of Pacific Peoples' is a key partner in delivery of this work.</p> <p>What's to come?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPMC are translating content around the definitions of close contact, casual contact and casual-plus contact and the actions required of people in each group. • Gujarati and Tamil will be added making a total 26 plus NZSL. 	

	Issue	Action	Agency	Progress	Status
				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An audit of content is underway to ensure it is all relevant and up to date.• As above, pre-translated templates that can be used to alert CALD communities in their own languages of updates to information eg changes to alert levels	

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ATTACHMENT B: CROWN LAW ADVICE

Attachment B withheld in full under 9(2)(h) of the Act

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