



2 April 2026

Ref: OIA-2025/26-0606

Tēnā koe

## Official Information Act request relating to Unite against COVID-19 campaign targeting young New Zealanders

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, which was received by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 16 March 2026. You requested:

*“... detailed official information related to the Unite Against COVID-19 vaccination campaign, which was managed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), with creative strategy and development handled by Clemenger BBDO Wellington and media placement by OMD New Zealand. My request focuses specifically on the period of September/October to February/March 2022, during the implementation of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (Traffic Light system)*

*I seek comprehensive details on how messaging was crafted, targeted and evaluated for young New Zealanders, including any internal discussions. This includes, but is not limited to, emails, reports, briefs, and other communications that reveal the decision-making process behind persisting with youth-targeted vaccination promotion - how messaging was crafted and disseminated to influence young New Zealanders' behaviors and perceptions related to COVID-19 vaccination and compliance during this timeframe.*

*Specifically, I request the following information:*

- 1. All strategy documents, creative briefs, audience segmentation plans, behavioral insight reports, or marketing rationales that outline how messaging was tailored to target young New Zealanders (aged approximately 12–24 years) during the vaccination campaign. This should include references to youth-specific communication channels (e.g., social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, or Snapchat), key persuasive narratives, psychological techniques (such as fear appeals, social proof, or urgency framing), and any data-driven insights used to encourage vaccination uptake in this group.*
- 2. Copies of internal and external emails, memoranda, meeting minutes, or correspondence between DPMC staff, Clemenger BBDO Wellington, OMD New Zealand, and other involved parties (e.g., The Sweetshop or public health advisors) discussing the development, approval or refinement of youth-targeted messaging during this period. This includes any references to risk assessments, ethical considerations or adjustments made in light of emerging data on vaccine side effects like myocarditis.*
- 3. Media placement plans, schedules, budgets, and performance reports from OMD New Zealand detailing how youth-targeted ads were disseminated during this timeframe. This should cover channel selections (e.g., digital platforms popular with youth), targeting parameters (e.g., age demographics, interests, or*

*location-based filters), reach estimates, and engagement metrics such as impressions, clicks, or shares.*

4. *Any research documents, focus group summaries, survey results, or analytical reports (internal or commissioned) that informed the messaging for young New Zealanders, including pre-campaign studies on attitudes toward vaccination, perceived risks, or barriers to uptake, as well as any mid-campaign adjustments based on real-time data.*
5. *Post-campaign evaluations, impact assessments, or debrief reports (from DPMC, Clemenger BBDO, OMD, or external evaluators) analyzing the effectiveness of youth-targeted messaging in November–December 2021. This includes metrics on vaccination rates among 12–24-year-olds, changes in public sentiment and engagement levels.*
6. *Contracts, agreements or scopes of work between DPMC and contractors (e.g., Clemenger BBDO Wellington, OMD New Zealand) that pertain to the youth-focused elements of the campaign during this period, including clauses on messaging guidelines, performance indicators or accountability for content accuracy.*

*If the information is held by another agency or entity (eg. Clemenger BBDO or OMD), I request that you transfer this request accordingly under section 14 of the OIA.*

*If any requested information is held by contractors (eg. Clemenger BBDO Wellington or OMD New Zealand) as part of their work for DPMC, please treat it as official information held by DPMC.”*

We have interpreted your request to be seeking information dated from 1 August 2021 to 31 March 2022 (inclusive) regarding vaccine advertising aimed at youth audiences; specifically, individuals aged 12 to 24, as part of the Unite Against COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign. This includes details on how messaging was developed and directed towards this demographic.

On 30 March, we notified you of our decision to transfer Parts 1, 4, and 5, as well as some aspects of Part 2, to Te Whatu Ora | Health New Zealand. The present response covers Parts 3, 6, and the remainder of Part 2.

## **Background**

Below we outline the roles of the Ministry of Health and DPMC in relation to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, as this context is relevant to your request.

The Ministry of Health led the development of public health messages and the overall COVID-19 vaccination strategy, working with other key agencies including DPMC, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples.

DPMC, through its COVID-19 Group’s Communications and Public Engagement team, was responsible for disseminating vaccination campaign messages via the Unite Against COVID-19 channels, managing the creative and media-buying agencies (e.g., Clemenger/OMD), while the Ministry of Health retained responsibility for the content of public health messaging.

This was a fast moving and dynamic campaign, where the creation of and recording of briefs may not have always adhered to a structured process

## Parts 2 and 3

Having assessed the extent of work required to collate the information requested in these parts of your request, I have decided to refuse them under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

The vaccine campaign incorporated a range of approaches to reach different audiences, especially as the rollout progressed. Identifying information related to vaccine advertising aimed at youth audiences, specifically individuals aged 12 to 24, as part of the Unite Against COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign, would require reviewing and assessing hundreds of emails between DPMC, Clemenger BBDO, OMD New Zealand, to determine potential relevance. While the volume of information directly in scope is unlikely to be significant, identifying it would involve significant manual work. I have considered whether extending the timeframe, imposing a charge, or refining the scope of the request could address this, but the substantial volume of emails exchanged between DPMC, Clemenger BBDO, and OMD—even over a shorter timeframe—means these options are unlikely to alleviate the reason for refusal.

As an example of the type of collateral produced as part of the vaccine campaign, you may however be interested in the document “COVID-19 vaccine: Taranaki Youth Drive,” which is publicly available here (pages 11-17) : <https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2025-08/dPMC-roia-oia-2024-25-0976.pdf>.

## Part 6

Searches of our information management systems have not returned any contracts, agreements, or scopes of work specifically related to campaigns aimed at youth audiences. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act – the requested documents do not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate them, cannot be found. Neither the advertising and media contracts between DPMC and Clemenger BBDO nor those between DPMC and OMD entered into this level of detail. As noted above, the vaccine campaign was fast moving and dynamic, and adapted to reach different audiences as the vaccine rollout progressed.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alan Cassidy".

Alan Cassidy  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate**

Proactively Released