



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

9 February 2022

Dear

On 14 September 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *All advice provided to Government Ministers regarding the response of the Ministry of Social Development, including its employment programmes, to the community outbreak of the delta variant of COVID-19 since August 17 2021.*

The Ministry has identified the following information in scope of your request. Note, most of the documentation has been provided to you in response to earlier requests made by you under the Act.

No.	File number	Date	Document type	Title	Decision and OIA Section(s)
1.	REP/21/8/874	19/8/2021	Aide-memoire	Cabinet discussion on change in alert levels	Has been released to you on 18/11/2021.
2.	REP/21/8/878	20/8/2021	Aide-memoire	One-Way Quarantine-Free Travel to New Zealand from Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu	Has been released to you on 18/11/2021.
3.	REP/21/8/881	23/8/2021	Aide-memoire	Discussion on access to food and other social services during lockdown	Has been released to you on 18/11/2021.
4.	REP/21/8/886	23/8/2021	Memo	Legal framework and integrity measures for the Wage Subsidy August 2021	Has been released to you on 18/11/2021.
5.	REP/21/8/887	24/8/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
6.	REP/21/8/889	24/8/2021	Joint Report	Joint Report: Wage Subsidy August 2021 scheme: Revenue test period	This document will be released on the Treasury's website on 13 December 2021.
7.	REP/21/8/891	20/8/2021	Treasury Report	COVID-19 Wage Subsidy August 2021 Scheme: Second Payment	This document will be released on the Treasury's website on 13 December 2021.

No.	File number	Date	Document type	Title	Decision and OIA Section(s)
8.	REP/21/8/892	25/8/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
9.	REP/21/8/896	26/8/2021	Aide-memoire	Housing provider meeting, Thursday 26 August	Has been released to you on 12/11/2021.
10.	REP/21/8/901	26/8/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
11.	REP/21/8/902	26/8/2021	Report	Draft Cabinet Paper - COVID-19: Proposed Community Response Package 2021	Release in part. Names of Ministry staff below tier 4 are out of scope.
12.	REP/21/8/902	26/8/2021	Cabinet paper	COVID-19: Proposed Community Response Package 2021	Withhold in full. 18(d) This paper will be released by MSD soon.
13.	REP/21/8/904	27/8/2021	Aide-memoire	COVID-19: Proposed Community Response Package 2021	Release in part. 9(2)(f)(iv), 9(2)(g)(i) Names of Ministry staff below tier 4 are out of scope.
14.	REP/21/8/906	27/8/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
15.	REP/21/8/910	30/8/2021	Aide-memoire	Housing provider meeting, 31 August	Release in part. 9(2)(a), 9(2)(f)(iv)
16.	REP/21/8/914	30/8/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
17.	REP/21/8/922	31/8/2021	Aide-memoire	Update: one-way quarantine-free travel from Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
18.	REP/21/8/923	31/8/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
19.	REP/21/8/926	31/8/2021	Aide-memoire	Meeting with representatives of the National Beneficiaries Advocacy Consultative Group (NBACG)	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
20.	REP/21/9/929	1/9/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
21.	REP/21/9/930	3/9/2021	Report	MSD's response to demand for support to access food and other related services	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
22.	REP/21/9/936	3/9/2021	Joint Report	Joint Report - COVID-19 Wage Subsidy August 2021 Scheme: Update and costs	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
23.	REP/21/9/937	2/9/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
24.	REP/21/9/939	3/9/2021	Report	Re-prioritising existing funding to meet community needs	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
25.	REP/21/9/942	2/9/2021	Report	Impact of 2021 COVID-19 restrictions on the Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey	Release in part. Names of Ministry staff below tier 4 are out of scope.
26.	REP/21/9/946	3/9/2021	Report	Report to Minister on response to COVID-19	Has been released to you on 22/11/2021.
27.	REP/21/9/949	6/9/2021	Joint Report	Joint report: Income support options for low-income	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.

No.	File number	Date	Document type	Title	Decision and OIA Section(s)
				households, following Alert Level increases	
28.	REP/21/9/950	6/9/2021	Report	Report to Minister on response to COVID-19	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
29.	REP/21/9/953	7/9/2021	Report	Draft paper - Government's response to increased ongoing demand for access to food and other essential wellbeing items	Withhold in full. 18(d) Will be released by the Ministry to the public soon.
30.	REP/21/9/953	9/9/2021	Minute of Decision	COVID-19 - Government's Response to Increased Ongoing Demand for Access to Food and Other Essential Wellbeing Items	Withhold in full. 18(d) Will be released by the Ministry to the public soon.
31.	REP/21/9/953	9/9/2021	Cabinet paper	COVID-19 - Government's Response to Increased Ongoing Demand for Access to Food and Other Essential Wellbeing Items	Withhold in full. 18(d) Will be released by the Ministry to the public soon.
32.	REP/21/9/956	7/9/2021	Report	Report to Minister on response to COVID-19	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
33.	REP/21/9/959	8/9/2021	Report	Report to Minister on COVID-19 protocols	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
34.	REP/21/9/961	8/9/2021	Aide-memoire	Government's response to increased ongoing demand for access to food and other essential wellbeing items	Withhold in full, s18(d). This document will be available in the January 2022 release on this website soon: <a href="https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/responses-to-official-information-act-requests.html">https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/responses-to-official-information-act-requests.html</a>
35.	REP/21/9/965	9/9/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
36.	REP/21/9/970	13/9/2021	Aide-memoire	Housing provider meeting, Tuesday 14 September	Has been released to you on 12/11/2021.
37.	REP/21/9/971	10/9/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
38.	REP/21/9/978	13/9/2021	Report	COVID-19 Update and Responses to Date	Has been released to you on 16/11/2021.
39.	REP/21/9/1024	23/9/2021	Report	Further funding needed to meet demand for food access through Alert Level 3 in Auckland	Release in part. Names of Ministry staff below tier 4 are out of scope.

The names of some individuals are withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Some information is withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act as it is under active consideration. The release of this information is likely to prejudice the ability of government to consider advice and the wider public interest of effective government would not be served.

Some information is withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act to protect the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions. The greater public interest is in the ability of individuals to express opinions in the course of their duty.

Note, the third paragraph on page two of REP/21/8/910 contains operational reporting. These figures are subject to change.

The principles and purposes of the Act under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Magnus O'Neill  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**



# Report

**Date:** 26 August 2021

**Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

**To:** Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment  
Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for Education

**Cc:** Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Minister for Youth

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## Draft Cabinet paper - COVID-19: Proposed Community Response Package 2021

### Purpose of the report

- 1 To seek your agreement to lodge the attached paper on 27 August 201 for Cabinet on that same day.

### Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **agree** to lodge the attached Cabinet paper on 27 August 2021.

#### Agree/Disagree

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister for Education

#### Agree/Disagree

Hon Carmel Sepuloni  
Minister for Social  
Development and  
Employment

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Marama Edwards  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Māori Communities and Partnerships

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Date

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Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister for Education

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Date

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Hon Carmel Sepuloni  
Minister for Social Development and Employment

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Date

## **Cabinet's agreement is sought to allocate additional funding to meet high community needs since the start of Alert Level four restrictions**

- 2 You are jointly taking a paper to Cabinet that seeks agreement to re-prioritise funding to respond to increased demand for support due to the COVID-19 Alert level 4 lockdown restrictions. Support is also needed for Alert level 3 restrictions.
- 3 Areas of highest demand in the community include access to food, access to essential items and services, and wraparound whānau support. There are also needs that relate to family and sexual violence, and support for young people.
- 4 Feedback from Foodbanks is that demand for food is unprecedented. In Auckland, demand is double to triple pre-Alert level 4 and in other parts of the country there has been a 50-100% increase. For example, in West Auckland, VisionWest Community Trust – the largest foodbank and a social services provider – has reported that since Alert Level 4 restrictions were put in place on 17 August 2021 demand has ramped up to the highest levels of demand experienced in 2020, seeing the delivery of over 1,000 food parcels. VisionWest also noted that last year demand progressively increased the longer lockdown restrictions were in place.
- 5 These immediate needs, particularly for food and essential items, is on top of but complementary with what the National Emergency Management Agency is providing.

## **MSD has already re-prioritised funding to meet immediate needs**

- 6 Community demand increased soon after Alert Level 4 started on 17 August 2021. To respond to the last week of increased demand, the Ministry of Social Development accessed \$2.8m from ring-fenced Community Services contingency funding.
- 7 This initial injection of funding is now largely exhausted. Community providers have reported that they are not able to meet the ongoing demand for this support during Alert Level 4 and 3, without additional funding being provided immediately.

## **We are seeking to re-prioritise funding to meet building demand**

- 8 We propose seeking Cabinet's agreement to reprioritise \$7.2m to cover immediate needs over the next two weeks. This package is fiscally neutral and targets:
  - access to food; and
  - access to essential items and services through Community Grant funding.
- 9 This would cover needs over the next two weeks, but we expect similar levels of need to exist while New Zealand remains at Alert levels 4 and 3.
- 10 Additional community grant funding will be targeted to Māori communities through existing providers and Iwi/Māori networks. These grants will be flexible to respond to demand arising in regions outside Auckland and Wellington, including rural areas.
- 11 Separately but complementary, te Minita mō Whānau Ora is considering whether any additional funding is required for Whānau Ora commissioning agencies.

## **Next steps**

- 12 Subject to your agreement, the office of the Minister for the Social Development and Employment will lodge the attached paper on 27 August for Cabinet that day.

## **Appendices**

- 13 Appendix 1: Final Cabinet paper

REP/21/8/902

Author: Out of scope, Policy Analyst, Social Development, Child and Youth

Responsible manager: Marissa Whight, Policy Manager, Social Development, Child and Youth

Draft Cabinet paper - COVID-19: Proposed Community Response Package 2021

# Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

## Cabinet paper

**Date:** 27 August 2021 **Security Level:** Cabinet Sensitive

**For:** Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and  
Employment

**File Reference:** REP/21/08/904

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## COVID-19: Proposed Community Response Package 2021

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**Cabinet  
Committee**

Cabinet

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**Date of meeting**

27 August 2021

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**Minister**

Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and  
Employment

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**Proposal**

You and the Minister of Education are seeking Cabinet's  
agreement to reprioritise funds from:

- Vote Education's Outcomes for Target Student Groups  
MCA; and
- Vote Social Development.

This funding will meet increased community need for food  
access and other essential services over the next two weeks in  
response to the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant.

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**Background**

The impacts of the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant in  
New Zealand and resultant immediate Alert Level 4 measures,  
have led to an increase in demand for essential services.

There are two areas where there is immediate demand:

- access to food; and
- access to essential items and services through  
community grant funding.

Feedback from providers and communities indicate pressures  
are building rapidly to unprecedented levels. Underlying  
vulnerabilities are expected to continue to compound should  
New Zealand remain in Alert level 3 or 4 restrictions.

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**Key issues****Demand for support with access to food and essential items is increasing rapidly due to restrictions**

Support for access to food and other essential needs services was generally meeting needs prior to the current lockdown however demand has rapidly increased since Alert Level 4. Anecdotal feedback from the sector indicates demand for food support has more than doubled across the country. Demand has tripled in Auckland, particularly with Pacific providers.

Essential items outside of food are also being raised as a concern.

While there is need nationwide, demand for food access and other community services is concentrated in Auckland, especially in the Pacific community.

**MSD has already re-prioritised funding to meet immediate needs**

To respond to the last week of increased demand, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) accessed \$2.8m from ring-fenced Community Services contingency funding.

This initial injection of funding is now largely exhausted. Community providers have reported that they are not able to meet the ongoing demand for this support during Alert Level 4 and 3, without additional funding being provided immediately.

**You are seeking to re-prioritise funding to meet building demand while we remain in Alert Level 3 and 4**

You and the Minister of Education are seeking Cabinet's agreement to reprioritise \$7.2m to cover immediate needs over the next two weeks. This package is fiscally neutral and targets:

- access to food; and
- access to essential items and services through Community Grant funding.

*Access to food*

Additional funding of \$4.200 million is sought for food networks to ensure distribution and supply. Funding will be prioritised towards areas of highest need, with overall funding intended to be distributed in line with the population across regions.

*Community grants for essential items and services*

Additional funding of \$3.000 million is sought primarily to support providers in areas of highest need; with support prioritised through the MSD's Community Connection Service. Grants can be targeted to areas outside Auckland as needed, as well as allocated to Iwi/Maori providers and networks.

MSD has also signalled that funding may be required shortly for a family and sexual violence response and enabling youth friendly COVID-19 messaging. MYD is engaging with DPMC about existing funding options for the youth messaging.

This proposal supports the Government's objective to keep New Zealanders safe from COVID-19.

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### *Reprioritisation from Vote Education*

Due to the nationwide lockdown, the Ministry of Education has paused the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme and is expecting operating underspends to accrue at a rate of approximately \$400,000 per school day.

The Ministry of Education seek to transfer the underspend accrued over the past eight school days to Vote Social Development to support the immediate increased need for essentials, including food, in the community.

*This proposed package is intended to compliment other agencies' services*

The focus of this package is providing cover during Alert Levels 3 and 4, which will complement the role of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Whānau Ora providers also work with whānau that are currently not or only partially supported by mainstream community-based providers. Te Minita mō te Whānau Ora and Te Puni Kōkiri are considering how Whānau Ora Commissioning will respond. This will be progressed separately.

*Further funding may be required after two weeks*

Based on the contagious nature of the Delta variant, the time required by other countries to eliminate it and that some psycho-social issues (such as mental health of children) are likely to manifest after lockdown, as happened during 2020.

MSD will monitor demand and continued need, as well as the use of reprioritised appropriation over the next two-week period, and will report back to relevant Ministers as additional need for funding arises.

*Consultation with other agencies*

Most feedback was from Treasury and NEMA (see [Appendix 1](#)).

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### **Talking points**

- We are hearing feedback from our providers and community that there is increasing need for further support with access to food and other essential items.
  - This was almost immediately after Alert Level four restrictions were put in place on 17 August 2021.
  - Demand for these services has increased rapidly for some of our providers, particularly in Auckland, but communities in other areas are also being affected.
  - Feedback from Foodbanks is that demand for food is unprecedented. For example, VisionWest Community Trust – the largest foodbank and a social services provider – has reported that since Alert Level 4 restrictions demand has ramped up to the highest levels of demand experienced in 2020.
  - Pacific communities in Auckland are in particular need. Many are self-isolating and adhering the Alert Level 4
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restrictions. They are unable to support their aiga and communities in the ways they usually would.

- MSD has already re-prioritised and activated funding to meet immediate needs in the community.
- Providers are not going to be able to meet ongoing demand for this support during Alert Level 4 and 3, without additional funding being provided immediately.
- MSD is also supporting providers and these communities to access income support in the first instance. However, some cannot access this support. It is important to offer an alternative way to provide support.
- I, with the support of the Minister of Education, propose reprioritising \$3.2m from Vote Education and \$4.0 from Vote Social Development, a total of \$7.2m, to fund a targeted response package to support the essential needs of New Zealanders for an initial period of two weeks.
- This package is fiscally neutral and includes two elements that will achieve improved access to food and improved access to essential items and services.
- The package will be delivered using MSD's existing provider networks and infrastructure, which we invested in through Budget 2020, and can be stood-up immediately.
- Where it makes sense, officials are working to ensure services are complementary, reduce pressures on existing providers and fill service gaps.
- I would like to acknowledge that Whānau Ora commissioning and the National Emergency Management Agency also provide services in this space however this proposed package will ensure that service gaps are filled during Alert Level 3 and 4.
- If New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4 beyond the initial two-week period it is likely that further funding will be required and will need to be drawn down from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.
- MSD will monitor demand, and will report back to relevant Ministers as additional need for funding arises.

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Author: Out of scope, Policy Analyst, Social development, Child and Youth Policy

Responsible manager: Marissa Whight, Policy Manager, Social Development, Child and Youth Policy

## Appendix 1 – Key feedback from agencies

### Feedback from the Treasury

We understand that Treasury have provided the points below to their office:

- There may be lack of clarity with inter-agency responses at higher Alert Levels eg, NEMA's role vs other agencies role. MSD is working with other agencies to ensure a coordinated approach.
  - TALKING POINT: We have reinstated the Caring for Communities CE's group which includes the NEMA CE to resolve any issues
- Indicated agencies should not assume that COVID-19 related initiatives would be funded from the CRRF, and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) should look first to their baseline to fund these initiatives
  - TALKING POINT: This is why we have prepared a fiscally neutral package for consideration today.
- s9(2)(g)(i) 
  - TALKING POINT: MYD Will be working with DPMC communications team on this.
- If MSD could look to fund the Whānau Ora component of the paper that was part of the original joint funding request (note that the Whanau Ora funding request is now being considered separately).
  - TALKING POINT: MSD have said that they do not have any further funding available in appropriations to meet these costs.

### Feedback from NEMA

These changes to the Cabinet paper have been made based on NEMA feedback.

- Remove the sentence at para 19: 'This is exacerbated by lack of control over the supply chain to purchase food, in 2020 they were able to approach the NEMA controller with food supply needs.'
- Add the following two paragraphs at para 32-33 to replace the old para 30-31:
  - 32 NEMA anticipate that because a number of agencies now have specific funding for COVID-19 related support, that will absorb some of the costs previously met by Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups. Accordingly, under COVID-19 Welfare Arrangements CDEM Groups' role is to provide support to people who have no other means of support available through other channels. For example to people who have no family or community support available, are ineligible for MSD assistance, and cannot access food banks.
  - 33 At this stage we anticipate that CDEM groups' welfare response is likely to be focused on supporting people and communities to understand how to access support through existing channels and providing support via referral where no other options are available. CDEM Groups are well placed to coordinate basic welfare support, such as food and household goods, to people and communities should there be an increase in need with referral pathways and planning well entrenched in the sector. With this lockdown there has not been a need to date for CDEM to undertake significant coordination activities. **In respect of iwi payments, iwi can make claims for eligible welfare costs under the Emergency Management appropriation through CDEM Groups – same as per last year.**

# Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

## Meeting

**Date:** 30 August 2021      **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE  
**For:** Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister of Social Development and Employment  
**File Reference:** REP/21/8/910

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### Housing provider meeting, Thursday 31 August

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**Meeting details** 5:00pm – 5:30pm, 31 August, via Zoom

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**Purpose of meeting** You are meeting with community housing providers and the Housing Ministers to discuss their response to the current alert level 4 lockdown. The group is expected to include Housing First and Transitional Housing providers.

A briefing has also been drafted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which includes the invitation list for this meeting.

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**Background for noting** This briefing outlines key information about the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) response to this COVID resurgence, information about the accommodation supports available and an update on actions points from the last meeting.

As mentioned in our briefing for last week's meeting with community housing providers [REP/21/8/896 refers], community and transitional housing providers are drawing on the experiences of previous lockdowns and, to date are managing pressures effectively. However, there is concern around the sector's resilience and capacity should the lock-down be extended further.

At the previous meeting providers raised a few issues that MSD was able to support a resolution for. A summary of the matters raised are outlined below. All matters raised were followed up.

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**Summary of matter raised at previous meeting** s9(2)(a) from Kāhui Tū Kaha raised the issue of receiving referrals 24/7. MSD and HUD spoke with s9(2)(a) and worked through a solution. HUD will fund a variation of contract to cover overnight referrals. MSD will process Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EHSNG) applications in the morning, additional supply has been identified.

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s9(2)(a) from Kahungunu Whanau Services raised the issue of increased family violence and the need to move into a prevention space. MSD meet with s9(2) at a regional level, advising if any clients are at risk of family violence and one party needs to leave that EHSNG will be extended as a prevention measure, this has been messaged to staff nationally.

Safety in EH was mentioned as part of a wider discussion regarding clients not self-isolating and breaching bubbles, these clients are the most difficult to engage. MSD continues to check in with our clients and suppliers. At a regional level we are working closely with Police and other agencies where there are pockets of risk.

Demand for EHSNG has increased by 318 in the last 7 days. A total of 498 in the last 14 days. There are a total of 4,295 households in EH as at 27 August.

MSD Regional Commissioner contact details have been circulated through Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) and Te Matapihi (Maori Housing Network). Our Youth Services team is actively engaging with stakeholders and we are providing accommodation support and access to services through our call centres and at a regional level.

MSD call centre wait times and queues were down at around 10 second last week. EH queues are actively managed by regions and monitored daily.

Officials are engaging with CHA and Te Matapihi weekly to identify pinch points in the housing response to the lock-down. Feedback to date has highlighted the following issues:

- issues around the provision and coordination of support for clients with mental health needs,
- rangatahi/youth homelessness and the inappropriateness of emergency housing in motels for that cohort.
- an increase in family violence is of particular concern.

HUD contacted the National Collective of Women's Refuges to enquire about potential additional accommodation capacity. They reported that as the higher Alert Levels continue there may be a need but not at this time. Agencies will continue to monitor this and respond at a place by place level.

MSD are working with HUD and other agencies to respond to these pressures within existing resources.

**The response to the current Alert Level 4 is not identical to the previous national lock-down.** For example, HUD has not been resourced to deliver additional supply at volume, although they have managed to secure a small number of rooms in Whangarei, Wellington, Hawke's Bay and Auckland.

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s9(2)(g)(i)

In the absence of alternatives, the EHSNG is being used as the primary response to acute homelessness rather than a last resort and financial assistance for eligible New Zealander's with accommodation requirements who are stranded due to current travel restrictions.

Nationally, we are not experiencing a shortage of motel units. However, in smaller and more isolated locations, or those with strong latent demand for tourism or seasonal worker accommodation, such as the East Coast, Northland and Eastern Bay of Plenty there is a shortage of options. We have highlighted these concerns to HUD for their consideration.

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**Accommodation support**

**The AoG Accommodation Sub-group has been set up, and agencies are responding to needs as they arise.** HUD and MSD will be sending some joint communications out to providers (HUD lead). This will include guidance on exiting people from accommodation (including transitional housing) in Alert Level 4. We ask providers to try not to exit people where possible.

MSD and HUD, with other agencies, have published updated guidance for housing providers, suppliers and support services on how to operate safely and in compliance with Public Health regulations at alert level four.<sup>1</sup>

MSD are also working with HUD on responding quickly to issues that arise in the regions regarding supply constraints and additional support services for those with the most complex needs. We want to do all we can to sustain people in tenancies, and those in emergency and transitional housing.

The Ministry of Health are working with MBIE and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to try and find some suitable accommodation in areas for people needing to self-isolate away from family who may be in multi-generational households and cannot stay at home.

**With service centres closed, MSD is managing demand for emergency housing via phone contact with clients.** While we are experiencing some increase in demand, phones queues are under control and people are receiving timely emergency housing support. We do want to acknowledge the work of the support

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/index.html> (links through to HUD website)

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service sector and their role in supporting homelessness across emergency and transitional housing.

**MSD continues to provide housing support through our financial products** including Housing Support Products and EHSNG. We are encouraging staff to help with as much as we can.

If someone contacts MSD and isn't eligible for our housing support, urgent queries will be redirected to the local Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) Group. If the person is not eligible for financial support from us at all, we will ask them to contact MBIE's temporary accommodation service.

**MSD continues to work with Police for those under a Police Safety Order.** MSD have an agreement with a small number of motels nationally in partnership with Police to house users of violence where the situation does not require the person to be arrested. MSD only does this during COVID-19 Alert Level 4 restrictions. To date MSD has supported the placement of approximately 90 people with the majority being in Auckland.

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**Support for rangatahi**

We have also seen a significant surge in support being sought by young people in relation to their physical mental and general wellbeing.

Providers are reporting that there are pockets of young people across the country struggling and there are a range of issues including; needing support to leave unsafe living environments, being isolated and having no way to engage support networks, and misinformation around vaccine risk leading to a lack of interest in being vaccinated and increased anxiety in young people.

Temporary funding has been allocated to Youthline to allow them to cope with the significant increase in demand they are experiencing for support from young people.

MSD's Youth Service is the first point of contact for rangatahi who need extra support through this time. Young people are not excluded from eligibility of EHSNGs, if, for example a young person is not yet in the Youth Service.

While putting young people in motels is not ideal, MSD staff will use their relationships across agencies and suppliers to find the best option for young people who need to access emergency housing services.

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**Support to access food**

As outlined in our briefing for last week's meeting, our partners in the community are reporting that demand for support to access essential items, including food continues to increase. This demand continues to be concentrated in the Auckland region with large groups, including church and school communities, being identified

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as contacts and having to self-isolate. This creates issues with whole support networks not being able to support each other.

To support this, last week, MSD released immediate funding to a group of priority providers in the Auckland and Wellington regions. This funding was designed to provide further resilience in the system to help people access food and other essential items, particularly those who may not be able to access food themselves, through providers like the Student Volunteer Army.

On 28 August you announced a \$7 million boost in funding to support the provision of food parcels and wellbeing packs, through providers delivering the Community Connection Service.

We anticipate demand will continue to rise along with cases and close contacts. We will continue to monitor this in order to assess who best to distribute funding announced on 28 August.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

. The Ministry continues to monitor volumes of hardship applications and wait times in our contact centre to ensure people can access food in a timely manner.

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**Process changes through lockdown**

**As outlined in our briefing for the previous meeting, some temporary processes have been introduced to make it easier for clients to work with MSD during lockdown.**

Providers and advocates of clients may ask about some of the things MSD is doing to help ease the administrative and logistic challenges clients can face in getting what they need while in lockdown. Temporary changes include:

- options to purchase essential food items for clients who don't have a payment card or can't get to the supermarket themselves.
- changes to the processing standards to accept more information from clients remotely.
- clients can request to appoint an agent or add a redirection of benefit over the phone or electronically (by email).

Some changes are also in place for Benefit and Allowance reviews and expiries. Any Annual Income Related Rent reviews due in the next 2 weeks have been deferred for 4 weeks, this will happen automatically.

**The Ministry has extended contact centre hours on weekends** for the General Enquiries Phone Line (0800 559 009). This is also in response to the increase in requests for food grants. The hours this number is open for this week are:

- Monday to Friday: 7:00am – 6:00pm



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- Saturday: 8:00am – 5:00pm

- Sunday: 9:00am – 1:00pm.

The StudyLink (0800 88 99 00) and Seniors line (0800 552 002) will be operating regular hours, Monday to Friday – 7:00am – 6:00pm

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Responsible manager: Karen Hocking, General Manager Housing

RELEASED UNDER THE  
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT



# Report

**Date:** 02 September 2021

**Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

**To:** Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Minister for Youth

## Impact of 2021 COVID-19 restrictions on the Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey

### Purpose of the report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to advise you of the impact of the current COVID-19 restrictions on the Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (the survey) currently underway and propose options for progressing the survey.

### Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **note** the Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey is currently underway, and is paused due to Level 3 and 4 COVID-19 restrictions, as the survey is delivered face-to-face
- 2 **note** that the current COVID-19 restrictions have seen a loss of a minimum of three weeks survey time
- 3 **note** that it is now unlikely that we will meet the target for survey completions due to the loss of survey time
- 4 **note** Officials have proposed options for progressing the survey, which take into account various considerations:
  - veracity of the survey data (including the impact on detailed sub-group analysis)
  - willingness of schools to participate, due to the competing demands of teaching time caused by the impacts of COVID-19 health restrictions
  - the timing of publicly available reporting data commitments
- 5 **Agree** that either:

**Option 1:** Stop data collection now, and utilise the data set of 7000 young people

**Agree/disagree**

or

**Option 2:** Continue data collection as intended until the end of Term 3

**Agree/disagree**

or

**Option 3:** Continue data collection into Term 4 with schools who have indicated an interest in taking part (recommended)

Agree/disagree

or

**Option 4:** Extend the survey timeframe for completions out to Term 1, early 2022 (not recommended)

Agree/disagree

Melissa Cathro

2/9/21

Melissa Cathro,  
Policy Manager, Child and Youth Policy  
Ministry of Social Development

Date



Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan  
Minister for Youth

06/09/21

Date

## **Data collection for the survey has been paused, due to the Level 3 and 4 COVID-19 restrictions**

- 2 New Zealand entered Level 4 lockdown restrictions on 17 August 2021. From Wednesday 01 September 2021, New Zealand lockdown levels were split across regional boundaries, with New Zealand south of Auckland's boundary moving to Level 3 restrictions. Northland will move to Level 3 from Friday 03 September 2021, and Auckland is to remain in Level 4 restrictions for a minimum of a further two weeks.
- 3 Due to ethics considerations, the survey is delivered face-to-face. It is not possible to deliver the survey in an online format. As such, Malatest International cannot survey while in Level 3, or 4 restrictions.
- 4 At present, two weeks of survey collection time has been lost, for Auckland this is likely to be the case for a minimum of a further two weeks. For the rest of New Zealand, this is likely to be the case for a further week, minimum.
- 5 At this stage, Malatest International is close to having surveyed 7,000 young people of its 11,000-14,000 target. Due to pressures caused by previous COVID-19 Alert Level restrictions, particularly in Auckland and Wellington, Malatest International were due to collect a large bulk of school surveys in Term 3 of the school year, with around 30 schools booked for completions, and active recruitment underway for a further 15-18 schools to reach the target.

## **There are implications for the survey if we do not reach the target number of completions**

- 6 Pausing data collection for at least three weeks poses a risk that we will not meet the target for survey completions. New Zealand schools make up the majority of survey responses, by design, when compared to the community sample taken from youth organisations such as One Stop Shops. This is because schools provide a more suitable format for surveying due to the size of the youth cohort in any given school location, and the organisational structure in the school environment.
- 7 Due to stressors caused by the COVID-19 Alert Level restrictions and the loss of teaching time for schools, it is likely that some schools booked or being recruited may withdraw their agreement to be surveyed. Also, the school exam period begins in Term 4, and so it is less likely that schools will be willing to participate in the survey due to pressures on teaching time.
- 8 The target for survey completions of 11,000-14,000 was set following advice from Statistics New Zealand (StatsNZ) when the survey was being developed, who advised that a sample size of 11,000-14,000 would provide a robust sample for large scale data analysis and detailed sub-group analysis. This sample size would also be nationally representative. This ensures its suitability for multiple uses in policy and programme development. In addition, as the survey is to be repeated three-yearly, the data set is suitable for monitoring long term data trends.
- 9 The survey is intended to inform the measurement of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. The survey is also likely to inform the measurement of a number of other Government strategies and programmes, such as the Disability Strategy. Questions in the survey were designed to produce usable data where Government agencies highlighted gaps in their data sources on youth, during the survey design phase. More broadly, it is expected that the public will have interest in the survey findings, and a small number of local Councils have expressed interest in the results.
- 10 Malatest International has currently collected close to 7,000 survey responses. Malatest International has advised that this meets the threshold of a robust sample, suitable for high-level analysis and is nationally representative. This view has been

reinforced by the Technical Advisory Group<sup>1</sup>. By comparison, the Youth2000 survey series surveyed 8,500 young people in 2012, and 7891 young people in 2019. With close to 7,000 survey completions, this brings the survey in line with other similar nationally representative data sets. However, a data set of this size does have implications for detailed sub-group analysis. Malatest International and the Technical Advisory Group have advised that this smaller data set when cut by sub-groups, such as sexual orientation or smaller ethnic groups, is not likely to be as suitable for detailed analysis, due to an increased margin of error around the data.

## **We have assessed options for progressing the survey**

- 11 Following consultation with Malatest International, the Technical Advisory Group and agency stakeholders, we have assessed options against the following considerations:
- the veracity of the data set
  - the willingness of schools to participate given the impacts of COVID-19, and
  - the timing of the survey completion, and the impact on publicly available reporting.

### *Option 1: Stop data collection now, and utilise the data set of 7000 young people*

- 12 The current data set is robust, and suitable for national level analysis, and use as a nationally representative sample. It can be used for policy and programme development for government stakeholders and to measure the impact of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. However, the current sample size will likely have a margin of error that is not ideal for analysing smaller sub-groups, reducing the Government's overall visibility for the wellbeing of these cohorts. This will also likely impact the survey's use for Government strategies such as the Disability Strategy, and other policy developments intended for minority population cohorts.
- 13 The Ministry of Education has indicated that schools are under pressure due to reduced teaching time as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Demands on teaching time are also likely to increase as schools move into Term 4, and the exam period begins. These pressures were already in place in the 2021 school year due to the impact of previous COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and have impacted the willingness of schools to participate in the survey. As such, even if the current COVID-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted imminently, we will see a further reduction in the willingness of schools to participate in the survey. As schools participate in the survey on an opt-in basis, it is likely that some schools will withdraw agreement to complete the survey due to the impact of the current COVID-19 restrictions. This view has been reinforced by the Ministry of Education.
- 14 Currently, Malatest International are in communication with schools, and are continuing their recruitment effort. However, they have seen a significant reduction in replies to their enquires, as they expected. The Ministry of Education have also advised that continuing to recruit schools following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions is likely to cause frustration for schools as they balance competing demands. The option to stop data collection reduces the demand on teaching time and the pressure schools to participate. Maintaining a positive relationship with schools is advisable, as schools will continue to be required in future iterations of the survey.

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<sup>1</sup> The Technical Advisory Group is a group of technical experts from stakeholder agencies. It was established as part of the ethics requirement for the survey, and is used to discuss the technical aspects data collection and reporting. The Technical Advisory group has representation from the Ministry of Social Development, StatsNZ, the Ministry of Health, Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, the Ministry of Education, The Treasury, and Malatest International.

- 15 The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is a key consideration for the survey, as it will provide the data to inform over half of its indicators. The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy reports on its progress yearly in April, through the publishing of its Annual Report. The second Annual Report is due in April 2022 and relies on data from the survey to be able to demonstrate measurable impact. The option to stop data collection now would ensure that the Strategy's Annual Report April 2022 timeframe is met.

*Option 2: Continue to survey as intended until the end of Term 3*

- 16 Continuing to survey until the end of Term 3 will likely add to the sample size and reduce the margin of error. There is value-add to the veracity of the data with this approach.
- 17 This option will also ensure we meet time commitments for publicly reporting the data, and the April 2022 timeframe of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy's Annual Report. However, as indicated, the Ministry of Education have expressed concern about the current pressures schools are facing. Continuing to recruit, book, and survey schools is likely to increase this pressure. There is also no guarantee that approach will be successful, given the reduction of communications from schools to Malatest International at this time.

*Option 3: Continue data collection into Term 4 with schools who have indicated an interest in taking part (recommended)*

- 18 This option proposes to extend out the surveying period into Term 4, and to focus recruitment efforts on those schools currently booked, or that have expressed an interest in participating in the survey.
- 19 An extension to the survey period will allow more time and opportunity for survey completions. This will increase the data set and reduce the likelihood of the margin of error. There is no guarantee that this approach will ensure enough responses are collected to significantly reduce the margin of error, however a larger data set increases that possibility.
- 20 Pushing into Term 4 reduces the likelihood of senior school students participating in the survey, due to moving into the NCEA exam period. It is likely therefore that the bulk of survey completions proposed in this option will be completed by junior school students (young people aged 12-14). There is value to this approach as we would continue to hear from an under-surveyed cohort of young people, while also adding to the sample size.
- 21 However, as noted in option 2, the Ministry of Education have expressed concern about the current pressures schools are facing with the reduction of teaching time, due to COVID-19 restrictions, particularly going into the exam period. To mitigate this concern, it is proposed that this option focus on only those schools who have booked in with Malatest International to complete the survey, or those to have expressed interest to book. This reduces pressure on schools not yet recruited, who have not accounted for the loss of class time to complete the survey. We think it is important to meet the commitment to schools who have booked that they will still have the opportunity to receive a personalised high-level report on the wellbeing of young people at their schools, as offered as part of participating in the survey.
- 22 This approach does extend the time initially scheduled to complete the survey, however, as we are expecting that a large number of schools will not be able to participate, thus narrowing Malatest's efforts in Term 4, the risk that we are unable to meet reporting timeframes is low.

*Option 4: Extend the survey timeframe for completions out to Term 1, early 2022 (not recommended)*

- 23 This option proposes to extend the survey timeframe out to school Term 1, early 2022. This extension to the survey period is likely to allow more time, more opportunities for survey completions, it increases the possibility of meeting the target for survey completion and reduces the margin of error to enable analysis on smaller sub-groups.
- 24 However, this approach does carry the possibility of having an impact on the veracity of the data. Continuing to add to the data set in Term 1 of 2022 brings the survey into a whole new cohort of youth. Malatest International and the Technical Advisory group has indicated that this could bring bias to the survey sample, and therefore this approach is not recommended.
- 25 Extending the survey timeframes into Term 1 of 2022 does reduce the immediate pressure on schools to participate in the survey, as they face competing demands for class time at the end of the school year and recovery from COVID-19 restrictions, should they soon lift. However, as shown by the survey rollout in 2021, schools do not have much capacity in Term 1 as it is often used to plan the agenda for the larger school year. This approach is not likely to provide much more flexibility.
- 26 In addition, Malatest International have advised that extending timeframes for the survey into Term 1 of 2022 also extends the publicly available reporting for the survey data. This option is likely not to meet the April 2022 timeframe for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Annual Report. It is MSD's view that this option is likely to increase reputational risk.
- 27 The below diagram indicates the balance of all options proposed, when factoring in various considerations. All options are subject to change, dependant on moving COVID-19 alert level restrictions:

Criteria/Considerations	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3 (recommended)	Option 4 (not recommended)
Data veracity (detailed sub-group analysis)	●	●	●	●
Pressure on schools to participate	●	●	●	●
Timeframe commitments	●	●	●	●

### Next Steps

- 28 We recommend you provide an indication of your preferred direction for the survey at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 29 You may wish to discuss the options raised in this report with your colleagues in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Ministerial Group at a future meeting.
- 30 Officials are available to discuss the options in this report with you as required.

REP/21/09/942

File ref: A13569316

Author: Out of scope, Policy Analyst, Child and Youth Policy

Responsible manager: Melissa Cathro, Manager, Child and Youth Policy



# Report

**Date:** 23 September 2021 **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

**To:** Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance  
Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment

**Cc:** Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

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## **Further funding needed to meet demand for food access through Alert Level 3 in Auckland**

### **Purpose of the report**

- 1 This report seeks your joint agreement to draw down \$3.1 million from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) to meet sustained demand for access to food while Auckland remains at Alert Level 3. This funding will cover the two-week period from 25 September 2021.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 The emergence of the Delta Variant of COVID-19 in the community has resulted in a surge in demand for support to access food, particularly in Auckland.
- 3 The Ministry of Social Development (MSD), among other agencies, responded swiftly to meet increased demand for food and essential items. Since 17 August, the Ministry has allocated a total of \$21.5 million to food banks, community providers and iwi to enable an appropriately targeted response for access to those that need it most. Funding so far has consisted of \$10.2 million transferred from Vote Education, \$6.8 million from MSD baseline and \$4.5 million from the CRRF.
- 4 As anticipated, the most recent allocation of funding of \$11.5 million [CMG-21-MIN-0024 refers] will be exhausted by 24 September 2021.
- 5 Auckland's shift to Alert Level 3 on 22 September 2021 has seen sustained demand for food as most people remain at home, earning capacity is reduced and most children are not at school.
- 6 Additional funding is required to continue to meet sustained demand for access to food while Auckland remains in Alert Level 3. So as not to pre-empt public health decisions and in line with Cabinet's decision, we are only seeking funding of \$3.1 million for two-weeks from 25 September 2021. We note that further funding will be needed if Auckland remains in Alert Level 3 beyond this time.
- 7 MSD cannot further reprioritise from within its baseline to meet ongoing demand while Auckland remains at Alert Level 3. The Ministry of Education cannot reprioritise and transfer funding from Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme to meet this demand.



- 8 Consistent with the COVID-19 Ministers Group decision, we propose that \$3.1 million in funding is drawn down from CRRF for this purpose [CMG-21-MIN-0024 refers].
- 9 The COVID-19 Ministers Group also anticipated needing additional funding to sustain access to essential wellbeing items. However, MSD proposes meeting this need with another option through Community Connectors and changes to the Income support system.
- 10 Depending on the timing of this Cabinet decision, there may be a funding shortfall for around one week from 25 September 2021 that will impact on the provision of essential wellbeing items through Community Connector Service providers.

## Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **Note** funding allocated from the Ministry of Social Development to food banks and community-based food providers in response to heightened levels of demand for food support will be exhausted by 24 September 2021.
- 2 **Note** further reprioritisation of appropriation underspend accrued from the suspension of the Ministry of Education's Ka Ako, Ka Ora | Healthy School Lunches during Alert Level 4 and 3 restrictions is not available.
- 3 **Note** on 9 September 2021, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group with power to act [CAB-21-MIN-0353, refers] delegated authority to you to jointly agree additional funding for food access and other essential wellbeing items, of up to a maximum of \$3.1 million should Auckland remain in Alert Level 3 or above [CMG-21-MIN-0024, refers], to be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, in accordance with CAB-21-MIN-0349.
- 4 **Agree** to draw down \$3.1 million from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to meet the sustained increased community demand for food access for two weeks from 25 September 2021 in the Auckland region.

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Finance*

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Social Development and  
Employment*

- 5 **Note** that, while additional funding of \$3.1 million is sought for Auckland only for an initial period of two weeks, should Auckland remain in Alert Level 3 or above beyond 8 October 2021 Cabinet agreement will need to be sought for further funding.
- 6 **Approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in paragraph 4 above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
<b>Vote Social Development Minister for Social Development and Employment</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26 &amp; outyears</b>
<b>Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure:</b>					
Community Support Services MCA					
<b>Non-Departmental Other Expenses:</b>					
Community Response to Adverse or Emergency Events	3.100	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>3.100</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Finance*

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Social Development and  
Employment*

- 7 **Agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2021/22 in recommendation 6, be included in the 2021/22 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply.

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Finance*

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Social Development and  
Employment*

- 8 **Agree** that the expenses incurred recommendation 6 be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund established as part of Budget 2020.

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Finance*

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Social Development and  
Employment*

- 9 **Note** MSD is preparing advice for additional funding for Community Connectors Providers in Auckland, to meet sustained demand for support with essential wellbeing items however there will be a gap in funding of around one-week from 25 September 2021.

10 **Agree** to discretionary use of the funding in recommendation 6 to provide urgent payments to Auckland NGO's with Community Connectors to provide essential wellbeing items from 25 September 2021, should they require additional funding while an option for short-term funding option is progressed.

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Finance*

**Agree / Disagree**

*Minister of Social Development and  
Employment*

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Marama Edwards  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Māori, Communities and Partnership

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Date

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Hon Grant Robertson  
Minister of Finance

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Date

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Hon Carmel Sepuloni  
Minister for Social Development and  
Employment

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Date

## **Alert Level restrictions to contain the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 has led to increased demand for support to access food**

- 11 Alert Level restrictions to contain the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 in the community has resulted in ongoing increased demand for support to access food, particularly in Auckland as the region remains in higher Alert Levels.
- 12 New Zealanders have had to self-isolate due to the increased transmissibility and infection rate of the Delta variant. At the peak there were over 38,000 people identified as close contacts, most located in Auckland. This number has reduced as self-isolation periods have lapsed. As at 22 September there are 1,282 contacts being actively managed.
- 13 In addition to self-isolation measures, prolonged time at Alert Level 4 and then Alert Level 3 will have likely compounded issues such as increased utility costs for families unable to work or go to school during, and reduced income for some families. This has led to pressure points in the welfare response that are being more acutely felt with the current outbreak, particularly in Auckland.
- 14 Additionally, families who are typically reliant on Healthy School Lunches programme for support are now having to absorb this cost and have limited options for accessing food and essential wellbeing items.

## **Funding allocated from MSD has enabled a significant welfare response through food banks and food networks**

- 15 As a part of the wider government response to the emerging needs of New Zealanders during this outbreak, MSD's response to increased welfare needs has focussed on access to food and other essential items through food networks, providers such as Community Connection Services and iwi.
- 16 Since 17 August 2021, MSD allocated an additional \$21.5 million to support access to food and other essential items through existing infrastructure and networks.
- 17 Of the total \$21.5 million allocated, \$9.6 million has been allocated specifically to meet the increased demand for access to food. This funding increased capacity of food banks, food networks and other food related providers, particularly in Auckland. Examples of increased demand among Auckland food providers and networks is provided at Appendix Two.
- 18 On 9 September 2021, The COVID-19 Ministers Group agreed to allocate \$11.5 million [CMG-21-MIN-0024 refers] to:
  - 18.1 meet the sustained increased community demand for food access and other essential wellbeing items
  - 18.2 address unmet need over this past week for to food access in rural and remote areas
  - 18.3 provide essential wellbeing packs through providers with Community Connectors, and
  - 18.4 support iwi to address critical unmet need for their whānau.
- 19 Of this \$11.5 million, \$3.1 million was allocated to funding food parcels through providers and foodbanks, including the NZ Food Network and targeted specifically to need in Auckland.
- 20 This will be exhausted by 25 September 2021 (see Appendix One for details).

## **Although Auckland has shifted to Alert Level 3, we anticipate increased levels of demand for food will continue**

- 21 Auckland will be in Alert Level 3 until at least 11:59pm 4 October 2021. We anticipate that the change to Alert Level 3 will not significantly change demand for help with food access.

22 The drivers of demand that have surfaced since 17 August 2021 will continue at Alert Level 3.

*... Alert Level 4 and 3 restrictions impact on earning capacity, and this can amplify pre-existing income and poverty inequities ...*

23 Some workers may be living week to week with reduced hours or no work at all.

24 It is also likely that with only click and collect, takeaway and essential retail services being open there will be continued revenue challenges for employers and they are likely to continue to retain workers on reduced salaries even where the wage subsidy is being utilised.

*and there are increased utility costs for families who are staying at home rather than going to school and work.*

25 Alert Level 3 still requires people to stay at home as much as possible and everyone should work from home if they can. Children and young people should learn from home and people must stay within their household bubble whenever they are not at work or school. At Alert Level 3, travel is restricted and only allowed for permitted movement in your local area.<sup>1</sup>

26 There will continue to be increased costs for households that would not ordinarily be incurred. This includes the cost of power and other heating and food, particularly where children would normally be fed at breakfast clubs and through the school lunch programme.

### **Underspend from the Ministry of Education's Ka Ako, Ka Ora programme cannot be reprioritised**

27 Since 17 August 2021, The Ministry of Education's Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme has had an underspend due to the programme being suspended or operating at limited capacity during Alert Levels 4 and 3 respectively.<sup>2</sup>

28 On 9 September 2021, The COVID-19 Ministers Group agreed to provide delegated authority to you and the Minister for Education to jointly agree any additional fiscally neutral adjustments from Vote Education to Vote Social Development to meet increased community demand for food access and other essential wellbeing items in response to the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant [CMG-21-MIN-0024 refers].

29 Of the underspend accumulated since 17 August 2021, \$10.2 million has been reprioritised and transferred from Vote Education to Vote Social Development to further assist in meeting the surge in demand for access to food and other essential wellbeing items.

30 While it was anticipated that further underspend could be reprioritised for this purpose, the Ministry of Education advises that this will be reprioritised to support re-engaging children and young people back into school following the lockdown.

### **The nature of ongoing demand in the Auckland region meets Cabinet's criteria for additional funding from the CRRF**

31 On 9 September 2021, The COVID-19 Ministers Group agreed to provide you with delegated authority to jointly agree additional funding to meet sustained demand for food access and other essential items should Auckland remain in Alert Level 3 or

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<sup>1</sup> [Alert Level 3 | Unite against COVID-19 \(covid19.govt.nz\)](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/alert-level-3)

<sup>2</sup> At Alert Level 3 the programme is still live for the children of essential workers etc who are going to school; this is often <10% of the roll.

above. You have the authority to approve up to a maximum of \$3.1 million, to be charged against the CRRF [CMG-21-MIN-0024 refers].

- 32 As signalled previously [CMG-21-MIN-0024 refers], the total \$21.5 million of additional funding released by MSD since 17 August 2021 is expected to be fully allocated by 24 September 2021.
- 33 It is anticipated that, with Auckland region remaining at Alert Level 3, and compounding welfare issues due to sustained time at higher alert levels, the surge in demand for food parcels for two weeks from 25 September 2021, will be similar to that experienced while Auckland has been at Alert Level 4.
- 34 We recommend that you agree to draw down \$3.1 million in funding from the CRRF to continue to help address the expected demand for support with food access in Auckland for the next two weeks from 25 September 2021. This funding is being sought for Auckland only, and does not include contingency for supporting other areas should there be unforeseen alert level changes in areas outside Auckland.
- 35 In practical terms, \$3.1 million provides a further 52,362 food parcels to be funded through existing contracts with providers and foodbanks, including the Food Network NZ.
- 36 Additional funding will be allocated based on priority population groups within the Auckland region. MSD anticipates that it will continue to weight support towards the Pacific community and more broadly to Māori and Pacific in higher areas of deprivation.

#### *Maintaining support for sustained demand while being responsive to public health advice*

- 37 It is important not to pre-empt public health response decisions regarding Alert Levels. Therefore, funding is only being sought for the two-week period from 25 September 2021, which may extend past the period that Auckland will remain at Alert Level 3 by four days.
- 38 If Auckland shifts to Alert Level 2 from 5 October 2021, this additional funding period will provide extra support while the impact of restrictions ease. Due to the way that funding is fully allocated to providers and foodbanks, it is unlikely that there will be underspend if Auckland shifts to Alert Level 2 before the period of funding lapses.
- 39 However, if Alert Level 3 restrictions continue beyond this date, this grace period will enable officials to prepare advice to seek further funding. We expect that while Auckland remains at Alert Level 3, demand will continue.

#### **Funding for NGO Community Connectors in Auckland is being considered alongside income support changes**

- 40 Previous funding allocations to MSD as part of the response to the emergence of the Delta Variant of COVID-19 has also included the provision of other essential wellbeing items through NGO's such as those with Community Connectors. A separate option is currently being progressed by MSD for the provision of essential wellbeing items through Community Connectors alongside changes to Income Support settings. This is expected to be considered by Cabinet on 4 October 2021.
- 41 The proposal is anticipated to seek temporary funding to MSD's Community Connection Service to support up to 59,000 low-income families in the Auckland region over a 16-week period through Auckland NGO and community organisations. Funding would be comprised of funding for discretionary in-kind assistance (otherwise known as wellbeing packages) and 61 additional Community Connectors to assist in assessing and servicing families. Funding implications of this option are still being worked through.
- 42 It should be noted that this proposal does not seek additional funding for foodbanks and the New Zealand food distribution network and supports the rationale to draw down on the CRRF contingency in this paper.
- 43 There is a risk that if this proposal is not supported by Cabinet, and there is no funding provided for the Community Connection Service and essential wellbeing

packages, there will be unmet need in the community for essential items. If this is the case, we will need to progress a further paper to Cabinet in the week commencing 27 September 2021.

*We seek agreement to discretionary use of the funding agreed to in this paper for essential wellbeing items through Community Connector providers in Auckland*

- 44 Due to the timing of the income support proposal being considered by Cabinet on 4 October 2021, there will be a funding gap from 25 September 2021 to 4 October 2021 for essential wellbeing items through Community Connection Service providers in Auckland. There is a risk that if funding is not made available for essential wellbeing items, there will be unmet need in the community.
- 45 MSD will maintain contact with Community Connection Service providers to gauge their funding levels. Whilst we would expect they will continue to support the same amount of families, we acknowledge that there may be some temporary limits on the level of assistance they can provide to meet immediate need.
- 46 Therefore, MSD seeks discretion to use the funding agreed to in this paper, to make urgent payments to Community Connection Service providers in Auckland, should they completely exhaust their funding and require an urgent top up. We would seek to reimburse any expenditure from additional funding for Community Connectors, if the proposal is approved.
- 47 This recommendation is in line with The COVID-19 Ministers Group's agreement to delegate authority to you to jointly agree additional funding for food access and other essential wellbeing items [CMG-21-MIN-0024 refers].

**If Auckland remains at Alert Level 3 beyond the initial two-week period, Cabinet approval for further funding will likely be required**

- 48 Based on spending throughout Auckland during Alert Level 4 and anticipated allocation throughout Alert Level 3, It is expected that the funding arrangement sought in this paper will be exhausted by 8 October 2021.
- 49 Given this funding arrangement will utilise the entire balance of funding that you have delegated authority to draw down from the CRRF, Cabinet agreement will need to be sought if further funding is required.
- 50 We will provide you with advice after Alert Level measures are reviewed on 4 October 2021.
- 51 Should there be a return to Alert Level 2 or lower in Auckland we would expect that the Food Network would see a reduced demand and should be able to return to the normal operational settings within a relatively short period of time post the Alert Level change.

**Appendices**

- 52 Appendix One: Appendix One: Allocation of funding for Food Parcels since 9 September 2021
- 53 Appendix Two: Examples of increased demand among Auckland food providers  
File ref: REP/21/9/1024

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## Appendix One: Allocation of funding for Food Parcels since 9 September 2021

New Zealand Food Network	\$1,000,000
Taumata Koorero Marae Collective: Te Haa Oranga o Ngati Whatua, Te Whanau o Waipareira, Hoani Waititi Marae, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Whai Maia, Ruapotaka Marae, Te Paea Memorial Marae Nga Whare Waatea: MUMA Social Services, Turuki Health, Manurewa Marae, Papakura Marae, Te Kohanga Reo: Tamaki Makaurau Te Kahui Tu Kaha, Huakina Development Trust	\$550,000
South Seas	\$250,000
The Fono	\$250,000
Auckland City Mission Union Street - Auckland CBD Boston Road - Auckland CBD Papakura Marae - Auckland South Manurewa Marae - Auckland South MUMA - Auckland South	\$205,000
Vision West	\$100,000
St Vincent De Paul East Auckland (service Central and South)	\$100,000
Affirming Works	\$100,000
Rapid Relief Team	\$50,000
SIAOLA	\$50,000
Student Volunteer Army	\$30,000
South Auckland Christian Foodbank	\$30,000
Ngati Tamaoho Collective: Ngati Tamaoho Huakina Development Trust Turuki Health Raukura Hau Ora o Tainui	\$30,000
Mahu Vision Trust	\$20,000
Love Soup	\$20,000
Auckland Dream Centre	\$20,000
Grace Foundation	\$20,000
Living Waters Waiheke	\$20,000
Mangere Budgeting & Family Support Services	\$20,000
Rawiri Community House aka / Rawiri Residents Association	\$20,000
Waka of Care	\$20,000
The UMMA Trust	\$20,000
Auckland City Multi-ethnic Council	\$20,000
Chinese New Settlers CNNST	\$20,000
Hauraki Māori Trust Board*	\$20,000
Te Marama Hou Ministries and Tuwhera Trust	\$15,000
Wellsford Co-Operative Parish - Wellsford Food Bank	\$10,000
Waiheke Budgeting Service	\$10,000
Age Concern	\$10,000
Salt Trust Silverdale	\$10,000
Kahui Tu Kaha - Muslim Food Support	\$10,000
Korean Positive Ageing	\$10,000
Shanti Niwas	\$10,000
Auckland Asylum Seekers Trust	\$10,000
Aotearoa Latin American	\$10,000
<b>Contingency</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
	<b>\$3,100,000</b>

\*Also covering the Upper Hauraki (currently in Alert Level 3) as part of MSD's Auckland Work and Income Region



## Appendix Two: Examples of increased demand among Auckland food providers

### Auckland Food Providers

- Two of Auckland's largest food providers, Vision West Community Trust and Auckland City Mission, have experienced a surge demand for help with food in comparison to before Alert Level Restrictions were put into place on 17 August. Funding provided through MSD has enabled providers to meet this demand. The increase in demand has also impacted their hours of operation.
- The table below illustrates the increased demand for food parcels and extension to hours in comparison to before lockdown (17 August 2021).

	Pre-Lockdown		During Lockdown (6 September-17 September)	
Foodbank	Food parcels	Operating hours	Food parcels	Operating hours
Vision West	248	12pm-2pm Tuesday-Friday	1,125	8:30am-3pm Monday-Friday
Auckland City Mission	729	9am-5pm Monday-Friday	1,905	Same but packing operation was extended over weekend hours

- At the higher Alert Levels, Vision West is primarily a delivery service as well limited pick up with assessments being completed via email and phone. Auckland City Mission is mainly available for contactless pick up with some limited delivery available. Assessments are carried out by phone, with an extra three FTE required to meet demand.

### New Zealand Food Network (NZFN) food distribution

- During the 11 weeks prior to lockdown NZFN distribution averaged 74,537 kg of surplus food donated from food producers, with no additional food purchased by MSD. This is the equivalent of 212,963 meals or 4,436 family food parcels (four people, four days, three meals).
- Since lockdown, there has been a steady increase week on week in the volume of food being distributed, due to the funding provided by MSD to purchase food, along with increased donations from food producers.
- In the week ending 17 September 2021, NZFN distributed 119,292 kg of surplus food donated from food producers, as well as 194,768 kg of additional food purchased by MSD. This totalled 314,060kg and is over four times the volume of food compared with the week prior to lockdown. This is the equivalent of 897,314 meals, or 18,694 family food parcels.
- Since the lockdown, there has been a steady increase week on week in the volume of food being distributed, due to the funding provided by MSD to purchase food, along with increased donations from food producers.