



29 August 2022

Harold

fyi-request-20099-9bab0b79@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2021/22-1563

Dear Harold

Official Information Act request relating to COVID-19 disinformation and harmful content

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 1 August 2022. You requested:

... for information relating to a presentation on the topic of the government's response to COVID-19 disinformation, delivered to the 23 November 2021 meeting of the COVID-19 Chief Executive's Board. The minute of this meeting can be accessed here (on page 207, paragraphs 12 to 15):

<https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffyi.org.nz%2Frequest%2F17765%2Fresponse%2F75491%2Fattach%2F4%2FFOR%2520RELEASE%2520of%2520of%2520of%2520OIA%25202021%252022%25200684.pdf&data=05%7C01%7Cinformation%40dpmc.govt.nz%7Ca6e194fa0a2d41887b1608da73620598%7Ceea6053309ef4b7a94060f38551cc613%7C0%7C0%7C637949162816024288%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=yII3q54wWkVH2v9yHkFSGy8dyIYgZ4Ppk6nVfaRpg2w%3D&reserved=0>

I would like to request:

1) Paragraph 13 states that:

"Members welcomed the paper and presentation [on this topic]."

I would like to request copies of the paper and presentation referred to here.

2) Paragraph 14 states that:

"Members raised questions regarding the coordination arrangements underpinning the interagency response to disinformation, and the mechanisms to capture and address material that does not reach a statutory threshold. Rachel responded that a virtual team would be established in the coming days, followed by the allocation of agency responsibilities and development of a scenario paper on grey area cases."

I would like to request a copy of this "scenario paper on grey area cases".

3) Paragraph 15 states that:

"DPMC was encouraged to establish a dashboard of key metrics and leading indicators

to shape more regular reporting [on COVID-19 disinformation] to Ministers."

If such a dashboard was produced, I would like to request the dates that this dashboard has been sent to Ministers.

1. Copies of the paper and presentation regarding disinformation and harmful content referred in paragraph 13, page 207

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the document listed below, subject to information being withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act, to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

Item	Date	Document Description/Subject
1.	18 November 2021	COVID-19 Disinformation and harmful content

Please note paragraph 20 states that *"Since August 2021, in response to a request from DPMC (COVID-19 Group and the National Security Group) for insights into the mis/disinformation landscape and its effect on COVID-19 mitigation measures, Te Pūnaha Matatini (TPM) has been providing regular analytical reports on the online COVID-19 mis/disinformation and extremist landscape."*

This is factually incorrect. Through 2021, The Disinformation Project (as part of Te Pūnaha Matatini) carried out disinformation landscape reporting under a research grant through a COVID-19 Response Fund (administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment) which ended August 2021. DPMC did not fund, nor enter into a contractual relationship with Te Pūnaha Matatini for these landscape reports, however, Te Pūnaha Matatini continued to provide their reports to support the COVID-19 response once the funding for the project ended.

In the last month, DPMC contracted The Disinformation Project, who are now separate from Te Pūnaha Matatini, for two landscape reports and one deep dive report on a topic of choice.

Appendix 1 of the above document – *Working Paper: Mis- and disinformation in Aotearoa New Zealand from 17 August to 5 November 2021*, is publicly available on the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse website: <https://thedisinfoproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2021-11-09-FINAL-working-paper-disinformation.pdf>.

Accordingly, I have refused this part of your request under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information requested is publicly available.

2. A copy of scenario paper on grey area cases

Although discussed at the COVID-19 Chief Executives Board (CCB) meeting, the development of a scenario paper on grey area cases was not formally commissioned and not progressed due to other work priorities.

3. Dates that the dashboard of key metrics and leading indicators was sent to Ministers

Out of concern for duplication of effort of a small workforce, the dashboard was discussed with the working group but not progressed, because at the time the COVID-19 Disinformation Assessment and Response Team (DART) at the Ministry of Health was developing their own reporting system.


Accordingly, the above two parts of your request are refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

In making my decision, I have taken the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act into account.

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

We do not intend to publish this response on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Fairhall
Deputy Chief Executive
COVID-19 Group