



# COVID-19 Ministerial Group

## Minute of Decision

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### Supporting the Pacific COVID-19 Response

**Portfolio**                      **Associate Health (Pacific Peoples)**

On 31 August 2021, following discussions with officials and Ministers, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group [CAB-21-MIN-0353]:

- 1        **noted** that Pacific communities are being disproportionately affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 Delta variant, and that the risk posed to Aotearoa by this outbreak is threefold:
  - 1.1     the COVID-19 Delta variant is more transmissible and deadly compared to earlier variants. Current cases have outstripped the August 2020 outbreak at a much faster rate and the magnitude of close contacts requiring support to self-isolate and adhere to public health guidance is much larger;
  - 1.2     Pacific communities, especially in Auckland, are going through their third full Alert Level 4 lockdown. Each time, the lockdown has been maintained for at least four weeks, and this has taken a toll on families' socioeconomic and psychosocial wellbeing, which will need to be considered in the response;
  - 1.3     the success of the COVID-19 Elimination Strategy is dependent on Pacific health and disability providers and their capacity to maintain response activities. Existing pressures and the speed of the outbreak precludes DHB commissioning of these services; instead, direct support via the Ministry of Health is necessary to sustain ongoing response activities and secure the sector's long-term sustainability;
- 2        **noted** that Pacific providers have been at the forefront of all significant outbreaks since the pandemic began last year, and that they need direct investment to sustain them given that the speed and the flexibility required by the fast-moving outbreak precludes existing DHB commissioning arrangements;
- 3        **noted** that the Ministry of Health recently provided advice to the Ministers of Finance, COVID-19 Response and Health on COVID-19 funding in Vote Health baselines, and that after reprioritising \$53 million for known pressures, there was an underspend of \$97 million remaining for the continued health system response to COVID-19 and potential future impacts;
- 4        **authorised** the Minister of Finance and the Minister for COVID-19 Response to:
  - 4.1     endorse a final proposal for supporting the Pacific COVID-19 response, together with the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health (Pacific Peoples);

- 4.2 approve the reprioritisation of up to \$26 million in 2021/22 from underspent COVID-19 funding in Vote Health for this purpose;
- 5 **noted** that most of this funding will go direct to Pacific health and disability providers via the Ministry of Health, and that this will be underpinned by transparent and consistent accountability arrangements;
- 6 **invited** the Associate Minister of Health (Pacific Peoples) to report back to the COVID-19 Ministerial Group by 10 December 2021 on the outcomes achieved through this investment.

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Cabinet Office

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PROACTIVELY RELEASED