

7 May 2020

Dr Ayesha Verrall  
Email: ayesha.verrall@otago.ac.nz

Dear Ayesha

### **Follow up of independent audit of contact tracing**

Thank you for your visit to the Ministry of Health on 30 April 2020 and for your letter of 2 May 2020 outlining your findings on the Ministry's progress against the recommendations from your rapid audit. I appreciate you taking the time to do this and to provide further advice on the indicators that will support the monitoring framework for contact tracing.

The Ministry has put in significant effort on improvements to contact tracing since your audit and I am pleased that the progress made on the preparedness plan, Public Health Unit (PHU) capacity and the National Contact Tracing Solution (NCTS) is evident. Your rapid audit provided clear guidance in setting the direction for these improvements.

I agree that the NCTS would be an optimal solution to a single national platform, however the impacts of introducing a significant change to the PHUs at this crucial time need to be considered. The timing of deployment for those PHUs who have capability that is integrated with local systems also needs to be carefully managed. The Ministry is working closely with PHUs to progress the roll out of the NCTS. Initial focus will be on those PHUs who have no or limited information technology tools to support contact tracing work. All PHUs now have read only access to the NCTS and can view reporting dashboards. The PHUs not using the NCTS will be providing data to the Ministry that is integrated into the NCTS to enable a singular view of all cases which provides the mechanism to monitor indicators nationally. We believe the value in having this national end-to-end view available to all those involved in contact tracing will quickly become clear to those using the system.

The team have reviewed your response to the proposed changes to the indicators as outlined in your letter and the attached table. The conversation you had with the team on 30 April as well as your clarification and guidance in your letter has helped shape our approach to outcome measures C, D and E.

- **(C) Proportion of close contacts with confirmed or suspected covid-19 at the time of tracing (target <20%).** With the clarification provided we agree that this is an important system level indicator of overall effectiveness. There is significant complexity in how this measure is calculated and who is included and excluded. Further work will be undertaken to resolve these issues and guidance sought from the public health Technical Advisory Group.

- **(D) Proportion of close contacts with covid-19 over 14 day follow up.** We appreciate the value that this information will provide when evaluating the performance of the contact tracing system. The Ministry will ensure that the data is made available through a measure outside of the formal indicator set.
- **(E) Proportion of contacts of Covid-19 positive contacts who become Covid-19 positive (target <1%).** With the clarification you provided we agree that this is an important system level indicator of overall effectiveness. Existing data sources are not able to support the analysis of this indicator but the NCTS will have the ability to measure this indicator for those public health units that have adopted the system.

Thank you again for making the time to provide advice about the Ministry's contact tracing response. We really appreciate that your advice has been constructive, considered and actionable. We look forward to continuing involvement in this important work.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ashley Bloomfield  
Director-General of Health  
Ministry of Health

Thanks again Ayisha.  
I will publish your letter & this  
response tomorrow.

Best regards.

