

COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group

Terms of Reference

Context

1. The recent reviews on Contact Tracing and the COVID-19 Surveillance Plan and Testing Strategy have identified the need for a continued focus on the whole-of-system response to COVID-19 and how this might be continuously improved over time. Additionally, we must continue to learn from our response to resurgences and ensure the system has understood the areas for improvement and that the adjustments have been made as a result. To enable this and to provide a level of independent review, the COVID-19 Response Minister has established the COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group (the Group).

Purpose of the COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group

2. The purpose of the Group is to provide advice to the Minister for the COVID-19 Response on specific areas of the response where improvements could be made with the benefit of alternative and independent perspectives.
3. The Group could;
 - a. Consider the current COVID-19 response efforts across the Government's system-wide response, encompassing border, managed isolation and quarantine, and public health response; and
 - b. Provide an ongoing independent perspective on the robustness of the COVID-19 response system and opportunities for continuous improvement on specific aspects of the response to give the Minister assurance that the necessary learnings have been recorded and implemented by agencies.

Scope

4. It is expected that the Group will advise the Minister for COVID-19 Response on the extent to which the Government response is performing efficiently and effectively and is based on best practice and technical advice.
5. The Group will provide advice to the Minister for COVID-19 Response on priority areas for improvement and learning. The Group will also provide advice on forward scenario planning, readiness and preparedness of the system.

Reporting and accountability

6. The COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group will report to the COVID-19 Response Minister who will lead consultation with the Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, and Associate Ministers of Health.
7. The Group will not be held accountable for any actions undertaken by agencies at the direction of the Minister as a result of their advice.

Membership

8. Members will be appointed by the responsible Minister and noted by Cabinet.
9. The Group will consist of a Chairperson (the Chair), and four members.
10. Membership is initially set as described in Appendix B. Membership may be amended as New Zealand's COVID-19 situation and strategy changes.
11. Members of the Group are individuals who represent sectors or are considered experts in a desirable field. Members are expected to engage with the sector, relevant agencies and wider stakeholders (including Iwi, private sector, non-government organisations and vulnerable communities, as appropriate) via the secretariat to ensure that they have a system-wide view of response efforts.
12. Additional specialists may be invited to attend a Group meeting if a topic requires further expertise not provided for by existing members.

Secretariat

13. Secretariat support for the Group will be provided by DPMC's COVID-19 Response Unit. The secretariat will ensure that the conditions are in place for sound, independent advice by the Group, including supporting the Chair to; identify agenda priorities and triage requests; manage the flow of information in and requests; ensure that items are well-framed to facilitate strategic discussions; support the development and preparation of written advice; and maintain sound board practices.

Meetings

14. The Group is expected to meet twice each month, at a minimum, with discretion to meet more frequently, subject to budgetary constraints. It is expected that two days' effort will be required in preparation for each meeting.
15. Members who are unable to attend a meeting of the Group cannot delegate attendance responsibilities.
16. A quorum of one less than total Group members is required for decision-making purposes.
17. The Chair will determine the meeting processes.

Information requirements

18. The Group is likely to require information from other agencies and stakeholders on the response. The Group will regularly engage with the responsible Minister regarding information requirements and, at the direction of the Minister, the Minister's Office will liaise with the relevant agencies and officials to request such information.
19. A delegate from the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor's forum is to attend meeting as an observer in order to facilitate information collection and inputs for the Group. This will ensure that; existing technical advisory functions are utilised first where possible; duplication of effort is avoided; history and knowledge of best practice and technical information is readily available; and requests for new information or analyses are expedited where possible.

Fees and reimbursements

20. Letters of appointment will detail the remuneration and reimbursement arrangements for the Chair and Members.

Media

21. The Chair will be responsible for any public statements on behalf of the Group. The Chair should inform the Minister's Office of any requests to comment prior to releasing a public statement, operating under a principle of 'no surprises'.

Declarations of conflict

22. The Chair and Members are responsible for declaring any real or potential conflict of interest to the other members of the Group, as soon as the conflict arises. Any real or perceived conflicts will be discussed by the Chair and/or responsible Ministers, and mitigations put in place if necessary.

General confidentiality requirements

23. Members of the Group must maintain confidentiality of matters discussed at meetings, and any information or documents (not otherwise publicly available) provided to the Group.

Removal of Members

24. Any serious breach of any of these Terms of Reference may result in responsible Ministers removing a member from the Group at their discretion. Serious breaches of the Terms of Reference include, but are not limited to, a breach of confidentiality, unauthorised communication with media about the Group, or a failure to declare, or appropriately manage, a conflict of interest.

25. Any member removed from the Group can be replaced with a new member at the discretion of the responsible Ministers.

Disestablishment of the Group

26. The Group will be operational until 01 June 2022 unless otherwise extended. The Group may be disestablished at any time prior to this date at the discretion of responsible Ministers.

27. The Group, including membership, scope and terms of reference will be reviewed in October 2021 by DPMC.

Annex A: Membership of the COVID-19 Continuous Improvement Ministerial Advisory Group

Name	Role	Term
Sir Brian Roche	Chair	From date of establishment until 01 June 2022
Rob Fyfe	Member	From date of establishment until 01 June 2022
Dr Debbie Ryan	Member	From date of establishment until 01 June 2022
Professor Phillip Hill	Member	From date of establishment until 01 June 2022
Dr Dale Bramley	Member	From date of establishment until 01 June 2022

