



Briefing

EXTENSION OF THE STRATEGIC COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY GROUP

To Minister for COVID-19 Response (Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall)			
Date	30/06/2022	Priority	High
Deadline	7/07/2022	Briefing Number	DPMC-2021/22-2931

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to:

- seek your agreement to proposed candidates for appointment and reappointment to the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group (the Group)
- consult with you on the draft updated Terms of Reference for the Group and draft Appointments and Honours Committee paper
- enclose letters to the outgoing Group Chair Sir David Skegg and member Professor Philip Hill to thank them for their service.


Recommendations

1. **Note** that a paper will go to the Appointments and Honours Committee on 27 July 2022 to advise them of your intentions to appoint and reappoint members to the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group.
2. **Note** that draft letters to the outgoing Chair Sir David Skegg and member Professor Philip Hill are appended for you to sign subject to any amendments.
3. **Agree** to the appointment of Professor Nikki Turner as Chair of the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group from the date of appointment to 30 December 2022.
4. **Agree** to the reappointments of Dr Maia Brewerton, Dr Ella Iosua, and Professor David Murdoch as members of the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group from the date of reappointment to 30 December 2022.


YES / NO

YES / NO

- 5. **Agree** to the appointments of Associate Professor Matire Harwood and Professor Patricia Priest as members of the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group from the date of appointment to 30 December 2022. YES / NO
- 6. **Agree** to the amended Terms of Reference for the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group. YES / NO
- 7. **Agree** to lodge the attached draft Appointments and Honours Committee paper for the 27 July 2022 meeting, subject to Ministerial consultation to be undertaken by your office. YES / NO


Amber Bill
Head of System Assurance and Continuous Improvement

30/06/2022


Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Minister for COVID-19 Response

- 4 JUL 2022
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Contact for telephone discussion if required:

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Amber Bill	Head of System Assurance and Continuous Improvement	s9(2)(a)	✓
Louise Cox	Senior Advisor	N/A	

Minister's office comments:

- Noted
- Seen
- Approved
- Needs change
- Withdrawn
- Not seen by Minister
- Overtaken by events
- Referred to

Proactively Released

EXTENSION OF THE STRATEGIC COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY GROUP

Purpose

1. The purpose of this briefing is to:
 - a) seek your agreement to proposed candidates for appointment and reappointment to the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group (the Group)
 - b) consult with you on the draft updated Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Group and draft Appointments and Honours Committee paper
 - c) enclose letters to the outgoing Group Chair Sir David Skegg and member Philip Hill to thank them for their service.

Background

2. The Group was established on 31 March to provide independent advice on the ongoing COVID-19 response informed by its expertise in epidemiology, infectious diseases, public health, and modelling. The Group's ToR set out that the Group will be operational until 30 June 2022 unless otherwise extended. The previous Minister for COVID-19 Response agreed to extend the Group until 30 December 2022 in May 2022 [DPMC-2021/22-1934 refers].
3. Sir David Skegg and Professor Philip Hill have decided not to continue in their roles of Chair and member of the Group respectively. Following consultation with you, Professor Nikki Turner has been approached to replace Professor Skegg as Chair, to which she has agreed.

Proposed appointments and reappointments to the Group

4. In addition to the proposed appointment of Professor Turner as Chair, current members Dr Maia Brewerton, Dr Ella Iosua, and Professor David Murdoch have all expressed an interest in remaining as members of the Group until 30 December 2022. To maintain continuity and retain the expertise of these individuals, it is proposed that you agree to reappoint these members. Biographical information is contained in the draft Appointments and Honours Committee paper (Attachment A) and the draft ToR (Attachment B).
5. To replace the two outgoing individuals, it is proposed that Associate Professor Matire Harwood and Professor Patricia Priest are appointed as members of the Group.
6. Associate Professor Harwood (MBChB, PhD) is a hauora Māori academic and GP dividing her time across the Department of General Practice and Primary Care at Auckland medical school and Papakura Marae Health Clinic in South Auckland. Matire is a member of the COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group, was a member of the COVID-19 Vaccine Science and Technical Advisory Group and as a member of the Steering Group, recently appointed the Board members for the Māori Health Authority. In 2017 she was awarded the L'Oréal UNESCO New Zealand 'For Women in Science Fellowship' for

research in Indigenous health and in 2019 she received the Health Research Council's Te Tohu Rapuora award for leadership in research to improve Māori health.

7. Professor Patricia Priest works in the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine at the University of Otago with a focus on infectious disease epidemiology. Her research interests lie in infectious disease epidemiology, prevention and control, screening, and public health and epidemiology. Professor Priest was previously a member of the Ministry of Health's (MoH) COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group and is a current member of the COVID-19 Testing Technical Advisory Group. Her work as Chief Clinical Advisor, Epidemiology gives her insight into the pandemic response activities in MoH and into the operation and interpretation of COVID-19 modelling.
8. It is considered that the two above candidates will collectively bring and strengthen key epidemiological and primary care expertise, and Māori perspectives of the Group.

Amendments to the Terms of Reference are proposed

9. To ensure the purpose, role and scope of the Group continues to meet the ongoing needs of the response to COVID-19, the ToR has been amended to reflect the current context.
10. In addition to amendments to the term and membership of the Group, key changes to the ToR are:
 - a) updated context to reflect the strategic shift away from elimination to minimisation and protection, and the transition into longer-term sustainable management of COVID-19
 - b) less emphasis on the provision of advice and assurance on modelling approaches and analysis of epidemiological modelling. The changes reflect the refinement of the modelling processes which continue to be a key input into Government decision-making
 - c) a shift in focus away from the vaccine rollout and border reopening to public health protections and border and community surveillance within the context of the risk of new variants and reducing inequitable outcomes for vulnerable populations.
11. Special Advisors Sean Hendy and Rodney Jones were included in the original schedule of members, but not mentioned in the substantive ToR. Given the change in context, we have not included them in the membership of the Group, noting that the inclusion of Professor Patricia Priest will ensure the Group are able to have ready access and expertise to provide any ongoing modelling advice.

Financial Implications

12. There is no fiscal impact to the Crown arising from the decision to extend the Group. The current arrangements whereby the Ministry of Health meet the costs for the Group and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) resource the secretariat function will continue. A Memorandum of Understanding to agree the funding arrangements is being signed by both parties. Both parties have capacity within their existing operating budgets to fund these arrangements.

Consultation

13. In regard to the proposed appointments of the incoming members of the Group, in addition to consultation with you, consultation was carried out with the Ministry of Health and the current members of the Group.
14. In regard to the amendments to the ToR, consultation was carried out with the proposed incoming Chair Professor Nikki Turner and DPMC officials.

Next Steps

15. If you agree to the proposed appointments, reappointments, and draft amended ToR, your office will carry out consultation with your Ministerial colleagues as appropriate in advance of the Appointments and Honours Committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday 27 July 2022.
16. As Sir David Skegg and Professor Philip Hill are not continuing as Chair and member of the Group respectively, draft letters are attached as Attachment C for you to sign (and amend as you see fit). Your office will deliver the signed letters to Professors Skegg and Hill.
17. As Appointments and Honours Committee papers are not subject to the standard proactive release requirements as set out in the Cabinet Office Circular (18) 4, any decision to proactively release this briefing, associated material, and the final Appointments and Honours Committee paper will be made in consultation with your office.
18. The amended ToR for the Group will be proactively released on the Unite Against COVID-19 website in due course and in consultation with your office. A press statement will be made once appointments and reappointments are made and following the Appointments and Honours Committee meeting on 27 July 2022.
19. Once you have agreed the membership of the Group and these have been notified to the Appointments and Honours Committee, the DPMC secretariat will provide you with appointment and reappointment letters for you to sign and provide to the candidates.

Attachments:		Appointments and Honours Committee papers are exempt from the proactive release process and the paper has not been included within this release
Attachment A:	Draft Appointments and Honours Committee paper	
Attachment B:	Draft amended Terms of Reference for the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory (including comparison version with tracked changes) <small>The final version of the Terms of Reference is available at the following link: https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/latest-updates/COVID-19-Strategic-COVID-19-Public-Health-Advisory-Group-Terms-of-Reference.pdf</small>	
Attachment C:	Draft letters for Sir David Skegg and Professor Philip Hill Attachment C is withheld in full under section 9(2)(a) of the Act	