



August Community Panel Meeting Minutes

Date	3 August 2021
Time	2.00-5.00pm
Venue	Members' Only Dining Room, Parliament
Attendees	Api Talemaitoga, Aram Kim, Callum Woodhouse, Habib Ulla Marwat, Jordon Milroy, Margaret Brown, Michelle Mascoll, Sarah Sparks, Chloe Kincaid, Natasha Dcosta, Jessica Ferreira, Amber Bill, Cheryl Barnes, Daniel Kawana, Rory McKenzie and Anthony Taueki (virtual).
Chair	Chloe Kincaid/Natasha Dcosta
Minute taker	Chloe Kincaid

Item 1: Welcome and apologies

1. Daniel Kawana welcomed members with a karakia that spoke to the strengths of bringing a diverse group together.

Items 2-8: Minutes and Actions

2. The Panel was introduced to Cheryl Barnes, Deputy Chief Executive of the COVID-19 Group. She discussed the Group, the purpose and her vision for the panel.
3. Natasha introduced the Chair of the Panel, Sarah Sparks, and Sarah introduced herself and her background.
4. Each Panel members then introduced themselves and shared one interesting fact about themselves with the group.
5. Sally Page, Senior Communications Advisor in the COVID-19 Group, then joined the meeting to discuss media protocols with the Panel. The Panel was advised to direct all media enquiries to the Secretariat (Chloe). Where this is not possible, for example during an interview, the member can confirm their participation in the Panel, but all other enquiries should be directed to DPMC.
6. Amber Bill, General Manager System Assurance and Continuous Improvement introduced herself to the Panel and discussed the purpose and expectations of the Panel meetings.
7. Each Panel member was asked to consider three questions prior to the meeting and they shared their thoughts on these questions: why they agreed to join the panel, their community's experience with COVID and their excitement and concerns about the work of the Panel.

8. There were a number of personal and community lived experiences that were shared that provided rich insights into the different challenges and opportunities each community had faced during the pandemic. The broad themes that were discussed include:
- a. Racism (lack of support in various languages), ableism (discrimination against the disabled), marginalisation and inequity (COVID poverty).
 - b. Blindspots due to unintended consequences (physical barriers to scanning) and or misinformation/duplication.or several communities, isolation and trying to work within a 'bubble' during a lockdown is impracticable and creates many barriers to participating in everyday life.
 - c. Cutting people off from their support systems also creates/intensifies many mental health issues.
 - d. Lockdowns and regulations have highlighted many instances of prejudice and unconscious bias that is present not only for people but are also inherent in our systems. This includes things like:
 - i. Trans people not having necessary access to hormones;
 - ii. Homophobia or racism from agencies that provide food and medical aid;
 - iii. Internet accessibility not being available to rural and marginalised communities;
 - iv. The difficulty of self-isolation in overcrowded housing; and
 - v. Language and other barriers to receiving government mandates and messaging, as well as encounters with misinformation.
 - e. In general, there was enthusiasm about bringing the voices of the community to the table and creating real change for their communities.
 - f. The Panel would like to see more transparency and clarity around COVID regulations and messaging, to support continued community cohesion around the pandemic response and ensure that no one gets left behind.
9. The Secretariat went through the work programme with the Panel and discussed any important themes or topics that were top priorities for discussion. The vaccination programme was a recurring theme that the Panel sees as a priority for discussion, particularly to ensure equitable and widespread coverage.
10. The Panel will email the Secretariat any suggested changes to the Terms of Reference and these will be confirmed at the next meeting.
11. Rory McKenzie, Senior Advisor Strategic Communications, briefed the Panel about the alternative formats/language translations being prepared for the Reconnecting New Zealanders event taking place on 12 August in the National Library.
12. Ruth Fairhall, Head and Strategy and Policy, and Sally-Ann Spencer, Senior Policy Advisor, presented to the Panel on the Reconnecting New Zealanders work that is due to be considered by Cabinet shortly.
13. Aram Kim brought up the vaccination programme being a key component in the border reopening strategy and for many New Zealanders, seeing a visual representation of progress would be helpful in understanding the country's current position.
14. The **key insights** that came from the panel discussion were:

- a. The challenges diverse communities faced with isolation during lockdown. One key example given was the extra home support that is usually needed within disabled communities and how the 'bubble' concept of an Alert Level 4 lockdown created unfair barriers for disabled people to complete normal, everyday tasks.
 - b. There has been a lot of discrimination throughout the COVID-19 system, some examples of which:
 - i. Heightened racism towards Asian populations
 - ii. Homophobia faced by the LGBTQ+ community when trying to access food or medical aid from non-governmental organisations
 - iii. Language barriers for New Zealand ESOL speakers and difficulties in accessing up-to-date information
 - c. Many communities have felt that the response has lacked transparency and in some cases this has led to misinformation, distrust of public organisations and inconsistencies in messaging.
 - d. There was some discussion of the situation creating 'COVID poverty', where there are barriers to simple things like taking public transport because of not being able to afford a mask. This could become a significant issue if mask wearing is mandated in more situations.
 - e. Lastly, mental health issues that arose from several aspects of the COVID-19 response were raised. These issues were particularly heightened during lockdown periods, but there has also been increasing depression and anxiety related to the 'unknown' – not knowing what's going to happen and not having physical family support when families are based overseas, among other issues.
15. The Panel **agreed**:
- a. That confidentiality and conflict of interest documents for each member would be signed and sent or discussed with the Secretariat before the next meeting;
 - b. Any amendments to the Terms of Reference would be sent via email before the next meeting, the final Terms of Reference will be confirmed at the next meeting;
 - c. The Secretariat will provide the Panel with some wording to use for media enquiries in light of the Prime Minister's public forum on Reconnecting New Zealanders.

Item 9: Final thoughts and wrap up

16. The meeting closed at 5.00pm with a closing karakia from Daniel Kawana.

Action register – Live actions

	Date of meeting	Action	Responsible owner	Due date	Comments
1	03/08/2021	All Panel members to sign and send confidentiality and conflict of interest documents.	Panel members.	01/09/2021	
2	03/08/2021	Send amendments to the Terms of Reference before next meeting.	Secretariat.	01/09/2021	
3	03/08/2021	Secretariat to provide Panel with wording to use if asked about Prime Minister's public forum next week.	Secretariat.	06/08/2021	

Proactively Released