

Briefing

COVID-19 Insights Paper for publication: Wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic

Date due to MO:	12/06/2023	Action required by:	22/06/2023
Security level:	UNCLASSIFIED	Briefing number:	BN2023-018
To:	Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister of Health		
Copy to:	Hon Peeni Henare, Associate Minister of Health (Māori Health) Hon Barbara Edmonds, Associate Minister of Health (Pacific Peoples) [REDACTED]		

Contact for Telephone Discussion

Name	Position	[REDACTED]
Karen Orsborn	Chief Executive	[REDACTED]
Matthew Bloomer	Acting Director Wellbeing System Leadership	[REDACTED]

Minister's Office to Complete

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change | <input type="checkbox"/> Seen | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's note | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn | |

Comment:

COVID-19 Insights Paper for publication: Wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic

Security level: UNCLASSIFIED **Date:** 12/06/2023

To: Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister of Health

Purpose

1. On 22 June 2023, Te Hiringa Mahara intends to publish the attached paper on wellbeing impacts of the pandemic.

Summary

2. On 22 June 2023, we will publish 'Wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic', the last of eight COVID-19 insights reports. A list of these reports is attached as appendix 1. This paper draws on the findings of our previous seven reports, along with additional academic and 'grey' literature, and our engagement with communities and leaders, to highlight the wellbeing impacts of the pandemic, and to learn from them.
3. In short, in the face of many challenges presented by the pandemic, communities across Aotearoa have shown how to protect and support wellbeing.
 - Many of the challenges faced in the pandemic were not new - the pandemic has exacerbated and amplified many inequities in mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and in access to services and supports.
 - Iwi, hapū, and whānau Māori exercised rangatiratanga, providing practical support for themselves and others through the pandemic in a uniquely Māori way.
 - Many communities engaged in opportunities to improve wellbeing for themselves and others, supported by connectedness and belonging, clear leadership, innovative practices, and collaboration with and between services and government agencies.
 - Wellbeing will be supported by decision-makers and government agencies listening to and trusting communities to do what's best, investing in communities and the social infrastructure that supports wellbeing, and seeking to better understand the experiences of different communities in Aotearoa.
4. A LinkedIn post will be made alongside publication. No media release or appearances are planned, our focus is on sharing this report with public sector agencies, including Manatū Hauora, and the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Covid-19 Lessons. If required, Te Hiringa Mahara will respond to media interest.
5. The paper and a high-level communications plan are attached, for your information. The final paper will be shared with your office before the publication date.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------|
| a) | note , on 22 June 2023, subject to minor editing changes, Te Hiringa Mahara will publish the attached report on <i>Wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic</i> | Yes / No |
| b) | note we intend to release this briefing under our proactive release policy | Yes / No |



Karen Orsborn
Chief Executive
Date: 12/06/2023

Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Minister of Health
Date:

COVID-19 Insights Paper for publication: Wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic

Background

1. As noted in previous briefings [BN2023-016, and others], we have published seven of eight reports to be produced as part of our Covid-19 Impacts Insights Programme.
2. The programme provides short, accessible, focused reports in an agile way. It cannot provide a comprehensive view of the impacts of Covid-19; it provides key insights on wellbeing areas or populations of focus.
3. This final report draws on the findings of the previous seven reports, along with additional academic and 'grey' literature, and our past engagement with communities and leaders, to highlight the wellbeing impacts of the pandemic, and to learn from them. This paper does not evaluate the Government's COVID-19 response – it highlights the shared and unique wellbeing impacts of the pandemic, for people who experience greater challenges to wellbeing across Aotearoa.

Summary of findings

4. Many of the challenges faced in the pandemic were not new – but were made more starkly visible for a lot of communities. The pandemic has exacerbated and amplified many inequities in mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and in access to services and supports. It has seen racism and discrimination increase, and it has affected the wellbeing of different communities in different ways, compounding the impact for those who experience intersecting disadvantage.
5. While there are many shared challenges, different communities across Aotearoa also face unique challenges, with unique mental health and wellbeing needs. Accessing and understanding information about the pandemic was challenging for some communities; while largely successful, the approach to vaccination did not work for all communities; and the latter stages of the pandemic have impacted communities differently.
6. Wellbeing inequities, as well as different social, economic and cultural needs, mean that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate for many populations in Aotearoa.
7. Such an approach can be seen as inadequate to support Māori wellbeing and does not reflect Te Tiriti partnership. In the face of this, and building on existing history and knowledge, iwi, hapū, and whānau Māori exercised rangatiratanga, providing practical support for themselves and others through the pandemic. Māori responses to the pandemic were agile and adaptive in protecting health and wellbeing, were grounded in tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori, and built on established networks and relationships.

8. In the face of similar inequities and needs, the strengths, resourcefulness, and contributions of many communities were evident as they engaged in opportunities to improve wellbeing for themselves and others. While communities sought to meet their unique needs, common strengths were evident across their responses. These include a strong sense of connectedness and belonging, clear leadership, innovative practices and collaboration with and between services and government agencies.
9. Where government decision-makers and agencies have been able to draw on these community strengths, support communities' self-determination, and strengthen these common enablers, they have been able to better support wellbeing together.
10. We have drawn on the findings to call for new or better ways of working with communities:
 - Recognising the value and exercising of rangatiratanga, and giving Māori, iwi, hapū and whānau the freedom and resources to act in the way that best meets their wellbeing needs.
 - Where government continues to provide services, planning them in partnership with Māori, meaning government responses are informed by tikanga and matauranga Māori.
 - Employing high-trust models for working with communities, enabling community-based providers and communities to spend more time and energy supporting local wellbeing, in ways that work for them.
 - Recognising and consulting those groups who often have poorer wellbeing outcomes and including their community leaders and members in planning and decision-making.
11. Communities have drawn on their own knowledge, resources and networks for wellbeing, supported by a range of common enablers, including trusting support from government, having resilient social infrastructure, and being able to use digital infrastructure to be innovative. This means there are some practical actions or enablers that can support wellbeing:
 - Funding and assistance for marae to maintain the capacity to provide practical support to their communities will support wellbeing now, and in the face of future crises.
 - Government resources to support the sustainability and resilience of other community organisations and social hubs who provide wellbeing support, will protect wellbeing now and enable preparedness for the next crisis.
 - Ongoing investment in bridging the 'digital divide' will support connection and wellbeing, especially when other social connections are unavailable, such as during 'lockdowns'.
 - Continuing investment in accessible, responsive, and ongoing comprehensive trauma and distress support, which will support communities in the future, in general and during times of crisis.

12. To understand the needs and wellbeing experience of many populations, investment in high quality research and data is needed:
 - High quality research and data will support iwi and Māori responses and will help build the trust needed for partnership. Greater emphasis needs to go into sharing relevant information and supporting Māori research and researchers to address these concerns, including upholding Māori data sovereignty.
 - We experience wellbeing differently, based on a variety of factors. If we are to improve wellbeing for all, we need better disaggregated data and research to understand wellbeing for different communities, including people with lived experience of distress or addiction, Pacific and Asian peoples and the ethnic communities that make up these groups.

Communications Plan

13. A high-level communications plan is attached for your information. Key points are:
 - No media release or media appearances are planned. A LinkedIn post will be made alongside publication on our website.
 - We will focus on sharing this report with public sector agencies, including Manatū Hauora, and the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Covid-19 Lessons secretariat.
 - If required, Te Hiringa Mahara Chief Executive, Karen Orsborn and Director Māori, Maraea Johns will be the primary spokesperson for any media interest.

Consultation

14. The attached paper has been informed by the consultation that informed each of the previous papers, as well as a range of engagements with stakeholders and community representatives over the past year. It has been reviewed by colleagues at the Social Wellbeing Agency.

Next Steps

15. The final paper and a short Q&A will be shared with your office before the publication date.
16. Subject to minor editorial changes, on 22 June 2023, the report will be published to the Te Hiringa Mahara website, sent to stakeholders, and an announcement posted to LinkedIn.



Appendix 1

COVID-19 publications

Publication	Date published	Briefing number
(1) Media reporting of COVID-19 and mental health and wellbeing	6 October 2022	BN2022-016
(2) Impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of older people in Aotearoa New Zealand	13 December 2022	BN2022-019
(3) Impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of rural communities in Aotearoa New Zealand	14 February 2023	BN2023-001
(4) COVID-19 and safety in the home	9 March 2023	BN2023-010
(5) Supporting wellbeing after a crisis	22 March 2023	BN2023-012
(6) Exercising rangatiratanga during the COVID-19 pandemic	11 May 2023	BN2023-014
(7) Pacific connectedness and wellbeing in the pandemic	8 June 2023	BN2023-016
(8) Wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic (summary)	22 June 2023	BN2023-018