


**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

29 March 2022

Dear

On 27 January 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Copies of key documents provided held by senior leadership about food waste that were created since the start of 2021*

On 8 February 2022, you refined your request to the following:

- *What updates, briefings, reports, aide memoires or memos were provided in 2021 to ministers and/or the chief executive or deputy chief executives relating to the department's work on reducing food waste.*

MSD has identified the below papers which are in scope of your request and enclosed unless specified otherwise. Please note that the below papers refer to 'food rescue' instead of 'food waste'.

No.	Date created	REP number	Document type	Title	Decision	Reason
1.	15/3/2021	REP/21/3/218	Aide-memoire	Launch of the Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance (AFRA)	Release in part.	Ministry staff names below tier 4 are withheld as they are out of scope.
2.	25/3/2021	REP/21/3/290	Aide-memoire	Meeting with Veronica Shale, Fair Food Charitable Trust	Release in part.	Ministry staff names below tier 4 are withheld as they are out of scope.
3.	3/9/2021	REP/21/9/930	Report	Overview of the Government's response to increased demand for access to food	Release in part.	Ministry staff names below tier 4 are withheld as they are out of scope.

				and other related services		
4.	11/10/2021	REP/21/10/1106	Aide-memoire	Responding to sustained demand for access to food and other essential wellbeing items	Release in full.	N/a.
5.	9/9/2021	N/a.	Cabinet paper	COVID-19: Proposed Community Response Package 2021	Refuse in full.	s18(d). This paper is available online at: https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/2022/proposed-community-response-package-2021.html

Some information is withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act to protect the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions. The greater public interest is in the ability of individuals to express opinions in the course of their duty.

The principles and purposes of the Act under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

MSD fully supports those principles and purposes. MSD therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. MSD will do this by publishing this letter on its website. Your personal details will be deleted and MSD will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Judith Turner
Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services



Aide-mémoire

Date: 15 March 2021 **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

For: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment

File Reference: REP/21/03/0218

Launch of the Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance (AFRA)

Event details 8:30am – 9:30am, 18 March 2021, Parnell Hotel and Conference Centre, 10 – 20 Gladstone Road, Parnell, Auckland

MSD contact: Sonya Cameron. Ph 029 675 2122

AFRA contact: Dawn Hutchesson. Ph 021 275 2243

Please note that if Auckland is at Alert Level 2 or above the event will move to Zoom.

Purpose of event This event is to formally launch the Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance (AFRA). You have been asked to speak at the event. Speaking notes are attached as Appendix Two.

On arrival you will be met by Sonya Cameron (Programme Lead, Food Secure Communities) who can introduce you to key people.

The launch will start at 8:45am, with speakers in the following order. Otene and David will introduce you during their speeches. Your speech is at 9:00am.

- Otene Reweti (Opening)
- David Savage (Facilitator)
- Minister Sepuloni
- Matt Dagger (Board Chair)

You may then wish to stay for morning tea and to talk with AFRA members (9:30am – 9:50am). Following the launch, AFRA members will have their inaugural hui.

Expected attendees There are approximately 60-70 guests attending. Guests mostly consist of food rescue organisations who are members of AFRA as well as other community food providers, supermarkets and industry representatives. Key attendees include:

- Angie Warren-Clark – Labour List MP
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- Dawn Hutchesson – General Manager of AFRA
 - David Savage – Facilitator
 - Otene Reweti – Auckland Council - Senior Advisor Maori Outcomes & Anglican Minister
 - Matt Dagger – AFRA Chair and General Manager Kaibosh
 - Tessa Vincent – led the development of AFRA
 - Rebecca Culver – AFRA board member and GM Just Zilch
 - Stu Enor – AFRA board member and GM Kairos
 - Shirleyanne Brown – AFRA board member and Chair Food Rescue Northland.

A list of AFRA member organisations is attached as Appendix One.

AFRA will have a photographer. Media have been invited.

Background **AFRA is a key partner for the Food Secure Communities programme**

In Budget 20, the Government invested \$32m over 2 years to 2022 through MSD to address the increased demand on foodbanks, food rescue and other community food providers, while supporting the growth of food secure communities.

The Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance has been established as one of the three national sector partners under the Food Secure Communities programme. Together they support the longer-term sustainability of the community food sector.

- *AFRA* builds the capacity and capability of local food rescue
- *New Zealand Food Network* increases the supply of food donated from national food suppliers to distribute through to food hubs (usually food rescue organisations)
- *Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective* builds the capability of foodbanks and community food services.

Food rescue is critical in increasing the supply of good quality food through to communities

Establishing AFRA has been a long-term goal of the food rescue sector. The sector has grown organically around New Zealand over the last decade, with some organisations (e.g. KiwiHarvest, Kaibosh) providing a high-quality service, while other areas have lacked capability or any service at all.

MSD has supported AFRA's establishment in recognition of the critical and cost-effective role that food rescue plays in increasing the supply of good quality food through to networks of foodbanks and other community food services.

In doing so, they reduce the amount of good food going to landfill, which in turn reduces New Zealand's CO2 emissions, and protects the environment.

Local food rescue organisations have historically distributed food largely from supermarkets, the hospitality industry and well as from smaller local food producers. With funding from MSD's Food Secure Communities grants, and additional food supply from the New Zealand Food Network many food rescue organisations have scaled up their distribution significantly over the last year.

Having this distribution system in place has been critical to ensuring vulnerable communities are able to access food, especially during periods of raised Covid-19 Alert Levels.

AFRA is now providing support to the food rescue sector

MSD are the main funder of AFRA, providing \$500,000 over a two-year period to 30 June 2022. Longer-term funding will be subject to a budget bid. While in many countries food rescue organisation have become self-funding through food producers paying to avoid the high costs of landfill, New Zealand has not yet reached this point.

AFRA's vision is Effective Food Rescue in Aotearoa – Food For All and mission is providing national support for local food rescue organisations to reduce food waste and increase food security.

AFRA currently have 19 food rescue organisations as members whom they are providing support to, and four goals:

- *Capacity building*: food rescue organisations are fully equipped to meet supply and demand
- *Best practice*: informed and evidenced best practice
- *Collaboration*: greater impact through collective impact
- *Advocacy*: policy and practice informed by local action.

Dawn Hutchesson has been appointed the General Manager of AFRA and started earlier this month. Dawn brings a wealth of leadership experience from the community and arts sectors.

Matt Dagger is the AFRA Chair, and the General Manager of Wellington's Kaibosh Food Rescue. Kaibosh have fostered the development of AFRA to this point.

Kaibosh contracted Tessa Vincent who led a consultation process with the sector that has resulted in AFRA. This has been a thorough and collaborative process, and there is a feeling of excitement and unity across the sector as a result.

Author: Out of scope, Senior Analyst / Programme Lead, Food Secure Communities
Responsible manager: Kelvin Moffatt, GM, Services and Contracts Management.

Appendix One: AFRA members



Names of members: Kiwi harvest, Kairos, Satisfy Food Rescue, Wellington Free Store, Kiwi Community Assistance, Wai Waste Food Rescue, Nourished for Nil, Love Soup, Gizzy Kai Rescue, Good Neighbour, Fair Food, Go Eco, Friendship House Huntly & Huntly West Hub, Food Rescue Northland, Kaibosh Food Rescue, Nelson Environment Centre and Just Zilch. New members not on the above image are Waiheke Resources Trust and Rotorua Whakaora.

Appendix Two: Speaking notes for Launch of the Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance

Speeches start at 8.45am.

Otene Reweti and David Savage will begin and will introduce you.

You speak at 9.00am for around 7 minutes.

Key acknowledgements

- Angie Warren-Clark – Labour List MP. Angie instigated the Environment Committee briefing to prevent food waste that was completed in early 2020. Angie has also been a long-term supporter of food rescue.

Key messages

- Very pleased to be at the launch of the Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance, recognising that the alliance has been a long-term goal for the food rescue sector.
- Food insecurity has been a significant issue in New Zealand for some time and increased significantly since the Covid-19 Alert Level 4 lockdown, where many anxious families sought food from food banks or other community organisations, often for the first time.
- During this time, despite disruptions to supply chains and a need to up-end normal operating procedures, food rescue organisations increased the supply of food through to community organisations, and thus to communities in need. I would like to thank you for your efforts.
- With funding from MSD's Food Secure Communities grants many food rescue organisations have scaled up over the last year.
- Having this distribution system in place has been critical to the Government in ensuring vulnerable communities are able to access food and other essential needs such as face masks, especially during periods of Covid-19 resurgence.
- The Government has supported AFRA's establishment in recognition of the critical and cost-effective role that food rescue plays in increasing the supply of good quality surplus food through to communities experiencing food insecurity.
- In doing so, food rescue also reduces the amount of good food going to landfill, which in turn reduces New Zealand's CO2 emissions, and protects the environment.
- I support AFRA's four goals: capacity, best practice, collaboration and advocacy, and look forward to seeing the food rescue sector grow its size, capability, impact and voice.
- And I congratulate you for the collaborative and collegial process that you have taken to establish AFRA. It is wonderful to see the excitement of the sector at this achievement.

Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Meeting

Date: 25 March 2021 **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

For: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment

File Reference: REP/21/3/290

Meeting with Veronica Shale, Fair Food Charitable Trust

Meeting/visit details	Friday 26 March 2021, Time TBC 2/624 Rosebank Road, Avondale
Expected attendees	Veronica Shale – Executive Director / Chief Cheerleader, Fair Food Charitable Trust
Purpose of meeting/visit	You met Veronica Shale at the NZ Food Network event in November 2020. She has since extended an invite to tour the new Fair Food site at Avondale.
Talking points	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congratulations on winning the Supreme Award at the New Zealand Food Awards. I understand your scale up over COVID-19 was phenomenal.• How has demand on your services been since then?• Tell me about how your service operates day-to-day.• Tell me about some of the organisations and businesses that you are working with.• I understand that you were one of the larger recipients of MSD's Food Secure Communities funding. How have you used the funding?• MSD funding for increased demand is only for two years – what is your plan for sustainability beyond this?• I understand that Fair Food is providing a 'pathways for employment' programme – can you tell me more about this?
Key discussion points	Winning Supreme Award at NZ Food Awards 2020 Up until COVID-19 Fair Foods was solely a mobile service, with three vehicles, three drivers, a GM and 70 corporate volunteers.

Over COVID-19, Fair Food massively scaled up, setting up four distribution hubs in Oratia, Avondale, Massey and Henderson. This enabled them to expand from providing 220 tonnes of food throughout the whole of 2019, to 151 tonnes of food in May 2020 alone.

As a result of this significant effort, Fair Food won the New Zealand Food Awards 2020 Supreme Award for their excellent teamwork and leadership in scaling up their service.

Central distribution hub & expansion to North West Auckland

Following COVID-19, Fair Food is now distributing up to 120 tonnes of food or 343,000 meals per month, which is the equivalent of feeding over 17,000 people for a week in West Auckland and beyond.

Fair Food received the largest amount of funding for increased demand from the Food Secure Communities programme of any food rescue organisation, reflecting the scale of their increased demand, and the critical role Fair Food plays in supporting other West Auckland organisations. Funding included:

- \$100,000 from the Community Food Transition Grant Fund covering June – August 2020.
- \$964,000 over 2020/21 and 2021/22 from the Community Food Response Grant Fund.

The Transition Grant funding enabled Fair Food to consolidate their operations into a pop-up hub in their Avondale site, enabling them to seamlessly continue to respond to their huge increase in demand, while planning for a permanent hub.

The Response Grant funding has contributed towards the lease of a new permanent 300-500 square metre fit-for-purpose site, also in Avondale, which Fair Food are about to move into. Funding has also supported employing key staff, expanding volunteer programmes, and purchasing three chilled trucks along with other infrastructure. This will mean that Fair Food can increase the reach of its food rescue and distribution drive operating efficiencies.

Fair Food empowerment and education programmes

Fair Food also run or are piloting other programmes including:

- A pathway to employment including through work experience, community service, training opportunities (employing 10 staff with varying hours).
- Kids cooking for kids in schools
- 'Do good work dos' – corporate volunteers working with and for a community in need

Background**Fair Food**

Fair Food was founded in 2011 and is a well-respected organisation with extensive reach and support in providing the only food rescue service in West Auckland.

Fair Food rescues fit-to-eat perishable, fresh food such as vegetables, fruit, protein and dairy, along with surplus bulk and ambient food, and distributes this to around 50 social service agencies and community groups.

Each recipient organisation must meet key criteria, including that they are a charity, provide access to wrap around services, assess and track the end recipient, and do not sell the food provided.

MSD Food Secure Communities

MSD's Food Secure Communities programme has invested \$32 million over two years to provide support for the increased demand since COVID-19 on foodbanks, food rescue and other community organisations who are distributing food.

Fair Food received funding from:

- The \$2m Community Food Transition Grant Fund which provided transitional funding to support the increased demand for food during the transition between Civil Defence standing down and MSD's longer-term funding.
- The \$21m Community Food Response Grant Fund which contributed towards the increased demand on organisations over a two-year period to July 2022.

Risks

Fair Food were only granted funding after we confirmed that they have a plan in place for longer-term sustainability beyond the length of MSD's funding. However, this remains a potential risk across all providers funded for their increased demand, which we are mitigating through continuous communication that the funding is only one-off.

Next steps (if any)N/A

Author: Out of scope, Senior Analyst, Food Secure Communities, Māori, Communities and Partnerships

Responsible manager: Claire Stearne, Acting General Manager, Services and Contracts Management, Māori, Communities and Partnerships.



Report

Date: 3 September 2021

Security Level: IN CONFIDENCE

To: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment

Overview of the Government's response to increased demand for access to food and other related services

Purpose of the report

- 1 To provide you with an overview of the Ministry of Social Development's contribution to the broader Government's response to increased demand for support to access food and other essential services due to the COVID-19 Delta variant.
- 2 To seek your approval to sponsor a paper to COVID Ministers next week seeking additional funding for access to food and essential items from 11 September.

Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **note** the COVID-19 Delta variant and resultant public health measures have led to greater demand for support to access food and other essential items.
- 2 **note** agencies have funded some iwi, community providers and other networks to meet immediate need for better access to food and other essential items.
- 3 **note** MSD anticipates that demand for access to food and other essential items will exceed additional funding allocated since we moved to Alert level 4 on 17 August.
- 4 **agree** to sponsor a paper for COVID Ministers next week seeking approval to allocate approximately \$10 million to meet ongoing demands from 11 September, some of which would be reprioritised and transferred from Vote Education and drawn down from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.

Agree/Disagree

Marama Edwards
Deputy Chief Executive
Māori, Communities and Partnership

Date

Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development and
Employment

Date

While supply chains are generally working, access to food and other essential items remains more acute than in previous lockdowns

- 3 Since Alert Level 4 restrictions were put in place on 17 August 2021, there has been a surge in demand for support to access food and other essential items.
- 4 Although some supermarkets particularly in Auckland are experiencing pressures due to self-isolation requirements (closures for deep clean and staff shortages), the overall food supply system is functioning well. We note that some people and communities, such as Pacific people, are being more affected than others.
- 5 As the Delta variant is more transmissible and infectious than previous variants, larger numbers of people are being required to self-isolate. This is leading to pressure points in the welfare response being more acutely felt than in previous outbreaks.
- 6 As of 3 September, 37,620 close contacts have been identified since 17 August 2021. The majority are in Auckland, with over half of these contacts identifying as Pacific. This is significantly higher than what we have experienced previously. In comparison, in the August 2020 outbreak, there were 1,500 close contacts identified.
- 7 Since Cabinet approved the additional \$7.2 million for MSD last week, foodbanks have reported sustained demand and remain under immense pressure. Community providers who have been offering support with other essential items such as hygiene products, household items and PPE have reported similar levels of continued demand.
- 8 In the first week of lockdown (Work and Income period 14 August – 20 August) there was a 64 per cent increase in Special Needs Grants (SNG) for food in comparison to the week prior, and an approximate 80 per cent increase after 10 days. In the 2020 Alert Level 4 lockdown, it took three weeks to experience this level of increase.
- 9 Preliminary reports from foodbanks have shown that funding has allowed providers to scale up to deliver an additional 13,300 food parcels (up from 6,000 or 220 per cent in the week prior to lockdown).

Some groups have signalled the need for targeted support or funding for food access and other essential items

- 10 The Pacific community in Auckland has been particularly affected by the current outbreak of COVID-19 and, therefore, self-isolation and Alert Level 4 restrictions. Pacific families made up over half of those having to self-isolate with entire support networks not being able to activate and mobilise.
- 11 Ministry for Pacific Peoples has advised that Pacific providers have raised the issue of not having access to PPE as a key concern. Furthermore, Pacific providers report being overwhelmed with requests for support (e.g., food parcels) causing significant strain on existing capacity. As a result, some requests are being put on hold as resources are low or have been exhausted. Accessing information is another key barrier for Pacific peoples, reporting a lack of vital information about the social supports available, including how to access these supports.
- 12 The Ministry for Women is seeking approval to fund \$2 million to re-establish the COVID-19 Community Fund to address the immediate impacts of further lockdowns on vulnerable groups of women and girls. If approved, this fund will assist community groups considered to have the most acute and immediate needs and could include help with leaving an abusing partner, culturally appropriate support networks for migrant women, mental health support for LGBTQ+ women.
- 13 Other groups who were identified as needing targeted support are:
 - 13.1 whānau who are currently not or only partially supported by mainstream community-based providers
 - 13.2 families who are needing access to culturally responsive food, such as Halal food
 - 13.3 communities and whānau in remote or isolated areas, and
 - 13.4 whānau through iwi-led responses.

- 14 MSD is conducting further work across the Ministry to understand any gaps related to services for older people and people with disabilities. We will work to incorporate this information into any subsequent advice and Cabinet papers.

Government agencies' responses to food access and related services during Alert level 4 and 3 is generally meeting immediate needs

- 15 Due to the levels of demand across Aotearoa New Zealand, government agencies have provided additional support to iwi, community and Whānau Ora providers.
- 16 Support has been targeted toward those in self-isolation through provision of food, increasing the accessibility and distribution of food through food banks and other food providers such as Eat My Lunch. They have also provided other essential items, such as period products and hygiene packs.
- 17 We have done initial mapping of agencies' responses to emerging needs in this current lockdown. [Appendix one](#) outlines funding provided by agencies since 17 August 2021.
- 18 In summary, since 17 August 2021, a total of \$69.3¹ million in funding across government has been released by agencies to meet immediate need for access to food, essential items, whānau support and support for Māori or iwi-led responses. This includes:
- \$28.0 million from Te Puni Kōkiri²
 - \$15.4 million from the Ministry of Social Development
 - \$0.3 million from the Ministry of Education
 - \$1.0 million from Te Arawhiti, and
 - \$4.9 million from the National Emergency Management Agency.
- 19 The Ministry of Health was allocated \$20 million through Budget 2021 to provide wrap around services for COVID-19 cases and eligible contacts with higher or complex needs in community settings, including the provision of food and accommodation.

Breakdown of funding by activity

- 20 Of this total amount, \$40.9 million has been allocated to meet the demand for essential items, some of which includes food. Other essential items covered by this funding include period items, connectivity (power and mobile data), household items, warmth, hygiene packs and wellbeing support. This funding will also assist communities' access COVID-19 vaccines and provide self-isolation accommodation.
- 21 The remaining amount, \$8.5 million, has been allocated to food banks, food networks and other food related providers. In practical terms, this equates to an additional 250,000 food parcels, costing approximately \$34.00 per parcel.
- 22 This is in addition to funding that was available for resurgence and food related activities prior to the start of lockdown, such as \$32 million for the MSD Food Secure Communities programme and the \$20 million allocated to the Ministry of Health through Budget 2021 to provide wrap around services, including food and accommodation for COVID-19 cases and eligible contacts with higher or complex needs in the community.

¹ On 2 September the Minister for Pacific Peoples announced funding of \$26 million to support Pacific communities, including through Pacific health and disability services, vaccination services, and communications.

² This includes exceptional funding for Māori organisations bridging gaps between services and funding for Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies. Under the Whānau Ora approach with Commissioning Agencies, support needs are determined by whānau themselves, so there is some flexibility in how the funding will be applied to address whānau needs.

Breakdown of funding by provider

- 23 Of the total funding released, \$30 million has been allocated by MSD and Te Puni Kōkiri to community providers, including Whānau Ora and MSD providers with Community Connectors to meet the demand for essential items, some of which will include food.
- 24 Of the total funding released, \$8 million has been allocated by MSD, Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Arawhiti to specifically meet the needs of iwi who are leading responses within their rohe. This includes support with communications outreach, iwi-led response planning and support to distribute kai, hygiene products, PPE and other essential items.
- 25 Iwi can also make claims for eligible welfare costs under the Emergency Management appropriation of an additional \$4.9 million through Civil Defence and Emergency (CDEM) Groups, as per last year. This is as a last resort.

Population groups reached though current additional funding

- 26 Funding provided to food banks, food networks and other food related providers will support the needs of different people to access services. While MSD does not request specific information about the people accessing funding, anecdotal information through our providers has indicated that people seeking support are often low income earners who have had hours of work reduced or are struggling to make up the income difference if they are receiving the wage subsidy, which only covers 80 per cent of wages.
- 27 MSD has established an approach informed by Pacific providers across Auckland to reach communities most at need. The three Pacific Food Secure Providers (Affirming Works, South Seas and The Fono) are now the centralised food hub for all Pacific providers. MSD is working with them and the food network to ensure they have funding and stock.
- 28 Approximately \$23 million of Te Puni Kōkiri's funding will target many needs of Māori and Pacific communities, through the three Whānau Ora commissioning agencies. MSD providers also support Māori and Pacific communities.
- 29 Most funding is servicing the needs of Auckland, Wellington and Te Tai Tokerau communities.
- 30 However, CDEM Groups are providing support to those who have no other means of support available through other channels. This is likely to be targeted to those living in rural or isolated areas of the country and those self isolating that cannot get immediate support through other means.

MSD's response continues to focus on access to food and other essential items through food networks, providers and iwi

- 31 Since 17 August 2021, MSD has allocated a total of \$15.4 million in additional funding to support access to food and other essential items through existing infrastructure and networks. The table below outlines how this funding has been distributed.

Amount	Source of funding	Distribution
\$2.8 million	Re-prioritised from Community Services MCA, including the Community Capability Resilience Fund allocated \$32m from the CRRF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$1.030 million to the Community Connectors• \$900,000 to the food sector• \$896,000 in priority grants for selected providers to support communities
\$7.2 million	Reprioritised from Vote Education and Vote Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$4.2 million for access to food• \$3 million for community grants for essential items and services, such as those with Community Connectors
\$5.4 million	Reprioritised from the CCRF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$1.4 million for food access in rural and remote areas• \$2 million to providers such as those with Community Connectors• \$2 million to iwi to meet critical unmet need

- 32 The additional funding and support provided since 17 August 2021, builds on MSD's recovery and rebuild infrastructure funded through Budget 2020 including:
- the Food Secure Communities network
 - the Community Connection Service, and
 - Building Community and Provider Capability.
- 33 The Food Secure Communities programme was funded in Budget 2020 (\$32 million over two years). This funding is to help meet the additional demand during COVID-19 lockdowns on foodbanks, food rescue and other community providers.
- 34 Through this funding:
- 131 foodbanks, food rescue and community providers around New Zealand are currently getting funding to help with increased demand, and
 - access to food stocks through food rescue organisations and other food hubs has increased.
- 35 The Community Connectors Service was funded \$41.3 million over two years from Budget 2020 to establish 125 Community Connector positions within the community and throughout the country to help people connect with the services they need to support recovery post COVID-19.
- 36 MSD was also allocated \$36 million from Budget 2020 for the CCRF for community initiatives that support the rebuild and recovery from COVID-19.

Based on past demand and funding levels, we expect further funding to be needed soon if restrictions continue

- 37 If Alert Level 4 and 3 public health restrictions continue, further funding will be needed to meet sustained demand for food and other essential items.
- 38 In terms of MSD's response, the total funding of \$15.4 million has been fully allocated.
- 39 Based on demand trends since 17 August 2021, we expect that this funding will be exhausted by 10 September as anticipated. Further, based on this demand and assuming it will continue, we expect to need similar levels of additional funding. Based on preliminary costings, we estimate the additional funding required will be approximately \$10 million for two weeks from 11 September 2021.
- 40 We expect that this further funding will be mainly allocated to support:
- Food Network New Zealand
 - Foodbanks, and
 - Provision of essential items through community providers.
- 41 Our key assumption is that current or similar Alert Level restrictions will continue from 10 September two weeks. What we know is that Alert Level 4 restrictions will continue for Auckland until at least 15 September and Alert Level 3 restrictions for the remainder of the country until at least 7 September.
- 42 We will continue to be guided by public health response. However, given the likelihood of higher Alert Level restrictions continuing we must ensure that we are being responsive to communities' needs and have adequate funding to meet sustained demand.

If Alert Level 3 and 4 restrictions continue, other pressure points within the welfare response may emerge

- 43 Despite the breadth of agencies' responses to immediate demand, it is unlikely this will reach all areas and all needs.
- 44 Many low-income families and whānau are likely to continue to experience cost pressures as families remain at home rather than school or work.

- 45 The Ministry for Pacific Peoples reported that any possible increase in funding and support made available to Pacific providers will help ensure Pacific families and communities, particularly those in Auckland, are able to access essentials (e.g. food, hygiene products). Information on what supports are available and how they can be accessed need to be made clear to Pacific peoples. This includes targeted messaging and communications, such as translated material into Pacific languages, to ensure as many Pacific peoples as possible can access this information.
- 46 Te Puni Kōkiri, Oranga Tamariki and Te Arawhiti are reporting that heating and energy costs, connectivity costs, transport and psychosocial support will continue as public health restrictions remain, and pressures on whānau and communities compile.

We have previously signalled that psychosocial issues may start to emerge

- 47 From 2020, we have good evidence of the immediate and medium-term impacts of social isolation and crowding from lockdown. It can negatively impact social and psycho-social wellbeing, particularly for children. It can also negatively impact mental health and elevate risk factors and drivers of family violence and sexual violence.
- 48 We are still closely monitoring demand in this space, and some agencies have responded to initial psychosocial needs.
- 49 Te Puni Kōkiri has identified areas of emerging concern being mental health and the potential for self-harm incidents (especially for rangatahi who experience higher rates of self-harm and suicide). Issues impacting whānau mental hauora are financial stress, illness, relationship problems, high deprivation, and lack of support.
- 50 Oranga Tamariki providers in Te Tai Tokerau, Auckland and Midlands have also reported that parental mental health is suffering, particularly among families with disabled children. Whānau are presenting high anxiety, particularly about jobs and money. Family violence providers are also finding it challenging to communicate with clients in a safe way. Banardo's counselling helpline "What's up", which is targeted at tamariki and rangatahi, has seen an increase in calls – including calls related to self-harm and suicide risk.

Joined-up approach to meet future demand while restrictions continue

- 51 Agencies are taking a high trust model with coordination largely happening at the provider level at the moment. Agencies continue to discuss how we can work together to meet these expected and emerging needs. The priority is ensuring that funding is coordinated locally, complimentary and reaches all population groups.

Funding options

- 52 There may be opportunities to seek further reprioritisation of funding from other agencies' appropriations if underspend due to Alert Level restrictions continue. However, if further reprioritisation cannot occur and demand continues, the Ministry will come back to you with further advice on how to meet this demand.
- 53 The Ministry of Education has indicated that the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme has a daily underspend during Alert Level 4 and 3 of approximately \$300,000 per school day, a total of approximately \$1.5 million per week. MSD is working with the Ministry of Education on an approach to allocate this underspend to the ongoing demand for food and other essential items.
- 54 We cannot further reprioritise from within MSD's baseline, given the reprioritisation that has already occurred. We recommend additional funding be sought from the CRRF on the basis that it meets a key criterion that it targets policy responses to the immediate impacts of resurgence-related restrictions on particular groups.
- 55 From our preliminary costings, we estimate a further \$10 million will be required to support ongoing needs after 11 September. Therefore, we propose that you sponsor a paper for COVID Ministers in the week commencing 6 September, which seeks approval to reprioritise and transfer from Vote Education and draw down from CRRF.

Indication of further support required for iwi and Māori

- 56 Early indications from Te Arawhiti, Te Puni Kōkiri and within MSD networks is further needs may arise from iwi, as well as communities in rural and isolated communities.
- 57 Further work could be done to support Māori. Te Puni Kōkiri has identified opportunities to address food access through existing resourcing efforts to include:
- involve and fund iwi and hapū in planning and determining activities for kai and related services,
 - activating a broader range of Māori providers, and
 - support for Ngā Hiahia Kai Māori Food Network in Tāmaki.
- 58 We will continue to monitor this space as needs arise and work with Te Arawhiti, Te Puni Kōkiri and NEMA to coordinate an approach. We also continue to work alongside these agencies to ensure current allocation and distribution is complimentary and maximises reach.

Appendix

- 59 Appendix One – Government agency funding allocated to support lockdown from 17th August 2021

File ref: REP/21/9/930

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Responsible manager: Out of scope Policy Manager, Social Development, Child and Youth Policy

Appendix One: Government agency funding allocated to support lockdown from 17th August 2021

Agency	Amount	Source	Service/distribution/activity
Te Puni Kōkiri	\$23m	COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund – August 2021	Food, power, mobile data, hygiene packs, mental health support, wraparound support to access multiple services
Te Puni Kōkiri	\$5m	Reprioritised from baseline	Community driven, local solutions to gaps in access and provision – small grants
Te Arawhiti	\$1m	COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund	Iwi-led response planning, communications outreach, support for vaccine uptake
Ministry of Social Development	\$2.8m	Reprioritised funding from Community Capability Resilience Fund	\$1.030 million to support whānau into existing channels of welfare support and support those self-isolating
			\$900,000 to support provision of food
			\$896,000 in priority grants to support communities
Ministry of Social Development	\$7.2m	Re-prioritised from Vote Education and Vote Social Development	\$4.200m to support provision of food
			\$3.000m for community grants for essential items and services
Ministry of Social Development	\$5.4m	Reprioritised funding from Community Capability Resilience Fund – allocated \$32.000m from COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund in Budget 2020	\$1.400m for food access in rural and remote areas
			\$2.000m to Community Connection service providers
			\$2.000m to address critical unmet need
Ministry of Education	Unknown	Repurposed funding within Period Products in Schools Programme	Provision of period products – 40,000 packs (enough for 20,000 per month)
Ministry of Health	\$20m	Allocated through Budget 2021 (COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund)	Wrap-around services for cases and eligible contacts with higher or complex needs
National Emergency Management Agency	\$4.90m	2021/22 financial year	Support people that have immediate welfare needs that do not meet NEMA's normal funding criteria and who cannot access other sources of support to meet the needs, including support to iwi, rural and isolated communities
Total	\$69.3m³		

³ On 2 September the Minister for Pacific Peoples announced funding of \$26 million to support Pacific communities, including through Pacific health and disability services, vaccination services, and communications.



Aide-mémoire

Cabinet paper

Date: 11 October 2021 **Security Level:** BUDGET SENSITIVE

For: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment

File Reference: REP/21/10/1106

Responding to sustained demand for access to food and other essential wellbeing items

Cabinet Committee	COVID-19 Ministers Group
Date of meeting	11 October 2021
Minister	Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment

Proposal You are seeking Cabinet's agreement to provide temporary funding to be drawn from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) to meet anticipated demand for food and other essential wellbeing items. This funding would cover the six-week period from 9 October 2021 to 21 November 2021.

The paper proposes two funding options for Cabinet's consideration:

1. \$13.55 million for six weeks [rec 3] (MSD's preferred option)
2. \$10.164 million for six weeks [rec 7] and establishing a tagged contingency of up to \$3.387 million [rec 11] (Treasury's preferred option)

In option 2, the paper proposes that you and the Minister for Finance are jointly authorised to draw down the contingency subject to reporting on:

- how prior funding for community needs has been allocated
- a costing model for resurgence related community needs funding with clear and consistent assumptions, and
- the need for additional funding to address community need directly relating to resurgence related restrictions [rec 12].

You are also proposing taking forward a proposal to Cabinet on the Community Connection Service on 15 November 2021.

Key issues ***Funding for food and essential items is exhausted; demand is ongoing***

Since 17 August 2021, MSD has allocated a total of \$24.63 million to support individuals and whānau to access food and other essential wellbeing items, particularly in Auckland. This funding has now been exhausted.

MSD has explored reprioritising from other appropriations within Vote Social Development and cannot currently further prioritise from MSD's baselines.

As noted in the Cabinet paper on 7 October 2021, 37 organisations in Auckland require funding to meet current need for food. This includes the Pacific hubs and iwi collective.

The New Zealand Food Network (NZFN) has also confirmed that, without funding to purchase additional food supplies, a significant number of food hubs and many food charities that source food through this channel will have limited capacity to meet local food needs from next week.

- From 6 September to 27 September 2021 there was more than a tenfold increase in food parcels provided across 13 Pacific focused providers (with all but one in Auckland) when compared to averages pre-lockdown.
- For the week ending 27 September 2021, there was a 700 per cent increase on pre-lockdown levels for food parcels delivered by food banks in Auckland. Appendix One of the Cabinet paper has more examples.

Since 17 August 2021, Community Connection Service providers in Auckland have reported a 514 percent increase in the number of people they have seen.

On average, pre-lockdown a Connector in Auckland would have had 17 visits per week compared to 157 visits per week from 17 August to 1 October 2021.

The number of individuals or families we expect Connectors to see in the next six weeks is 34,700, which is less than early modelling provided in the draft cabinet paper.

The costing reflects an optimistic scenario of demand easing

Demand is anticipated to trend downward, and funding has been phased over the next six weeks accordingly. We have costed a package worth \$13.55 million to cover the period from 9 October to 21 November 2021, including:

- \$5.5 million for a further 50,000 food parcels to be funded through existing contracts with foodbanks and community food providers, including the New Zealand Food Network.
- \$8.05 million to address the immediate wellbeing needs of a further 34,700 families and individuals through Community Connection Service.

MSD anticipate that demand for food parcels will return to pre-lockdown levels for the Auckland region by the end of the week of 15 November 2021. This aligns with easing of Alert Level restrictions in Auckland and the temporary increase of income thresholds for income support payments from 1 November 2021 to 28 February 2022 [CBC-21-MIN-0118 refers].

This additional funding will be allocated based on priority population groups within the Auckland region. Funding can be made available to other regions as necessary. MSD anticipates that it will continue to weight support towards the Pacific community and, more broadly, to Māori in higher areas of deprivation.

Proposal to report back on the Community Connection Service

This proposal would outline the value of the Community Connection Service and options to expand the service to meet ongoing demand among diverse communities until 30 June 2022. The options could include temporary increased FTE to address workforce fatigue and additional discretionary

funding. It will also outline how it support the new Traffic Light Alert Level system.

Our advice **MSD prefers allocating the full \$13.55 million for six weeks; we can provide reporting to you and Minister for Finance regardless**

MSD anticipates that increased levels of demand will continue for at least the next three weeks where it is likely Auckland will remain at Alert Level 3. Some easing of restrictions may allow some people to return to work. However, given the level of uncertainty around how this outbreak will eventuate, and what public health measures will be determined, funding for six weeks will:

- ensure that providers are adequately funded to be responsive to demand which exceeds baseline
- provide certainty as we transition through Alert Levels in Auckland over a yet to be confirmed timeframe, and
- ensure provider capacity and delivery planning is supported.

MSD believes that the option proposed by the Treasury is an avenue to seek information. We can provide this information in a timely manner, without having to impact providers and communities who are impacted by COVID-19.

Feedback to date from providers is that, while the Government has had to be responsive to public health decisions, making two-week by two-week funding decisions relating to food and essential items has caused added uncertainty for providers, impacting their ability to effectively plan in a fluid context.

Treasury's comment "it is difficult to determine what portion of the funding requested is in response to resurgence restrictions or is in response to pre-existing demand due to income inadequacy resulting in food insecurity", does not acknowledge the reality of people and their lives.

It is difficult to demarcate what is "in response to resurgence restrictions" or pre-existing. Providers, which is confirmed by past lockdown research¹, have noted that cumulative self-isolation and general uncertainty of dealing with a pandemic are exacerbating pre-existing hardship and wellbeing issues.

Further information on food purchasing, triage and reporting

Organisations working to support food security includes a food hub established with the three Pacific Providers (Affirming Works, South Seas Health and The Fono), VisionWest and Auckland City Mission (ACM).

Appendix One outlines current information on how these providers are managing their services, including purchasing arrangements, triage and reporting processes. If option 1 is agreed, we can also provide you and the Minister of Finance with detailed information by 1 November 2021.

1 The direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 risks compounding pre-existing social and economic inequities. While the ways in which they are affected will differ, the population groups at higher risk of adverse social and psychosocial impacts in the immediate and medium terms include: Māori, Pacific Peoples, refugees and migrants, health workers, essential workers, people with existing physical and mental health conditions, people with disabilities, older people, young people (18-25 years), children, and women. Rapid Evidence Review - The immediate and medium-term social and psycho-social impacts of COVID-19 in New Zealand (msd.govt.nz)

Further information on the provision of essential wellbeing items

Through providers, such as the Community Connection Service, MSD has been enabling the provision of essential wellbeing items, "wellbeing packs". Wellbeing packs are bespoke bundles of support for individuals and families facing challenges as a direct consequence of higher Alert Levels; or have existing challenges made worse due to higher Alert Levels.

Wellbeing packs are funded by MSD increasing the amount of discretionary funding allocated to each Community Connection Service.

The use of discretionary funding to meet immediate need is an existing service offering within the Community Connection Service and sits alongside the work Community Connectors (Connectors) do to triage and connect individuals and families to eligible services.

Appendix Two provides more information on the benefit of the service, including their role in MIQ, funding, triage and reporting.

Reporting back to Cabinet on the Community Connection Service

We recommend that you report back to Cabinet on 15 November 2021 with a proposal to expand the Community Connection Service to help meet ongoing demand among diverse communities. The date of this report back would ensure that there is no gap in community support through the service, as funding under the proposed Cabinet paper would end on 21 November 2021.

While we are hopeful that demand for food will continue easing back to pre-lockdown levels, we expect that demand for the discretionary funding available to Connectors will remain above pre-lockdown levels. This is because of the cumulative impacts of self-isolation on individuals and whānau, alongside often pre-existing wellbeing needs. We are considering the scope of this proposal, which may also seek support for workforce pressures. We will continue to engage with your office as this proposal takes shapes, well ahead of Cabinet.

Talking points

- Auckland's situation as restrictions continue is still putting extra pressure on individuals and whānau to access food and other essential items
- As we know, many of the families impacted by COVID-19 this time have been hit worse because of the hardship they were experiencing before
- Community providers in Auckland are giving food to many of our most impacted communities, including Pacific and Māori families
- Community Connectors are also seeing high need for bespoke 'wellbeing packs' of essential items that are meeting immediate whānau needs
- The effectiveness of this response is enabled by community providers being able to plan with some funding certainty; in our current context, with resurgences likely to continue, I believe a six-week period is reasonable
- I propose we allocate the full six-week funding of \$13.55 million
- The proposal reflects our expectation that this demand will ease; although for Community Connectors, the demand will stay above pre-lockdown levels
- I will also ask MSD to provide me with more detailed reporting on demand and costings by 1 November 2021

-
- I will also report back to Cabinet on 15 November 2021 on the Community Connection Service, including its value during COVID-19
 - This proposal will include options to expand its service to support our most at need communities, alongside other complementary services
-

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Responsible manager: Marama Edwards, Deputy Chief Executive - Māori, Communities and Partnerships

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Appendix 1: Further information on food purchasing, triage and reporting

Organisations working to support food security includes a food hub established with the three Pacific providers (Affirming Works, South Seas Health and The Fono), VisionWest and Auckland City Mission (ACM).

South Seas Health is bulk purchasing food supplies from food distributors, such as Tegal Chicken and Pak N Save. They also receive bulk food from the NZFN, along with other donated goods.

Affirming Works purchase food from a range of suppliers. Their main source of supply in addition to the NZFN, is Pak N Save, Sylvia Park, where there is a strong business relationship with the store owner. They also purchase through local food providers for their Pacific communities, which includes taro, tapioca, yams and rice.

VisionWest receive donated food from a range of partners including their food hubs, Fair Food, Kiwi Harvest and NZFN. Much of the donated food is bread, dairy products, produce and frozen goods except for meat (currently in low volumes). For dry goods, long-term stock and staples are in short supply; VisionWest purchases in bulk from Foodstuffs where they have a strong relationship formed over the past two years. They plan their purchasing in two-week cycles and seek to purchase goods in advance to avoid any shortages and ensure the receiving of goods happens within the right time frame to keep adequate stock levels. Their current purchasing is entirely based on funds available from MSD and, although they had business continuity supply at the beginning of the current lockdown, they are now relying on MSD support to maintain their capacity to meet weekly demands, along with some much smaller public donations. Funds provided by MSD are spent in the immediate period after being received.

VisionWest has a strong triage system undertaken by social workers and community workers trained in helping whānau navigate a range of supports. It happens over email and phone where whānau are connected to Work and Income and other supports. The VisionWest triage service records the reasons driving the need for food parcels and reports this to MSD weekly. Currently the highest stated reason is financial hardship followed by low and reduced income, and then health concerns.

Auckland City Mission, across five key sites, is working together with their partners at Ngā Whare Waatea Marae (MUMA), Manurewa Marae, and Papakura Marae to provide food parcels to families across wider Auckland; most of these whānau live in the South Auckland area. ACM have been receiving some food from NZFN weekly but purchase most items required to make up parcels from existing suppliers at well-negotiated prices. Purchasing is needed to meet the level of demand. Typically, they purchase in bulk once a week. They plan their purchasing based on the funding available and the trend of demand they are experiencing.

Families are assessed over the phone when they ring an 0800 number to request food support. This includes ensuring that families are accessing all support available to them through Work and Income. ACM and their marae partners have strong working relationships with their respective local Work and Income offices and have dedicated Work and Income staff members co-located at the various sites.

ACM does not carry contingency funding for this level of demand, so funding received is responding to this actual demand and being used to purchase food to meet it. The resourcing for this demand is dependent nearly solely on government support. They have expressed the need for funding certainty (period longer than two weeks) as the two-weekly cycle of funding does not allow for planning beyond each 14-day period.

As stocks run low while numbers of whānau in need remains high, they continue to source as much as possible through NZFN and food rescue opportunities and rely heavily on the two-weekly cycle of funding currently operating to purchase food.

Appendix 2: Further information on the provision of essential wellbeing items

Connectors can access the discretionary fund to meet immediate essential wellbeing needs, such as mobile phone data and other connectivity items, hygiene items, baby products and sanitary items. This is based on a needs assessment and is intended to be a last resort, once they have exhausted all other financial support options including from MSD. This is complimentary to existing hardship assistance through Work and Income.

The Community Connection Service benefits families by alleviating their immediate hardship issues, but also helps to avoid families taking on further debt. Providers selected for this service have been heavily involved in resurgence response activities across Auckland and provide a 'no wrong door approach' with referrals from testing sites, vaccination centres and foodbanks creating the opportunity for individuals and families to receive wrap around support. Connectors have direct access to MSD case management staff to ensure a more coordinated process for families to access immediate support through the providers, but also receive longer term support through MSD. As part of the Pacific response we have seen an increase of 15 percent new clients come through to MSD because of the support that is being brokered between trusted community provider and MSD. These were clients that have never engaged with us previously. This is being achieved by having trusted community providers working alongside individuals and families and MSD.

Connectors report that people in MIQ and those in self-isolation have multiple complex needs, either pre-existing or other needs which have been exacerbated by isolation. The discretionary fund is being highly utilised to support these issues.

Community Connection Service providers in Auckland have reported a 514 percent increase in the number of people they have seen since 17 August 2021. On average, pre-lockdown a Connector in Auckland would have had 17 visits per week compared to 157 visits per week from 17 August to 1 October 2021.

The number of individuals or families we expect Connectors to see in the next six weeks is 34,700, which is less than early modelling provided in the draft cabinet paper. This is because we anticipate a similar easing of demand for the Community Connection Service as with food provision, however, not at the same pace as demand for food parcels. This difference is anticipated to be driven by factors, such as:

- continued need to support families and individuals as they transition out of MIQ
- vaccination events in the coming weeks which may drive up referrals to the Community Connection Service, and
- continued levels of distrust and embarrassment that some people engaging with the Community Connection Service experience, which may result in a slower transition into income support services.

Like foodbanks, any baseline or contingency discretionary funding Community Connection Services had prior to lockdown, has been utilised, meaning discretionary funding received through this package will be the only discretionary funding available to the Community Connection Service.

Providers with the Community Connection Service and involved in the response to the Delta outbreak; are brought together on a regular basis with MSD to share information and discuss changing needs and priorities. Providers work with MSD to respond and pivot towards new areas of concern, cohorts in the community and one-off requests. Most recently this has included working with hard to reach communities and those in unstable housing. Providers operating Community Connection Services provide regular reporting to MSD.