

5 July 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Spending on communications staff

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 7 June seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about spending on communications staff.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing health districts in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing more than 8,900 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

Waitematā DHB operates with a small corporate communications team of six full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, including a Director, Associate Director, internal communications lead, external communications lead, digital media advisor and graphic designer. The team operates a media line from 7am to 8pm 365 days per year, including on-call weekend work in addition to normal rostered hours.

Up until 2020, the only occasions on which communications contractors were used were when permanent staff went on maternity leave or where there was a delay in a new staff member being able to start work.

The use of contractors has increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic for the following reasons:

- The need to support COVID-19 communications work to our workforce and population while a permanent staff member was temporarily seconded to the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre as part of the initial COVID-19 response;
- Difficulty retaining and recruiting permanent staff due to job security uncertainty associated with the national health reform process and the introduction of a state sector wage freeze;

- A full-time staff member reducing work hours to pursue study opportunities during the current financial year.

In general, Waitematā DHB has taken a very conservative approach to communications spending and has demanded high value from its investment in this area.

Answers to the majority of your specific questions are covered in our annual review responses to the Parliament Health Select Committee, which are already publicly available on the Parliament website.

We have extracted the relevant sections and collated them in **Attachment 1**, covering the following questions:

Question 1

Number of FTE communications/media staff employed in each year (this includes all internal and external communications staff/content producers and social media staff)

Question 2

The salary range paid to communications staff in each year.

Question 9

Total salary costs for communications staff each year.

Question 10

In each year, how many communications staff paid a salary more than \$100,000 per annum and \$200,000 per annum?

Please note that the information is provided in financial year format rather than calendar year format for the years 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21.

In relation to each of the above questions, you have also sought information for 2022 year-to-date. We can advise that:

- There has been no increase in corporate Communications Team FTE this year.
- The salary range paid to Communications Team members earning over \$100,000 has not changed, owing to the state sector wage freeze. However, one team member had a salary increase due to their appointment to an expanded role, reflecting their additional responsibilities and duties. There has been a back payment of \$1300 before tax to those team members earning under \$100,000 as part of the 2021 salary review process. The 2022 salary review process has not occurred yet.
- Three contractors are currently working in the corporate Communications Team. One of these is covering reduced hours of a staff member who reduced their hours to part-time work. The other two are filling roles which we are aiming to make permanent appointments to as the national health reform process settles.

Responses to your outstanding questions are provided below:

Question 3

Number of communications/media contractors used in each year.

Question 4

Total sum paid to communications contractors in each year.

We are providing a combined response to questions 3 and 4. The figures below outline spending on contractors within the corporate Communications Team.

Year	Communications contractor cost
2017/18	Nil
2018/19	Nil
2019/20	\$9033*
2020/21	\$73,096**
2021/22	\$243,665***

* One contractor working on COVID-19-related communications to staff and the general public while a permanent staff member was on secondment to Northern Region Health Coordination Centre while the pandemic was in its initial stages.

** Two contractors used to provide additional communications support for COVID-19 messaging to staff and the general public.

*** Three contractors, all covering vacant budgeted staff positions that could not be recruited to due to job security uncertainty associated with the national health reform process and the introduction of a state sector wage freeze.

Question 5

A breakdown of positions and numbers employed in each role (ie how many media advisors, senior media advisors, internal communications, managers, social media producers/managers).

As explained above, the six FTE positions include a Director, Associate Director, internal communications lead, external communications lead, digital media advisor and graphic designer. The team operates a media line from 7am to 8pm 365 days per year, including on-call weekend work in addition to normal rostered hours.

Question 6

How many media queries received in each year?

We are able to provide this information in calendar year format. Please note that the information below is the raw number of media queries received and is not weighted for complexity. For example, a routine patient status update request is counted as one query in the same way as a more-complicated query that may require input from various clinical services.

Number of media enquiries received by Waitematā District Health Board:

Year	Media queries
2017	523
2018	480
2019	463
2020	411
2021	527
2022 YTD	194

Question 7

How many interview requests received in each year?

We are able to provide this information in calendar year format. Please note that the numbers below represent those media contacts we have recorded as primarily seeking an interview with a member of DHB staff. Other media approaches where information was sought as well as an interview may be excluded as they were recorded primarily as an information request.

Media interview requests received by Waitematā District Health Board:

Year	Interview requests
2017	117
2018	126
2019	97
2020	83
2021	85
2022 YTD	29

Question 8

How many media interviews given and to which media organisations and when?

This information is not held as requests are typically recorded as 'open' or 'closed' rather than whether an interview occurred.

We are, therefore, refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982.

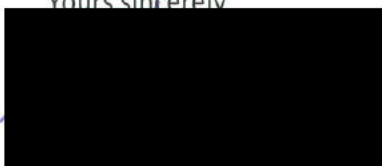
You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman. Information about how to seek a review is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

I trust that the information we have been able to provide is helpful.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publicly funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



Director of Communications
Waitematā District Health Board

2017/18 Waitematā DHB responses to Health Select Committee questions

52. How many public relations and/or communications staff, contractors/consultants or providers of professional services were employed in the last financial year; what was the total salary budget for these staff and how much were these staff paid broken down by salary band? How does that compare with each of the previous four financial years? Provide a numerical and percentage breakdown of public relations or communications staff by employment status ie permanent, contractor/consultant, provider of professional service.

The Communications team includes a Director and Deputy Director, a dedicated full-time Digital Media Advisor, two Communications Advisors and a 0.8 FTE Graphic Designer.

The Communications Department is responsible for managing all media interactions (both reactive and proactive), managing the DHB's corporate social media accounts, promotion of DHB initiatives and campaigns, production of staff e-newsletters and publications, maintaining the DHB's external website and intranet home pages, managing Official Information Act responses and ongoing issues management.

During 2017/18, a fixed-term contractor covered the role of a permanent staff member whilst on maternity leave. Upon completion of the contractor's term, all Communications Department staff were permanent employees again.

Year	FTE	Salary
2013/14	5.50	\$565,506
2014/15	5.57	\$560,735
2015/16	5.48	\$564,813
2016/17	6.08	\$585,870
2017/18	6.26*	\$659,258

* Please note that staff numbers appear higher in this table as it is measured by earnings of unique individuals rather than by FTE. For example, where a staff member has resigned and been replaced, this table records that single FTE position as earnings by two unique individuals: the departing staff member and the incoming replacement.

Headcount by \$10,000 band by staff category	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
170,000 - 179,000					1
160,000 - 169,000				1	
150,000 - 159,000	1		1		
130,000 - 139,000		1			
100,000 - 109,000		1		1	2
90,000 - 99,000			1		
80,000 - 89,000	2	2			
70,000 - 79,000	1	1	1	2	2
60,000 - 69,000	2	1	2	2	1
50,000 - 59,000				1	
40,000 - 49,000			2		
30,000 - 39,000			1	1	1
20,000 - 29,000	1				
10,000 - 19,000				1	
0,000 - 9,000	1		1		1
Total	8	6	9	9	8

2018/19 Waitematā DHB responses to Health Select Committee questions

52. How many public relations and/or communications staff, contractors/consultants or providers of professional services were employed in the last financial year; what was the total salary budget for these staff and how much were these staff paid broken down by salary band? How does that compare with each of the previous four financial years? Provide a numerical and percentage breakdown of public relations or communications staff by employment status i.e. permanent, contractor/consultant, provider of professional service.

The Communications team has 5.8 FTE positions, including a Director, Deputy Director, Digital Media Advisor, Internal Communications Advisor, External Communications Advisor and a 0.8 FTE Graphic Designer. All are permanent staff and the team did not hire any contractors in 2018/19.

The Communications Department is responsible for managing all media interactions (both reactive and proactive), managing the DHB's corporate social media accounts, internal staff communication channels, promotion of DHB initiatives and campaigns, production of staff e-newsletters and publications, event management, maintaining the DHB's external website and intranet home pages, overseeing the Official Information Act response process and on-going issues management.

Year	FTE*	Salary
2014/15	5.57	\$560,735
2015/16	5.48	\$564,813
2016/17	6.08	\$585,870
2017/18	6.26	\$659,258
2018/19	6.03	\$644,964

* Please note that staff numbers appear higher in this table as it is measured by earnings of unique individuals rather than by FTE. For example, where a staff member has resigned and been replaced, this table records that single FTE position as earnings by two unique individuals: the departing staff member and the incoming replacement.

Headcount by \$10,000 band by staff category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
170,000 - 179,000				1	1
160,000 - 169,000			1		
150,000 - 159,000		1			
130,000 - 139,000	1				
110,000 - 119,000					2
100,000 - 109,000	1		1	2	
90,000 - 99,000		1			
80,000 - 89,000	2				2
70,000 - 79,000	1	1	2	2	
60,000 - 69,000	1	2	2	1	1
50,000 - 59,000			1		
40,000 - 49,000		2			
30,000 - 39,000		1	1	1	
20,000 - 29,000					
10,000 - 19,000			1		
0,000 - 9,000		1		1	
Total	6	9	9	8	6

2019/20 Waitematā DHB responses to Health Select Committee questions

52. How many public relations and/or communications staff, contractors/consultants or providers of professional services were employed in the last financial year; what was the total salary budget for these staff and how much were these staff paid broken down by salary band? How does that compare with each of the previous four financial years? Provide a numerical and percentage breakdown of public relations or communications staff by employment status ie permanent, contractor/consultant, provider of professional service.

The Communications team had 5.8 FTE positions during 2019/20, including a Director, Deputy Director, Digital Media Advisor, Internal Communications Advisor, External Communications Advisor and a 0.8 FTE Graphic Designer. All are permanent staff and the team did not hire any contractors in 2018/19.

The Communications Department is responsible for managing all media interactions (both reactive and proactive), managing the DHB's corporate social media accounts, internal staff communication channels, promotion of DHB initiatives and campaigns, production of staff e-newsletters and publications, event management, maintaining the DHB's external website and intranet home pages, overseeing the Official Information Act response process and ongoing issues management.

Year	Bud FTE	Budget Salary	Actual FTE	Actual Salary
2015/16	5.51	595,715	5.48	564,813
2016/17	6.10	574,526	6.08	585,870
2017/18	5.30	532,202	6.26	659,258
2018/19	5.30	577,305	6.52	708,448
2019/20	5.30	671,333	6.43	716,154

Headcount by \$10,000 band by staff category	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
190,000 - 199,000					1
170,000 - 179,000			1	1	
160,000 - 169,000		1			
150,000 - 159,000	1				
130,000 - 139,000					1
110,000 - 119,000				1	
100,000 - 109,000		1	2	1	
90,000 - 99,000	1				
80,000 - 89,000				1	1
70,000 - 79,000	1	2	2	1	
60,000 - 69,000	2	2	1	1	2
50,000 - 59,000		1			1
40,000 - 49,000	2				1
30,000 - 39,000	1	1	1	1	2
20,000 - 29,000				1	
10,000 - 19,000		1			
0,000 - 9,000	1		1		
Total	9	9	8	8	9

* Please note that staff numbers appear higher in this table as it is measured by earnings of unique individuals rather than by FTE. For example, where a staff member has resigned and been replaced,

2020/21 Waitematā DHB responses to Health Select Committee questions

52. How many public relations and/or communications staff, contractors/consultants or providers of professional services were employed in the last financial year; what was the total salary budget for these staff and how much were these staff paid broken down by salary band? How does that compare with each of the previous four financial years? Provide a numerical and percentage breakdown of public relations or communications staff by employment status ie permanent, contractor/consultant, provider of professional service.

The Communications team had 6.0 FTE positions during 2020/21, including a Director, Deputy Director, Digital Media Advisor, Internal Communications Advisor, External Communications Advisor and a Graphic Designer. One staff role was filled by a contractor for the second half of the financial year due to the inability to attract new permanent staff as a result of ongoing employment uncertainty associated with the health reforms.

The Communications Department is responsible for managing all media interactions (both reactive and proactive), managing the DHB's corporate social media accounts, internal staff communication channels, promotion of DHB initiatives and campaigns, production of staff e-newsletters and publications, event management, maintaining the DHB's external website and intranet home pages, overseeing the Official Information Act response process and ongoing issues management.

Year	Actual FTE	Actual Salary
2016/17	6.08	585,870
2017/18	6.26	659,258
2018/19	6.52	708,448
2019/20	6.43	716,154
2020/21	5.47	690,535

Please note that subsequent checks have identified a slight under-report of Communications FTE and spend for the 2020/21 year. The correct figure is 5.94 FTE and actual salary of \$704,807.

Headcount by \$10,000 band by staff category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
190,000 - 199,000				1	
180,000 - 189,000					1
170,000 - 179,000		1	1		
160,000 - 169,000	1				
130,000 - 139,000				1	1
110,000 - 119,000			1		
100,000 - 109,000	1	2	1		
80,000 - 89,000			1	1	1
70,000 - 79,000	2	2	1		2
60,000 - 69,000	2	1	1	2	1
50,000 - 59,000	1			1	
40,000 - 49,000				1	1
30,000 - 39,000	1	1	1	2	1

Attachment 1

20,000 - 29,000			1		
10,000 - 19,000	1				
0,000 - 9,000		1			
Total	9	8	8	9	8