

Introduction

Tēnā koutou katoa

On 04 March 2021, the Minister for Youth Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan hosted a Youth Engagement Zoom Hui (Zhui) with over 130 rangatahi, youth workers and youth sector organisation representatives from the Auckland region. The Zhui was organised by the Ministry for Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi.

The Zhui was in response to the latest COVID-19 community outbreak in Auckland. MYD worked with its funded providers to ensure youth from diverse groups participating in the Zhui were supported pre, during, and post the event. MYD also worked with the Ministry of Education to include youth representatives from schools. Best endeavours were undertaken to enable young people to participate within the Zoom licensing requirements and time constraints.

The Zhui gave participants an opportunity to ask questions of a panel, talk about the challenges they were experiencing as a result of Alert Level changes, and discuss three different topics. The panel included:

- Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan – Minister for Youth
- Dr Siouxsie Wiles – Auckland University Associate Professor and Microbiologist
- Marama Edwards – Deputy Chief Executive Māori, Community and Partnerships – Ministry of Social Development
- Jackie Talbot – Group Manager, Secondary and Tertiary – Ministry of Education.

After the Q & A session, the floor was opened up for discussion around the following three areas:

- What are the two top issues/concerns you would like to raise about COVID-19 and the Government's COVID-19 messaging?
- What things are you or other young people doing in your communities to respond to COVID-19 and its impacts?
- Do you have any other questions about how the Government is responding to the current COVID-19 Alert Level changes?

Zhui participants were also encouraged to send through additional questions, so they could be answered after the event. Everything we heard was valuable and we want to thank all those who contributed their thoughts and ideas. We have arranged the questions we received under key themes¹ and have provided answers from relevant

¹ The majority of the questions were posted via the Zoom Chat function at speed and often related to spoken comments being made at the time. The variety of questions and the context in which they were asked means that MYD has made a judgement call (for some) on which theme they relate to best.

government agencies². We have also shared this information with all government agencies. At the end of the document, we have provided a list of available support.

Thank you for your patience on this document – we hope readers find it useful and we look forward to holding similar youth engagements in the future. If you would like to get in touch with us, please email MYDInfo@myd.govt.nz.

Nāku iti noa, nā

The MYD team

² This document is intended as a summary of what was discussed and raised, it does not necessarily constitute the official views of MYD, where advised government agencies have provided their responses to these questions.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Government response	4
Themes, Questions and Answers	5
Health (27)	5
Education (30)	10
Social support services (19)	20
Youth development (6).....	24
Disabled young people (5)	26
Employers and essential workers (4).....	27
Youth homelessness (1)	28
Discussion regarding the topics distributed prior to the Zhui	29
Financial support	32
Information links	34

Government response

A total of **92** questions were asked during the Zhui via the open forum (10) or through Chat (82). Seven key themes emerged from the suite of questions:

- Health (27)
- Education (30)
- Social support services (19)
- Youth development (6)
- Disabled young people (5)
- Employers and essential services (4)
- Youth homelessness (1).

The Office of Ethnic Communities (OEC) hosted a Zoom call on 02 March 2021, which involved ethnic community representatives, Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan (Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities), Dr Ashley Bloomfield (Director-General of Health) and Marama Edwards (Deputy Chief Executive, Māori, Communities and Partnerships, Ministry of Social Development). The purpose of the Zoom was to provide information on the COVID-19 vaccine and the types of support available from the Government. OEC developed a Zoom call summary report of the key points raised in the Zoom call dated March 2021. Where relevant, we have used the same information to help inform the responses in this document to ensure consistency in government messaging.

The following government agencies reviewed/contributed to the responses:

- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Ministry of Education (MOE)
- Ministry of Social Development (MSD)
- Office of Disability Issues (ODI)
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD)
- New Zealand Police
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC).

A copy of the responses will be shared with all government agencies.

Themes, Questions and Answers

This section summarises the key questions raised during the Zhui. Due to the large volume of questions, we have summarised the key themes and topics raised by participants. Please note that we have paraphrased and/or copied verbatim the questions as written in the Zoom Chat function.

There may be questions raised at the Zhui which are not able to be answered, as they may relate to policy issues that are still being worked through by Government.

Health³ (27)

The questions and responses have been grouped into the following sub-themes:

- Mental health (5)
- COVID-19 information (11)
- COVID-19 safety (9)
- General (3).

Mental health⁴

“Given the exceptional impact that level changes has been shown to have on the need for Kiwis to reach out for support on Youthline’s helpline, what are this government’s intentions for the funding of not only Youthline’s helpline but other NZ helplines in the near future?”

“In terms of teenagers specifically Pacific Islanders and Maori students who have been heavily impacted by Covid-19 ... What support could you offer to those students that may not know youthline numbers or organisations that can help them through this and if you know of family member that have been struggling through Covid-19 how did you help them through this uncertain time?”

“What strategies do you have to help the increase of anxiety levels that have been raised in our rangatahi over this time and throughout the lockdown?”

The Ministry of Health funds a range of helpline services for people of all ages who are experiencing some form of distress including “1737” the National Telehealth Service where people of all ages can free call or text 1737 anytime to receive support from qualified health professionals and counsellors, as well as the alcohol and other drug and gambling helplines. In addition to this, funding has been made available for youth-specific phone and web-based supports through Youthline. (see page 28 for details)

In 2019, the Government announced investment of \$455 million over four years to expand access to and choice of primary mental health and wellbeing support for all New Zealanders. This includes targeted funding for kaupapa Māori, Pacific and youth-specific mental health and addiction services across the country. Since the announcement, services for young people have already been set up or expanded in ten district health board areas across Aotearoa New Zealand, with more still to come. Kaupapa Māori and Pacific mental health and addiction services are also being rolled out across the country

³ Answers included under the Health theme were provided by different government agencies.

⁴ All answers included under the Mental Health sub-theme were provided by the Ministry of Health.

and can be accessed by people of all ages, including young people who choose to access culturally-specific services.

In 2020, the Ministry of Health invested in a psychosocial response package that funded a variety of supports, tools, and resources to help New Zealanders and whānau manage anxiety due to the uncertainty and change caused by COVID-19. The psychosocial response package includes:

1. a campaign, Getting Through Together, which focuses on things everyone can do to maintain mental wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic, with practical tips for looking after individuals and whānau.
<https://www.allright.org.nz/campaigns/getting-through-together>
2. A range of digital supports and e-therapies to help people manage their mental health and wellbeing during the uncertainty of COVID-19, including the Melon app, Mentemia app and Staying on Track e-therapy tool.
<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/mental-wellbeing/free-tools-resources-and-apps/>

As part of the Budget 2020 COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, the Government has provided \$25 million over four years for mental health support for tertiary students at polytechs, wānanga and universities. This funding will be used to boost and expand wellbeing supports and services for tertiary students, starting with programmes in polytechs and wānanga over the coming months.

“What is the government doing to implement Rainbow (LGBTQIA+⁵, MVPFAFF+⁶) policies during COVID-19 lockdowns? Rainbow peers are the ones who need to possibly have free mental health support for our young people.”

During lockdown, we heard there was concern that Rainbow young people would need access to more targeted support, which is why we provided additional funding for OUTLine, a Rainbow community organisation, to support their helpline to operate remotely and be more widely promoted and available.

Since then, the Government has announced a \$3.2million dollar boost for mental health supports for young Rainbow New Zealanders. The Ministry of Health is in the process of procuring these new services which will be provided by Rainbow organisations. These services are expected to be up and running in the second half of 2021. On top of this, additional funding has been made available for training to ensure that our mental health and addiction workforce has the skills and confidence to respond to the specific needs of Rainbow New Zealanders who seek help during times of distress.

COVID-19 information and messaging⁷

“Are there any initiatives to make the COVID-19 messaging more relatable and engaging? Rangatahi are finding that some information is difficult to

⁵ LGBTQ+ **stands for** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), and others. The "**plus**" represents other sexual identities including pansexual and Two-Spirit.

⁶ MVPFAFF+ stands for Pacific and Indigenous rainbow community which include mahu, vakasalewa, palopa, fa'afafine, akava'ine, fakaleiti (leiti), fakafifine.

⁷ All answers included under the COVID-19 information and messaging sub-theme were provided by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

understand or are finding the messaging is inconsistent with information sharing.”

We are operating in a constantly changing environment, which means some advice is prone to change. We carry out periodic research into various communities and groupings such as youth, Māori, Pasifika, ethnic people, etc. We also hold regular meetings with youth representatives from diverse backgrounds which informs our messaging. We recommend that rangatahi follow our social media channels for information that is up to date and easy to share.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UniteAgainstCovid19/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/covid19nz>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/uniteagainstcovid19/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/uniteagainstcovid19/>

“What is the capacity of the Covid Response to translate messages concisely and without cultural assumptions into other languages, so whānau don’t have to rely on each other to translate?”

The Unite Against COVID-19 website has information available in 25 languages, including New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). This information is translated by the government’s translation service within Department of Internal Affairs for the 24 ethnic and pacific languages, Te Taura Whiri for Te Reo Māori, and Deaf Aotearoa for NZSL, so we can be confident of the accuracy and appropriateness to Aotearoa New Zealand’s communities.

Translations can take anywhere between 1-4 days to be translated and uploaded onto the COVID-19 website, depending on the complexity and length. We are constantly reviewing the content and languages that we translate.

The translations can be found here: <https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/translations/>

“What is going to be done to make information more accessible to our whānau in terms of those of which that English is second language? Ideas I have received include different languages for the broadcast, radio, information put out into the communities through churches, workplaces, schools, text messaging in own language.”

As well as having information available in 25 languages on the Unite Against COVID-19 website, we also work with numerous ethnic media outlets who provide translated information on both radio and in newspapers.

We send updates to an ethnic community stakeholder list – this is made up of a range of cultural organisations including churches and places of worship. We also have a subscriber service through our translated webpages where people can opt in to receive updates whenever content has been published in translation. The links to subscribe can be found at the top of every language page here: <https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/translations/>

We are exploring having content available in audio and video.

There is also a layer within the existing campaign that is in the works that will target a younger audience, which is less information-dense and more focused on illustration and imagery.

“What is the government going to do to get clear and simple information about the vaccine out, in terms of encouraging and also dealing with conspiracy theories as well?”

The Unite Against COVID-19 information-based Vaccine Campaign is in market now – in press, radio, and paid digital content. It provides facts and answers some of the key questions people who have participated in research to support the campaign have asked. It encourages people to seek information from credible sources to make informed choices.

“What are you guys doing to stop the spread of mis-information? How are you promoting to youth the importance of getting the vaccine, and squashing the conspiracies lingering? Some of our clients do not have access to wifi, laptops, mobiles, or even landlines when they do hear from others 9 time out of 10 it is the wrong message.”

Relevant government agencies are working together to identify mis- and disinformation, and decide if/how to act on it based on international best practice. Part of this will be asking people to report it through the appropriate platforms and channels. For example, if it's a Facebook post, we ask people to report it to Facebook so it can be removed if appropriate. People can report print and other materials to [CERT NZ](https://www.cert.govt.nz/individuals/common-threats/covid-19-vaccine-scams/): <https://www.cert.govt.nz/individuals/common-threats/covid-19-vaccine-scams/>

“Due to the negative media representation of south Auckland, how is the government holding to account the media outlets that sensationalize and profit off the suffering of those being worse effected by COVID?”

It is the government's role to remain neutral. If people have concerns about media content, they can contact the Broadcasting Standards Authority: <https://www.bsa.govt.nz/>

“I think a lot of young people are hesitant about the vaccine and don't want to take it due to all the rumours circulating online. What can the government do about this?”

The Unite Against COVID-19 information-based Vaccine Campaign mentioned above has content specifically targeted for young people. As we approach Group 4 in the rollout – which is when most young people will be vaccinated – more and more content featuring influencers that resonate with young people will be published. For example, there is an upcoming 'ask me anything' with Ladi6 and Doctor Siouxsie Wiles.

“I have noticed in my community that there is a lot of fake news circulating on community facebook groups due to language barriers and lack of messaging to ethnic communities – what can be done about this? I also think that govt. messaging may not be utilizing how ethnic communities get information. For example, churches and faith communities could be key to community with groups.”

There is content on the Unite Against COVID-19 website about 'Getting the right information' that has been translated into 25 languages. There has been a concerted effort from the government to dispel misinformation. Ensuring that everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand has access to reliable information to make informed decisions is a priority for us.

“What priority are youth on the COVID-19 roll out? Especially youth who are in high contact jobs or live with their elders?”

Currently MedSafe has approved the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for those aged 16 years and over. Everyone aged 16 years and older in Aotearoa New Zealand has been prioritised into four groups in decreasing order of need for the vaccine. Any young people in Groups 1, 2 or 3 will be prioritised, with Group 4 being the remaining population. There is enough vaccine available for all New Zealanders 16 years and older.

Important information on getting a vaccine, including the prioritised roll-out can be found here:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-getting-vaccine>

“How are we ensuring that youth are able to continue their jobs/go to school without worrying about potentially bringing the virus home?”

“What support is out there for young people who don’t have access to their own transport to go and get tests and later on vaccines? There are lots of vulnerable young people living independently who rely on public transport to get around.”

Planning for the public rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine is ongoing. The government is aiming to have as many people as possible in Aotearoa New Zealand receive their vaccination before the end of the year and the Ministry of Health is working with District Health Boards to ensure that vaccines are accessible throughout the country, including for hard to reach communities.

Ministry of Health is examining its communication channels to ensure they are reaching everyone, including youth.⁹

“What is happening with the overstayers in our country? Do they receive healthcare and if not, how do we stop the spread of COVID if they are afraid to get tested because of their overstay status?”

COVID-19 testing and healthcare for individuals with COVID-19, are free irrespective of citizenship/immigration status, nationality, or level of medical insurance and coverage.

“Why don’t we put in place stronger restrictions for those who break out of quarantine? Right now there are no repercussions for those who are purposely putting the whole country at risk?”¹⁰

The Police role in the circumstance relates to the enforcement of the relevant legislation. In this instance the Ministry of Health is the lead agency and is responsible for obtaining the relevant legislation. Police are guided by this legislation and any subsequent Health Orders that are issued from time to time. The Police approach to any breach of the

⁸ All answers included under the Mental Health sub-theme were provided by the Ministry of Health.

⁹ This information has been extracted from the OEC Zoom call summary report developed in March 2021.

¹⁰ This answer was provided by the New Zealand Police.

COVID-19 related breaches or offences has been one of engage, encourage, educate and, as a last resort, enforce.

General

“How can we minimise the COVID-19 cases without enforcing lockdown?”

The best way to prevent infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, is to stay home when you are sick, practice good hygiene by washing your hands, keeping your distance from people you don't know while you are out and about, and continuing to use the NZ COVID-19 tracer app. For more information check out the Unite Against COVID-19 website (<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing>).

“As a young expecting teenage mum for the first time Its really hard to prepare a new start of life. Is there any extra support for us young parents outside of winz?”

“Knowing that there are a lot of expecting teen mums out there and are due while this COVID-19 is happening. Is their any support around letting their partners being in the labour room while in Level 3 and Level 4?”

Pregnant young women can access support through various places and should discuss their individual circumstances with their midwives who will be able to guide them on what support is available.

Alert levels 3 and 4 represent a significant risk of community transmission of COVID-19. Therefore, measures have to be put in place to reduce the risk of exposure and transmission. One of these measures is to restrict the number of people entering the hospitals. However, support during labour and birth is vital to the wellbeing of the mother and baby, therefore a support person is encouraged to be there with any labouring woman. The visitor restrictions during Levels 3 and 4 are in place to protect women, babies and whānau, as well as other patients and hospital staff. The staff working in the maternity units are aware of this and work hard to support women birthing and new mothers during this time.

Education¹¹ (30)

The questions and responses have been grouped into the following sub-themes:

- Online learning (14)
- Additional support (12)
- Resubmissions (3)
- English as a second language (1).

Online learning

“What additional support are you willing to offer youth who are struggling to adapt with online school during covid restrictions?”

¹¹ All answers included under the Education theme were provided by the Ministry of Education.

“What support is available for students and teachers working digitally during lockdown? What resources are available for students that require school resources and facilities?”

“How can the government help students that in lock down cant keep up?”

Early learning services, schools, kura and wharekura will provide additional support to any students who are struggling with online learning. Teachers are best placed to talk to those students, as they know best where they’re at with their learning and what their individual circumstances are.

There are also lots of resources available on the Ministry of Education’s [Learning from Home](#) website (including links to TV learning programmes in Māori and English mediums) and the [Ki to Ao Mārama](#) site for resources in the Māori medium.

It’s up to each school/kura/wharekura to decide how they support students who are required to learn from home (or wherever they’re based). This may include the distribution of hard copy learning material.

“How can government help the students that don’t have any technology? How can the government help the students in lockdown, can the government be able to provide as student laptops?”

In response to the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, the Ministry distributed more than 37,000 computers to students who didn’t otherwise have access to a device for home learning (prioritising students studying for NCEA and those in lower-decile schools). The ownership of these 37,000 devices has been given to schools/kura/wharekura, so they can continue to be used for home learning in any future events.

“Teachers should be able to provide extra support for students who aren’t able to do online learning whether that’s because of having no digital devices or because they are essential workers and not able to join classes online. How can the teachers help those students?”

“For our students who may not have access to technology or the space within their bubbles/households to hold effective online schooling, what is being done to encourage and aid online education, especially if lockdowns extend?”

“Lot of students don’t have access to devices and internet... are there any plans in motion to support students with limited access to technologies for online schooling?”

It’s up to each school/kura/wharekura to decide how they support students who are required to learn from home (or wherever they’re based). Teachers are best placed to talk to those students, as they know best where they’re at with their learning and what their individual circumstances are. One option could be the distribution of hard copy learning material.

“And how can our youth workers, like myself, collaborate with the government to ensure things are moving forward safely and effectively?”

We would need to know specifically what youth workers are referring to here to determine whether we're best placed to answer this question. It may be better directed to schools.

“Is there professional development to help teachers learn to teach digitally?”

The Ministry of Education provides access to schools for professional learning and development (PLD) to support the development of digital skills, including teaching digitally. One of the four priorities for centrally funded, regionally allocated PLD is Digital Fluency, which is about supporting teachers, and learners to confidently and effectively use digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. The Ministry dedicates \$47m a year to centrally funded, regionally allocated PLD.

“What support is there for teachers to deliver classes digitally, will there be a national standard to hold them accountable?”

There is not a specific standard for delivery of classes digitally or by distance, but the general criteria of the Teaching Code and Standards and learners' entitlements under the national curriculum remain, whether teaching is occurring in person or digitally/by distance. The Ministry has provided a Distance Learning Review Tool for schools and kura to use to assess their readiness and capability with delivering teaching and learning online/by distance, and this can be used to understand their status against what good practice in online and distance teaching and learning looks like, and how to take next steps to improve. This tool is available here:

<https://pld.education.govt.nz/news/supporting-schools-and-kura-prepare/>

“Are there any alternatives to digital learning or alternative teaching ideas the Ministry of Education has?”

Distance education does not need to be delivered completely digitally, although some form of digital communication (including texting) with teachers or peers can help improve the experience of distance education. We also recognise that not all types of distance education delivered online are high-quality, particularly when the move is made in an emergency. It is important to keep communicating with teachers and peers about what is working, and what is not, to help inform changes or improve the support available during distance education.

“Yeah online schooling doesn't work for everybody... Would it be possible to do staggered year level entry into schools during level 3?”

At Alert Level 3 there is a high risk the disease is not contained. While education is important, the health, safety and wellbeing of New Zealanders remains the top priority for both the Government and the Ministry of Education. While we know it is very beneficial for students to be at school with their friends and learning face-to-face with their teachers when possible, it is also important Government takes decisive action to minimise the spread of COVID-19. This is why at Alert Level 3, schools and early learning services were physically open only to those students who are unable to be

appropriately supervised at home. Where possible, students and teachers are asked to learn or work from home.

Additional support

“How can we support our rangatahi with a resilience curriculum in schools? How can we support and teach our young people to cope and thrive during these times?”

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) is designed to ensure that young people are able to experience rich opportunities for building and exploring their resilience. It identifies key competencies that draw on knowledge, attitudes and values that will allow young people to be confident, connected, lifelong learners and active members of their communities. These competencies are not separate or stand-alone and are key to learning in every learning area.

To support schools when developing teaching and learning programmes around mental health and resilience, the Ministry is developing mental health education guidelines to support schools in the development of their own mental health teaching and learning programmes. The guidelines will be clear, easy to use, bicultural and inclusive and provide boards of trustees, leaders, and teachers with good practice guidelines to create teaching and learning opportunities and whole school approaches to building resilience and wellbeing.

Together, with supporting resources, the guidelines will allow teachers to design safe and inclusive mental health education programmes, that are tailored to individual student needs and local contexts.

A resource that could be used alongside the guidelines is *Mental Health Education and Hauora: Teaching interpersonal skills, resilience, and wellbeing*, which every school with year 7 students and above were provided with in 2020. This is a practical resource for teaching about mental health, and includes lesson ideas and activities. You can download this at: [education.govt.nz/news/wellbeing-and-mental-health-teaching-resource-for-teachers/](https://www.education.govt.nz/news/wellbeing-and-mental-health-teaching-resource-for-teachers/).

The Ministry remains committed to developing curriculum supports for mental health education to ensure all ages and year levels are catered for.

“What implications have been put in place for students before escalating the use of Youthline?”

We know experiences for students were diverse during COVID-19 and after students started returning to schools.

Some students enjoyed this time, but others told us they really missed their friends, teachers and face-to-face time, and this was affecting their wellbeing.

The Ministry of Education worked hard to get a device into every home, so students could stay connected with the friends, their teachers, and their learning.

For some students the learning environment was not great at home, so we encouraged schools to reach out to all students, to check in, to see if they had the things they needed.

We helped too, by providing advice about managing learning time and devices at home. Suzy Cato and Nathan Wallis worked on the "Home Learning TV" channel, doing the same.

After the first long lockdown ended, we set up a wellbeing fund, so students could get the help they need through their teachers and the guidance network.

We also have a similar wellbeing fund for teachers, so they are firing on all cylinders, to support students when they need it.

You can contact the Youth Action Squad (YAS) through Netsafe (funded by the Ministry of Education); they are helping students affected by cyber bullying.

We know that lots of students continue to be worried about their friends and their wellbeing and have set up online groups, checking in with others, sharing games and activities online. Does your school have groups like this? You might like to look at what these groups are doing. Support Crew <https://www.supportcrew.co/> is one example of an online platform aimed at how others can help, get people through these difficult times. If you need help, please reach out to a trusted friend, or teacher.

"As we pretty much spent 5 weeks being in and out of school its really hard for students to catch up with their work and actually get it done to a high standard. And we cant resub for an achieve, so whats the government going to do to help students through that?"

"As we know we've been in and out of school basically this whole year (im from Papatoetoe high) and im sure everyones been stressed as least I have... whats being done to help students who are struggling with stress and anxiety due to covid 19 lockdowns? Whats being done or what can be done to make it easier for them?"

To address wellbeing needs as a result of COVID-19, the Government announced a \$66 million package in new funding to support the wellbeing of our learners and educators as a result of COVID-19.

The package included a \$52 million Urgent Response Fund, which enabled schools and kura to fund the provision of immediate support for any learning, social, emotional, mental, or other wellbeing needs of children and young people resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown and ongoing effects. The Fund has enabled over 2,000 early learning services, schools, and kura nationally to provide support to children and young people.

More information can be found at: <http://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/>

The Government has also announced \$25 million in new funding to expand front line mental health and wellbeing services for tertiary students.

This funding will be used to meet the ongoing wellbeing needs of tertiary students in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. These new services will be embedded within tertiary settings to ensure ease of access. They will include access to counselling and other treatments as well as peer support, self-management support and links to social and wellbeing supports.

The Ministry of Education will work closely with the Ministry of Health to facilitate the accelerated rollout of the youth-specific services of the Ministry of Health’s mental health, wellbeing, and addiction initiatives to tertiary providers.

More information can be found at: <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/wellbeing-in-education/> and <https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/covid-19-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-support-for-students/>

The Government is funding counselling provision in large schools and through community counselling in primary and small secondary schools. The first services will be in place for Term 2, 2021.

The Ministry of Education is developing guidelines for teaching about mental health, aligned with the New Zealand Curriculum. These are designed for schools with students in years 1-13 and supporting schools to take a whole-school approach to mental health education. The Ministry is developing the Guidelines in consultation with the Ministry of Health. Teaching resources will be developed and released in 2022 to support their implementation.

“It continues to hinder on how our Maori youth have lower chances of going to university and study. Even if there may be support offered to these communities, how is this support communities to them? How do they know that this support exists?”

Through the NCEA Change Package, seven key changes have been announced:

- 1: Make NCEA more accessible
- 2: Mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori
- 3: Strengthen literacy and numeracy requirements
- 4: Have fewer, larger standards
- 5: Simplify NCEA’s structure
- 6: Show clearer pathways to further education and employment
- 7: Keep NCEA Level 1 as an optional level

Change 2: Mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori in particular will ensure that NCEA is inclusive of and values mātauranga Māori, which will make NCEA a more relevant qualification for ākonga Māori. An example of this is the development of a new Te Ao Haka subject. This will be a University Entrance-approved subject and may enable ākonga to achieve University Entrance, further opening a pathway to university study.

By effecting these changes, ākonga Māori will be able to access a secondary school qualification that is more robust, consistent, inclusive, and accessible. In doing so, the updated NCEA qualification will support ākonga Māori to achieve success in NCEA as Māori.

More information about the NCEA Change Package can be found here:

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/ncea-review/change-package/>

“In terms of supporting our rainbow diverse youth and Pasifika rainbow diverse youth... need more support in schools such as programmes and what policies

are put in place ... to support getting back to school, as school can be one of the only (if even that) safe spaces for our students that are rainbow”

School policies for Rainbow students should aim to protect and promote safety and inclusion. Under the Education and Training Act 2020, a school’s board is required to provide a safe environment for students and to ensure that their school is inclusive.

The Ministry of Education provides the online *Inclusive Education: Guide to LGBTIQ+ students* to help schools do this. This is available at:

<https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-lgbtqa-students/>. This guide includes some resources about Pacific Rainbow experiences. These are available at: <https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-lgbtqa-students/explore-maori-and-pasifika-understandings-about-sex-characteristics-gender-and-sexuality-diversity>.

The Ministry of Education refreshed its curriculum guidance *Relationships and Sexuality Education* last year. It contains strengthened information about rainbow concepts and issues, supports schools in creating environments inclusive of rainbow students, and has a clearer focus on healthy relationships. The Ministry of Education has also funded Curriculum Leads to provide frontline support to teachers and schools in creating inclusive environments for all learners. If schools, families, and learners need additional support, they can reach out to their local regional education office. The Ministry of Education has also funded the development of additional resources for schools and anticipates these will be made available by mid-2021. A rainbow youth organisation is developing this guidance.

Schools are also able to access support to help learners and families attend and engage in school during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Ministry of Education has set up two funds to support Pacific learners’ education success and wellbeing during COVID-19: the Pacific Education Support Fund and Pacific Education Innovation Fund, where groups can apply for funding to connect Pacific learners to education or deliver on innovative ideas to support Pacific learners and their families. More information is available from: <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/action-plan-for-pacific-education/pacific-education-funds/>

The Government also funded a \$52 million Urgent Response Fund, which enabled schools and kura to fund the provision of immediate support for any learning, social, emotional, mental, or other wellbeing needs of children and young people resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown and ongoing effects.

“What support is there for rangatahi who have left school to help support their families financially but want to still gain their NCEA?”

Through the NCEA Change Package, the Ministry of Education has committed to making our senior secondary qualification more robust, consistent, inclusive, and accessible for students of all abilities and backgrounds.

While NCEA results have previously been able to be viewed online, students who did not pay their NCEA fees did not receive a formal recognition of achievement. As part of *Change 1: Make NCEA more accessible*, the Ministry has removed all NCEA fees, including for Scholarship. Rangatahi who have already left school but have unpaid NCEA fees, which impeded them from receiving their formal NCEA, are now able to apply to receive formal recognition of their learning without paying these fees. More information about this change can be found here:

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/ncea-review/change-package/access-ncea/>

The Youth Guarantee suite of initiatives support learners in developing their own pathways towards future work and careers. These initiatives provide opportunities for students to achieve a minimum of NCEA Level 2 to enable progression to higher levels of study, training, or employment. More information about Youth Guarantee can be found here: <https://youthguarantee.education.govt.nz/>

Opportunities are available to cross-credit learning outside of secondary school in order to achieve NCEA. If a person gains 80 credits from another standard-based qualification, this can be cross-credited to achieve NCEA Level 2, provided that literacy and numeracy requirements are met. More information can be found here:

<https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/understanding-ncea/awarding-of-ncea-level-2-after-leaving-school/>

“Universities removed a few of their requirements for admission, and NCEA also lowered their requirements last year – how will these students be supported to fill this gap and do well in their first year of University – both academically and with their mental health?”

There are currently a wide range of supports for students. This includes support to access essential supplies, financial assistance, and wellbeing resources. More information can be found at: <https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/covid-19-and-wellbeing-support-for-students/>

The expansion of mental wellbeing services for students enrolled in tertiary education institutes will start this year (2021) and continue over the next four years. More information about the expansion of these services will be available soon.

“Are there any realistic discussions taking place in government surrounding a temporary Universal Student Allowance to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic?”

Both the Government and the Ministry of Education recognise that wide access to tertiary education is vital to the economic and social wellbeing of New Zealanders. For this reason, the Government contributes to assisting students with the costs of study through a range of support, including tuition subsidies, student loans and allowances. Loans are widely available, interest-free to Aotearoa New Zealand-based borrowers and with a repayment scheme based on income. Student allowances are targeted to those most in financial need. No student has unlimited access to either student loans or allowances, and constrained funding is targeted to where it will provide the most benefit to individuals and the economy.

The Government moved quickly last year to ensure income continuity for tertiary students to support them to stay engaged in tertiary education and to help them meet the additional costs associated with studying in a different way during lockdown. Key initiatives included the initial COVID-19 student support package, including for example a temporary increase to the amount that can be borrowed for student loan course-related costs from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and a range of funds to support learners with additional financial needs, including a \$20 million Hardship Fund for domestic tertiary

learners; a \$1 million Hardship Fund for international students; and a \$20 million Technology Access Fund. These support measures, together with the support Ministry of Social Development can already provide, aimed to provide an immediate response to the financial impact COVID-19 was having on learners and were therefore limited to 2020.

Any future changes to the student support system will need to be considered alongside other Budget priorities and wider government commitments.

“What changes are being made for resubmitted rules on exams?”

There are no changes being made to rules that govern students wishing to apply for a review or reconsideration of their results for externally assessed NCEA standards and New Zealand Scholarship subjects.

Resubmissions

“Why did the ministry of education change the resubmission rules this year?”

The resubmission rule change means that only Not Achieved grades can be resubmitted to gain a maximum of Achieved grade if successful in a NCEA assessment. All of the changes to NCEA were tested against five guiding principles to ensure the changes will deliver the desired outcomes. They were Wellbeing, Equity and Inclusion, Coherence, Pathways and Credibility.

In regard to the resubmission rule change, there are two principles that can be looked at: Wellbeing and Credibility.

Wellbeing of Kaiako (teachers) and ākonga (students) needed to be considered in terms of workload and pressure while participating in NCEA assessments. By focusing on allowing students to achieve in NCEA assessments, we have removed significant workload for both teachers and students.

The change to the resubmission rule improves the credibility of NCEA by valuing the academic success of students who have attained Merit and Excellence grades without needing to resubmit.

It should be noted that this change to the resubmission rule does not stop teachers and students from using formative assessment practices to support teaching and learning in the classroom prior to summative assessment events.

“What changes are being made for resubmitted rules on exams?”

There are no changes being made to rules that govern students wishing to apply for a review or reconsideration of their results for externally assessed NCEA standards and New Zealand Scholarship subjects.

“What about those cases where students have jobs? I’ve spoken to some students from school and it hurts when students who don’t have jobs or family to take care of get approval and praise from teachers when they get excellence... yet those students who do have jobs and family to take care of get

put down when they get not achieved or achieved... Sometimes support isn't given enough through teachers..."

Teachers know and understand their students and are best placed to understand what is going on for students. Teachers are committed to supporting students to achieve positive educational and social outcomes and do this through building rapport, positive working relationships and making school the best place for students to be.

We understand that many students have part time employment and that for some students, part time employment is necessary to support their families. If a teacher is concerned about the impact that employment is having on a student's education and social wellbeing, the teacher should raise that with the student and their whānau. If a student is concerned about the impact that employment is having on them, they should raise this with their teacher, a guidance counsellor, or another trusted adult.

The removal of school donations and NCEA fees is an example of what the Ministry is doing to reduce the financial barriers. The implementation of the food in schools and period products initiatives are also removing barriers that students may face. Through the refresh of the National Curriculum, the education sector's commitment is building cultural capability and delivering culturally responsive education and reduce instances of racism and bullying. We're focused on making school a place that students really want to be.

English as a second language

"I have a question regarding to refugee and migrant youth, how are the student with the language barrier or without English are getting support in schools?"

Migrant and former refugee students who need support to learn English are eligible for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) funding. Schools can use the funding in a range of ways, including for employing specialist teachers, and specialist teacher aides (who may be bilingual). Support ranges from small withdrawal classes, to in-class support. Funding can also be used for resources such as bilingual dictionaries and reading material.

We also have refugee-specific funding for additional support for former refugees including Computers in Homes courses (which include provision of a device and internet for one year), and career pathway support in secondary schools. In some larger centres, we support homework programmes specifically for former refugees. These usually employ bilingual support workers.

We have a range of additional supports available in some schools e.g. Bilingual Support Workers, and Online Foundation English programmes for secondary school students.

To support senior leaders, teachers, and teacher aides to provide the best possible support for students needing additional English support, we have a range of professional development projects, including scholarships for teachers to gain specific ESOL qualifications.

During the first COVID lockdown, we made key information about learning from home for parents and caregivers available in the most commonly spoken languages by students in schools. We also have some generic education information (e.g. Early

Learning Services, Resolving Problems at School) available in most commonly spoken languages.

Ministry of Education staff have access to Ezispeak, which is a 24-hour interpreting service available to support parents and students with specific concerns.

Social support services¹² (19)

The questions and responses have been grouped into the following sub-themes:

- Family violence (13)
- Youth Services (5)
- Community support (1).

Family violence

“The questions of how the victims of physical and mental abuse in a household are getting help?”

“Is there extra financial support for those students [who are stuck at home with abusive parents, partners etc]?”

“With the uncertainty of lockdown, people living in an abusive household are also unable to gain a stable income as well... is there any plan set in place?”

“How are You’s ensuring that families & our youth are in a safe environment at home with there mental health, education, finances or even abuse how can You help out with things like this with during Covid?”

We know that family violence is an ongoing issue for people and during COVID-19, there are additional challenges that those affected by family violence experience. Help is still available.

MSD funds a range of support options for youth and adults who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, family violence. The services are delivered by non-government organisations around the country and are available to all New Zealanders. They work with individuals and/or families/whānau to identify issues and solutions, and plan for their ongoing safety and wellbeing.

The services provide a range of support options including:

- Accommodation e.g. at a Women’s Refuge safe house
- Safety planning, including for children
- Provision of information, advice, and support through helplines
- Education programmes for children and young people who have witnessed family violence.

There is also support for people who use violence so they can become violence-free. For example, there are group programmes that help people identify triggers and develop coping mechanisms when they are feeling aggressive.

<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/family-and-sexual-violence-prevention/>

¹² All answers included under the Social support services theme were provided by the Ministry of Social Development.

<https://family.services.govt.nz/#/?category=Family%20Violence>

Work and Income offers some financial support for people who are leaving violent relationships and more information can be found here:

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/relationships/violent-relationships.html>

“I would like to know how the government can support survivors of domestic violence? There is research coming out from the UK that corporal punishment is re-emerging in homes due to the stress of pandemic as well as domestic violence on to youth.... Are there any initiative you would see working to help young people in these situations? Would national messaging e published about how to report domestic violence in pandemic?”

“Motels/hotels have refused to take south Auckland (youth) clients needing safe emergency accommodation... does the government have a response for better support for young people going through Domestic/Family Violence?”

There are a range of providers and services for young people who aren't safe, funded by Oranga Tamariki. Young people can call Oranga Tamariki for help and support on 0508 326 459.

MSD funds a range of support options for youth and adults who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, family violence. The services are delivered by non-government organisations around the country and are available to all New Zealanders. They work with individuals and/or families/whānau to identify issues and solutions, and plan for their ongoing safety and wellbeing.

The services provide a range of support options including:

- Accommodation e.g. at a Women's Refuge safe house
- Safety planning, including for children
- Provision of information, advice, and support through helplines
- Education programmes for children and young people who have witnessed family violence.

There is also support for people who use violence so they can become violence-free. For example, there are group programmes that help people identify triggers and develop coping mechanisms when they are feeling aggressive.

<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/family-and-sexual-violence-prevention/>

<https://family.services.govt.nz/#/?category=Family%20Violence>

In response to COVID-19 and lockdown, MSD developed the Safe Bubble website (www.safebubble.org.nz) which features a number of key support services and free helplines. They cater to people who have been harmed, as well as those who have harmed others and want to make a change.

“As NZ becomes more international, do you have any recommendation for young progressive youth who may have difficulties with more traditional parents from ethnic communities? As we are seeing in the UK, this difference can aggravate violence in the home particularly towards young women and daughters. How might we reach ethnic communities, especially young people

who may not have an opportunity to report abuse? Do you have any national plans to announce how to address a rise in domestic violence under pandemic?"

There are a range of organisations offering support for people in ethnic communities that can be found here:

- <https://family.services.govt.nz/#/?category=Family%20Violence&keyword=ethnic>

As part of the COVID-19 Budget package, the Government recognised that increased stress and financial hardship from COVID-19 placed extra demand on family violence services. Government is investing an additional \$8.6 million¹³ in providing additional capacity for MSD-funded specialist family violence services. This should enable people impacted by family violence to get the support they need from specialist family violence services more quickly.

"What are some supports in line for young LGBTQI and MVPFFAF who are struggling not only with studying but also homes that aren't as accepting of who they are?"

"IN terms of services to support youth safe what are some services are there for young LGBTQ and MVPFFAF who aren't safe at home?"

There are a range of services and organisations available for members of the rainbow community:

<https://outline.org.nz/>

<https://ry.org.nz/>

Youth Services/Services Delivery

"Last year we experienced a high number of rangatahi dropping out to stay home to look after their young siblings while their parents and grand parents go to work. Many of the youth service providers need an LOR from Winz before they're able to receive support to accessing grants, benefits etc. What 1 on 1 support can be provided to help a young person navigate those hoops, for example, young people who have no ID and born in Australia with a family who have not got the means to help get a valid ID?"

MSD and MSD Youth Service providers will help young people to get a primary identification (e.g. birth certificate) if the young person doesn't have one. If a young person meets the qualifications to receive a Special Needs Grant, the young person may be able to receive a Special Needs Grant for the costs of an identification document where the document is reasonably required as supporting evidence for an application for benefit.

The grant can cover:

- the application fee for a New Zealand birth certificate or

¹³ <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/factsheets/budget/2020/covid19-responding-to-increased-demand-family-violence-services.pdf> - link to this information

- the application fee, or any other fee, for a document of identification if the client's birth certificate is not registered in New Zealand.

This assistance is available to clients applying for a benefit, including those who are imprisoned or detained in prison under a sentence of imprisonment, preventative detention, or corrective training, or who are remanded in custody by a Court pending a further appearance before a Court.

A grant can be made for members of the client's immediate family where each family member is included in the benefit application and is required to provide the identification document to support the application. More information can be found at:

[Identification document fees information check out \(workandincome.govt.nz\)](https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/identification-document-fees-information-check-out)

“What is the long term approach for students dropping out of school to support their whanau?”

“Lockdown forced a high number of pasifika and maori students to drop out of school to support their families financially, what extra support is there for low socio-economic communities?”

If you or your whānau have been affected by COVID-19, support is available. If you have lost your job or can't work at the moment, you may be able to get a benefit, some other financial help, or support to find work. You may be able to access help even if you're working. You may be able to get help with food costs, accommodation costs, power, gas, heating or water bills, medical and dental costs.¹⁴ More information is available below:

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19/help-for-you-and-your-whanau.html>

“What support is there for the youth that are not in school or work?”

Young people do not have the ease of entry into the workforce or the work stability that their parents experienced. There is also greater demand by employers for skills as well as qualifications. Moving from education to employment is an important life stage for young people.

MSD's Youth Service is for young people aged 16 – 19 years not in employment, education or training and it aims to help them into education, training or work-based learning, so they gain the skills to find a job and have an independent future.

Youth Coaches work with young people to provide intensive wraparound support to assist them with their goals and improve their wellbeing. This can include parenting, budgeting, obtaining a driver's license.

Young people are referred to the service through Ministry of Education, MSD, or community-based providers, who work directly within schools and the wider community to support young people showing signs of struggling and at risk of leaving school early. Check out the Youth Service, MSD and Employment New Zealand websites for more information:

<https://www.youthservice.govt.nz/>

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/initiatives/phrae/youth-service-for-neet.html>

¹⁴ This information has been extracted from the OEC Zoom call summary report developed in March 2021.

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/starting-employment/hiring/hiring-young-people/barriers-to-youth-employment/>

“What is happening regarding student allowances and income many applications are still being processed despite the fact that students applied a while ago. Thus, this impacts not only students living lifestyles (rent, food, etc) but also mental health?”

StudyLink has experienced a surge in late applications due to the COVID-19 economic impacts, as many students return to study instead of work. We’re working hard to get everyone’s applications processed as quickly as we can. Of those student allowances still being processed, in most cases that is because we are awaiting further information, for example on parental income. We would urge anyone who is experiencing hardship to please call us on 0800 88 99 and we can prioritise their applications. People can also email us: <https://www.studylink.govt.nz/about-studylink/contact-us/index.html>.

Community support

“Is there any support around parents of youth, to ensure that parents are able to fully support family and allow youth to continue education?”

For parent/s who are MSD clients receiving income support through a main benefit, they may also be eligible for extra help to support accommodation and living as well as directly support their children. More information can be found on <https://doogie.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/work-and-income/extra-help/index.html> and includes *School and Year Start-Up Payment* and *Childcare assistance programme*.

Youth development¹⁵ (6)

“Is there a Youth Strategy being developed following the effects of COVID?”

In July 2020, the Government launched the Youth Plan 2020-2022: Turning Voice into Action – Rebuilding and Recovering. The Youth Plan sets out actions that government will take, in partnership with others, to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 for rangatahi. It aims to ensure rangatahi have a say in decisions about recovery, to support the wellbeing of rangatahi and their family and whānau, to enable rangatahi leadership and to drive transformative change.

The Youth Plan is for rangatahi aged 12-24 years, with a particular focus on the perspectives, experiences, and outcomes of four priority groups. These are:

- rangatahi Māori aged 17-24 years
- Pacific young people aged 17-24 years
- rainbow young people aged 17-24 years
- disabled young people aged 17-24 years.

The Youth Plan 2020-2022 has 16 Actions that sit within four focus areas:

¹⁵ All answers included under the Youth development theme were provided by the Ministry for Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi.

1. Voice – rangatahi voices and perspectives are listened to, valued, and embedded in decision-making at all levels, particularly in decisions about COVID-19 recovery.
2. Wellbeing – the wellbeing of rangatahi, their family and whānau, and their communities is supported and strengthened.
3. Leadership – rangatahi are enabled to lead their own lives, have their identities seen, valued and respected, and have increasing influence in their communities and over government policy.
4. Transformative change – government agencies work collaboratively with each other, the youth sector, communities and rangatahi to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for rangatahi.

Work on the Youth Plan began prior to COVID-19. It has been primarily informed by engagement with rangatahi and the youth sector, and collaboration with government agencies. More information or a copy of the Youth Plan is available here <https://myd.govt.nz/young-people/youth-plan/youth-plan.html>.

“For major youth organisations that have planned events/workshops in person how would these events in future take place under restrictions?”

We have seen many examples of youth sector festivals, hui and workshops undertaken remotely using online tools during the last 12 months. This can be a challenge for some young people who have limited access to technology and internet, but can also allow young people from a range of communities contribute and participate.

We have seen major events being planned for the year ahead which include contingency plans for alternative means of delivery. Alert Level changes could happen again without much notice so it’s important for organisations to be prepared and ensure events can adapt, to continue to provide opportunities for young people.

For information on Alert Level requirements for events, visit: <https://covid19.govt.nz/everyday-life/gatherings-and-events/>

“What advice would you give to young people or resources you could suggest for those who have been disconnected from their support networks during lockdown?”

It is important for young people to stay connected through different channels. The Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi has supported Youthline to have greater capacity to connect with young people who need someone to talk to as a result of COVID-19.

The government has also partnered with a number of online and app resources to support wellbeing. You can find more information about these tools at: <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/mental-wellbeing/free-tools-resources-and-apps/>

“How and were MVPFFAF considered in terms of MYD’s covid response and covid messaging?”

“What is the government doing to implement Rainbow (LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF+) policies during COVID-19 lockdown?”

In response to COVID-19, the MYD commissioned research to gain a greater understanding of the impact on rainbow communities. This work focused on MYD’s priority population groups and targeted MVPFAFF.

The data and research findings are being used to inform policy and decision making within MYD and across government. On top of this, there is ongoing work with Te Ngākau Kahukura (<https://www.tengakaukahukura.nz/>) to increase rainbow competency within government.

“Will there be another opportunity to korero like this in the future?”

MYD is currently investigating how best to keep the conversation going with rangatahi, and ensure they are provided with opportunities to have their voices heard by government. Once that piece of work has been completed, we will be in a better position to provide further information in this regard. Keep an eye on our social media channels ([Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)) and on the [MYD website](#).

Disabled young people¹⁶ (5)

“I am representing a group of 4 young people with disabilities and their questions are:

What services are available for people with disabilities living alone at home?”

There are a range of services available for disabled people who need assistance in their home. These services are usually funded by the Ministry of Health and involves an assessment of the disabled person’s needs to identify the type of support required and how much support. Not all disabled people are eligible for this support. More information is available on the Ministry of Health website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/disability-services/about-disability-support-servicesit>

“How do you communicate with people that do not have internet access and/or literacy difficulties?”

This is a constant challenge and the Office for Disability Issues encourages all Government agencies who are providing important information for all New Zealanders, and in particular when providing information for disabled people, to use a range of accessible formats – Easy Read translations, sign language translations of written information, large print or braille for people who are blind or low vision – ensuring that web-based communications meet all the web accessibility standards.

So much information is now web-based and requires internet access, so the Department of Internal Affairs is commencing a work programme to respond to what is known as the “digital divide”. Disabled people, people with low income, and older people are population groups who often experience this challenge.

¹⁶ All answers included under the Disabled young people theme were provided by the Office of Disability Issues.

“Can you create a game or app to describe Covid in an interactive way? Also, keen to see it in cartoon format”

The Ministry of Social Development provided about \$3 million to organisations to develop a range of apps and other approaches to enable disabled people to better connect with others and access services e.g. to celebrate Autism Day, Autism New Zealand recently announced at Parliament, an app they are developing to promote social connections and access to information on Autism and Autism events. This was funded from the \$3 million. Unfortunately, no one proposed developing a game or app to describe COVID-19 in an interactive way. We will pass on the idea to others.

“Are there people I can call to talk to? Do people conduct community visits (with social distancing) to offer a chance to korero?”

Talking and staying connected are important for everyone’s wellbeing and disabled people should be able to have access to the same helplines that every other New Zealander has access to. See below a link to mental health lines available in New Zealand. There are several disabled people’s organisation and service providers who may be able to assist depending on what may be available locally. <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines>

Employers and essential workers¹⁷ (4)

“How is the government holding employers accountable for lack of following proper protocol?”

“What support is there for rangatahi who are in high contact and essential services roles?”

“What support is available for young people that are being taken advantage of in their workplace and forced to work in unsafe situations i.e. high contact roles without PPE? What services are available if rangatahi cannot approach their Manager? Text services were suggested.”

MBIE has released guidance for employees, employers, and businesses around COVID-19, and this covers rangatahi working in high contact and essential service roles. It is important to understand your entitlements around safe workplaces that are committed to following the correct procedures. You can find out more information at:

<http://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types/of/leave/coronavirus-workplace/>

If you are concerned that something may breach the rules, you can report it to the [COVID-19 Compliance Centre](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/covid-19-compliance/) through an online form at:

<http://www.covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/covid-19-compliance/>

All workers including rangatahi may also seek support from their elected Health & Safety (H&S) Representative within their workplace. H&S Reps represent and advocate for all

¹⁷ All answers included under the Employers and essential workers theme were provided by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

workers on wellbeing, health, and safety matters. This also provides a platform should the need arise for a clear pathway for matters to be escalated to the Site H&S Committee and to a national leadership level within MBIE.

Youth homelessness¹⁸ (1)

“Youth homelessness is still a big issue, what is the update to support?”

Young people make up a high proportion of overall homelessness statistics. Nearly 50 percent aged under 25 years of age and 19 percent are under 15 years of age, as shown in the Severe Housing Deprivation in Aotearoa New Zealand 2018 report. Māori rangatahi are particularly impacted by housing insecurity.

The Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan (action plan) guides Government’s work to respond to and prevent homelessness. The action plan is supported by Te Maihi o Te Whare Māori: Māori and Iwi Housing Innovation (MAIHI) framework, an approach for addressing Māori housing across all needs and aspirations. MAIHI focuses work around both urgent actions to reduce homelessness for Māori, and the deeper system changes needed to improve Māori housing. Young people have been identified as a key group for focus in the action plan. The action plan includes an action to expand supported living placements to eligible young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care, or youth justice, to support a more gradual transition into adulthood. Housing stability is the biggest identified issues facing young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care and this action will provide an additional 168 placements over the next four years.

Funding allocated in the first round of the Local Innovation and Partnership Fund will also support two new initiatives targeted at youth homelessness.

The action plan also identified key areas for further work to be undertaken in 2020-23. As part of responding to the impacts of COVID-19, we have brought forward longer-term work on options for rangatahi/young people. This work recognises that addressing homelessness for young people requires more than just providing housing. It is a bigger systemic issue and we need to have a range of supports in place to prevent young people falling through system gaps into homelessness.

More on the action plan here: <https://www.hud.govt.nz/community-and-public-housing/addressing-homelessness/aotearoa-homelessness-action-plan-2020-2023/>

¹⁸ All answers included under the Youth homelessness theme were provided by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Discussion regarding the topics distributed prior to the Zhui

The discussion was an opportunity to confirm what officials had heard thus far and more importantly hear directly from young people regarding potential solutions including specific actions they had/were doing in their local communities to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

Question 1: What are the two top issues/concerns you would like to raise about COVID-19 and the Government's COVID-19 messaging?

The top two concerns raised by young people in response to this question were related to Mental Health and the Government's COVID-19 messaging content and delivery.

Mental health

Mental health was the most common concern raised by Zhui participants consistently through the open forum and the Zoom Chat function. The responses below are a sample of the discussion, general feedback, and proposed solutions.

- *"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be heard! #MoreFunding4YouthMentalHealthOrgs."*
- *"More youth voice around what is needed by young people around increases in family violence and abuse from covid. more youth voice around what is needed by youth people about mental health impacts of covid."*
- *"A solution for those facing abuse is the government working with many non-government organisations like She Is Not Your Rehab who know how to engage with the people and already are."*
- *"Top Issues- Mental Health, and the question of how victims of physical and mental abuse in a household are getting help."*
- *"Lockdown forces many to be stuck at home with abusive parents, partners etc."*
- *"Can the government please put more money into mental health services!"*
- *"Also, what is happening regarding student allowances and income many applications are still being processed despite the fact that students applied a while ago. Thus, this impacts not only students living lifestyles (rent, food, etc) but also mental health!!"*

Government's COVID-19 messaging

Ensuring the Government's COVID-19 messaging content is consistent, creative, engaging and easy to follow. The responses below are a sample of the discussion, general feedback and proposed solutions.

- *"They need to be more engaging, creative, easy to follow and fun, the messaging needs to be consistent."*
- *"Elevate the existing platforms for our young creatives, artists, creative communities etc."*
- *"Highlights a slide gap in the creative process used to reach young communities."*
- *"One of the issues for youth the message gets both lost in the noise of life and also the stress they are under. For many it is about getting some level of qualification in uncertain times the short term and what the world will look in the long run and whether those qualifications will matter."*

- *"The information about COVID can be inaccessible to some so getting people who can translate into slang/other languages through art and summaries is important."*
- *"I think the absolute best way Covid info can be communicated to young people is through summaries. Instead of telling people on Instagram "scan in" summarise the importance of scanning in or getting a vaccine etc."*

Youth are more likely to react, respond and engage when information is presented by people who they feel they can relate to, or who look like them. The responses below are a sample of the discussion, general feedback, and proposed solutions.

- *"Social media and social media influencers are good idea."*
- *"Tik tok"*
- *"Youth councils and youth groups"*
- *"Rappers of all areas codes; POETIK, Melodownz, Jess B etc."*
- *"Youth will react, respond and engage more in information that is presented by people who feel they can relate to, or who look like them. There's no need to find specially qualified editors, when we have local talent in our community who have better ideas and bigger heart and passion for our youth."*
- *"Working with social media influencers and artists that the community know and can connect and relate to can help to get the messages across more effectively with our young people."*
- *"I also think that govt messaging may not be utilizing how ethnic communities get information. For example, churches and faith communities could be key to communicating with groups."*
- *"Working with artists of the most affected community who can communicate with the youth and put content on social medias is a good start."*
- *"Many schools have opened up Instagram pages to reach the youth and teenagers about whats going on as it can be tedious for students to check their emails over and over."*

Youth also raised concerns about fake news circulating on community Facebook groups.

Question 2: What things are you or other young people doing in your communities to respond to COVID-19 and it's impacts?

We heard from young people about the range of actions they/or others were taking to help respond to the impact of COVID-19 in their local community. For example, student councils and other groups created Instagram pages to inform youth rather than relying on emails; some rangatahi found lockdown to be an opportunity to connect with their peers via video-chatting, online gaming, quiz nights, mobile games, posting supportive content, and encouraging their peers to get tested and to seek help if they were concerned about their mental health; and the Onehunga School STARS programme peer mentors changed their programme to support the wellbeing of Year 9 students. The responses below are a sample of the discussion, general feedback, and proposed solutions.

- *"Video-chatting with one another; games-nights (online, mobile games, etc.); Netflix-parties; meditation; yoga. Posting supportive messages for South Auckland."*

Encouraging people to get tests and stay home. Encouraging getting help with their mental health!"

- *"Student council groups and different subjects at Onehunga and many other schools have opened up instagram pages to reach the youth and teenagers about what's going on as it can be tedious for students to check their emails over and over."*
- *"Our Peer Mentors have changed the focus in the Stars programme from values-based facilitation to supporting their Year 9s wellbeing."*
- *"I like the NZ COVID TRACER, when people see me scan in it encourages others to scan too and if I can't find a code at the door than I will find the posters in store."*
- *"Encouraging messages to each other, checking in."*
- *"We've been seeing lots of leaders and collective communities, however, there has been a lot of anxiety around the outbreak."*

One Zhui participant suggested a potential role for the government to combat isolation.

The government needs to create an initiative to bring young people together and keep them connected in an informal space online to battle isolation :)

Question 3: Do you have any other questions about how the Government is responding to the current COVID-19 Alert Level changes?

Responses to this question covered the earlier discussion regarding the Government's COVID-19 messaging (refer to Question 1). Due to time restraints, many of the questions/feedback were captured in the Chat function and are currently captured in the Q and A section of the report. The responses below are a sample of the discussion, general feedback, and proposed solutions.

- *"Why don't we put in stronger restrictions for those who break out of quarantine?"*
- *"Are there any exemptions for sports during COVID? The wider sporting community have expressed the harmful effects of the lockdown(s) Rangatahi are feeling disconnected from their community. Not only are they losing their passion for sports but also the potential for future professional careers."*
- *"Why has it taken a pandemic for the government to recognise the inequalities and inequities in NZ? Students shouldn't have to sacrifice education to financially support their families."*
- *"What is going to be done to make information more accessible to our whanau in terms of those of which that English is second language. ideas I have received include different languages for the broadcast, radio, information put out into the communities through churches, workplaces, schools, text messaging in own language. As these Whanau are not able to get clear and understandable information that they deserve to know so that they can continue to be safe and know what is going on."*

One Zhui participant asked for a Māori interpreter to be put in place to support Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern when she addresses the nation, as Te Reo Māori is recognised as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, alongside New Zealand Sign Language.

Other Zhui participants also asked for more systems and policies to help marginalised communities such as Māori, Pasifika, and Rainbow communities.

Financial support¹⁹

Find out what financial support you could access using the COVID-19 Financial Support Tool (available at www.COVID-19.govt.nz). Information on support from MSD can be accessed on the website www.msd.govt.nz, and by phone: 0800 559 009.

Who	Support	Description of support	More information
Individuals	Jobseeker Support	This is a weekly payment that helps people until they find work	About the support Call 0800 559 009
	Redundancy Support	If you've been made redundant there may be several ways Work and Income can help you.	About the support
	Emergency Benefit for Temporary Visa Holders	This support is for holders of temporary visas who cannot support themselves or return to their home country because of the impact of COVID-19	About the benefit
	Getting food or help with urgent or unexpected costs	Support is available if you need help getting groceries and other essential supplies	Get food or help with urgent costs Call 0800 559 009
	Getting help with living expenses	If you've lost your job or had your hours reduced, you may be able to get a benefit or some other financial help from Work and Income	Get help with living expenses Call 0800 559 009
Employers and self-employed people	COVID-19 Wage Subsidy March 2021	This subsidy supports employers and self-employed people, so they can continue to pay employees and protect jobs for businesses affected by the rise in alert levels on 28 February 2021	About the subsidy Call 0800 40 80 40
	COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme	Employers and self-employed people can apply to this scheme if they or their staff need to self-isolate and cannot work from home	About the scheme Call 0800 40 80 40

¹⁹ This information has been extracted from the OEC Zoom call summary report developed in March 2021.

	COVID-19 Short-Term Absence Payment	This payment supports employers and self-employed people to help pay workers who cannot work from home while they wait for a COVID-19 test result.	About the payment Call 0800 40 80 30
	COVID-19 Resurgence Support Payment (RSP) Inland Revenue	If your business or organisation is facing a reduction in income due to an alert level increase, you may be eligible for the RSP	About the payment Call 0800 473 107
Communities and clubs	Community Capability and Resilience Fund	This is a fund available to community groups for initiatives that support the rebuild and recovery from COVID-19	About the fund Email: CCRF_2020@msd.govt.nz

The following mental health services are also available for support:

- Youthline: free text 234 or call 0800 37 66 33
- Lifeline: free text 4537 or call 0800 543 354
- 1737 Peer Support: free text or call 1737.

Information links

EDUCATION:

- <https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/covid-19-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-support-for-students/>
- <https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Further-education/COVID-19-Bulletin/COVID-19-Bulletin-for-Tertiary-Providers-11-July-2020.pdf>
- <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/wellbeing-in-education/>
- <https://www.studylink.govt.nz/about-studylink/news/2020/covid-19.html>
- <https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/video-conferencing-tools-and-guidance-for-ec-schools-and-kura/>
- <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/stayconnectedstaysafe/>
- <https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/supporting-transitions/refugee-background-students/>

FINANCIAL:

- <https://www.youthservice.govt.nz/>
- <https://covid19.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/travel-within-new-zealand/local-travel/>
- <https://myd.govt.nz/funding/akonga-youth-development-community-fund.html>
- <https://www.tekura.school.nz/>

SOCIAL SUPPORT:

- <https://www.youthline.co.nz/get-help.html>
- <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources>
- <https://www.youthservice.govt.nz/>
- <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/initiatives/phrae/youth-service-for-neet.html>
- <https://www.employment.govt.nz/starting-employment/hiring/hiring-young-people/barriers-to-youth-employment/>
- <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19/help-for-you-and-your-whanau.html>

COVID-19 MESSAGING (INCL. VACCINE INFO):

- <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-resources/how-to-get-trustworthy-information/>
- <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines>
- <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/>
- <https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/translations/>

COVID-19 SAFETY:

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines>
- <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/how-our-vaccine-rollout-will-work/>

SAFETY (FROM VIOLENCE):

- <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/family-and-sexual-violence-prevention/>

RAINBOW:

- <https://ry.org.nz/>
- <https://ry.org.nz/drop-in-centres>
- <https://ry.org.nz/homelessness-support>

MĀORI AND PASIFIKA:

- <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/2020/covid-19/supporting-communities.html>
- <https://whanauora.nz/partners/>
- <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/community-funding/>

REFUGEE AND MIGRANT YOUTH:

- <http://www.areyouok.org.nz/>
- <https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/covid-19/>

EMPLOYMENT:

- <https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/>

- <https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/covid-19-compliance/>

YOUTH WORKERS:

- <https://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/funding-and-performance/funding/fund-finder/targeted-training-and-apprenticeship-fund/>
- <https://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/lottery-covid-19-community-wellbeing-fund/>