

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the group/business unit for the period. It excludes the GE2023 Programme or by-elections which are reported on through separate channels.

Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

A strategic gateway review has been completed to assess progress to date and recommend how the programme is taken forward by re-theming and aligning remaining interventions by leadership accountability (ELT/ DCEs). Intervention sponsors will determine workstream scope and deliverables, allocate resources and be responsible for realising benefits. This shift allows the Business Change Manager and external programme resource to be fully released, and future work to be planned and integrated alongside business-as-usual operations.

The Programme team has been focusing on closing out work, transitioning remaining and follow-on work to the business, and documenting key programme inputs and outputs. The latter will ensure the completion and embedding of outstanding first tranche interventions and the planning and execution for longer-term second tranche interventions are well-informed to continue the transformation journey.

- The TOM programme's culture workstream has been updated to include the data from this year's engagement survey.
- An update will be provided to the Chief Executive on 3 November 2022 and next steps will be determined.
- The TOM Strategic Review follow-up will be presented to ELT on 8 November 2022.
- The SLG Workshop to further develop future operating arrangements has been postponed and will be rescheduled.
- The close-out report and benefits assessment narrative are in progress.
- The Risks, Issues and Decisions and Actions register is being handed over to the new Programme Management Office.
- All other key project documents are being copied across to a new Teams channel for handover.

Other progress

- Business Plan revision completed, v2.0 approved by the CEO
- Corporate policies migrated to Sharepoint
- Delegations Procedures developed and approved by the CEO
- Data and Information Management Policy drafted and now being socialised prior to being considered by ELT.

Issues under management

- Nil

Risks

- Nil

Other news

- A Manager, PMO has been appointed and will start on 21 November
- Interviews are taking place w/c 31 October for two Project Coordinators
- The response to the Senior Programme Coordinator was not great [REDACTED] 9(2)(g)(i)
[REDACTED] 9(2)(g)(i) This interview will take place w/c 31 October.

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

Information Technology

- Master Services Agreement drafting has completed and is now under legal review.
- Cyber-security reporting wireframes were discussed with the Board.
- CERT Cybersmart awareness drop-in session held.
- Progressing well with development of system enhancements on the IT Work Plan.

Finance, Procurement and Property

- We have started drafting contract management plans for key contracts, to help contract managers better manage these strategic relationships.

People and Culture

- The Have your Say 2022 engagement survey was completed with an 85% participation rate. Feedback was presented to the CEO, ELT and Tier 3 Managers.
- Negotiating LMS agreement with Learning Works including the support contract and is ready to be signed.
- Implemented the Remuneration and Performance Round. Progressed the establishment of a Draft Master Employee List for the Commission.

Preparing for an election

Information Technology

- MEO requirements have been defined and Catalyst are now preparing the SOW
- Certification and Accreditation for ARTS project has been paused due to lack of control information supplied from project to assess.

Finance, Procurement and Property

- Telnets contract variation has been drafted and is going to the Board for signing. The contracts for the Electoral Access Fund committee members have been developed. The variations to extend the print panel are nearly complete.
- Finance is undertaking a high-level financial reforecasting exercise. Templates and instructions were sent to business units on 27 October. The objective of the reforecast will be to identify expected material under and over-spends versus budget for the current financial year. Completed templates are due back with Finance by 11 November.
- First aid kits, PPE, Civil Defence Bin and Chemical Cabinet for the Hamilton West by-election have all been ordered
- CourierPost (e-Ship) and OPD (Stationery) systems have both been re-activated for the electorate HQ to use.

People and Culture

- We advertised 10 positions this month, including 2 internal-only roles. We received 51 applications for the 8 of the roles advertised.
- 60 offers were made to Electorate Managers as well as 20 offers for other positions (not including casuals)
- 4 Approvals to Appoint are in progress before offer documents can be issued.
- Started to review and update HR processes and systems in preparation for the delivery of the By-Election.
- Participated in the Voting Services Simulation as required.

Preparing for the future

Enterprise Services

- A review of the Enterprise Services Business Plans (Corporate Services and IT) has been done by the ES DCE and Managers and a refresh of this will be completed over the next few months.

Information Technology

- First of the Cyber smart week drop-in sessions was successfully held.
- Recruitment for new IT positions is progressing with the position descriptions currently being finalised.

Finance, Procurement and Property

- The drafting of the updated procurement policy, procedures and templates is well under way and is nearly ready for an internal review prior to any consultation/review by the wider organisation.
- Finance is working with Walkerscott to enhance the financial reports that were implemented on go-live of the FMIS, and to create some new reports. These are required to efficiently produce the monthly management and board reports, and ad hoc analysis.
- Closing of the Hamilton and Dunedin regional offices to ensure they are moved out of their premises before the end of their respective lease is under way in conjunction with ECE and IT. We are looking at co-locating these offices with other government agencies or community groups rather than lease own premises.

People and Culture

- The draft Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and high-level consultation timeline was referred to the Board for endorsement and is due to go out for consultation soon.
- Continued support to the Operating Model Refresh and SnapHire implementation work.
- Progressed work with Humankind to develop Position Descriptions to support the business with the "Capability Uplift" work.
- Presented the draft Pay Gap Action Plan to ELT and sent it to the Board for endorsement at the November Board meeting.
- Preparing to roll out the Code of Conduct across the Commission.

Building relationships and understanding

Finance, Procurement and Property

- The Procurement team have begun discussions with the business on the procurement pipelines for their individual cost centre or business units so they are aware of timings and can plan for it.

Issues under management

Recruiting high quality permanent staff remains difficult in current job market. The following roles have been advertised and readvertised with no success.

- Cyber Security Analyst
- Senior Systems Administrator.

Risks

Work exceeds internal capability and capacity to deliver

IF there are not enough internal resources available from a capacity and capability perspective **THEN** the technology assets required for GE2023 will not be delivered to sufficient quality in a timely and cost-effective manner that meets the needs of the general election.

Large amount of change occurring

IF the large amount of organisational and process change occurring at the Commission is not well managed and supported **THEN** Enterprise Services' ability to deliver key services to the Commission may be impacted.

People management

TOIL or excess annual leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two IT staff in the unit have annual leave balances of 25 days or more. This is the same as last month. Both staff have plans for extended leave in place for the next six months• TOIL balance for the whole IT team is 78.5 hours. This is a reduction of 14.5 hours since last month. Staff are aware that this should (where possible) be taken before reward or annual leave.• Two members of the Finance, Property and Procurement have leave in excess of 25 days. A leave plan has been discussed and agreed with them.• One employee in People and Culture has leave exceeding 25 days.• Two employees in People and Culture have TOIL of a couple of days after delivering the Remuneration and Performance Round. Employees will be encouraged to take this time as soon as possible.
Staff turnover	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 staff in IT have resigned• Manager Finance, Property and Procurement 9(2)(a) has resigned, with his last day on 24 November. We should have a contractor secured to start the week beginning 7 November as 9(2)(a) is having 4 weeks sick leave from 9 November.
Staff engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% of Enterprise Services completed the Have Your Say 2022 engagement survey. This week the Enterprise Services managers will get more detail by team on the results.

Other news

Status of the recruitment for the Enterprise Services team:

Team	Roles	Status
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cyber Security Analyst• Systems Administrator• Senior Systems Administrator• Solution Architect x 2 (1 x backfill for resignation)• Technical Analyst• Technical Writer• Systems Specialist (backfill for resignation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not started• Not started• Not started• Not started• PD writing• PD writing• Not started
People and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal Advisor, Capability and OD• Coordinator, People and Culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviewing• Offer
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team Leader, Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reference checking
Finance, Property and Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manager, Finance, Property and Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not started

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Preparing for an election

- Continuing to work with Ministry of Justice on other legislative change this term including changes to the MEO, Parliament Bill, donations and loans for parties and candidates, regulated period, overseas voter eligibility and ministers warrants if return of the writ is delayed. Regulations amendments came into force 1 October 2022.
- Advice to DPMC on by-election timing.
- Continuing to provide support to the Election Access Fund project, including input on applicant guidance, the formal eligibility notice, forms and internal policy documents.
- Updating collateral including handbooks, online guidance, candidate nomination form, and advisory opinion templates to reflect new rules for 2023 and better meet accessibility standards.
- Ongoing work regarding procurement and lease approvals including print advisor, legal services, regional offices.

Preparing for the future

- Participating in the TOM programme steering group, GE steering groups, GE Programme Board, data stewardship group, and by-election working group.
- Board papers presented at October meeting on the broadcasting allocation process and timetable and registration of Democracy NZ.
- Input into archives audit.
- Information request from IRP regarding training for voting staff.
- Paperwork for the renewal of Mark Lawson's appointment as Deputy Electoral Commissioner.

Building relationships and understanding

- New provisions for Stats NZ accessing roll data came into force in September. We are continuing to work with Stats NZ to implement the new arrangements.
- Continuing meeting weekly with Ministry of Justice Policy team on legislative change and other electoral work.
- Advice to party re donations rules and fundraising as well as party and logo registrations
- Support to Independent Electoral Review Panel including working on information requests and work on Commission's submission to the Panel.
- Invitation to join the IFES Global Online Campaigning Transparency Community of Practice.
- Input into International team's NZ's voting options during covid case study for upcoming Commonwealth Elections Network conference.

Other progress

- Dean continues to lead IRT including updates to the vaccination policy and conducting risk assessment for all field staff for the GE and by-election
- Filling of the list seat for Trevor Mallard's resignation.

Advisory opinions

Six advisory opinion requests received in October.

Official Information Act requests responded to in October

Requestor	Topic	Response Time
Individual	The number of voters in Napier that have been deregistered since the last General Election, including those that have re-enrolled	8WD
Individual	Regarding the 2017 and 2020 General Elections: - A detailed list of any and all cyber-attack attempts on the Commission's election management systems.	On-going
Individual	Any communications between 1 September 2022 and 19 October 2022: 1) Between your chief executive or other executive manager and your communications/media staff regarding how media queries are dealt with. 2) From the office of your relevant minister regarding how media queries are dealt with.	On-going

Parliamentary questions

Requestor	Question	Date of Response
David Seymour MP	What team building exercises or courses, if any, have been offered in 2022 to the staff of the departments, agencies, and entities for which the Minister is responsible, if any, and if any team building exercises or courses have been offered to staff, how many staff, if any, participated in those team-building exercises or courses?	06/10/2022
David Seymour MP	What team building exercises or courses, if any, have been offered in 2022 to the staff of the departments, agencies, and entities for which the Minister is responsible, if any, and if any team building exercises or courses have been offered to staff, what funded activities, if any, did these team-building exercises or courses involve?	06/10/2022
David Seymour MP	What team building exercises or courses, if any, have been offered in 2022 to the staff of the departments, agencies, and entities for which the Minister is responsible, if any, and if any team building exercises or courses have been offered to staff, what was the total and per-attendee costs, if any, of these team building exercises or courses?	06/10/2022
Melissa Lee MP	Has the Minister or any of their reporting departments, entities and working groups in their	11/10/2022

	respective portfolio contracted with Dialogue 22 and/or its CEO Hon Kris Faafoi; if so, what is the breakdown by cost, reason and organisation?	
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Party administration and compliance

- The Board approved the registration of DemocracyNZ and its logo.
- Progressing Freedom New Zealand’s application to register a party and logo.
- Progressing New Nation Party’s application to register a party and logo.
- Progressing New Conservative’s and TOP’s applications to substitute their existing logos.

Issues under management

- Awaiting detailed judgment of the High Court in the second SFO case re donations in which 3 defendants have been found guilty. SFO have sought leave to appeal re: NZ First Foundation case. The Minister has approved the introduction of an SOP to the Electoral Amendment Bill to clarify the meaning of party donation and to introduce a new offence for failure to transmit a donation.
- Possible SOPS re MEO as bill continues through parliamentary stages.

Risks

No new or significantly changed risks.

People management

TOIL or excess annual leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 people in the team have leave balances of more than 25 days. Leave plans for the Christmas period are under discussion.
Staff engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 staff survey team session scheduled.
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment underway for fixed-term role budgeted for. Offer made to preferred applicant.

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

Internal communications

Internal communications have continued to support culture and wellbeing across the Commission, with a focus on promoting the Engagement Survey, Cyber Safe Awareness Week, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and Diwali.

We have continued to focus on providing our people with information and tools they need to do their job easily. This month we have started publishing monthly reports on ECHO and launched the new look corporate policies page.

There has been a lot of support across the organisation to communicate the Engagement Survey, and ongoing support to embed change. Upcoming work includes property and functional alignment within business groups, roll out of new laptops, and launch of the Commission's new style guide and templates.

There were 3,095 visits to ECHO in September. The top news stories were 'Local elections community engagement – a taste of what's been going on', 'Your chance to have your say' (rolling out engagement survey) and 'Our new FMIS is live'. The most visited pages were our structure, vacancies and employee lifecycle.

Voting Services appointments

John Small has been appointed as Overseas Operations Manager in the Overseas Voting Unit. John is currently working on the ARTS project with the People and Culture team and will continue to do so until completion of that project and transition across to the Overseas Voting role.

Sarah 9(2)(a) has been appointed to the Senior Advisor Security and Resilience role. This role is temporarily being located within the Voting Services team while Mark Lawson is Acting in the National Manager role.

Regional Review implementation

A Board paper was presented in the October meeting to articulate further work to be completed in the short term (to December 2022) and the longer term (from January 2023 onward) to further realise the benefits from the Regional Review. The detailed planning is underway with the regional teams.

Recruitment for the newly structured community engagement teams continued across the motu in October. Some highlights include:

- New permanent staff started in Rotorua, Wellington, and Christchurch.

- We welcomed Murali Kumar, who is supporting the Auckland and Whangarei teams, as acting Community Engagement Manager Auckland until this role is filled.
- Community Engagement vacancies still to be filled in Auckland plus the 2 CE manager roles for Auckland and Central. Whangarei are in the process of completing interviews.
- The Christchurch office have reconfigured the office space, to better serve the two functions of enrolment processing and the new permanent Community Engagement team.
- We have successfully secured 2 new staff for the Enrolment Support roles in Lower Hutt, starting on 7 November.

Preparing for an election

Local Body Election 2022

- Special Vote Declarations completed successfully on 14 October which concluded the LBE processing workloads
- Final processing statistics for LBE 2022 are:
 - 336,719 enrolment forms processed between 4 July 2022 and 10 October.
 - That is an average of 24,051 forms per week over 14 weeks.
 - Of that number, 201,760 (59.9%) were submitted online and 134,959 were paper.
 - We processed 133,657 returned Update Packs (GNAs)
 - We completed 25,657 special vote checks between 20 September and 13 October
- Final Community Engagement numbers were:
 - 1,714 separate community engagement activities were completed during the campaign
 - Of those 1,714 were in-person engagements, and 564 were digital
- Wellington staff who were located at Gibson Sheat are not back in the Lower Hutt office and all staff have recommenced their WFH arrangements.
- Review activities (lessons learnt) are underway.

Hamilton West by-election

ECE planning is being finalized for the Hamilton West by-election now with confirmed dates in place which includes the centralized processing, public enquiries and community engagement plans.

Public and stakeholder information is being prepared to raise awareness of the by-election and how, when and where to enrol and vote. Planned activity includes an advertising campaign, media, social media and stakeholder engagement, and content for print collateral and online that will be available in other languages and alternate formats for disabled people.

Election Access Fund communications

Applications to the Election Access Fund opened on 31 October. Information about the Fund, and how to apply, was published at elections.nz. Information is available in alternate formats and in English and te reo Māori. Online and paper application forms were created and tested, along with other forms to support people to apply. Information was sent to media, political parties, disability groups and other interested stakeholders. Pro-active and re-active FAQs were prepared to support the 0800 service, internal enquiries teams and to respond to media questions or interview requests. An advertising campaign is being prepared to help raise awareness about the Fund between now and the general election.

Always on

Online enrolment continues to be supported with *Always On* advertising to reach people who need to enrol or update their details. This activity targets people who have moved house or who have recently become eligible to enrol to vote and prompts them to enrol or update their details.

Preparation for GE2023

- ECE Hamilton staff will be relocated to the Hamilton West Electorate HQ while longer term property needs are being assessed
- Conversations have begun in some regions for GE2023 with our Voting services colleagues, particular focus on targeted communities and recruitment opportunities.
- The Large Print Version - Get ready to Vote form – has been distributed to key stakeholders, including Blind low Vision NZ – who assisted in its co-design.

Māori Electoral Option

The project roadmap was approved by the Programme Board at its October meeting. It also approved removal of the Parliamentary by-election/local body election exception from scope of the 31 March implementation. The first time this scenario could apply would be during the 2025 Local Body Elections. Overall project status remains AMBER due to uncertainty about the outcome of the legislative process and the short timeframe for delivery.

MIKE system requirements have been confirmed and provided to Catalyst for sizing. Some delay in confirming a statement of work with Catalyst is expected due to by-election activities and the MIKE OS upgrade. An initial meeting has been held with the Commission's print advisor to discuss print requirements and commence sourcing quotes for the April mailout, paper for the mailout brochure has since been ordered to ensure availability. We are continuing to work with NZ Post on the timeline for the mailout. Implementation of macrons in MIKE is a dependency for the mailout data extract, this has been reviewed with IT and will need to be implemented by 15 February 2023.

Recruitment for a Business Analyst and a Project Lead – Partnerships and Contracts (fixed term roles) is ongoing.

Lisé **9(2)(a)** started with the communications and education team as a Senior Adviser at the end of September to prepare a communications strategy for the Māori electoral option public information campaign. Planning is underway with our research partner to hold focus groups with Māori and advice has been sought from our advertising partner on a creative approach for the campaign.

Preparing for the future

ECE business improvement programme

The programme timeframe has been re-baselined to reflect resource availability in the regions. Good progress on the business improvement initiatives in conjunction with GE23, MEO23, LBE22 and Hamilton West by-election. Key highlights were:

- Roll cleanse processes: Analysis work on TSR and the solution options paper for management reporting are in good progress. Discovery on the person type 'other' category will kick off in November.

- Data integrity measures initiative aims to articulate critical measures for integrity assurance at a strategic level. The Discovery report has been reviewed and the recommendations have been endorsed. The development work will commence when the data capability become available.
- Unpublished process requirements have been completed. It was confirmed that Legal has access to the required information in MIKE.
- Overseas elector process: Discovery report has been approved, and the recommendations will be incorporated into the GE23 enrolment campaign.
- Māori Macrons: Macrons development is near completion in MIKE, aiming to go live on the 15 February when the ERSA development is completed. Request has been made to access an IT environment, allowing ECE to commence the training development in November. Meeting with NZ Post was held on 4 October, to discuss implementing macrons on NZPost correspondence prior to the MEO campaign.
- Correspondence review has been completed, with generic EC contact details, signature, and contents of 28 letters updated in MIKE. The last set of NZ Post letters have also been updated on the 27 October.
- NZPost Change My Address reporting work was kicked off in October, to assess options of leveraging the information in our enrolment processing.
- Business processes are being updated to reflect the new regional processing team structure. Further work will be planned to develop the detailed procedures.
- Testing of the new enrolment dashboard is underway, incorporating feedback from SMEs and LBE lessons learned.

Telnet contract for 0800 call centre services

The negotiation with Telnet has been completed, and the contract variations drafted. As we are seeking to extension the Master Service Agreement established in 2012, the total Whole of Life Contract value exceeds the CEO financial delegation, a Board paper is prepared to seek approval for the 20-month contract extension until June 2024. The planning for the full RFP processing will start in November 2022.

Building relationships and understanding

Strategic communications

A suite of resources has been developed to share with staff to support the embedding of the overarching Communications and Engagement Strategy in work across the Commission, including a strategy on a page, and a guide on how to use the Strategy and message house. The Strategy will go out to staff over the next few weeks.

Work also continues on an implementation plan setting out activity to tell our story to stakeholders and raise the profile of the Commission in election year, using the Strategy as a guide. The draft implementation plan has been shared with the Executive Leadership Team for feedback before it goes to the Board.

The Board joined members of the Operations Group and our agency FCB for a session on the Public Information Strategy for the 2023 General Election which will inform our advertising and other communications work for eligible New Zealanders in election year. This strategic work will be informed by the Overarching Communications and Engagement Strategy. The session was a chance to discuss the challenges and opportunities ahead and hear the Board's input. The Public Information Strategy will be finalised in December.

Social media

Activity on our social media pages significantly reduced after the local elections. However, we're seeing a small but steady stream of negative comments directed at the Commission on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, because some overseas voters continue to receive their voting papers after voting closed. Our responses let people know the role of the Commission in local elections and direct them to their local council to share their feedback.

The Commission's posts on Facebook and Instagram celebrating the historic milestone of 50% of Parliament's seats being occupied by women and suffrage day received positive engagement.

Media

Participation in local elections has been a primary focus of the media in the past month. Online voting and having more in-person voting have been suggested by some academics and local body politicians as a way of increasing turnout. Handing over running of the elections to the Electoral Commission has also been suggested as a way to increase promotion of voting and have a more consistent approach across the elections. Having the Commission pick up the elections is a key recommendation of the Future of Local Government panel's draft report released, and widely reported, on 28 October.

While the role of the Commission has been clarified by the coverage, there has still been some confusion over who actually runs the elections, with many media enquiries and comments on social media seeking information on the local election throughout October.

The other major electoral story for the media this month was the resignation of Gaurav Sharma from Parliament, which has triggered a by-election in Hamilton West. Media enquiries have focussed on the dates and cost for the by-election. We anticipate high media interest in the by-election which, in a bellwether seat, will be seen as an indicator of support for the Government and Opposition in the lead-up to election year.

A selection of stories is attached in Appendix A.

Community Engagement Evaluation Framework

The community engagement teams have tested our monitoring framework for gaining feedback in the field during our community engagement activities. The feedback will help to further refine the framework and inform the implementation approach.

Issues under management

- Nil

Risks

- Nil

People management

TOIL or excess annual leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some staff in ECE have higher than desirable leave balances but they are being actively managed and leave plans are in place.
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Staff engagement	•

Other news

- DCE and CEO visit to Napier on 17 November will include our Rotorua, Hamilton, Gisborne and Napier CE staff – an invitation has been extended to the Voting RM.
- Community engagement is continuing nationally with school visits, ongoing network meetings and a focus on planning for summer events and associated activity.
- Communications and Education successfully recruited one new permanent position during the month. Grace **9(2)(a)** accepted our offer for the position of Senior Advisor Digital. Hannah commences on the 7 November.
- Communications and Education has interviewed two candidates for the new Senior Advisor, Communications and Education (Accessibility) role.
- Recruitment has also commenced for the new permanent role of Senior Advisor, Communications and Engagement to support the delivery of the implementation plan for the overarching communications and engagement strategy.
- Recruitment for 3 Business Analysts, for MEO, Community Engagement and GE2023.
- Recruitment for a Customer Services Manager (aka centralised Enquiries Manager) is planned.

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

The DCE SGD and Principal Advisor Governance attended a ‘What good looks like’ seminar hosted by the Office of the Auditor General outlining current reporting and accountability methodology. The team has also been helping our KPMG auditors understand the Commission’s systems and data architecture to inform their 2021/22 audit.

Preparing for the future

The SGD team has been preparing for the Justice Committee’s annual review questionnaire to the Commission, which we expect to receive in November. Potential questions will be circulated to managers to allow them as much time as possible to prepare their potential responses.

Data and Insights

The data platform project is about 80% through MVP delivery.

EMS 2023 simulation data will be imported starting this week. Dashboards containing historical elections data have been delivered and final changes are with Voting Services for approval.

ECE dashboards continue to be reviewed by testers, though their time has been limited due to the LBE and by-election.

A backlog of new dashboards, for production after the MVP is delivered, has been created. This includes dashboards for management at the ELT and regional levels, as well as further information for use in planning for GE 2023.

The certification and accreditation process will begin next month and will be the final step in delivering the data platform.

We are commencing a fourth phase of work with Deloitte to provide the ingestion pipeline build and support work for the remaining development of the platform.

Election Access Fund: Te Tomokanga – Pūtea Whakatapoko Pōtitanga

The Election Access Fund opened on 31 October, and we can now receive applications.

The media campaign to raise awareness of the fund also launched on opening day, with a media release and emails sent to the individuals and organisations on our stakeholder database.

The campaign is designed to reach the diverse disability community and was developed with guidance from an agency with disability expertise. It will include radio, press, online display and social media advertisements, which will be pushed at regular intervals to align with when people are likely to be contemplating standing for Parliament.

As required by the Election Access Fund Act, on 6 October a Gazette notice was published giving public notice of the eligibility criteria for payments from the fund.

Agreements were signed with the independent panel members who will assess applications to the fund. The panel members are Jade Farrar, Dianne Glenn, Huhana Hickey and Robbie Watene. Their first meeting for training purposes is on 2 November.

Minister Allan was provided an update on 20 October to advise of final preparations for fund opening, including publishing eligibility rules, recruiting an independent panel, and communications planning.

International Liaison:

Our advisor has returned from Tokelau. The rules and manuals have been drafted and are being submitted to the general Fono. We hope to complete this assignment within the next month.

The preparations for the Commonwealth Elections Pacific Region network conference are well underway for 7-11 November. We will be having a mihi whakatau, with the welcome dinner led by Hone Matthews, and we will be hosting the farewell dinner on the final night. We will have a member of the Operations group attending the workshop.

International Electoral Assistance Programmes (MFAT funded):

We continue progressing with MFAT:

- The new Pacific Regional programme in partnership with UNDP, is still underway. The launch date for this have been pushed to February. This will allow us to support countries who do not have a bi-lateral programme with us.

Fiji

To date the writ has not been issued and we await the date along with the rest of Fiji. The Manager International has been in country providing support to the Deputy Supervisor of Elections based on her having previously held the role.

All the Technical Advisors (TA) are on standby and will deploy once the date is announced.

Papua New Guinea

PNGEC are now in review mode and one of our TA will attend the Training and Awareness workshop from 8-11 November in PNG followed by another TA attending the National Review to be held 21-25 November.

This will help us to shape our activity plan for support for next year.

Tonga

The Manager International and a TA travelled to Tonga for the first time since 2019 and had a very successful week with the Electoral Commission in Tonga. They were able to agree on a high-level strategic support plan which will now be worked into an annual activity plan and work programme.

Other progress

The International team has now filled the vacancies it has been carrying for many months: administration support officer Niki 9(2)(a) and programme manager Karen Beggs both started this month.

People management

TOIL or excess annual leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No change. The two staff with TOIL balances are planning to use these over Christmas.
Staff engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No change