



This report covers the main activities undertaken by the group/business unit for the period. It excludes the GE23 Programme or by-elections, which are reported on through separate channels.

Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

The Māori advisor team has participated and led in preparations for the MEO and GE2023. Work that requires building understandings and the capability of staff via:

- Electorate Manager Training
- Imbedding tikanga Māori across the commission
- Whakatau/pōhiri to new staff – Wellington (including the Governor-General), Christchurch
- Internal workshops (Wānanga)
- Review external communications
- Supporting Community Engagement with strategy and Training of new MEO staff
- Supporting Telnet (pronunciation resources)
- MEO Contracted groups procurement and training (history of MEO)
- Working with Communications Learning and Development to develop and improve cultural capability
- Support for Community Engagement at Te Matatini
- Translation work (We have prioritised this work).

Preparing for an election

Trust & security

The Trust and Security work is progressing at pace and involves representatives from across the business as well as external agencies. The current areas of focus or this work are:

- Evaluating our current protections, identifying the main gaps in the work programme and key decisions that need to be taken, through internal workshops and external risk evaluation work – we held a workshop from representatives from across the business (in the internal Security Group) on 24 February and the first Risk and Security Working Group on 23 February.
- Documenting the strands of work occurring across the organisation in support of the trust and safety of GE2023 into a consolidated project plan at a more fine-grained level to track progress against a centralised view – this is currently being worked through with the Programme Director.
- Making recommendations to the Programme Board about additional protections that may be required to support the mitigation or risk and preparations to respond to issues that may arise during GE2023 – a paper setting out the main finding and recommending next steps is being worked on and is pencilled in for the 23 March Programme Board.

- Furthering the inter-agency support work to have an agreed (inter-agency) risk profile established by April – a draft risk profile is being worked upon based on discussion and feedback at the first Risk and Security Working Group meeting on 24 February.

Māori advisory team

- Support Voting Services with Kaupapa Māori Voting places (Location - kura and or places of significance to Iwi)
- Support in the development of the advertisement production for the MEO campaign
- Recruitment
- Translation work.

Preparing for the future

- Our capability is noticeably growing in Te Ao Māori. We are continuing to develop our tikanga that is appropriate to us in-house and appropriate to our different communities.
- Our translation work for MEO and GE is better positioning ourselves to have powerful conversations with Iwi.

Building relationships and understanding

n/a

Other progress

n/a

Issues under management

n/a

Other news

- Mark Lawson is currently recruiting for a Senior Advisor – Interagency Liaison role to support trust and security work.

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

The *SLG Wānanga* was held on 7 March and the date for the All Staff wānanga is set for 16 March. Final arrangements are made to secure appropriate venues for regional gatherings for the wānanga.

The *Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy* was endorsed by ELT and referred to the Board for approval at the March Board meeting.

Phase 2 of the *FMIS project (Solver)* has gone live and training has been given to all budget managers. Budget templates for FY23/24 have gone to all budget managers and we are working towards a finalised budget by the end of March 2023. This is on track, and consolidated budgets are currently being reviewed at ELT level.

Implementation of an additional layer of *Multi Factor Authentication* protection when logging in to your account.

The team progressed work on the *Employee Database (Excel)* to capture the status of our people due to have no HRIS and limited functionality in our payroll system. With the implementation of the changes coming into effect from 31 March, reporting of employee metrics and Health and Safety is being transferred to the People & Culture team from the Principal Advisor Corporate Services.

Preparing for an election

Financial pressures are being reassessed, as confirmation of October election date may have a financial impact, but this is also mitigated by savings in other areas.

Electorate Manager training has been completed, and EFTPOS cards are being issued to all the Managers. RM's have now being set up with new DFA's and able to approve invoices directly in Business Central for the first time. The EMS financial module is being reviewed, and minor development changes are being discussed with Joe Glover to improve some internal controls.

Testing has been completed for the organisational structures inside the Learning Management System *TUPU*.

EMS Production went live last week this included a connection for the *data platform software* development is proceeding well and is on track for deployment at the end of March. Certification and Accreditation for this data platform continues.

The *Enterprise Services Operations Manual* is being updated to ensure we have all the milestones included and understood across the team.

Preparing for the future

Visitor Management System development is in progress. This will improve the way our visitors are managed at National Office.

Work has begun at looking at *FMIS Phase 3* which was descoped from Phase 1. Finance and procurement are currently working on this and will also bring IT into the discussion. Additions to BC such as NZBN checks and Māori Vendor details, are being considered as further future improvements to the financial control and data collection improvements in Business Central

Across Enterprise Services we have 20 *vacancies* – 12 in IT, 3 in Property and Procurement, 1 in finance, 3 in People and Culture and 1 in Enterprise Services. We are using Sapphire to recruit these roles, and we are actively recruiting 9 of these roles.

Building relationships and understanding

People & Culture, Administration and IT are continuing to work together to *streamline onboarding and inductions* to provide a better employee experience.

Other progress

Health and Safety – Further progressed consultation and procurement of services for delivering field Health and Safety Training.

Issues under management

Recruitment for an IT Solution Architect has been difficult and after multiple interviews we are now reaching out to recruitment agencies.

Other news

- Antony 9(2)(a) has been brought in as a temp Accounts Payable officer while our permanent Assistant Accountant is being recruited for this role.
- Procurement and Property Manager and Procurement Senior Advisor are in the final stages of recruitment.
- The transition to the new preferred stationery supplier Office Max is in progress, with comms due to go to users this week.
- The office plants contract with Plants Undercover has been discontinued, to ensure budget priorities are being met.
- 9(2)(a) left the IT team on 24 February.
- Recruitment is proceeding well for System Admin and Cyber Security roles with two offers made within the IT team.
- The Learning and Development team members report to the Principal Advisor Capability and OD from 6 March as part of our change that was confirmed in December 2022.

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

- Two team members underwent training on Te Kauhanga, our new data platform using Tableau dashboards.

Preparing for an election

- Work continued in supporting the Ministry of Justice in legislation to reduce the voting age.
- We are in the process of finalising the Broadcasters and Publishers Handbook for the 2023 General Election. This replaces the Media Handbook from 2020.
- Kristina, Dean and Braedyn attended the Returning Officers training day to witness secrecy declarations.
- Potential third party promoter organisations were emailed this month, with instructions on how to apply for the Register of Promoters. The website is updated with the Third Party Handbook for the 2023 General Election and the Register will be filled as promoters' applications are accepted.
- Following the broadcasting allocation notice period, all 15 registered parties and two unregistered parties applied for broadcasting allocation. Work continues on a board paper with suggestions for allocation.
- The two unregistered parties, Animal Justice Party New Zealand, and Protect and Prosper New Zealand, have advised that they intend to register before the 2023 General Election.
- Work has begun on the updated Judicial Recount resource pack for District Court Judges, providing information on the election process, history of previous recounts and relevant law. The pack was last updated in November 2020.
- Input into the trust and resilience work being led by Mark.

Preparing for the future

- Continuing work with the Communications Team on the development of election candidate hub animated resources for the election, on being a candidate, loans, donations and advertising expenses. Scripts have been voice recorded and preliminary animations sent to us from National Park for review.
- Participating in the GE steering group, GE Programme Board, the working group on risk and security, stakeholder engagement plan (data stewardship group, and by-election working group did not meet this month).
- Provided a submission for the Review into the Future for Local Government on 22 February, discussing the review's recommendations for centralising administration of local electoral processes.
- Provided a submission for the Inquiry into the 2022 local elections to the Justice Select Committee on 28 February.

Building relationships and understanding

- Hosted a meeting with the Broadcasting Standards Authority, Advertising Standards Authority and Media Council to establish relationships and prepare for the upcoming media briefing in April.
- Met with Stats NZ and LINZ to discuss a high level timetable and budgets for the next boundary review in 2025.
- Continuing meeting weekly with the Ministry of Justice E&C policy team on legislative change and other electoral work. We met for a casual catch-up on 1 February to establish relationships in preparation for cooperative work this year.
- Support to Independent Electoral Review Panel secretariat including working on a range of information requests, with input from staff in the Operations group.
- Kristina, Karl, and Marie presented at the Justice Committee's annual review of the Electoral Commission on 16 February.

Other progress

- Dean handed over IRT lead during February.
- Review of procurement templates being developed by the Enterprise Group.
- Continuing to review collateral, web content and statements of work being developed for the continuous Māori Electoral Option, which comes into force on 31 March.
- Working on section 112 requests for electoral roll data.

Advisory opinions

We received 20 advisory requests in February. All were responded to within the 5 working timeframe.

Party administration and compliance

- Information was sent to registered parties on their obligations around returns for donations and loans from 2022.
- Following the return of the writ for the Hamilton West By-Election, registration applications continued. Freedoms New Zealand was registered on the Register of Political Parties on 16 February. The Opportunities Party successfully applied for a variation of their logo.
- Board papers have been prepared for registration of the logo of Freedoms New Zealand and an application by New Conservative to vary their logo.
- The Democrats for Social Credit informed us they do not intend to contest the 2023 General Election and were deregistered in February. A Gazette notice to this effect was submitted on 1 March.
- Work continues on the application for registration from the New Nation Party.
- Continuing to respond to enquiries from prospective parties around the registration process, broadcasting allocation and the election.
- After a public enquiry, the Māori Party received a notice that their Facebook page did not contain a promoter statement. They have since amended their page.

Official Information Act requests responded to in February

We responded to two OIA requests in February. All were within the 20 working day timeframe.

Requestor	Topic	Response Time
9(2)(a)	<p>From Google search I noted you have called for independent member to set on the Election Access Fund Panel last year.</p> <p>May I ask how did you call for public nomination and on what platform you have call for public nominations, e.g. govt.jobs website. Also, how many applications you have received from the public and how many you have received from other nominating agencies such as TPK or Ministry of women etc. further, how many you have shortlisted and interviewed.</p> <p>Please supply the pay rate and term of reference/job description of this role.</p> <p>Also, the current panel member of the Election Access Fund</p>	7WD
info@data.govt.nz	Political Donation Data: Data regarding each party's annual return (including publicly available donor information), and large donations.	19WD

Parliamentary questions responded to in February

We responded to four parliamentary questions in February.

Requestor	Question	Date of Response
Melissa Lee MP	What Bring your Own Device (BYOD) policies, if any, are currently being operated by their responsible entities?	14/02/2023
Melissa Lee MP	Were any cybersecurity incidents notified to the Minister or any duty Minister operating within their portfolio between 16 December 2022 and 14 February 2023; if so, what was the nature of the event, by dates, reason, and organisation?	14/02/2023
Chris Bishop MP	In relation to any statutory entity named in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Crown Entities Act 2004 or any public service agency the Minister is responsible for, which entity or agencies, if any, have appointed a Plain Language Officer or Officers pursuant to the Plain Language Act 2022; when, if ever, were they appointed, how many, if any, have been appointed for each entity or agency; and if appointments have been made, how were they appointed, are the appointees within or outside the agency, and how many, if any, full-time equivalent staff have been hired as Plain Language Officers?	14/02/2023
Melissa Lee MP	How, if at all, are the Minister's Departments and entities, if any, ensuring that use of Microsoft 365 and other information management software platforms complies with government information and records management policies and laws?	21/02/2023

Issues under management

- We are continuing to work with the IT team on the solution needed for parties to access the nominations system via the Party Portal and to ensure that the EMS and results systems work for umbrella/component party relationships.

Other news

Resourcing

- Recruitment continues for a permanent Legal Advisor role.
- 6 proposed secondments from the Ministry of Justice from 12 June to 22 October to support the Legal and Policy Team were approved at the quarterly hui between MOJ Policy and the Electoral Commission.

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

Staff Recruitment:

Shane Whitfield, Director Strategic Engagement and Partnership officially started with the Commission on 13 February and is based in Christchurch. Currently, he is getting his feet under the table with a comprehensive induction to support him and getting to understand his role.

Kelly **9(2)(a)**, Contracts and Partnerships Lead who started in February will be working closely on the Māori Electoral Option 23. She is based up in Auckland.

Justin McCready was appointed to the Customer Services Manager role and started on 27 February. Justin will be working closely on the public enquiries activities for Māori Electoral Option and further consolidate the set up and practice for GE2023.

9(2)(a) a long serving Enrolment Officer in the Lower Hutt office has resigned (retirement), and recruitment is underway. The vacancy for an Operations Support Officer in the Lower Hutt Enrolment team has been completed.

Kevin **9(2)(a)** Senior Advisor, Communications and Media started in February to support our media engagement for the General Election. His role is to support our engagement with national, regional and local media to help tell the Commission's story and ensure that New Zealanders have the information they need to enrol and vote.

Organisational communications

We have continued to focus on providing our people with the information and tools they need to do their job easily. This month we have launched the Electoral Commission Style Guide, internal brand guidelines, and templates to help our people write clearly and consistently.

Events

Voting Services ran a 4-day Electorate Managers Training workshop in February. The Governor General, Commission Chair and Chief Executive and members of the Operations Leadership Team presented to the electorate managers. A comprehensive workshop was delivered to train returned and new Electorate Managers to prepare them for the election.

The Community Engagement leaders held a 2-day leadership hui on 21/22 February – it was an opportunity to work with the newly appointed Director to form the team culture and continue planning for MEO and GE.

Engagement staff from Auckland, Whangārei, Hamilton and Christchurch attended Te Matatini Herenga Waka, Herenga Tangata in Tāmaki Makaurau. This biennial event hosted over 60,000

people and was watched by 1 million online. This provided a key opportunity to engage with Māori from across Aotearoa ahead of both the Māori Electoral Option and General Election campaigns.

Alongside our Enrolment station, we had several activations to pique the interest of those passing by and to spark up conversation around the upcoming electoral events. The most popular of these activations were our kirituhi stamps (Māori patterns placed onto the arms or legs), and our “Pick Your Favourite Kai” Voting Poll. A busy four days saw several hundred electors get enrolled.

Preparing for an election

Māori Electoral Option:

Development work on the MIKE system changes is progressing well. Brochures and envelopes for the mailout have been printed and New Zealand Post has completed the dress rehearsal process and testing of macrons using EC data. New Zealand Post has also carried out development and testing of changes to the ROE1 enrolment form and ROE9 confirmation letter, which are being updated to incorporate MEO changes.

Preparations for the Māori Electoral Option campaign have progressed. A detailed production timeline has been agreed but timeframes are very tight ahead of the campaign launch. Production is moving at pace and to date has progressed very well.

A creative approach for the campaign was agreed in February and talent and crew, including sand artist Marcus Winter, were confirmed and contracted after Ministry of Justice and neutrality checks were completed.

A stills photo shoot was held in Auckland to capture imagery to use across campaign assets. Post-production was completed and imagery has been applied to collateral that will be used by community engagement teams, external stakeholders and our website.

TV and radio scripts and messages for other media channels were drafted and circulated for comment. Storyboards for television and video content were drafted and preparations are underway to film in Auckland in mid-March.

A media approach for the Māori Electoral Option was completed and agreed in February, enabling the first media placements for the campaign to be booked.

Work to prepare the website for the launch of the campaign is underway.

A campaign kit to support internal teams to know and understand the Option, along with guidance to deliver information in political neutrality way, and how the Commission will deliver information to Māori has been drafted.

Content has been drafted and sent to alternate format providers to create accessible versions, including Large Print, Easy Read, Braille and audio.

Kelly **9(2)(a)** has started as Project Lead – Partnerships and Contracts. Planning for training is progressing well and a walkthrough of the community engagement training plan has been held to get feedback from internal stakeholders. A procurement process has been carried out for an

agency to provide temporary enrolment processing staff, PersolKelly has been confirmed and will commence recruitment for 11 staff, due to start training on 27 March.

A working group has been formed and is meeting regularly to assess impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle on delivery of the campaign, our regional teams are providing input on the expectations of communities in affected areas. We are assessing the delivery of the community engagement component of the campaign in the worst affected areas, and determining how we may tweak that delivery. We are identifying ways of reaching people who have been displaced and may not receive a mailout pack, including through targeted advertising.

We are also in the process of finalising the contract statement of work with Telnet for MEO delivery. This includes the required setup for the event and the provision of dedicated Te Reo speakers to support Māori descent electors in preparation for Māori Electoral Option 23. Further investigation on other potential options of Te Reo capability to assist with public enquiries have been explored. It concluded that the utilisation of Te Reo speakers in Telnet remains the best approach to ensure consistency and quality of the service.

Websites

Updated website content to support the changes to the Māori Electoral Option has been prepared and is now being translated. This has also meant updates to some of our existing video resources, which have been re-edited to take the changes into account.

We are engaging with our website vendor, Pikelin, to make the changes to vote.nz necessary to conduct the Māori Electoral Option and accept registrations for Kids Voting 2023.

Always on advertising activity

Always on activity continued in February to deliver enrolment messages to people who have recently moved house, turned 18, eligible to enrol on the provisional roll and recently moved to New Zealand. Messages ran across Google Search, digital and social media. New content is being trialled on Tik Tok to reach younger New Zealanders aged 18 to 24. A media schedule for the next quarter is being prepared.

The team are supporting the development of materials for Community Engagement and Voting Services, including pull up banners, posters, brochures and flags, that can be used outside of an event, to strengthen our brand look and feel and provide trust and confidence.

Preparing for the future

The GE23 community engagement strategy has now been approved by the Board and the first stage of the implementation is underway with a staff socialisation session set for early March. Once this is in place regional teams will develop localised plans to support the GE as well as consider longer term opportunities for engagement.

The Monitoring and Engagement framework is nearing completion and staff will be trained in use of the tools from mid-March with the view to begin gathering data around the impact of both MEO and GE engagement.

The implementation of Diacritics functionality in MIKE has been completed. In addition to the diacritics for addresses, staff can now enter names with diacritics from 16 February onwards and training has been provided to all staff across the regions.

The procurement process for de-escalation training has been progressing well. Once the contract process is completed, it is planned that the community engagement staff will receive training which will be facilitated by an external vendor from the 22nd to 23rd of March. All permanent and temporary staff for MEO will be attending. This is a half day training and there will be 6 sessions delivered in different locations namely Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton, Gisborne, Wellington, and Christchurch. There are up to 20 seats available for each location. The training will cover the application of the Health and Safety Workplace Act (HSWA) of 2015 to aggressive vs assertive behaviour, de-escalation techniques and incident reporting, among others.

Meeting with Leigh and MOJ, to discuss questions on the initial costing provided, policy options and implications for Voting Age Bill.

The team have supported the development of the SLG and all staff wānanga and have worked with P&C to implement and consult policy, communicate property moves, and improve the Commission onboarding and induction processes.

Building relationships and understanding

We have begun investigating the opportunity to engage Stats NZ staff into to the temporary workforce for the Commission once the census duties are completed.

We continue to have a diverse range of speakers at our fortnightly all staff meetings and provide opportunities for people to connect. We have spoken at Electorate Manager training and engaged with new Community Engagement leads to understand how we can best work together.

Stakeholder engagement

Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women

Communications and Education is working with the Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women on shared opportunities to acknowledge 130 years of women's suffrage in Aotearoa New Zealand on 19 September.

Census

Communications and Education and Enrolment continue to meet with senior leaders for the 2023 Census to share information about preparations for the Census and General Election and is linked with their social media team.

Media

The focus of political journalists continues to be on the response to Cyclone Gabrielle and party leadership. Newspapers around the country have also been marking candidate selections in different electorates, as parties prepare for the general election.

Items of interest include Newshub stories on whether there could be – at some point – a referendum on lowering the voting age. They also ran a story on the Prime Minister ruling out a snap election and included the results of an opinion poll in which 59% of people said they didn't think there should be an early election.

Items mentioning the Electoral Commission include a Newshub story on a complaint about a Pāti Māori Instagram post which needed a promoter statement. Radio New Zealand talked to internet experts about election advertising tactics that could be seen at this election including microtargeting. Both stories included comment from us on the rules for election ads.

Strategic communications

Development of the stakeholder engagement plans continue to make good progress, with just two needing drafting and a couple more needing final sign off.

Once we have those formalised we will be able to move into tracking that engagement, so we can put some structure around who we are engaging with, the purpose and the outcome.

Work on raising the Commission's public profile in the right way for the right reasons continues with the updating of op-eds for Marie and Karl following their feedback. We've also noted a few more opportunities for commentary in the media later in the year, but at this stage we're looking to get the first two signed off and pitched to media. Trust and community are key pillars of both.

Election Access Fund communications

Content to raise awareness of the Election Access Fund amongst disabled people is at the production stage. A creative approach and casting were completed in February for a photography shoot and radio recording in early March. All talent appearing in materials about the Fund have lived experience of disability. Activity about the Fund is scheduled to go live in March. Additional communications will be sent to stakeholders, including political parties and disability organisations, before activity starts.

Election integrity

Work on our communications activity focused on integrity and building trust and confidence in elections is continuing. This work is aligned with activity led by the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer on integrity, security and trust and confidence in the election.

A new video about how votes are counted at Parliamentary elections has been created and published on elections.nz. The video will give transparency to the process and be shared on our social media platforms throughout election year.

The communications team is working with the voting services to create a video to show voters what to expect when they get to a voting place and how to vote. Media will be invited to film their own footage that they can use in news articles about the election.

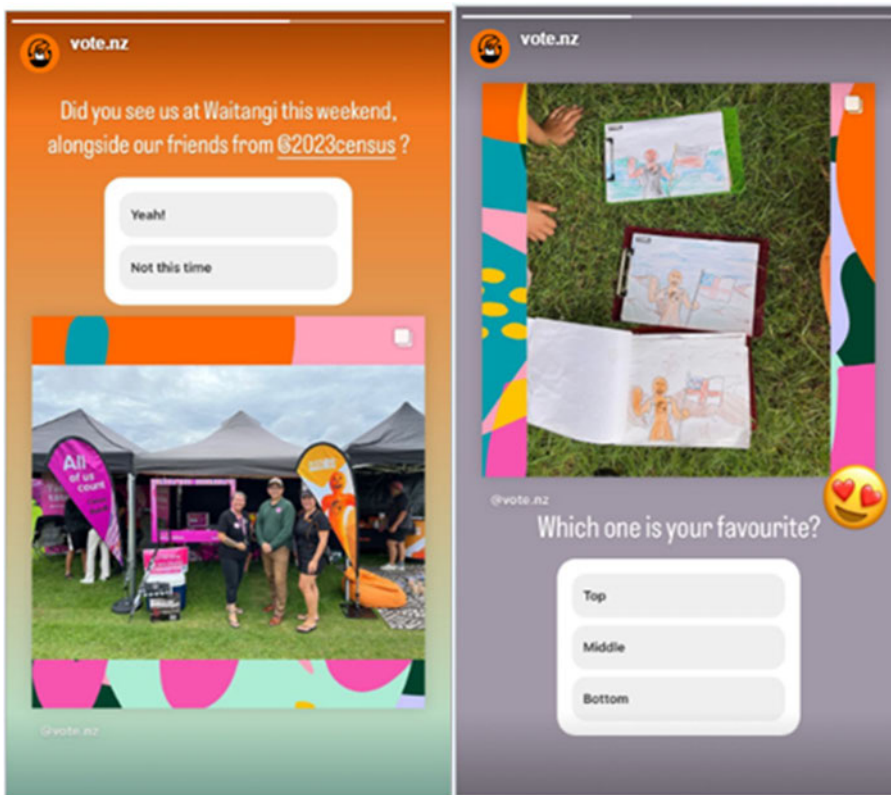
A timeline for our approach and developing resources on election integrity has also been shared internally for feedback. It includes a range of initiatives including working with social media companies and publishing a Facts About The Election page on vote.nz which will form the basis of proactive social media content for the year.

Social Media

Work continues on Best Practice Guidelines for Community Management document, which details how we will run and moderate our social media channels in the lead up to the General Election and other events. The new Guidelines will be finalised before the end of March.

A free trial of Agorapulse, a social media management tool, has been underway. It's unlikely we will continue with this service as it does not meet our needs for responding to comments and Direct Messages with quality assurance capability. We are looking at alternative options, including trialing new features for Sprout Social which was used at the 2020 General Election.

Posts were shared on our Instagram page and Instagram Stories of our community engagement teams at Waitangi and the Governor General's speech at the Electorate Managers training in February. These posts generated good reach and Census appreciated us promoting their team's attendance at Waitangi alongside our community engagement team.



Our reach on Facebook increased by 917% and Instagram by 105% in February, compared to the previous month. Reach is the number of accounts that saw any content from our Page, or about our Page, including posts, stories, ads, social information, and more. The increase is largely attributed to paid posts about the Election Access Fund.

The number of followers on our Facebook (28 new followers) and Instagram (46 new followers) pages continues to rise and is expected to climb further when the Māori Electoral Option campaign starts. The Commission currently has 46,609 Facebook followers, 2,700 Instagram followers and 1,978 Twitter followers.

Other progress

N/A

Issues under management

- Impact of Cyclone Gabrielle on Māori Electoral Option as some affected electors were reallocated as their properties were red stickered. The enrolment team is having regular meetings to discuss different delivery options for those who were affected by the cyclone.
- Staff located in the impacted regions continue to provide regular insights gathered from the community regarding potential implications for engagement and enrolment activity, access to affected areas, recruitment, and kaimahi ora.

Other news

- Recruitment for Senior Advisor Learning and Development is now underway.
- A Health and Safety Committee was held on the 23 February.
- Enrolment processing staff supported five local body by-elections during the reporting period, with the provision of elector data, nomination checks and special vote checks.

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Progress against the strategic priorities

Building our capability

- The data and insights team has implemented the Commission's new Tableau-based data platform, Te Kauhanga. This will help us to share our data internally effectively and create a 'one-stop-shop' for our data needs.

Preparing for an election

- To date one EAF application has been processed and approved. This granted \$2,593 for taxis to get to political party meetings and a note taker, to assist a person with visual impairment. Another disabled person is preparing an application with advice from their political party. We have received a small number of enquiries about the fund. In addition to those already mentioned, two others were from potential applicants.
- Election-year protocols for monitoring have been agreed with the Ministry of Justice.

Preparing for the future

- Recruitment is underway for the Manager Strategy, Risk and Assurance and Senior Data Insights roles.

Building relationships and understanding

- Regular fortnightly meetings with the Ministry of Justice monitoring liaison recommenced on 24 February.

Other progress

n/a

Issues under management

n/a

Other news

- The SGD team workshop held at Wellington Zoo on 17 February was highly successful.
- Charmaine 9(2)(a) will join the team (6 March) in a part-time EA role replacing 9(2)(a)