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9(2)(a)

RE Official Information Act request CDHB 10159

I refer to your email received 30 July 2019 requesting information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB regarding our Communications/Public Relations Staff.

The Canterbury and West Coast DHBs' TransAlpine Communications Team provides 24/7 services for emergency response communications and from 6am until 11pm for more general media queries. Staff provide communications advice and services for both District Health Boards.

The demand for a wide range of communications services is at a consistently high level year-round and unforeseen events such as the earthquakes in North Canterbury in 2016, junior doctors strikes in 2017 and 2019, nurses' strike in 2018, the Port Hills fires in February 2017, Canterbury floods in 2017, the Measles outbreak at the beginning of March 2019 followed by the terrorist attacks on the 15 March 2019 and the flood in the new outpatient building at the end of March 2019, along with strikes by hospital midwives, pharmacists, medical imaging technologists and psychologists all require significant input from the communications team to ensure the public and all stakeholders are kept informed.

Since the 2010/11 earthquakes the demand for communications services has increased significantly – in accordance with the major changes and transformation taking place in our health systems and the major new building construction and repair programmes underway in Canterbury and on the West Coast. This increase in demand is also fuelled by the growing expectation from media and the public for more and better proactive communications, and a faster response to events that affect them.

During periods of peak demand we engage contractors to help with elements of our work and this includes communicating all of the changes associated with new ways of working in new facilities, as well as organising events such as site and building blessings, staff and public open days, ministerial and VIP visits and formal opening events. Each of these events are often major projects which are led by communications team members.

There has been significant media interest in many aspects of Canterbury DHB's activities since the quakes.

Much of this interest has focused on mental health and wellbeing. Canterbury's integrated health system along with damage and repairs to our hospital buildings, new facilities, finances, new home and community-based services; parking issues and solutions such as the park and ride scheme.

Keeping more than 11,000 DHB staff and around 20,000 wider health system staff informed about what is happening in our health systems, together with the wider community are important aspects of our work and keeps the TransAlpine communications team extremely busy.

We are proud to have won a number of PR and Communication awards for our work and more importantly receive positive feedback from our colleagues and other agencies for the quality of work we do.

1. How many comms / PR staff did you employ (FTE) for the years ending June 30 2014 and 2019?

For the 2014 year we had the following Communications staff:

7 FTE Canterbury

1.5 FTE Comms contractors working on facilities communications.

1 FTE West Coast-based.

The total salary for all employed Comms staff was \$662,855 and for contractors \$253,259

For the year ending 30 June 2019 we had the following Communications staff:

6.5 permanent FTE Canterbury

1 FTE [12 month fixed-term ends Sept 2019]

1.5 FTE Comms contractors working on facilities communications.

1 FTE West Coast based

The total salary for all employed Comms staff was \$840,621 and for contractors \$219,524

*The current TransAlpine Communications team includes the following roles: 1 x Executive Director, 1 x Team Leader, 1 x Senior Media Advisor, 4 x Senior Communications Advisors [note one is fixed term until end of Sept] and 1.5 Communications Advisors.

2. How many comms / PR people did you employ (FTE) on contract for the years ending June 30 2014 and 2019?

Two people are on contract for facilities communications - refer to the answer to Q1 above.

3. How much was your comms/PR budget for the years ending June 30 2014 and 2019?

2013/2014 total budget was: \$1.046 million

2018/2019 total budget was: \$1.346 million

4. What proportion of the comms/PR budget was spent on outside comms/PR consultants or contractors?

Refer to Question 1 for cost of contractors.

5. How many media enquiries did you receive for the years ending June 2014 and 2019?

We do not have an electronic system to record all media queries, so cannot give exact figures as the information requested does not exist in a document and this information could not be provided without substantial collation and research. Your request for this information is therefore declined under Sections 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982.

Many media enquiries are received out of hours and over weekends, and we would respond to thousands of media responses each year. These can range from a 'condition update' of the status of a patient in hospital, to a complex series of questions on mental health data and DHB finances.

Information is also released via our Facebook page [posts and live stream media briefings, such as during the measles outbreak and terror attacks] twitter account, weekly e-newsletter the CEO Update, proactive media releases and WellNow our community magazine published twice a year. When there is an adverse event such as the mosque terror attacks or earthquakes, we can respond to hundreds of media enquiries in just a few days.

Canterbury DHB employs one full time media advisor, and this role together with the executive director of communications, team leader and senior communications advisors provide media responses 24/7 during emergencies, and from 6am to 11pm at other times - including weekends and public holidays.

6. What is your target turnaround time for media enquiries?

As soon as possible. We do not have a target turnaround time. Some simple requests are responded to within minutes, while others which require more research and data to be pulled with input from multiple people can at times, take days.

We aim to keep reporters informed of progress with more complex requests.

7. How often did you meet the target response time last year?

Not applicable.

8. What proportion of time did your comms/PR team spend on responding to media enquiries last year?

We do not hold this data. (Declined under Section 18(g) of the Official Information Act)

*We have one person working full-time on media queries [40 hours per week, plus on-call]. At peak times two or three other Communications staff may also spend part of their day working on media enquiries, but we cannot quantify the total proportion of time each Comms team member spends researching and preparing information for reporters as we do not record how much time is spent on the various tasks and projects we work on each day.

9. How many live (in person or by phone) media interviews did your chief executive do last year?

This information is not available without substantial collation and research and your request for this detailed information is declined under Section 18(f) of the Official Information Act.

We can however, provide an estimate, of approximately one live interview a week. * It should be noted that after the mosque terror attacks in March 2019 the chief executive would have completed hundreds of live/pre-recorded and in-person interviews for international and local media during the first few days.

10. If you have a policy or guidelines on how comms/PR staff should respond to media enquiries, please provide a copy.

We do not have written guidelines. We always aim to provide timely, accurate and helpful responses as soon as possible to all reporters – including student journalists.

11. How many of your current comms/PR employees are former journalists?

This information is private and withheld under Section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

12. What is the range of salaries paid to your comms/PR staff from lowest to highest?

Providing this information would breach the privacy of individual staff and is therefore withheld under Section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

*Note: we have provided the total number of communications staff and the total amount paid to these staff in the answer to Question 1 (above). We believe this satisfies any public interest in this matter.

You may, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act, seek a review of our decision to withhold information by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz; or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Canterbury DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Gullery
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Planning, Funding & Decision Support