

# Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



28 September 2021

S Rasool

fyi-request-16574-5a1faf7d@requests.fyi.org.nz

CHOIA110

Dear S Rasool

## Official Information Act request for the criteria for designating a country “very high risk”

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received on 30 August 2021. You requested:

*“... please confirm the criteria of adding countries to the published high risk countries on the link below. Plus why USA, UK & Japan have not been added to the list, and especially likewise countries where delta and lambda variants are spiking ??”*

The criteria for considering ‘very high risk’ designation takes into consideration a broad range of factors including, but is not limited to:

- The number of positive cases as a percentage of arrivals.
- Whether cases in the country are rising rapidly, and the predominant strain i.e. the Delta variant.
- The level of confidence in the country’s health system capacity and its testing measures.
- Vaccination coverage rates in the country.

When classifying a country as ‘very high risk’ consideration is given to these and other factors. We also consider data and information relating to the global situation on a regular basis.

Cabinet papers, Minutes, and related briefings covering a wide range of different topics that make up the COVID-19 response have been made publicly available on the COVID-19 website: [covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/proactive-releases](https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/proactive-releases). Documents relevant to the ‘very high risk’ category for countries can be found under the topic “Border”.

In particular, I draw your attention to the two documents listed below. This paper and Minute set out the risk assessment framework for travellers arriving in New Zealand from very high-risk countries and jurisdictions:

- The 30 June 2021 Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee paper “*Creating A Risk Responsive Border: Proposed Risk Assessment Framework For Very High Risk Countries And Jurisdictions*” [SWC-21-SUB-0101]: [covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/proactive-release-2021-august/Creating-a-risk-responsive-border-proposed-risk-assessmen....pdf](https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/proactive-release-2021-august/Creating-a-risk-responsive-border-proposed-risk-assessmen....pdf) and,
- The related Minute of 30 June 2021 “*Risk Responsive Borders*” [SWC-21-MIN-0101]: [covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/proactive-release-2021-august/Minute.pdf](https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/proactive-release-2021-august/Minute.pdf).

To the extent your request is for the information available here, your request is refused under section 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information is publicly available.

Information on international COVID-19 case numbers is publicly available online from a range of sources.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CH', is positioned above the printed name.

**Chris Hipkins**  
**Minister for COVID-19 Response**