

Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



Chuck Schooner
fyi-request-17133-4ab37f0d@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref. CHOIA131

Dear Chuck

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 11 October 2021. Please find a response to each part of your request below.

As the Minister for Covid-19 response are you aware of the following international trends

- August 1, 2021 Israel it was announced half of all Covid-19 infections were among the vaccinated with signs of more serious disease among fully vaccinated in elderly*
- August 5, 2021 Israel 95% of severely ill Covid patients are fully vaccinated and that they make up 85-90% of Covid hospitalisations overall*
- Scotland official data of hospitalisations and deaths show 87% of those who died from Covid in the third wave were fully vaccinated*
- In Gibraltar which has a 99% vaccination rate cases have risen 2500% since June 1, 2021*
- In Iceland where over 82% of people have received the shots 77% of new Covid cases are among the fully vaccinated*

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) monitors trends in international COVID cases and pandemic responses and regularly informs me of key information.

Were you aware that that mRNA vaccines although have been around for 20 years were never approved for use in humans due to side effects prior to this pandemic?

While the Act allows New Zealanders to ask for information from Ministers and government agencies, there is no requirement to create new information or provide an opinion in order to respond to a request. However you may be interested to know that information regarding the safety and efficacy of mRNA vaccines can be found on the Ministry's website at the following links:

- www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-how-vaccine-works
- www.health.govt.nz/our-work/immunisation-handbook-2020/5-coronavirus-disease-covid-19

*Can you please provide all reporting by Medsafe that highlights why these types of vaccines have never been approved before?
- If this work wasn't complete can you state why?*

Medsafe can only approve medicines when the sponsor company has submitted a medicine application. Comirnaty is the first vaccine containing an mRNA-based active ingredient for which Medsafe has received a new medicine application.

Can you please provide all the reporting completed and provided to you about any and all countries that are showing waves of cases where vaccination rates are high and if this has been flagged to you?

Countries that are showing waves of cases where vaccination rates are high – such as Portugal, Iceland, Singapore, the United Kingdom – have been included in several of the Ministry's weekly international perspectives reports. Each report provides a breakdown of current case trends, vaccination rates, hospitalisations and deaths, and public health measures by country. These are provided to me each week.

Providing relevant reports that feature high vaccination rates would require significant collation, therefore the Minister is refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. The greater public interest is in the Ministry of Health and my office to be able to continue to lead the pandemic response.

Provide the agency and who is responsible for monitoring the overseas trends - ie Medsafe, universities?

The Ministry monitors the effects of the pandemic in other countries. Sources include public data on deaths, hospitalisations and infections and how these are being reduced by vaccination roll-outs; scientific literature; reports on how the virus is mutating and changing in other countries; and information from global networks such as the World Health Organization.

The Ministry works directly with their counterparts in Australia to better understand the effects of the pandemic there, and to learn from their experience in minimising its effects. Our pandemic response is also informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' analysis of reports from its network of embassies and consulates.

Please provide the number of people that have an unlinked case and if they are fully vaccinated in all cases as at today's date

Please find information on unlinked COVID-19 cases as at 9:00AM on 30 November 2021 in the table below.

| COVID-19 vaccination status | Count of unlinked cases |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Fully vaccinated at least 7 days before reported as a case | 465 |
| No doses received prior to being reported as a case | 792 |
| Not eligible for vaccine due to being less than 12 years old | 459 |
| Partially vaccinated | 448 |
| Total | 2,164 |

Please confirm if people administering the vaccination they are notifying people of the risks associated as per the Medicines Act?

People receiving vaccinations are provided with information sheets and the opportunity to ask questions. These info sheets can be found online on the Ministry's website at: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-resources

Please provide legal justification that has been given to yourself Ministry of Health that supports the government blatantly in breach of the Medicines Act?

Please refer to my response above. The Act does not support requests where an opinion, comment, argument, or hypothetical statement is sought for response, couched as a request for information.

The government is satisfied that it is acting in accordance with the Medicines Act 1981. In addition, where requirements are imposed under the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020, all Orders are assessed for compliance with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (NZBORA) and an Order will only be made by myself as the Minister for COVID-19 Response if compliant with the NZBORA.

As part of decision making, the Minister receives advice about compliance with NZBORA including legal advice. The rights and freedoms in NZBORA are subject to reasonable limits prescribed by law, as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society, so such rights and freedoms are not overridden as part of the making of Orders.

When will the outstanding conditions be met by Pfizer?

On 28 October 2021 Medsafe renewed its provisional approval of the Pfizer Comirnaty vaccine until 3 November 2023. Pfizer New Zealand has met all obligations required to date by the conditions of the provisional approval granted in February 2021, including provision of additional data about the clinical trials and vaccine monitoring. The renewed provisional approval has eight conditions attached to them and can be found in the Gazette notice here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/Comirnaty-Gazette-Oct-2021.pdf

Provide cost/benefit analysis of mass vaccination for a disease that has a less than 1% death rate and even less in healthy people

There has been no cost/benefit analysis conducted. However, the original benefit/risk assessment for the Comirnaty vaccine has been released in a previous OIA response from the Ministry: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202106950_response.pdf. Please refer to Document 10 on page 94.

Cabinet decides which COVID-19 vaccines are to be administered in New Zealand following advice from COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

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

Morehu Rei
Ministerial Advisor