



14 March 2022

ASE

fyi-request-18407-aeb9d9f1@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2021/22-0932

Dear ASE

Official Information Act request relating to potential risks and effects of COVID-19 pandemic response

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 1 February 2022. You requested:

1. *"What due diligence has DPMC undertaken in assessing and understanding potential risks and harmful effects (including lack of efficacy) of lock-downs, "traffic lights", and similar measures? When were such risks and harmful effects assessed? How is such due diligence ongoing?"*
2. *What due diligence has DPMC undertaken in assessing and understanding potential risks and harmful effects (including lack of efficacy) of face-mask recommendations and requirements? When were such risks and harmful effects assessed? How is such due diligence ongoing?"*
3. *What due diligence has DPMC undertaken in assessing and understanding potential risks and harmful effects (including lack of efficacy) of COVID inoculations for the general public; for employees in specific roles and/or industries and/or employed by certain employers; for children younger than 16; for children younger than 12? When were such risks and harmful effects assessed? How is such due diligence ongoing?"*
4. *What due diligence has DPMC undertaken in assessing and understanding potential risks and harmful effects (including lack of efficacy) of the "My Vaccine Pass" system? When were such risks and harmful effects assessed? How is such due diligence ongoing?"*
5. *For clarity, please define "efficacy" for each of the COVID response measures, as specified above.*
6. *To the extent that any of this due diligence, as specified above, in assessing and understanding potential risks and harmful effects (including lack of efficacy) of these COVID response measures has not been undertaken by DPMC, please explain why such due diligence has not been done."*

The information you have requested in questions 2 and 3 is more closely connected to the functions of the Ministry of Health (the Ministry). Normally, we would transfer your request to the Ministry under section 14(b)(ii) of the Act. However, as you have also made a request to the Ministry for this information, we instead refer you to that department's response for this information.

With regards to questions 1,4,5 and 6, I am responding to the information relating to DPMC.

It may be helpful to provide some context surrounding topics you have raised in your request. From 3 December 2021, New Zealand moved into the COVID Protection Framework, also known as the “Traffic Lights” framework. This new approach to COVID-19 introduced more freedoms for vaccinated New Zealanders. The framework is designed to keep us safe as we go about our daily lives now that our vaccination rates are higher.

The deployment of highly effective and safe vaccines enabled us to adjust our approach. High vaccination rates create more options for both domestic measures and border settings. Our new domestic framework to control COVID-19 enabled us to minimise the spread of disease without relying on widespread Alert Level 3 and 4 lockdowns. By vaccinating, effectively testing, tracing and isolating, and controlling the virus through our new framework, we will reduce the frequency, size and speed of outbreaks.

Our response to COVID-19 is under continuous review for improvement. It is not possible to predict how the response and the current framework may be adapted or changed in the future as the impact of future variants of the virus or how the pandemic will progress are not known. Cabinet has instructed officials to review the policy in early 2022 and report back to the Minister for COVID-19 Response, in order to monitor the effectiveness and wider impacts of the policy.

I am refusing parts 1, 4 and 5 of your request under section 18(d) of the Act as the information requested is publicly available. Advice and decisions regarding New Zealand’s response to COVID-19 have and will continue to be proactively released on the Unite Against COVID-19 website, and can be accessed at:

<https://covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases/alert-levels-and-restrictions/>

I am refusing part 6 of your request under section 18(e) as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

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

We do not intend to publish this response on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s website.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Response