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6 November 2023

Kylie Stewart

By email: fyi-request-23831-ed444646@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H2023030668

Tēnā koe Kylie

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 14 August 2023 for information regarding the removal of mask mandates and the isolation period for COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand. You requested:

“Please provide any advice you were given from Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, Te Aka Whai Ora the Māori Health Authority, or e Pou Hauora Tūmatanui the Public Health agency, or any other agencies regarding the removal of mask mandates from medical and disability care settings and removing the isolation period for COVID-19.”

I have identified 88 email chains which includes correspondence between Manatū Hauora and other government agencies in scope of your request. Some information has been withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons
- 9(2)(g)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers and officers and employees of any public service agency; and
- 9(2)(h) of the Act to maintain legal professional privilege.

I have considered the countervailing public interest in releasing the information and consider that it does not outweigh the need to withhold at this time.

Please note that Manatū Hauora has also identified further email correspondence within the scope of your request that is withheld in full, along with any attachments under section 9(2)(h) of the Act to maintain legal professional privilege.

On the email chain with Te Arawhiti from 31 July 2023 on page 85, it is noted the revoking of mandates would take place on two proposed dates. The final date was 15 August 2023.

Draft attachments of the Cabinet paper titled *COVID-19 public health measures* (pages 12, 113, 142 and 145 of the document binder) and the draft briefing titled *Review of the COVID-19 Orders July 2023 - H2023028724* (page 97 of the document binder) are withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act. The final versions of these documents are to be proactively released soon

at the following link: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/release-ministerial-decision-making-documents. As such, the final documents are refused under section 18(d) of the Act.

The document in the Word hyperlink on page 122 titled *Appendix 4 for TWO* is on page 141.

I trust this information fulfils your request. If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on: oiagr@health.govt.nz.

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.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Ross Bell
Acting Deputy Director-General
Public Health Agency | Te Pou Hauora Tūmatanui