

23 April 2018

Lyn Fattorini
FYI Organisation

By email: fyi-request-7522-f9131eba@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Lyn

RE: Official Information request - Positive diagnoses of E.coli in South Canterbury 2015-2018

Thank you for your request for information from the South Canterbury District Health Board which you sent via the For Your Information website on 27 March 2018. The information you requested was as follows:

Please supply me with statistics for all positive diagnoses of E.coli in the South Canterbury region for at least 2015-18, along with the region (i.e., enough detail to determine which water supply each patient was on). I would like 'very likely' (c.f., positive) diagnoses also, if possible, but kept distinct from positive diagnoses.

Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria are a group of bacteria that live in the intestines of warm-blooded animals, including humans. Many strains of *E. coli* live in the intestines of healthy people and do not cause illness. However, some strains of *E. coli* can cause illness, including serious illness requiring hospitalisation. The only type of illness due to *E. coli* that must be notified to the Medical Officer of Health is disease caused by Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC), also known as Verotoxin-producing *E.coli* (VTEC). This is a very serious infection, particularly in young children.

As such, we can only provide statistics on notified cases of STEC/VTEC in the South Canterbury region (see table below). This table shows the number of cases which were classed as confirmed (there were no probable cases) over the period you have asked about. These data are grouped by territorial local authority region. Providing further details of the addresses of these individual cases could potentially impinge on their privacy, so we decline to do so pursuant to section 9 (2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

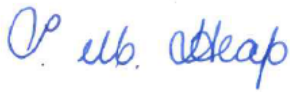
STEC Cases in South Canterbury Region (01/01/15 to 17/04/18)

Territorial Local Authority	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Mackenzie District	0	0	3	0	3
Timaru District	5	6	6	3	20
Waimate District	1	1	2	2	6
Total South Canterbury	6	7	11	5	29

E. coli is measured in drinking water supplies as part of the process of determining whether the water is safe to drink. This is described in the Drinking-water Standards for New Zealand 2005 (Revised 2008). However, *E. coli* is not measured to assess the risk from *E. coli* itself. Rather, it is used as indicator of the risk of disease-causing bacteria being present. Since *E. coli* is found in faeces, its presence in drinking water suggests that the water has been contaminated with faeces and that there may be other disease-causing bacteria in the water, for example, *Campylobacter*.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in the matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "T. Heap".

Teresa Heap
EA to Chief Executive Officer

DRAFT