



10 February 2022

Simon Veritas
fyi-request-17761-5b39b286@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2021/22-0771

Dear Simon Veritas

Official Information Act request relating to analysis by Professor John Gibson on lives lost from COVID-19 lockdown

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 29 November 2021. You requested:

1. *"John Gibson is Professor of Economics at Waikato University. He has published on the equivalent lives lost from lockdowns (e.g. his latest estimate is that government policies have killed the equivalent of 46,000 future lives). Has the DPMC ever provided Professor Gibson's analysis as part of any advice to the Prime Minister or Cabinet? If so, what were the dates and titles of the papers provided?"*

1a. *If Professor Gibson's analysis has never been provided to the Prime Minister or Cabinet, please provide me any material showing the internal decision-making not to do so (note, if Prof Gibson was never discussed, I understand the material will not exist)*

2. *Has the DPMC, in its advice to the Prime Minister or Cabinet, attempted to estimate the loss of utility (happiness, wellbeing) from lockdowns and other restrictions, such as MIQ, in a quantitative sense? If so, what were the dates and titles of the papers provided? Please note, I have read the recent release of advice to Cabinet, and there is no effort to quantify these things, but I want to be sure.*

3. *Is the DPMC aware of any public polling on issues of concern relating to COVID (e.g. "would you support a travel bubble with Australia?"), and if so, which ministry or department is responsible for them? If it is the DPMC, please provide me all reports of polling conducted."*

The time frame for responding to your request was extended under section 15A of the Act by 20 working days because it necessitated consultations to be undertaken before a decision could be made on the request. Following this extension, I am now in a position to respond.

I will answer each of your questions in turn.

Question 1

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) has not provided any analysis undertaken by Professor John Gibson to the Prime Minister and/or Cabinet, nor has this formed part of any advice to the Prime Minister. As Professor Gibson's work has not been considered, no internal decision-making documents exist. This part of your request therefore

is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, that the information requested does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Question 2

No quantitative analysis of the loss of utility of the nature you have requested has been undertaken by DPMC when considering the impact of lockdowns on the public's health and wellbeing. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the information does not exist in the format you've requested.

I can advise however that as part of the Alert Level framework, which was in place prior to the implementation of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (the Traffic Light System), there were nine factors that Cabinet had to consider when reviewing the Alert Level restrictions in place. One of these factors was "*public attitude towards the measures and the extent to which people and businesses understand, accept, and abide by them*". More information regarding Alert Level restrictions and their impacts on wellbeing has been proactively released and is available on the following website: covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases/alert-levels-and-restrictions/

Question 3

DPMC conducts polling, including public sentiment research, some of which is publicly available. We look to publish this research periodically. More information, including reporting is available through the Unite Against COVID-19 website: covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases/research/. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information you've requested is publicly available.

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

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Chief Executive
COVID-19 Group