

24 August 2020

Rick Shera

By email: fyi-request-13412-036886f0@requests.fyi.org.nz  
Ref: H202005558

Dear Rick Shera

### **Response to your request for official information**

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 29 July 2020 for:

*"To date, there have been two published occasions where people have visited New Zealand supermarkets and may have had the COVID 19 virus at the time:*

- When a man escaped from quarantine and visited a countdown supermarket in Auckland - <https://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=15517&d=h6yg37eXLoZqFvQ-m0KM2hWp9zUkLnKAytZ2UUdAKA&u=https%3a%2f%2fcovid19%2egovt%2enz%2fupdates-and-resources%2flatest-updates%2f2020-07-08-statement-from-air-commodore-darryn-webb-head-of-managed-isolation-and-quarantine%2f>*
- When a man flew to Korea via Singapore and tested positive on arrival - <https://www.health.govt.nz/news-media/news-items/covid-19-media-update-28-july>*

*I have the following requests under the Official Information Act with respect to the NZ COVID Tracer app (<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-and-tools/nz-covid-tracer-app>):*

- 1. In either or both of the above situations, was a "push notification" sent out to people using the app who have signed up to receive such "contact alert" notifications (see <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-and-tools/nz-covid-tracer-app/how-nz-covid-tracer-works>)?*
- 2. If the answer to question 1 is "no" in either or both cases, who made the decision or decisions not to send such push notification(s)?*
- 3. If the answer to question 1 is "no" in either or both cases, please provide a copy of any advice or a record of any verbal advice, that was received by the person(s) who made the decision(s) referred to in question 2 above, and which advice discussed or recommended whether to, or whether not to, send push notifications to NZ COVID Tracer app users, in either or both of those situations?*
- 4. Please provide any document or advice that sets out criteria to guide when to, or when not to, send out push notifications to NZ COVID Tracer app users for contact tracing purposes."*

The Ministry did not send any contact alerts related to these two cases. Any potential exposure event would need to meet a clinical threshold for a contact alert to be sent. The decision for a push notification is a clinical decision made between the Ministry and the local Public Health Unit (PHU). The decision made will vary depending on the circumstances.

Once you are signed up for contact alerts, the NZ COVID Tracer app will let you know if you have checked into a location at the same time as a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. This enables you to be aware of any symptoms and take appropriate steps to protect your family and friends.

Contact alerts work through 'push notifications' to your phone. Notifications will include information about the locations and timeframes where people may have been exposed to COVID-19. If there is a match with the information stored in your digital diary, you will receive a contact alert. This does not involve transmitting any location information from your phone to the Ministry.

Receiving a contact alert does not necessarily mean you have been exposed to COVID-19. The contact alert means you have used the NZ COVID Tracer app to check into a location at around the same time as a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, and where contact tracers consider there may have been a risk of exposure. You may not have come into close contact with that person, or if you did, it may not have been for long enough to present a significant risk of exposure.

A contact alert is a simple way of making you aware that there is a risk of exposure. You are not required to start self-isolating after you receive a contact alert. However, if you feel unwell or start to develop COVID-19 symptoms, you should immediately contact Healthline on 0800 358 5453.

If you are identified through the contact tracing process as having a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19, for example if you were seated near the confirmed case, contact tracers will contact you directly with further advice.

Please refer to the Ministry website for further information:

- How NZ COVID Tracer works: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-and-tools/nz-covid-tracer-app/how-nz-covid-tracer-works#new>
- Questions and answers on NZ COVID Tracer: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-and-tools/nz-covid-tracer-app/questions-and-answers-nz-covid-tracer>
- Contact tracing for COVID-19: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-general-public/contact-tracing-covid-19>

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website.

Yours sincerely



Gaynor Bradfield  
**Manager, Office of the Deputy Director-General  
Data and Digital**