



4 June 2021

File No. DOIA 2021-2247

Eurisko Bowden

fyi-request-15411-ca02fb4d@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Eurisko Bowden,

Thank you for your email of 9 May 2021 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (the Ministry) requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). For simplicity we will respond to each question individually.

1. *How many reports of Covid-19 dis/mis-information has CERT NZ received?*

As at 9 May 2021 the New Zealand Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT NZ) has received 234 reports of potential misinformation or disinformation.

2. *How many reports of mis/dis-information on other matters (e.g. elections) has CERT NZ received?*

CERT NZ does not collect misinformation and disinformation on other matters. As such this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

3. *Under what legislation and/or cabinet directive does CERT NZ collect this information?*

CERT NZ was established in 2017 by Cabinet as part of the Ministry. There is no obligation to report to CERT NZ as it is voluntary.

One of the functions CERT NZ has as part of its role is to coordinate and triage cyber reports. As the public perception of cyber incidents varies, CERT NZ operates a 'no wrong door' policy, and receives a broad range of reports. Those we do not deal with ourselves are referred to relevant agencies.

4. *How is information collected used? The website states "By emailing us this information, you consent to us sharing it with our partner and other government agencies for investigatory and statistical purposes." Please can you elaborate on which agencies this information is shared with and how it is used?*

As at 9 May 2021 CERT NZ passed on COVID-19 misinformation reports to the Ministry of Health.

A weekly high-level summary of all COVID-19 Scams and potential Misinformation/Disinformation reports is also shared with a number of other agencies which currently include Netsafe, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Consumer Protection, New Zealand Police, Department of Internal Affairs, National Cyber Security Centre, National Assessments Bureau, Serious Fraud Office, Domain Name Commission NZ, the office of Hon Chris Hipkins, the office of Hon Dr David Clark, the Office of Film and Literature Classification and the Commerce Commission.

5. *What criteria do CERT NZ use to determine whether any given report is in fact mis/dis-information?*

CERT NZ does not determine if any given report is in fact misinformation or disinformation. Members of the public report potential misinformation and disinformation to CERT NZ. Other agencies with relevant subject matter expertise can determine its accuracy i.e. for COVID-19 the Ministry of Health.

6. *As CERT NZ is a cyber security agency why are they handling these type of reports instead of, say, Department of Internal Affairs?*

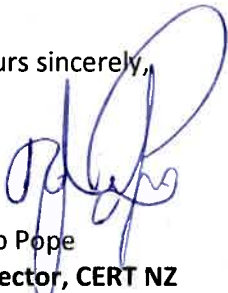
As the global effort to roll out vaccines began, CERT NZ was made aware of the risk of cyber criminals using the public interest in the vaccine to scam individuals out of money or personal information.

CERT NZ requested that New Zealanders submit any reports of vaccine scams, so we could provide advice to the public and other authorities on how to avoid them. As a result, New Zealanders also started to report what they thought to be either misinformation or disinformation.

In order to simplify reporting lines for the benefit of the public, CERT NZ agreed to also collect these reports and pass them onto the relevant authority. This coordination role is part of a general effort all government agencies are taking to do what we can to support the Unite against COVID-19 effort.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of our response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone: 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely,



Rob Pope
Director, CERT NZ
Te Whakatairanga Service Delivery