

14 September 2021

Alan Campbell

By email: fyi-request-16330-56e3f41d@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H202110148

Tēnā koe Alan

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 6 August 2021 requesting details of the numbers of Ministry of Health (the Ministry) OIA requests relating to COVID-19. On 11 August 2021 the Ministry asked you to clarify your request and on 15 August 2021 you refined your request.

The Ministry used key words from your request to search the text of the OIA requests that it received from 1 July 2020 to 30 July 2021. I have outlined the key words that were used and the number of results that each returned for each part. Please find the number of individual OIA requests provided to each part of your request below.

“Can you please provide details of the number of OIA requests you have received, between 1 July 2020 and 30 July 2021 relating to;

- *the covid-19 pandemic (The MOH guidance and advice to government agencies and supporting scientific data / papers)“*

The search term ‘covid’ found 694 references and 47 with the search term ‘pandemic’.

- *“PCR tests (MOH guidance on PCR suitability for clinical diagnosis and cycle recommendations)“*

The search term ‘PCR’ found 84 references and 407 with the search term ‘test’.

- *“Covid19 virus isolation (requests for information on whether the MOH has received confirmation that the SARS-COV-2 virus has been isolated / proven to exist).“*

The search term ‘isolat’ (to cover ‘isolate’, ‘isolated’, ‘isolation’) found 162 references.

- *“the covid 19 vaccine. (requests related to the safety and efficacy of the vaccine)“*

The search term ‘vaccin’ (to cover ‘vaccine’ and ‘vaccination’) found 402 references. Please note this may have also included references to influenza or measles vaccination.

- *“the efficacy of lock-downs (requests related to the MOH advise on the efficacy of lock-downs in stopping / slowing the spread of COVID19)“*

The search term ‘lock’ (to cover ‘lock down’, ‘lock-down’, ‘lockdown’) found 54 references.

- *“the efficacy of masks (requests related to the MOH advise on the efficacy of masks in stopping / reducing the spread of COVID19)”*

The search term ‘mask’ found 51 references.

You also asked:

*“In addition, can you please provide information on the;
average response times”*

The Ministry has interpreted your request for additional information to mean all OIA requests received in the time period between 1 July 2020 and 30 July 2021:

- 19.83 working days for all requests
- 15.01 working days for requests where an extension was not granted
- 37.42 working days for requests where an extension granted

“longest response times”

There were 972 requests that took longer than 20 working days to provide a response. There were four requests that took more than 100 working days to answer. For all requests within the time period, the longest response time was 204 working days. Please note that many of the requests had extensions granted.

“requests refused and the reason for the refusal”

Requests under the Act can be granted in full, granted in part or refused in full. Most requests are either granted in full or part. Where information is withheld this is commonly because of privacy (to protect personal health information or the mobile phone number of a senior official), because the information is or will soon be publicly available, the matter is under active consideration by Ministers or to protect legal professional privilege or commercially sensitive information. This part of your request would be difficult to collate as it would require the Ministry to review each of the OIA requests within the timeframe requested and determine which requests were refused in full or part and what the specific grounds were used to refuse them. For context, the Ministry received 2,209 requests, during the requested timeframe. While the Ministry has considered extending your revised request and considered a charge, providing a response would require substantial collation or research. This is considered ‘substantial’ as it would have a significant and unreasonable impact on the Ministry and its ability to carry out critical operations. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act.

“complaints to the ombudsman following these requests.”

The Ministry has received 83 Ombudsman preliminary enquiries or formal investigation notifications during the requested period.

I trust this 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. 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 Ministry website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases.

Nāku noa, nā



Adrian Portis
Acting Group Manager, Government Services
Office of the Director-General