

15 September 2021

Dan

By email: fyi-request-16432-1e1e7223@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Dan

Official Information Act Request: Delta variant and PCR testing

On 18 August 2021 you sent a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 to the Ministry of Health, who transferred your request to ESR on 18 August 2021. Your request was as follows:

*"Please can you tell me what type of Test or technology is being used to detect the Delta variant of Covid-19 and how this differs from the standard PCR test being used to detect Other variants of Covid?
Can you also tell me what threshold of cycles is being used to detect the Delta variant if using a PCR test?"*

Our response to your request:

The variants of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), including the Delta variant, are determined by genome sequencing. Detailed information on genome sequencing can be found on our website at the following link: <https://www.esr.cri.nz/our-expertise/covid-19-response/new-news-page/>

PCR tests detect all variants of SARS-CoV-2. PCR tests do not distinguish which variant of SARS-CoV-2 is detected. ESR's PCR assays are set to cycle for 45 cycles with a cut-off for calling a result positive is equal and below 40 amplification cycles and only when it has also been confirmed by a second target PCR which became positive equal or below 40 cycles.

Your right to seek a review

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

Thank you for your request.

Yours sincerely



Jill Vintiner

**Joint General Manager Health and Environment Group - Health
ESR**