



17 December 2021

Ref: DOIA 2122-1006

George Morrison

fyi-request-17399-37bb4f56@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear George

Thank you for your email of 29 October 2021 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Please provide me with all communications relating to the decision to allow the walkway next to the Crown Plaza to remain open for public use. I am interested in what external representations were made to MBIE that it remain open and any internal discussion on the matter.

On 26 November 2021, the Ministry notified you of an extension to the timeframe for responding to your request to 17 December 2021.

On 9 August 2021 a returnee at the Crowne Plaza Managed Isolation Facility (MIF) tested positive for COVID-19. No further arrivals were placed in the Crowne Plaza while a thorough source investigation was completed, and an urgent review and audit of the Infection Prevention Controls (IPC) and ventilation systems, was commissioned. The final source investigation report determined that, despite significant investigations into potential epidemiological links, the exact chain of transmission from the returnee was not able to be determined.

On 2 September, the Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was reconvened to provide advice on the continued use of the Crowne Plaza as a MIF. The TAG review did not identify any likely point at which the index case could have transmitted COVID-19 to the general public from the Crowne Plaza MIF.

TAG also concluded that, from a public health and IPC perspective, there was no rationale or justification for shutting the public atrium for any period of time to members of the public. Modelling by engineers at the University of Canterbury suggested that the risk of infection to members of the public if an infectious case were standing in the MIF lobby was very low. Despite the low risk the TAG recommended precautionary measures including sealing the gap in the Perspex screens separating the public walkway from the MIF lobby. This work was completed in September.

The background to the assessment of the Crowne Plaza MIF and the rationale for its reopening, as well as briefings and other documents, can be found at the following link:

www.miq.govt.nz/about/news/crowne-plaza-managed-isolation-facility-ready-to-receive-returnees-from-thursday/

Due to the sealing off of the MIF lobby from the public atrium, we have interpreted your request for information relating to the “walkway next to the Crown Plaza” to be in relation to the walkway by the returnee fresh air area, which the public uses to access the Huawei Centre.

The Department of Engineering, University of Canterbury was engaged to prepare a report on the risk of exposure to members of the public using the walkway. This report is included in the accompanying attachment as *Document 1*.

The TAG discussed the walkway and determined that the risk of exposure to members of the public walking past returnees as they arrived at the facility, or while they were getting fresh air, was very low. There was limited public health or IPC rationale in closing this area. However, out of an abundance of caution the wall of the walkway was raised and a roof placed on top. The roof and wall of the structure are now covered with a plastic coating. This work was completed by 8 September 2021.

The Ministry did not receive any external representations to keep the walkway open. On the contrary, the Ministry received a request to reaudit and conduct testing on the walkway. Emails for this request are included in the accompanying attachment as *Emails*. Some information is withheld under the following sections of the Act:

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| section 9(2)(a) | to protect the privacy of natural persons |
| section 9(2)(b)(ii) | to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information |
| section 9(2)(g)(ii) | to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of employees/officials from improper pressure or harassment |
| section 9(2)(k) | to prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage. |

I do not consider that the withholding of this information is outweighed by public interest considerations in making the information available.

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.

Yours sincerely



Shayne Gray
General Manager Service Quality and Assurance
Managed Isolation and Quarantine