

Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



1 February 2022

Raghu Pushpakath

fyi-request-17632-e7d153c5@requests.fyi.org.nz

OIA0494

Dear Raghu

Official Information Act request requesting data behind cumulative risk at the border

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received on 20 November 2021. You requested:

- 1) *You said "So we have to deal with the cumulative risk". Assuming that you used the term "Cumulative Risk" from a Mathematics/Statistics perspective, what all data have you collected about Kiwis returning home and what statistical models have your team created about the threats/risks they bring in, in order for you to come up with this "Cumulative Risk" decision?*
- 2) *You said "if we're getting even 10 cases per 1000, if we're having 5,000 or 6,000 per day coming into the country...". How did you make this assumption of 5000-6000 arrivals per day? How many flights does your statistical model predict to come into the country, and how many passengers in average per flight?*
- 3) *You also said "if we're getting even 10 cases per 1000". For last many days/weeks, we have not seen these many infections from the border in any of the daily Covid updates from your department. How did your statistical model come up with this figure and based on what data?*

When I said that we have to consider cumulative risk in relation to decisions about changes at the international border on 17 November 2021, I used "cumulative risk" in its plain English meaning rather than referring to a particular technical approach or framework. Accordingly, your request for data relating to "cumulative risk" is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

With regards to parts 2 and 3 of your request, the number of international arrivals expected under the planned steps for *Reconnecting New Zealand* are highly uncertain. The numbers of 5,000 to 6,000 travellers per day are plausible figures based on historic travel volumes.

Decisions about *Reconnecting New Zealand* are also informed by modelling produced by various experts. For estimating the number of infectious arrivals associated with different options for relaxing restrictions at the international border, officials have discussed modelling

approaches with academic statisticians. The results of that modelling are included in a Cabinet paper which will be publicly released by the end of January 2022 on the Unite Against COVID-19 website (covid19.govt.nz). As such, your request for information relating to arrivals at the border is refused under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information will soon be made publicly available.

I also note that modelling information received from Te Pūnaha Matatini is also typically made available at: tepunahamatatini.ac.nz/covid-19/.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CH', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response