



1 February 2022

Kevin O'Neill  
fyi-request-17686-41609bbe@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2021/22-0769

Dear Kevin O'Neill

**Official Information Act request relating to data and modelling behind the term 'Cumulative Risk' for New Zealanders overseas.**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 15 December 2021. You requested:

*"... the Data and Model behind your use of the term "Cumulative Risk" about kiwis returning from overseas*

- 1) what does the term "Cumulative Risk" mean*
- 2) how to you get to the number of having 5,000 or 6,000 per day coming into the country*
- 3) what is the estimated number of expected cases from fully vaccinated and tested New Zealanders doing 7 days home quarantine*
- 4 What is the health advice you are waiting on."*

I will answer each of your questions in turn.

***What does the term "Cumulative Risk" mean?***

Risk at the border is determined not only by the risk that an individual traveller is infected, but also by the overall volume of travellers entering the country. While the individual risk of a traveller may be low, the cumulative risk from large volumes of travellers (even when supported by testing, isolation and vaccination requirements) may lead to a level of cases that is not compatible with the settings and objectives of our domestic protection framework.

***How to you get to the number of having 5,000 or 6,000 per day coming into the country?***

These figures were initial high-level estimates which indicated 5,000 – 6,000 arrivals per week under Step 1 of the medium-risk pathway. These estimates are made using pre COVID-19 airport arrival data and assumptions about the appetite to travel under the medium-risk pathway settings (for example, 7-days self-isolation, pre-departure testing and other measures).

Estimates are indicative only as:

- The actual volume of travellers are likely to vary significantly depending on policy decisions made and other external factors impacting demand; and
- 2022 travel patterns may not align entirely with pre-COVID arrivals data.

***What is the estimated number of expected cases from fully vaccinated and tested New Zealanders doing 7 days home quarantine?***

Initial estimates were made based on the COVID-19 situation in Australia and the observed incidence of cases from Australia at the New Zealand border (in MIQ) at the time. Those estimates were that allowing travel for the group specified in Step 1 from Australia with self-isolation would result in approximately 1-2 cases in the community per week. The situation in Australia has now materially changed and the volume of imported cases would therefore be much higher.

***What is the health advice you are waiting on?***

Further public health advice was provided to Ministers prior to the commencement of Step 1. Given the Omicron outbreak around the world, the Minister for COVID-19 Response has announced that border re-opening will be delayed until at least the end of February 2022.

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

We do not intend to publish this response on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Barnes  
**Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Response**