



S Hill

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06 April 2022

Dear S Hill

Ref: OIA 2122-1807

Thank you for your email of 16 March 2022 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

"[1] Why was MBIE selected to perform negotiations with Pfizer for the COVID vaccine?"

[2] Under who's direction did MBIE perform the above?"

[3] At the time of negotiation and procurement, did MBIE have processes in place to adequately perform this task?"

[4] Did MBIE make any recommendations to have Pharmac perform this task?"

[5] Did MBIE liaise with Pharmac in the procurement and negotiation phases of acquiring the vaccine?"

[6] Did MBIE at the time of procurement and negotiation have the necessary staff and skills to perform said task?"

[7] How many additional employees and/or consultants did MBIE onboard to perform this task?"

The Government has proactively released the August 2020 Cabinet paper (covid19.govt.nz/assets/Proactive-Releases/proactive-release-2020-october/HR02-CABINET-PAPER-AND-MINUTE-COVID-19-vaccine-strategy-10-August-2020.pdf) which sets out a mandate and decision-making processes for MBIE's procurement of vaccines.

Further details on the structures supporting the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy are set out in the earlier May 2020 Cabinet paper (covid19.govt.nz/assets/Proactive-Releases/proactive-release-2020-june/PAPER-COVID-19-Vaccine-Strategy.pdf), which has also been proactively released. This paper also provides the background for why MBIE led this work rather than Pharmac. In essence, Pharmac did not have capacity that could easily be reassigned to the task. Pharmac was, however, part of the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy Taskforce, and senior Pharmac staff were an integral part of the negotiating team.

MBIE was able to rapidly put in place processes and bring together appropriately skilled staff from across government to negotiate the purchase of the Government's vaccine agreements. MBIE's performance in negotiating the supply of vaccines from providers was audited by the Office of the Auditor General. This report is the best independent assessment of the extent to which MBIE was able to perform the tasks assigned to it. You can find this report at oag.parliament.nz/2021/vaccines



The Vaccine Taskforce did not keep a detailed record of all the staff involved in either the development of policy and who contributed to the vaccine negotiations themselves, and not all participants in the work did so full time. At its peak, however, over 60 staff were reprioritised from across several government departments to support the work of the Taskforce. Most of these staff worked directly on the procurement of vaccines.

On behalf of the Taskforce, MBIE contracted specialist legal advice to support negotiations with potential vaccine suppliers from BellGully. BellGully are responsible for providing legal advice to Pharmac on pharmaceutical purchases and therefore have extensive expertise in negotiating pharmaceutical supply contracts.

I trust that you find the information helpful.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rae
Manager International Science Partnerships
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

