Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall

Minister for COVID-19 Response
Minister of Research, Science and Innovation
Minister for Seniors
Associate Minister of Health

16 August 2022

Chris McCashin
fyi-request-19959-b97f40e9@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref. AVOIA68

Dear Chris,

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 19 July 2022 for information relating to COVID-19 vaccines. Please find a response to each part of your request below.

> *"It is really important to be aware that there are rare side effects that become more frequent at the younger age group and that's why we have a lower age limit at the moment and we continue to track whether or not it's safe to widen access there"*
> *I am just trying to understand this statement and what you mean by this - please confirm if I have interpreted what you said correctly.*
> *- Rare side effects of the vaccine are more frequent in younger age brackets - I am assuming this is yes based on the above statement?*
> *- We continue to track whether or not it's safe to widen access there - I am assuming you mean that you are looking to jab even younger children? Yes or No - this is despite you saying just before that the side effects are more frequent in our younger generation*

The context of the quote you reference was referring to the eligible age range for someone's fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or second booster. It is not referring to children. Information about eligibility for a second booster dose is available at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-boosters#additional.

> *Please provide all reports, analysis, email correspondence, memos formal and informal, data, warnings that show side effects are more frequent in younger age brackets as your statement clearly states this.*

I will reiterate that my statement above was not about children or younger people. Like all medicines, the COVID-19 vaccine may cause side effects in some people, although they are usually mild and are not long-lasting. The prevalence of side effects from COVID-19 vaccines in younger people has been discussed in COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) memos. Please refer to the Manatū Hauora website for further information: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/cv_tag_boosters_after_myocarditis_and_pericarditis.pdf (refer to paragraphs 9 and 25). Additional CV TAG memos are published at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/covid-19-vaccine-technical-advisory-group-cv-tag.

Information regarding the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine can be found at:

- The Coronavirus Immunisation handbook: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/immunisation-handbook-2020/5-coronavirus-disease-covid-19. This also provides references to scientific studies conducted regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine.
- The vaccine datasheet: www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/c/comirnatyinj.pdf.

I note the Medsafe Reports per table 11 state AEFI's in children - continue to monitor. Please provide the process documents, reports completed specifically associated with this category.

Please refer to the COVID-19 Vaccine Independent Safety Monitoring Board meeting minutes for further information, published at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-information-health-professionals/covid-19-vaccine-strategy-planning-insights/covid-19-who-were-working#ismb.

Ultimately I want to know all of the work, reports completed by the authorities that show the process completed by Medsafe whereby they continue to monitor AEFI's in children, the memos associated, the reports provided to minister, how warnings are notified to minister, risk benefit analysis, do they monitor monthly, weekly, fortnightly, minutes associated with monitoring meetings.

The COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring process is described on the Medsafe website at: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/monitoring-process.asp.

As an example, I have taken some of these "Rare" side effects per Medsafe reports which are in the thousands, but here are some Bell's Palsy, Guillain-Barre syndrome, Cerebral Haemorrhage, Multi-system inflammatory syndrome, Cardiac arrest, stroke, suicide, autoimmune issues. More than enough data is available that shows Covid impacted the elderly (until mass vaccination and changing death counts) - how is Cardiac arrest, stroke, GBS a better outcome than a child suffering a mild flu? There lives are now ruined when they could have walked it off.
Please provide a risk / benefit analysis for under 20 age group using the available Medsafe data If one has not been completed then why not?
Please note the date of this request, as it sounds like you are aiming to jab even younger children - please provide a risk / benefit analysis and also note are you really wanting to be responsible for inflicting our most vulnerable to any of the above?

This part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist. The risks and benefits of COVID-19 vaccines are assessed at approval, according to the age group requested by the vaccine manufacturer. Approval has not been sought for an age group with this cut off, therefore, a risk/benefit analysis does not exist.

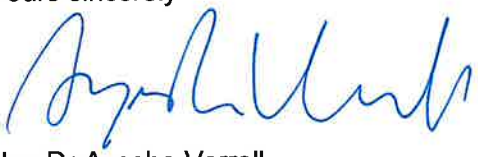
Manatū Hauora has released the original benefit/risk assessment for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in a previous response under the Act, this is available at: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202106950_response.pdf. Please refer to Document 10 on page 94.

While the Act allows New Zealanders to ask for information from Ministers and government agencies, there is no requirement for Ministers or agencies to create new information, compile information they do not hold or provide or prove an opinion. Your questions and the statements that support them appear designed to engage in a debate about the Government's COVID-19 vaccination programme, rather than a request for official information. The Act does not support requests where an opinion, comment, argument, or

hypothetical statement is put to my office for response, couched as a request for information. Please be advised that using the Act in this manner could be construed as vexatious and result in such requests being refused under section 18(h) of the Act.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



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