

15 July 2024

Erika Whittome
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Tēnā koe Erika

Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00053202

Thank you for your email on 17 June 2024, asking Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Also regarding information asked in 1.

“ Worksafe notified the Ministry of Health in writing at the beginning of the outbreak that they did not require a notification.”

Would you kindly share this “writing” from Worksafe or the name and date of the gazette notice of this notification from Worksafe?

Response

After extensive searching we have been unable to find the actual document that you have requested. Therefore we are refusing your request under Section 18(e) as the information cannot be found.

However, we can provide a summary of an account of the events from our National Manager, Health and Safety Delivery, Michael Field. His summary is:

“Mid-2020: Michael Field emailed Work Safety New Zealand (WSNZ), in his role of co-chair, Auckland Region Covid-19(C19) Health & Safety Technical Advisory Group, to confirm whether they required notification of staff hospital acquired infection of C19. At this stage, we were carrying out genome sequencing, so were in a position to supply this information, as we knew the source of every infection.

In response, WSNZ replied via email, stating that they did not require notification.

Late-2020: WSNZ changed their approach and notified Kate Coley (who was looking after Occupational Health & Safety nationally at the time) that they did now want notification. It was at that point that Michael supplied Kate with a copy of WSNZ’s previous email. Unfortunately, at this point C19 was endemic to NZ, with widespread transmission and infection, so we had ceased genome sequencing. As we were therefore unable to identify the source of the infection, we were unable to identify if any staff member contracted C19 at work. By that stage, it was actually far more likely, given our stringent PPE controls, that most, if not all, staff infections of C19 would have occurred outside of the workplace, likely at the shops or via friends/relatives.”

We recommend that you contact WSNZ as they may be able to assist you in finding this particular document.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at hnzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sue Gordon', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Sue Gordon

**Head of Health, Safety, Wellbeing and Organisation Resilience
People & Communications**