



13 November 2024

By email: fyi-request-29136-c913f3a0@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Daniel,

Official Information Act Request: Reasons for removing covid19 wastewater sampling sites

On 11 November 2024 you requested information under the Official Information Act 1982 (Act) from ESR as follows:

“Previously a lot more sites were sampled for covid19 and the results shown on poops.nz however a lot of sites have been removed.

I am requesting all documents and communications on why wastewater sites for covid19 sampling were removed.”

Our response to your request:

The relevant papers (i.e. documents and communications) relating to your query are from the Ministry of Health and are commercially confidential as they relate to budget. This information is consequentially withheld under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is subject of the information, with this being the Ministry of Health.

Decisions on the sites selected were made between the Ministry of Health and ESR. The location and frequency of sampling have been regularly reviewed to take in to account the different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, during the emergency response to COVID-19, a large population coverage with sampling at least twice a week was needed to inform rapid changes to public health measures and interventions. Factors taken into consideration were geographic and demographic coverage, but other factors such as holiday locations, feasibility of collecting samples and other risk factors, have also been considered.

In 2024, as COVID-19 is now managed alongside other communicable diseases, the purpose of the surveillance programme is much different than it was in 2021 and has been changed accordingly so it is fit for purpose. We will continue to review the scope of the programme.

Your Right to Seek a Review:

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Jill Vintiner

**General Manager Health, Health and Environment Business Group
ESR**