



Te Kawa Mataaho

Public Service Commission

28 October 2021

9(2)(a)
privacy

Dear 9(2)(a) privacy

Official Information Request Our Ref: OIA 2021-0145

I refer to your official information request received on 12 October 2021 where you asked:

“I refer to this Newsroom article: <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/new-strategy-could-overwhelm-contact-tracing>

It quotes Professor Hill who was a member of the COVID-19 Continuous Review group, and who conducted a review of the February 2021 Auckland Outbreak.

Newsroom says:

“The expert went further in his comments to Newsroom on Thursday, saying the expert review panel he sits on reached out to the Public Service Commissioner over the ministry’s refusal to implement a ministerial directive on the 1000 cases per day benchmark.

We were concerned enough about the decision the ministry had made about capacity being at odds with the ministerial directive, that we sought assurance from the head of the public service, Peter Hughes, that he would check whether this was appropriate and take action accordingly, Hill told Newsroom”.

Under the OIA I seek:

- *All correspondence from Professor Hill and the expert panel to the Public Service Commissioner and the Commission regarding this matter;*
- *Any replies from the Commissioner and the Commission;*
- *All correspondence from the Public Service Commission and the Commission to and from the Ministry of Health relating to this matter. “*

Background information

On 22 April 2021 the Public Service Commissioner (Commissioner) met with the COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group members, at the group’s request, to discuss the impending release of their then draft report into the February 2021 Auckland COVID-19 outbreak.

At this meeting Dr Debbie Ryan raised a question about the Ministry of Health’s (MoH) advice and the process for giving it to Ministers, with respect to contact tracing capacity. Dr Ryan also noted that the group had raised this in an earlier conversation with MoH. The Commissioner committed to follow up with MoH.

Following the meeting, Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (the Commission) raised the question with MoH who advised it had noted Dr Ryan's earlier queries on the matter of contact tracing capacity. They also advised they were aware of Ministers' expectations in relation to contact tracing capacity and had provided their advice to the Minister for COVID response and the Associate Minister of Health.

The Commission followed up with the Group's Secretariat at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet by phone on 3 May 2021 to confirm the conversation with MoH, which reflected that MoH advice had been provided to Ministers on the matter raised by Dr Ryan.

The Secretariat advised it would follow up with the group members and write to the Commission formally, should any further information be required.

Our Response

In response to your request, the Commission has not received or responded to any correspondence from Professor Hill addressed to either the Commission or the Public Service Commissioner. The Commission also holds no correspondence in relation to this matter between the Commission/Commissioner and the MoH.

We are therefore refusing your request for information under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act request on the grounds that the information requested does not exist.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Ministerial.Services@publicservice.govt.nz.

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.

Please note that we intend to publish this letter (with your personal details removed) on the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission's website.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks
Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission