

8 October 2020

Bronwyn Pullar

**By email:** [fyi-request-13794-055b729e@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-13794-055b729e@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Ms Pullar

**Official Information Act Request: Genome sequence for Korean traveller**

On 14 September 2020, you sent a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 to ESR. Your request was as follows:

- 1. What steps, if any, has Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited (ESR) taken to establish the specific genome sequencing of the strain of Covid-19 virus acquired by the 22 year old traveller who left NZ on 21 July 2020 and tested positive via a Rapid Test upon arrival in South Korea on 22 July 2020, and who again tested positive in the subsequent PCR tests?*
- 2. Has ESR obtained the genome sequence for the Covid-19 virus for the 22 year old traveller who departed NZ on 21 July 2020 and tested positive upon arrival in South Korea on 22 July 2020 from South Korean health officials and laboratories? If not, why not?*
- 3. Has ESR, or NZ Health Officials on your behalf, asked counterparts in South Korean to provide a sample of the Covid-19 virus acquired for the 22 year old traveller who departed NZ on 21 July 2020, then tested positive upon arrival in South Korea on 22 July 2020, so that genome sequencing could be performed by ESR in NZ? If not, why not?*
- 4. Has ESR received a sample of the Covid-19 virus for the 22 year old traveller who departed NZ on 21 July 2020 and tested positive upon arrival in South Korea on 22 July 2020 from South Korean health officials and laboratories to analyse? If not, why not?*
- 5. Has ESR, or your agents, established the genome sequence for the virus acquired by the 22 year old traveller who departed NZ on 21 July 2020 and tested positive upon arrival in South Korea on 22 July 2020? If not, why not? If so, what is the specific genome sequence?*
- 6. What steps, if any, has ESR taken to establish whether, or not, the strain of Covid-19 virus acquired by the 22 year old traveller who left NZ on 21 July 2020, and then tested positive upon arrival in South Korea on 22 July 2020, is the same strain as the current Auckland community outbreak where the Americold Mount Wellington worker was the first known case?*

**Our response to your request:**

Questions 1-4:

- ESR never received any sample for sequencing from South Korea. ESR was advised that the Ministry of Health made contact with the Republic of Korea National IHR<sup>1</sup> Focal Point (NFP) on this matter but did not request a sample.

Questions 5-6:

- Please refer to Written Parliamentary Question 15837 (2020) available at [https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\\_15837\\_2020/15837-2020-dr-shane-reti-to-the-health-minister-chris](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ_15837_2020/15837-2020-dr-shane-reti-to-the-health-minister-chris)

**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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Thank you for your request.

Yours sincerely,



Jill Vintiner  
**Chief Operations Manager – Health and Environment Group**  
**ESR**

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<sup>1</sup> International Health Regulations