

# Hon Dr Megan Woods

MP for Wigram

Minister of Housing

Minister of Energy and Resources

Minister of Research, Science and Innovation

Associate Minister of Finance



02 AUG 2021

Scott

[fyi-request-15933-1a03bc12@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-15933-1a03bc12@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Ref: OIA21-166

Dear Scott

I refer to your email of 30 June requesting following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*"In August last year it was announced that VAANZ had been granted \$10 million for the establishment of a COVID-19 vaccine development and evaluation platform. I request copies of all briefings received by Minister Woods relating to this project, and any other projects VAANZ has undertaken with government funding, dated since the beginning of this year.*

*It was also announced that New Zealand company BioCell had received \$3 million to upgrade their facilities to allow for the domestic manufacture of a COVID-19 vaccine. I request copies of all briefings received by Minister Woods relating to this project, dated since the beginning of this year."*

While I have not received briefings relating to either topic in 2021, I have received two briefings that refer to these topics as background information. I have attached the relevant extracts as an annex to this letter.

I trust that you will find this information helpful; however, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of my decision on this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found at: [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Woods'.

Hon Dr Megan Woods

**Minister of Research, Science and Innovation**

## **Annex: Briefing Extracts**

### **Extract from 2021-2864 Visit to Malaghan Institute of Medical Research (1 April 2021)**

#### *Vaccine Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand*

11. VAANZ is hosted by the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research and includes research partners at the University of Otago and Victoria University of Wellington. Their mission is to rapidly progress New Zealand's capability and capacity to develop and manufacture a COVID-19 vaccine in line with New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy and build New Zealand's ability for future vaccine development, production, supply and linkages with international vaccine research. The Platform supports New Zealand vaccine research capability and capacity development.
12. The VAANZ platform is designed to be flexible, adapting to a constantly changing environment around New Zealand's COVID-19 vaccine needs. To date, it has set up a platform for screening vaccine candidates; developed mouse models, assays and protocols; and carried out pre-clinical assessment on five vaccine candidates. The Platform is working with the Ministry of Health to perform post-rollout safety and efficacy research on New Zealanders receiving COVID-19 vaccines and is evaluating its suite of vaccine candidates to ensure its work is relevant to new SARS-COV-2 variants.

### **Extract from 2021-2808 COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy: Investing in domestic production capabilities (24 June 2021)**

#### **Background**

#### *The COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy agreed to develop and invest in domestic vaccine manufacture capabilities*

1. Under the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy, MBIE led work to investigate and develop New Zealand's domestic COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing capability [CAB-20-MIN-0229 refers].
2. Cabinet allocated \$4.75 million to MBIE to support manufacturing, of which MBIE gave \$2.88 million to upgrade BioCell's facilities. The contract was signed in August 2020 and provides a five year option to use the facility if needed. It is expected that this should be ready by the second half of 2021.
3. Cabinet also allocated \$10 million for domestic COVID-19 research. MBIE funded the research platform Vaccine Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (VAANZ) through the Malaghan Institute, and required it to connect with BioCell and South Pacific Sera to ensure links between research and manufacturing. The platform's contract with MBIE will conclude in 2021/22.