

3 June 2022

Gill Fair

By email: fyi-request-16729-565c300a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Gill

Official Information Act Complaint: COVID-19 wastewater testing

On 13 September 2021 you sent a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 ("Act") to ESR as follows:

"Could I please request the following information under the Official Information Act:

a) wastewater Covid testing results for August 2020 and August 2021, with dates and locations of each

b) As of September 2021, the locations of wastewater sites where Covid-monitoring is taking place and how often testing is taking place at each site."

Our revised response to your request:

The Office of the Ombudsman recently wrote to ESR to notify us that you had made a complaint about our response. Your 'concern is whether a request for the daily wastewater Covid testing results for August 2020 with dates and locations would require a substantial amount of work that would 'unduly affect' ESR's team.'

Your request was received at a time when any increased workload would have unduly affected the team responsible for answering your request.

During August 2021, the wastewater testing laboratory team had to work significant hours to accommodate a huge increase in workload to support the Government's pandemic response. This intense pressure continued throughout the rest of 2021.

Due to this increased work pressure, anything not strictly required could not be accommodated. Only the staff involved in wastewater testing could have responded to this query. There was no time to collate the data and provide the information to answer your request.

As well as this, in August 2020, there was no routine wastewater surveillance and ESR's wastewater laboratory results were not electronically stored in a centralised database. These results were still in lab books and would have taken some time to collate into a centralised format to send to you.

Since our response to your request, ESR has now developed a centralised electronic database of samples and results which enables us to be in a better position to respond to the types of questions you have asked. We are also in the process of making all results publicly available.

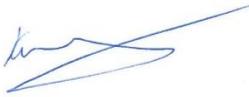
We have attached a spreadsheet noting sites and results from August 2020 and August and September 2021 – we trust this will answer your original questions satisfactorily.

We are sending our revised response to both you and the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office will contact you to see if our revised decision has resolved your complaint. Assuming it has, the Chief Ombudsman will then discontinue his investigation and the file will be closed.

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



Kate Young
General Counsel
ESR