

23 November 2021

Maxwell

**By email:** [fyi-request-16908-b1a3a159@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-16908-b1a3a159@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Maxwell

**Official Information Act Request: Genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2**

On 27 September 2021 you sent a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (Act) to ESR as follows:

*“Can I please request all documentation held by Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited (ESR) and/or Ministry of Health (MOH) (email correspondence, white papers, test guidelines, ARTIC protocols, Oxford NanoPore MinION sequencing guidelines, test results, submitted GISAID data, data integration with NexStrain, RNA genome data, etc.) related to the genome sequence results from the initial 25 test cases within New Zealand on Novel coronavirus/SARS-COV-2 RNA sequencing.”*

**Our response to your request:**

Please find the *attached* report which covers the sequencing of the first 25 cases of SARS-CoV-2 in New Zealand. ESR numbers have been redacted to protect the privacy of natural persons pursuant to section 9(2)(a) of the Act.

An internationally curated and open database containing sequences that are obtained from cases infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus can be found at the following link:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sars-cov-2/>

The record from the original deposition of the genome of the virus annotated with the functional genes encoded in its genome is available here:

[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nuccore/NC\\_045512](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nuccore/NC_045512)

All genomes generated in New Zealand are submitted to an internationally curated database here: <https://www.gisaid.org/>. These can be viewed on Nextstrain:

[https://nextstrain.org/ncov/gisaid/oceania?f\\_country=New%20Zealand](https://nextstrain.org/ncov/gisaid/oceania?f_country=New%20Zealand)

Methods to extract and analyse viral genome data have been published and peer reviewed. The most commonly used protocol of SARS-CoV-2 can be found here:

<https://artic.network/ncov-2019>

Additional information on genome sequencing can be found on our website at the following link: <https://www.esr.cri.nz/our-expertise/covid-19-response/new-news-page/>

**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  
**Joint General Manager Health and Environment Group – Health  
ESR**