OIAD-1756

10 February 2022

Ms Evans

fyi-request-18226-43abdf73@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Ms Evans

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 18 January 2022 in which you asked for:

1. *The data and associated risk matrix that was used to exclude children unvaccinated against Covid-19 (as per OCC and UN age ranges) from DOC camp sites throughout NZ. Please provide information that shows how this decision was made at each of the differing levels (green, orange and red) and in each season eg: Summer vs Autumn.*
2. *If potential exposure numbers were used within the risk matrix please provide details of average number of campers per day/season/DOC campsite.*
3. *I would appreciate access to any information you hold and used in your decision-making process; including meeting minutes that shows the risk posed by unvaccinated individuals in wilderness settings to vaccinated individuals and how this differs across the various National Parks in New Zealand.*

Context

DOC’s COVID-19 Visitor Accommodation Vaccination Policy is based on a risk assessment undertaken to determine the risks of transmission of COVID-19 at DOC’s visitor accommodation facilities.

This was done to meet DOC’s obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. This Act requires DOC to take all reasonable, practicable steps to eliminate or otherwise minimise the risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19 to our workers; and to make sure that the health and safety of other people including visitors at the Department’s huts and campsites are not put at risk from anything else at the workplace.

DOC undertook a COVID-19 risk assessment for unmandated businesses under the Health and Safety at Work Act. The assessment found high risks for hut users and moderate risks for visitors and staff at campgrounds. DOC’s COVID-19 risk assessment is available at: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/accommodation-vaccine-policy>.

All public sector agencies are required to comply with public health guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We are following public health guidelines and have developed our policy to align with the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Protection Framework. This can be found at <https://covid19.govt.nz/traffic-lights/covid-19-protection-framework/>. We rely on the public health information and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health provides the public health advice that underpins our risk assessment and policy. The Ministry of Health’s COVID-19 public health advice can be found on their website at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>.

Your questions and our responses are below:

1. *The data and associated risk matrix that was used to exclude children unvaccinated against Covid-19 (as per OCC and UN age ranges) from DOC camp sites throughout NZ. Please provide information that shows how this decision was made at each of the differing levels (green, orange and red) and in each season eg: Summer vs Autumn.*

The Department of Conservation has published the risk assessment on which this policy is based on its website. In these circumstances, your request is declined under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information is publicly available by visiting [www.doc.govt.nz/accommodation-vaccine-policy](http://www.doc.govt.nz/accommodation-vaccine-policy).

The risk assessment makes no distinction based on age, aside from taking into account the public health advice provided by the Ministry of Health regarding the age of eligibility for vaccination and the age of eligibility for My Vaccine Pass. DOC’s policy adheres to this public health advice and accordingly the policy applies to eligible people from the age of 12 years and 3 months.

Children under the age of 12 years and 3 months may stay in any DOC accommodation facility, regardless of their vaccination status. They are not required to show proof of vaccination status as they are exempt from the My Vaccine Pass requirements, as set out in the COVID-19 Protection Framework (traffic lights).

The risk assessment was undertaken for the peak visitor season and the risk assessment and the policy will be regularly reviewed as factors change, including changes to the Ministry of Health’s public health advice and traffic light settings. A formal review of the Risk Assessment and Policy will be undertaken by 31 May 2022.

1. *If potential exposure numbers were used within the risk matrix please provide details of average number of campers per day/season/DOC campsite.*

Potential exposure numbers were not used in the risk assessment. This part of your request is therefore declined under section 18(f) of the Act as the information requested does not exist.

1. *I would appreciate access to any information you hold and used in your decision-making process; including meeting minutes that shows the risk posed by unvaccinated individuals in wilderness settings to vaccinated individuals and how this differs across the various National Parks in New Zealand.*

As already noted, DOC has not decided toexclude children unvaccinated against COVID-19 from DOC campsites but has developed a Visitor Accommodation Vaccination Policy with regard to the Ministry of Health’s public health advice around age of eligibility for vaccination and My Vaccine Pass requirements.

The policy is based on the risk assessment undertaken to determine the risks of transmission of COVID-19 at DOC’s visitor accommodation. The risk assessment does not consider the risk posed by unvaccinated individuals to vaccinated individuals in wilderness settings nor how this may differ across the National Parks in New Zealand*.* There are no meeting minutes or similar. This part of your request is therefore declined under section 18(f) of the Act as the information requested does not exist.

The risk assessment details the factors considered. The risk assessment is for DOC visitor accommodation facilities and does not include consideration of risk in wilderness settings.

The risk assessment considered different accommodation facility types, which are standardised across DOC public conservation land. DOC considered the risks posed at different types of accommodation facilities, including assessment of whether contact with others at these facilities would be indoors or outdoors. The assessment found high risks for hut users and moderate risks for visitors and staff at campgrounds. All DOC tracks, carparks, and most toilets remain available to everyone.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Department’s website.

Nāku noa, nā

Steve Taylor

Director Heritage and Visitors

Department of Conservation

*Te Papa Atawhai*