



4 March 2022

Stella Hart  
fyi-request-18297-379d3b93@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2021/22-0923

Dear Stella Hart

### **Official Information Act request relating to kawakawa balm**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request partially transferred to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) from the Ministry of Health on 1 February 2022. You requested:

*My requests are focused on the advice to treat a sore throat caused by a Covid infection with Kawakawa Balm and are for the following:-*

- 1. Any medical evidence such as studies or scientific/medical review held by the Ministry of Health or any other agency, body or Ministry, in particular the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.*
- 2. If there is no such evidence I request the Government Policy that governs the release of medical advice to the public.*
- 3. Documents or official policy that would allow DPMC to write such material, noting that the DPMC was the author of the above document.*
- 4. Any advice received by the DPMC and particularly Rory McKenzie of that Office to support the inclusion of Kawakawa Balm as a response to a sore throat caused by a Covid infection.*
- 5. Disclosure as to Rory McKenzie's formal qualifications and those qualifications of any public servant who has made written advice in public communications as to such treatment.*
- 6. Any correspondence with producers of Kawakawa Balms as to the use of the Balm for such treatment.*
- 7. Any report, communications, policy, consideration or direction regarding the ability of beneficiaries to access this treatment with respect to cost*

DPMC has accepted partial transfer of question 1, and the transfer of questions 3, 4 and 5.

### **Response to your request**

I am responding to the parts of your request for information held by DPMC. The rest of your request will be responded to by the Ministry of Health. I note that DPMC does not have a role in providing medical advice of any kind.

I am declining your first question for *'any medical evidence such as studies or scientific/medical review held by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet'* under section 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

With regards to question 3, for *'Documents or official policy that would allow DPMC to write such material, noting that the DPMC was the author of the above document'*, it is important to note that this suggestion is to alleviate symptoms, and not cure a case of COVID-19. I reiterate that DPMC does not provide health advice. Any health advice present in the document was supplied by the Ministry of Health. I am declining this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

I am declining question 4, for *'Any advice received by the DPMC and particularly Rory McKenzie of that Office to support the inclusion of Kawakawa Balm as a response to a sore throat caused by a Covid infection'* under section 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

With regards to question 5 for *'Disclosure as to Rory McKenzie's formal qualifications and those qualifications of any public servant who has made written advice in public communications as to such treatment'* I am withholding this information under section 9(2)(a) as this is necessary to protect the privacy of individuals.

I would reiterate that the suggestion to use Kawakawa balm is in order to treat symptoms and is not advice regarding a cure for COVID-19.

In making my decision, I have taken the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act into account.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

We do not intend to publish this response on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Barnes  
**Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Response**