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Mr Neville Hudson
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Ref: H201403742

Dear Mr Hudson

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request of 20 October 2014 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) about New Zealand's National Security System".

You also requested information from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on 16 October 2014. One aspect of that request sought information about resources for containment of Ebola. This aspect was transferred to the Ministry of Health on 31 October 2014. This request was similar to your second question to the Ministry and has been responded to below.

1. Who within the Ministry is in the group who will make any decisions regarding the ebola virus?

The Ministry of Health has established an Ebola Readiness Incident Management Team which is led by Charles Blanch, Director, Emergency Management. The team is charged with coordinating the Ministry's readiness work with the health sector and government and coordinating the response in the very unlikely event that New Zealand has a suspected or confirmed case of Ebola.

2. What resources are available for protection and containment, who will monitor any protocols, and who will develop protocols?

In the very unlikely event that there was a suspected or confirmed case of Ebola in New Zealand, the Ministry and District Health Boards would use appropriate response plans, facilities and infection prevention and control protocols for New Zealand hospitals. The Ministry and DHBs closely monitor and revise the existing protocols as required. The Ministry has also developed guidance for health professionals on Ebola, which is updated regularly. Any amendments are made based on changes to international standards, guidance and best practice.

The Ministry of Health has a National Health Emergency Plan (NHEP) which provides overarching direction to the health and disability sector and all of government. It shows how the health sector works with other government agencies to respond to disasters and emergencies. The NHEP describes the strategic relationships for emergency management across the health sector and against the four Rs (Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery).

A suite of guidance documents and action plans support the NHEP. Further information is available on the Ministry of Health website:

Ebola Readiness: <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/ebola-updates/ebola-readiness>

Health professional advice: <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/ebola-updates/ebola-information-health-professionals>

National Health Emergency Plan: <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/emergency-management/national-health-emergency-plan>

NZIPAP: <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/new-zealand-influenza-pandemic-plan-framework-action>

3. Who will make and under what criteria will the decision be made to close the border?

On 8 August 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a statement on the Meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee Regarding the 2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa. This statement outlined the following advice for all states:

"There should be no general ban on international travel or trade; restrictions outlined in these recommendations regarding the travel of EVD cases and contacts should be implemented."

The Ministry of Health continues to monitor the advice from and actions being taken by the WHO, and remains committed to working with the WHO on measures to limit the global outbreak of Ebola.

Review of border measures is part of ongoing discussions at the Ministry not only in relation to Ebola, but as part of the planning and response framework for emerging infectious diseases.

4. At what stage will the general public be advised of any decisions made that will affect their safety and wellbeing?

The Ministry continues to update information about Ebola on the Ministry website as new information becomes available.

The Minister of Health has also been issuing regular media statements to the public.

I trust this information fulfils your request. You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review my response to your request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Mackie', written in a cursive style.

Dr Don Mackie
Chief Medical Officer
Clinical Leadership, Protection and Regulation