

5 May 2026

Mr. Richards

By email: fyi-request-34407-83123d3b@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H2026081071

Tēnā koe Mr. Richards

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora (the Ministry) on 7 April 2026 for information regarding COVID-19 vaccine course recommendations. Each part of your request is addressed in turn:

1- All documents, briefings, minutes, emails, risk assessments, modelling, or internal advice prepared or considered by the Ministry of Health, Te Whatu Ora, or the Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) when deciding — in the 27 March 2026 amendments to Chapter 5 of the Immunisation Handbook — to retain a routine recommendation for a primary COVID-19 vaccine course (one dose for healthy previously unvaccinated individuals aged 5 years and over; two doses for severely immunocompromised individuals aged 5 years and over), while simultaneously advising that additional doses are “not routinely recommended” for healthy adults aged 30–64 years due to lower clinical risk of severe infection and high population hybrid immunity.

2- Any epidemiological modelling, cohort studies, or risk-benefit analyses (using 2025–2026 data) assessing the incremental benefit of a primary dose (or two-dose primary course) in previously unvaccinated healthy or immunocompromised individuals against severe COVID-19 outcomes, hospitalisation, or death under current endemic conditions with LP.8.1-lineage strains and widespread hybrid immunity.

3- The most recent surveillance data (2025–2026) on severe COVID-19 outcomes in the remaining unvaccinated population (including those eligible for a primary course) compared with those possessing hybrid immunity, stratified by age group, comorbidity status, and ethnicity.

4- Updated analyses of adverse event rates (particularly myocarditis/pericarditis and any other serious events) following a primary COVID-19 vaccine dose (or two-dose course) in previously unvaccinated healthy or immunocompromised individuals aged 5–64 years, including comparison to infection-related risks in 2026.

6- Any internal advice or modelling addressing (a) equity impacts (including for Māori and Pacific populations) of retaining the current primary-course recommendation versus (b) moving the primary course to a shared clinical decision-making / optional model only, consistent with the approach taken for additional doses in healthy 30–64 year-olds.

7- All correspondence, briefings, advice, or assessments exchanged between the Ministry of Health / Te Whatu Ora and the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) concerning NZDF’s “further review” of its baseline vaccination schedule triggered by the 27 March 2026 Immunisation Handbook changes. This includes any evaluation of how the risk-stratified approach and reduced routine recommendations for healthy adults apply to NZDF serving members and recruits, with specific reference to NZDF OIA-2026-5687 and follow-up

request 34315 (including impacts on recruitment, retention, the ~164 previously discharged personnel, and NZDF's status as the only remaining Five Eyes nation with a COVID-19 baseline requirement).

On 21 April 2026, the Ministry determined that part 1 of your request asked for information which was held by Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora (HNZ), and as such this part of your request under section 14(b)(i) of the Act. It was subsequently confirmed that parts 2, 3, 6 and 7 asked for information which aligned more closely with HNZ's functions, and these parts were transferred to their agency on 23 April 2026. Should you wish to follow up with HNZ, you can contact their OIA services team at: HNZOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz.

4- Updated analyses of adverse event rates (particularly myocarditis/pericarditis and any other serious events) following a primary COVID-19 vaccine dose (or two-dose course) in previously unvaccinated healthy or immunocompromised individuals aged 5–64 years, including comparison to infection-related risks in 2026.

Medsafe no longer publishes COVID-19 vaccine Safety Reports, hence the most recent AEFI data analysis (adverse events following immunisation with COVID-19 vaccines) is from November 2022. Reports of AEFIs to COVID-19 vaccines can now be found in the SMARS database on the Medsafe website here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/vaccine-report-overview.asp.

As the Ministry does not hold updated analyses for adverse event rates including any comparisons to infection related risks for the year 2026, and has no grounds for believing that the information is held by another agency, your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act.

5- Any cost-effectiveness, health-economic, or resource-allocation assessments for continuing to recommend and publicly fund primary COVID-19 vaccination (one- or two-dose courses) for previously unvaccinated individuals when routine additional-dose recommendations have been narrowed for the same low-risk groups.

On 17 April 2026, the Ministry transferred part 5 of your request to the office of the Minister of Health, Hon Simeon Brown, under section 14(b)(ii) of the Act. The Minister's office will be responding to part 5 of your request in due course. To follow up, you can contact the Minister's office at: S.Brown@ministers.govt.nz.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on: oiagr@health.govt.nz.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Chris James
Group Manager
Medsafe