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2 July 2026

Nigel Gray

By email: fyi-request-34823-e63c9718@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: H2026083674

Tēnā koe Nigel

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 4 June 2026 for information regarding COVID-19 border restrictions. You requested:

“I am requesting the following information held by the Ministry of Health relating to the Government’s COVID-19 border restrictions and their impact on the right of New Zealand citizens to enter New Zealand.

1. Medical and scientific justification documents

All medical, scientific, epidemiological, modelling, risk assessment, or public health documents (including internal advice, external advice, briefings, memos, emails, reports, and assessments) that were used, relied upon, referenced, or considered by the Ministry of Health to justify restricting or preventing New Zealand citizens from entering New Zealand during the COVID19 response. This includes (but is not limited to):

the assessed risk posed by returning citizens

the necessity of restricting entry

the medical justification for requiring MIQ as a precondition for entry

the medical justification for limiting MIQ availability

any advice on whether preventing citizens from boarding flights was medically justified”

The Ministry has interpreted “medical justification” to refer to a matter of public health intervention.

The situation is described succinctly in the Chief Ombudsman’s opinion on the administration of the Managed Isolation Allocation System: *While New Zealand was pursuing an Elimination Strategy, and during the transition to a minimisation and protection approach, the border provided the first line of defence against outbreaks of COVID-19 in New Zealand. The aim of the Elimination Strategy was to protect the health system from being overwhelmed, protect vulnerable communities, and protect the health of New Zealanders overall, whilst also supporting the economy. These were important aims, particularly in the time before vaccines against COVID-19 were developed and made widely available in New Zealand.*

www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/sites/default/files/2022-12/Final%20opinion%20on%20Managed%20Isolation%20Allocation%20System.pdf

In essence, that defines the public health need for the approach, overall. Much of the relevant information is laid out in the Royal Commission of Inquiry: COVID-19 Lessons Learned Phase 1 Report, specifically chapter 4, and on pages 175-179 there are links to related information.

The (now defunct) All-of-Government COVID-19 website hosted many proactive releases of referenced documents, so many of the links in the Phase 1 report will now no longer function. While much of this has since been migrated to the DPMC website, these lists are not completely comprehensive: www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-programmes/other-work/historical-programmes/covid-19-proactive-releases

You can still access all the contemporarily released information through web archives (e.g. web.archive.org):

web.archive.org/web/20230124011418mp_/https://covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases/

Of specific relevance to your request are the following:

- web.archive.org/web/20230202071428mp_/https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/Proactive-Releases/proactive-release/Novel-Coronavirus-Review-of-Temporary-Border-Measures.pdf
Outlines options regarding the restriction of entry and rationale for each.
- web.archive.org/web/20230207191155mp_/https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/Proactive-Releases/proactive-release/Self-Isolation-order-under-Section-701F-Health-Act.pdf
Paragraphs 11 and 12 explain the rationale for self-isolation.

Please note that this is not a government-maintained archive.

The Ministry released its commissioned reports in 2020 on matters of modelling which informed the COVID-19 response: www.health.govt.nz/publications/covid-19-modelling-and-other-commissioned-reports

The settings of Managed Isolation and Quarantine, including additional modelling have been released under the Act previously:

- www.health.govt.nz/information-releases/consideration-of-the-managed-isolation-and-quarantine-miq-settings
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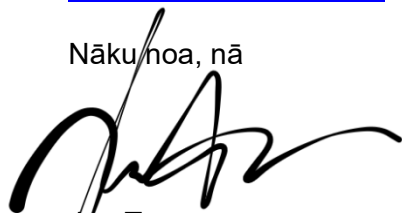
The Ministry considers this publicly available information to address your queries adequately, regarding the public interest. Note that the links above are not exhaustive.

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/hoa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jan Torres', written over a horizontal line.

Jan Torres

Manager, OIA Services

Corporate Services | Te Pou Tiaki