

15 June 2022

s 9(2)(a)

By email s 9(2)(a)
Ref H202206638

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), which was transferred from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 19 May 2022. The Ministry is also aware that you sent an identical request to Hon Andrew Little, Minister of Health. As the information you have requested is identical to the request the Ministry received, we have decided to consolidate your request into one.

“All documents relating to New Zealand's relationship, conversations or agreements with the World Economic Forum and the World Health Organisation”

On 25 May 2022, you were contacted by the Ministry and asked to clarify your request in order to provide a response to your request. Specifically, the Ministry sought clarity for which aspect of New Zealand's relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) you were interested in and to provide a specific timeframe. On the same day, you clarified your request too:

“... interested in New Zealand's role in, or support for, the WHO push for an international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response... interested in policy concerning Covid-19 as it relates to health professionals. Please supply information that clarifies whether WHO issued any suggestions about doctors required public stance or behaviour, during the Covid-19 pandemic. If WHO did give such guidelines, I am interested in what our government agreed to or supported.

Timeline: I suppose 2019 to the present to cover those issues.”

WHO Member States, including New Zealand, jointly agreed to begin negotiating a new treaty (or instrument) at a special session of the World Health Assembly in November 2021. A pandemic treaty or instrument was a key recommendation of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, to help improve the global community's ability to respond to future pandemics. This information can be found on the following link: www.theindependentpanel.org/about-the-independent-panel/.

The negotiations towards a new treaty or instrument are being taken forward via an Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) involving all WHO Member States, including New Zealand. As part of the INB process, Member States will jointly determine what actions will be required to better prevent, prepare and respond to a future pandemic. If you are interested in learning more about the work of the INB, you can access further information at:

www.who.int/newsroom/events/detail/2021/11/29/default-calendar/second-special-session-of-the-world-healthassembly.

New Zealand sees the establishment of the INB as an important step towards preparing the world for future health emergencies and ensuring that a global health crisis of this magnitude does not occur again. Governments are working towards an outcome by the 77th World Health Assembly in 2024: www.who.int/about/governance/world-health-assembly.

I note your request for WHO guidelines on “doctors’ required public stance or behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic”. Please note that the WHO has not issued such guidance and this part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the information requested does not exist.

You may be interested in accessing the WHO’s COVID-19 webpage, which offers general and technical advice for individuals, health professionals, organisations and Member States to independently observe if they so choose. This can be found on the following link: www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019.

Your request for documentation between the Ministry and the World Economic Forum is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information requested does not exist.

Please note that the Ministry is proactively releasing joint advice produced with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) that relates to negotiations towards a new pandemic treaty or instrument in the coming weeks. As such, your request for documents between the Ministry and the WHO is refused under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information requested will soon be made publicly available. This information will be published at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/general-information-releases.

I trust this information fulfils your request. 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



Sarah Turner
Deputy Director-General
Office of the Director-General