5 June 2024

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[redacted] [redacted]
Ref: H2024041115

Tēnā koes 9(2)(a)

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 8 May 2024 for information regarding the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. Please find a response to each part of your request below.

How many were administered?

This part of your request was transferred to Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora on 15 May 2024 under section 14(b)(i) of the Act. You can expect a response from Health New Zealand in due course.

Who made the decision to approve?

There are a number of approval and advisory points for a vaccine to be used in New Zealand. Ultimately, Cabinet's approval was required for a COVID-19 vaccine to be rolled out, which occurred in November 2021. I have described below the different approval points for your information.

In March 2021, New Zealand decided that the principal vaccine in its COVID-19 vaccination programme would be the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine Comirnaty and purchased sufficient quantities of that vaccine for the whole population. At that point, evidence about effectiveness and rare side effects of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine (Vaxzevria) had emerged in other countries and was taken into account in making this decision.

Medsafe granted provisional approval for distribution of Vaxzevria in July 2021, for individuals over 18 years of age, according to official recommendations.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group considered what those official recommendations should be in October 2021. They set out their decisions and reasons for it in the following document, titled, *"Memo - Decision to use the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine: COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) recommendations",* which is publicly available at: www.tewhatuora.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Who-we-are/Expert-groups/COVID-19-Vaccine-Technical-Advisory-Group-CV-TAG/Decision-to-use-the-AstraZeneca-COVID-19-vaccine.pdf

Following this advice, Cabinet then approved the inclusion of this vaccine in the immunisation programme on 8 November 2021 in small quantities, specifically for people who were unable to

take Comirnaty for medical reasons or wanted an alternative to an mRNA vaccine such as Comirnaty. Further information about the decision to use can be found at: www.beehive.govt.nz/release/astrazeneca-arrives-new-zealand-second-covid-19-vaccine-available-month

Who is held responsible for such decision?

The New Zealand Government is responsible for the decision to approve the AstraZeneca vaccine. Accountability for decisions for approval of medicines arises in a number of ways. Depending on the particular concern, decision makers may be accountable as a result of a judicial review proceeding before the High Court, a complaint to the Ombudsman or complaint to another relevant body, such as the Human Rights Review Tribunal where there has been discrimination on a prohibited ground.

Treatment harm caused by COVID-19 vaccination is covered by ACC if the criteria for treatment injury are met. This is where there is a physical injury caused by the vaccination, that is not a necessary part or ordinary consequence of the treatment. Further information about this can be found on ACC's website at: www.acc.co.nz/covid-19/providers/general-covid-19-provider-information

You may be interested in the ACC COVID-19 vaccination injury analysis information, which is available at: www.acc.co.nz/assets/oia-responses/covid-19-vaccination-claims-refresh-july-2022-ipa-7835.pdf

A summary statement of New Zealand COVID-19 vaccine procurement process and contracts with suppliers is publicly available at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/general-information-releases/summary-statement-new-zealand-covid-19-vaccine-procurement-process-and-contracts-suppliers

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 Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests

Nāku noa, nā

Ross Bell
Acting Deputy Director-General
Public Health Agency | Te Pou Hauora Tūmatanui