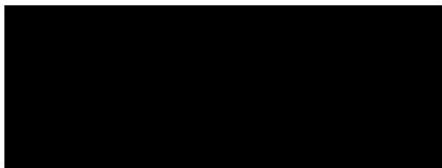




10 December 2021



Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Management of COVID Delta-related media enquiries

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 6 December 2021 seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about the management of COVID Delta-related media enquiries.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,600 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information:

Under the Official Information Act, please provide information, including but not limited to emails, applications, reports, meeting minutes, memos, data, audiovisual materials and correspondence to/from the DHB about:

- **Any decision by the DHB communications and media team stopping a media interview going ahead with medical staff (after an interview had been set-up).**
- **Any other instances in which medical staff agreed to talk to the media and they were prevented from doing so.**

There has been no instance of the Waitematā DHB Communications team preventing an interview already arranged with medical staff from going ahead.

- Any communication to/from the media team and the senior management team and executives about requests for interviews during the Delta outbreak.
- For the avoidance of doubt, the information sought relates to the public health response to COVID-19 during the Delta outbreak
- Date range August 2021 (Delta outbreak detected) to November 30, 2021.

Waitematā DHB received 221 media enquiries between 1 August and 30 November 2021 and almost all of these were related to the Delta outbreak.

While Waitematā DHB responded directly to some of these queries, many responses were provided via the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre, which is overseeing the COVID response on behalf of the four Northern DHBs, including Waitematā. Some queries with a national focus were coordinated by Technical Advisory Services (TAS).

Every COVID-related enquiry generates some internal discussion as to the most-appropriate way of responding and which agency should have ownership, particularly where the enquiry is common to multiple DHBs and consistency is required to ensure information is provided on a comparable basis.

The communications adviser who had responsibility for overseeing Waitematā DHB's coordination of media requests during the period in question recently finished employment with the DHB. While there is a record of the final outcome of each media request, transactional correspondence on individual queries is not readily available.

To obtain some of this detail, it would be necessary to gain access to the staff member's archived email account and search for correspondence on each of around 200 media requests. This would be a resource-intensive exercise that would provide an incomplete picture as many discussions are likely to have been held verbally with various senior and executive leaders.

Undertaking this work would impact the functions of the Communications team at a time when it is carrying a number of staff vacancies and is still needing to manage incoming media requests, along with other business-as-usual activities.

We have considered extending the timeframe for responding to your request or hiring a contractor to undertake this work but have concluded that these options would not assist as the volume of work would still be significant and a contractor would not have any background in DHB systems, people or Delta-related issues.

We are, therefore, refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982 due to significant collation and research.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman. Information about how to seek a review is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If there are any specific media enquiries that you wish to seek information on, please advise and we will be happy to consider your request.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publicly funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



Director of Communications
Waitematā District Health Board