



26 November 2021



Ref: OIA-2021/22-0508

Dear 

Official Information Act request relating to the country risk assessments of very high risk countries

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 29 October 2021. You requested:

1. *Country risk assessments: 'very high risk' countries and jurisdictions, August 2021*
2. *Country risk assessments: 'very high risk' countries and jurisdictions, September 2021*
3. *Country risk assessments: 'very high risk' countries and jurisdictions, September 2021*
4. *further documents or recommendations shared with Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group*
5. *Assessment of Equity Consideration done for Crown Law / NZBORA done in for all three submissions*

I have interpreted question 3 of your request to be for *Country risk assessments: 'very high risk' countries and jurisdictions, October 2021*.

A review of the country risk classification was provided to the Minister for COVID-19 Response, Hon Chris Hipkins, for consideration on 16 August 2021, though a decision regarding a change in risk designation for these countries was delayed due to the Delta outbreak on 17 August 2021. An updated review of the country risk classification was provided to Minister Hipkins on 27 October 2021.

On 24 November 2021, the Government announced upcoming changes to the classification of some very high-risk countries (VHRs) that will see Indonesia, Fiji, India, Pakistan, and Brazil removed from the VHR list. Papua New Guinea will continue to be classified as a VHR country, and travellers from Papua New Guinea will need to spend 14 days in a non-VHR country before coming to New Zealand.

In accordance with Cabinet Office circular CO (18) 4: *Proactive Release of Cabinet Material: Updated Requirements*, the information requested in questions 1 and 3 of your request are due to be proactively released on the Unite against COVID-19 website (covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/proactive-releases/). Accordingly, I am refusing these parts of your request under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information is soon to be publicly available.

Regarding question 2 of your request, due to the Delta outbreak on 17 August 2021, no country risk assessment was prepared in September 2021. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information requested does not exist.

The information you have requested in part 4 of your request is due to be proactively released on the Unite Against COVID-19 website (covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/proactive-releases/) in the coming weeks. Accordingly, I have decided to refuse your request for this information under section 18(d) of the Act – as the information requested will soon be publicly available.

In response to question 5 of this request, this information is being withheld under section 9(2)(h) of the Act, to maintain legal professional privilege.

In making my decision, I have taken the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act into account.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Response