



24 March 2022

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Ref: OIA-2021/22-1038

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act request regarding COVID-19 testing and vaccination

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request partially transferred from the Ministry of Health on 7 February 2022. You requested:

"How can it be that an Unvaccinated Person can get a Covid test, showing NEGATIVE and yet they are still unable to attend events such as a Weddings, Receptions, Birthdays, Funerals etc? Yet a Vaccinated person can still contract Covid and potentially pass it on, attending events without any prior testing." Please respond to my question as requested."

Throughout the response to COVID-19 the Government has taken an evidence-based approach to achieve a balance between the impact of public health restrictions on New Zealanders and their communities, and the need to minimise the spread of COVID-19 given the extraordinary health, economic and social impacts of widespread community spread.

Prior to the introduction of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (also known as the Traffic Light system) and vaccine passes, officials provided advice on implementing exemptions for vaccine passes on grounds other than medical exemptions; however, it was advised that this model could potentially result in a broad exemption regime that could create added health risk. On that basis, there is a narrow set of medical exemptions for vaccine passes based on Ministry of Health advice. Because the number of those exempt on medical grounds is very small (around 300 people), it was decided that this would be better managed through a dedicated exemption process without the need for a negative test.

The COVID-19 Protection Framework is about protecting all New Zealanders from the most serious impacts of COVID-19. Vaccination remains the best tool to protect individuals and the community from the effects of COVID-19 and is why vaccination passes form a key part of the Framework. However, vaccine passes were never intended to be a permanent measure.

Looking ahead, and as the Prime Minister signalled on Monday 21 February 2022, once we are over the peak of cases in this Omicron outbreak, we will start reducing restrictions to reflect the reducing risk posed by the outbreak as we work our way back down the Traffic Lights. Public health risk assessments are regularly being carried out and officials continue to review the Traffic Light settings generally to ensure they are fit for purpose and appropriate to the risk posed by COVID-19.

Decisions and advice regarding the Framework are available on the Unite Against COVID-19 website:

<https://covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases/alert-levels-and-restrictions/>.

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

This response may 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



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COVID-19 Response