



21 December 2022

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Ref: OIA-2022/23-0417

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act request relating to receipt and handling of document related to potential harm caused by COVID-19 vaccines

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 12 December 2022. You requested:

Dear Prime Minister, Ministers, Chris and Ministries of Health and PM and Cabinet

Please provide information held by you or your advisors to show:

- A) when you or your advisors first received the attached document and*
- B) what you and/ or your advisors did with this document including who you provided it to*

Please also provide information to show how information indicating how harm or risk whether identified by international experts or by the public is considered and addressed by government policy. Please include information of any checks and balances each of you and your advisors have to protect the public against government ideology that is contrary to the evidence and/ or that is contrary to the precautionary principle and/ or the public interest.

I would like individual answers from each of you on these questions please, as you each have individual duties.

In response to your first two questions, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Cabinet Office business unit received this document on 5 December 2022. No action was taken, as the material had been copied to multiple parties and there was therefore no need to forward it on.

Your third question is for information 'to show how information indicating how harm or risk whether identified by international experts or by the public is considered and addressed by government policy. Please include information of any checks and balances each of you and your advisors have to protect the public'. I have provided some information below from the Cabinet Manual about the role of the public sector. This information can also be accessed here: <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual/3-ministers-crown-and-2>

- 3.6** The formal relationship between Ministers and the public service is governed primarily by the [State Sector Act](#) and the [Public Finance Act](#). The relationship is also governed by convention, key aspects of which are set out in this chapter.

Roles and responsibilities

3.7 Ministers decide both the direction of and the priorities for their departments. They are generally not involved in their departments' day-to-day operations. In general terms, Ministers are responsible for determining and promoting policy, defending policy decisions, and answering in the House on both policy and operational matters.

3.8 Ministers have a duty to give fair consideration and due weight to free and frank advice provided by the public service.

3.9 Officials are responsible for:

- a. supporting Ministers in carrying out their ministerial functions;
- b. serving the aims and objectives of Ministers by developing and implementing policy and strategy;
- c. actively monitoring the performance or condition of state sector organisations, government assets, and regulatory regimes within their Ministers' portfolios;
- d. informing Ministers of significant developments within their portfolios, and tendering free and frank advice; and
- e. implementing the decisions of the government of the day.

3.10 Officials must be politically neutral in their work, serving the current Minister in such a way that they will equally be able to serve any future holder of the office. This principle of political neutrality is central to the public service's ability to support the government of the day and any future government.

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



Katrina Casey
Executive Director Implementation Unit and
Deputy Chief Executive Covid-19 Group