

14 March 2022

133 Molesworth Street
PO Box 5013
Wellington 6140
New Zealand
T+64 4 496 2000

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H202201064

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 4 February 2022 for:

"Please provide the risk assessment carried out for all school staff (i.e. teachers, teacher aids, support workers, IT techs etc. at primary, intermediate and high schools) to support the Pfizer mandate with reference to the toxicity reported in the Pfizer safety data sheet. The risk assessment would have needed to identify and list the hazards; list the risk controls; list additional controls; and give a risk rating (i.e., calculate the level of risk by finding the intersection between the likelihood and the consequences)."

The mandatory vaccinations for workers the health and education sectors were put in place to help protect the most vulnerable members of our community. Because international evidence shows us that the spreading of COVID-19 amongst children is high, it was deemed critical for staff working in education to be vaccinated.

While children are less likely to be admitted to hospital with COVID-19, their chances of passing it on to their family and local community remain high. Once COVID-19 is in communities there is a high chance that vulnerable populations, including the elderly, immunocompromised people and those not vaccinated, will fall sick and potentially die.

The vaccination assessment tool was developed for businesses and workplaces that are not covered by the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 (the Order). For places of work not covered by vaccine mandates, employers can choose to do a risk assessment to see if they can require work to be carried out by vaccinated workers, on health and safety grounds.

Further information about the risk assessment process is available here: www.business.govt.nz/covid-19/vaccination-assessment-tool. Given the education workforce is covered by the Order, a risk assessment for school staff was not created by the Ministry. Therefore, your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the document requested does not exist.

The Government and Ministry of Health continue to strongly encourage those working with vulnerable populations who are not covered by the Order to be vaccinated against COVID-19. In addition, the Government is continuing to work to ensure that there is the maximum possible uptake of COVID-19 vaccination within New Zealand.

Safety will always be our priority. Medsafe has thoroughly assessed the Comirnaty vaccine, and it has met strict standards for quality and the benefits were considered to outweigh any risks of harm. All medicines including vaccines can cause side effects in some people. Since rare side effects are not usually detected in clinical trials, Medsafe works with the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM) to monitor the safety of medicines in real world use.

More information about the vaccine evaluation and approval process can be found here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/vaccine-approval-process.asp

A Pfizer COVID-19 (Comirnaty) vaccine data sheet is available on the Medsafe website. This document includes information on the qualitative and quantitative composition of the Comirnaty vaccine, clinical particulars including adverse reactions identified in clinical trials, as well as special warnings and precautions for use among other information. This document can be accessed here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/c/comirnatyinj.pdf

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 Ministry of Health website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases.

Nāku noa, nā



Astrid Koornneef
Director
National Immunisation Programme