

[REDACTED]
By email: [REDACTED]
Ref: H202100116

Dear [REDACTED]

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 30 December 2020.

"1. Please provide all information held by the Ministry of Health that confirms the covid19 virus has been isolated in a Laboratory.

2. Please provide a copy of the full diagnostic report of the covid19 virus that has been isolated in a Laboratory, including the name and location of the Laboratory."

The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes the disease COVID-19 was first described by Chinese scientists in late 2019. Their work was quickly confirmed by others internationally and the results published by the World Health Organization on their website: <https://who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance-publications?healthtopics=b6bd35a3-cf4f-4851-8e8085cb0068335b&publishingoffices=aeebab07-3d0c-4a24-b6ef-7c11b7139e43&healthtopics-hidden=true&publishingoffices-hidden=true>.

There are several examples of the virus being isolated and cultured in a laboratory setting. One example provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States describes the isolation and culture of SARS-CoV-2 at: wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/6/20-0516_article.

A research paper, *Isolation and rapid sharing of the 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) from the first patient diagnosed with COVID-19 in Australia*, describes the first isolation and sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 in Australia. It is available at: www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/212/10/isolation-and-rapid-sharing-2019-novel-coronavirus-sars-cov-2-first-patient.

In New Zealand the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been isolated and grown on numerous clinical specimens by the Institute of Environmental Science and Research using routine viral culture techniques. SARS-CoV-2 has also been isolated by researchers at University of Otago. In New Zealand and elsewhere the results of research identifying SARS-CoV-2 as a novel coronavirus has been confirmed by whole genome sequencing.

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 website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Yours sincerely



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