

20 September 2021

[REDACTED]

By email: [REDACTED]  
Ref: H202110943

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

### **Response to your request for official information**

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 23 August 2021 for:

*“the ministry's Delta response plan”*

The Ministry has many plans (i.e. testing, surveillance, resurgence etc.) related to the COVID-19 Delta Response, but not a Delta specific plan. Therefore, your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the information requested does not exist. However, the below information may be of interest to you.

The Ministry of Health is constantly reviewing its response to COVID-19, based on clinical, scientific, international and national evidence to provide guidance and advice to the public and the border.

With evidence of the effect of the more transmissible Delta variant in overseas jurisdictions, the Ministry adjusted our COVID-19 response planning. The Ministry has conducted scenario planning to encompass different aspects of our response to be ready for a Delta variant outbreak. This has included continuous improvements in surveillance testing, contact tracing, vaccination, border control and MIQ, and being able to surge our capacity in these areas as required. COVID-19 is an evolving situation which requires a continuous improvement approach therefore it is important that we update protocols as we encounter new incidents. We are confident we have fit for purpose standard operating procedures and protocols to enable an effective response to any outbreak.

Overall, our approach is a more defensive, cautious and conservative one because of the higher level of risk which the Delta variant presents to New Zealand. The New Zealand experience of managing COVID-19 has taught us that capacity is not a steady state measurement. Our approach to response management is to adjust as an outbreak evolves, and capacity is utilised where it will most effectively minimise the risk of onward transmission.

The Ministry of Health has worked to support the health sector and system to deal with a range of scenarios as part of its COVID-19 response planning since December 2020. Scenario planning exercises were looked at from an individual DHB and PHUs perspective, acknowledging their operational capabilities. Further scenario planning and stress-testing of the current system has continued, up to the current August outbreak in Auckland.

As we have seen, an incursion of the Delta variant requires a swift and forceful response, and our response during this outbreak has indicated we were prepared for that.

The Ministry remains open to working with you to provide information in response to a more specific request.

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](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nick Allan', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Allan  
**Manager OIA Services**  
**Office of the Director General**