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9 March 2023

s 9(2)(a)

By email: **s 9(2)(a)**
Ref: H2023020146

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) to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 14 February 2023 for information regarding censorship on Manatū Hauora social media platforms.

On 17 February 2023 you were contacted by Manatū Hauora in order to clarify your request. We asked:

“Manatū Hauora has interpreted your request to be seeking correspondence between Manatū Hauora and Twitter since 1 January 2019 regarding censorship about COVID-19, specifically. Could you please confirm if this is correct?”

We have not received a response from you regarding clarification of your request to date. Therefore, we have interpreted your request as quoted above. Please find a response to your request below:

- 1) copies of any communications or other information between yourselves, your advisors, any representative of your ministries or the wider New Zealand government and Twitter since 1 January 2019*
- 2) please provide any communications between the New Zealand government and Twitter or any other mainstream or social media platform attempting to censor or restrict publication in any way of any medical or other information about Covid, the Covid vaccine alternative solutions to enhance immunity apart from vaccination, data about the safety and efficacy of the PfizerVax and/ or safety signals treatment injuries, deaths or other harm from the Covid response and/ or the PfizerVax. If any information was by telephone, please include information about the time, parties to and content of any relevant calls.*
- 3) please also provide any internal government advice, policies, guidelines, discussion papers, emails or other information about how to censor mainstream media and/ or social media, consideration of possible levers for achieving this, what should be censored and the reasons for this censorship. I am particularly interested in censorship of information about the Covid response and information contrary to the government narrative/ indoctrination about the safety and/ or efficacy of the PfizerVax.*

I am also interested to know what other topics have been censored by government on social media or MSM in the last 10 years

Your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the requested documents do not exist. To confirm, Manatū Hauora has not contacted any social media platforms (such as Twitter) about censorship or restricting publication on COVID-19 or any of the topics you have referenced. We have only contacted Facebook (Meta) to stop false weight-loss ads being shared as they were using the Manatū Hauora logo without consent.

For your information, Manatū Hauora has a dedicated Social Media team, which manages our social media accounts (including Facebook (Meta), Twitter, and LinkedIn). This is to ensure that our social media platforms are used appropriately and that our community guidelines are being adhered to: www.health.govt.nz/about-site/social-media-community-guidelines. While breaches to the guidelines may lead to posts being deleted, or users being blocked, the Ministry does not consider these to be a form of censorship.

As you may be aware, the COVID-19 Disinformation Assessment and Response Team (DART) acted as a clearinghouse for reporting on disinformation when it was in operation. DART received reports of disinformation through a variety of forms, including leaflets, digital items, weblinks and reports from social media. While most instances were brought to the attention of Manatū Hauora by members of the public or external parties, some were generated internally through monitoring by our Social Media team. For example, if the Social Media team noted disinformation on a post on our channels, this was reported to DART.

Furthermore, Censorship in New Zealand is governed by the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 (the Classification Act) and associated regulations, which is administered by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). For further information on this matter, I suggest you submit a request to DIA (OIA@dia.govt.nz) or to other agencies that deal with publications and communications, such as:

- the Broadcasting Standards Authority (info@bsa.govt.nz), which deals with television and radio programmes
- the New Zealand Press Council, for newspapers and magazines
- the Advertising Standards Authority, for advertising.

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

Nāku noa, nā



Annie Coughlan
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