

Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



22 November 2021

Thomas Beagle
New Zealand Council of Civil Liberties
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C19OIA2021033

Dear Thomas

Official Information Act request relating to COVID-19 vaccine certificates for domestic use

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received on 9 October 2021, which was also addressed to the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern. I apologise for the delay in responding to your request. Owing to an administrative error your request was not processed within the statutory timeframes.

You have requested information relating to vaccine certificates for domestic use including the civil liberties implications of the certificates. I am responding as the information requested falls within scope of my portfolio as the Minister for COVID-19 Response.

COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates (CVCs) are a key tool to support the broader public health response to COVID-19. Proof of vaccination requirements in some domestic settings will enable us to maximise the benefits of greater vaccination rates and allow greater freedoms and increased economic activity. They will be used as a measure to ensure people can demonstrate that they are either fully vaccinated or exempt from the requirements (either due to medical circumstances or age).

In developing an approach to CVCs, we have considered the distinct rights and interests of Māori, as well as the health outcomes for the wider population while assessing related issues such as equity, feasibility, employment, access to lifeline services, human rights, privacy and the Treaty of Waitangi.

In particular, the Government has been cognisant that vaccine requirements have the potential to deny access to everyday services to people who are legally exercising their right not to be vaccinated. Acknowledging that vaccine requirements limit people's access, Cabinet agreed that providers of life-preserving basic needs will be prohibited from introducing vaccine requirements.

Public health advice received during the policy process noted that CVCs can reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and help to protect vulnerable groups. CVCs have also been used internationally to help encourage vaccinations, by acting as an incentive as part of a move towards fewer domestic controls. Cabinet has also instructed officials to review the policy in early 2022 and report back to the Minister for COVID-19 Response, in order to monitor the effectiveness and wider impacts of the policy.

Outlined below is a list of the key decision-making documents relating to vaccine certificates for domestic use:

- Joint Briefing: *Initial advice on the domestic use of COVID-19 vaccination certificates*, dated 17 September 2021
- Joint Briefing: *The domestic use of COVID-19 vaccination certificates in high risk settings*, dated 24 September 2021
- Brief Insights Report – *Details on different countries' approaches to domestic COVID-19 vaccine passes*, dated 1 October 2021
- Joint Briefing: *COVID-19 vaccine certificates – settings for domestic use*, dated 14 October 2021
- Cabinet Paper: *COVID-19 vaccination certificates - implementation in domestic settings*

I have made the decision to proactively release all decision making documents relating to COVID-19 vaccination certificates, including the above, on the Unite against COVID-19 website (see: covid19.govt.nz/). I intend to publish this information by late January 2022.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely



Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response