




27 July 2021



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 17 June 2021 to the Ministry of Education, requesting the following information:

- *Copies of any reports, documents, memoranda, correspondence, legal advice or emails, both internal and external discussing vaccine hesitancy and antivax attitudes among school principals, teachers or boards in 2021.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

As the COVID-19 vaccine rollout continues, the role of school leaders as trusted and respected members of communities is key to its success. Over the course of this pandemic, school leaders have done an incredible job of keeping their communities informed and making sure they know where they can find the most up to date and accurate information available, relying on the guidance published by the Ministry of Health. While individuals may choose not to be vaccinated, we would all be very concerned if any senior and influential member of the education community was speaking out against the advice of the Director-General of Health.

### Your request

We have interpreted your request to mean antivax attitudes or vaccine hesitancy being expressed by school leaders, being principals, teachers, board members, and specifically about COVID-19 vaccines.

I can advise that the Ministry has not produced any reports, documents, memoranda, or legal advice that discusses vaccine hesitancy or anti-vaccination attitudes by school leaders. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the requested information does not exist.

With regard to your request for internal and external emails, the collation of this information would involve a search by our IT services for every email in 2021 that mentions the keyword 'vaccine'. The Ministry would need to then consider each individual email against your request. This search would likely pull in many thousands of emails, as it would include messaging around seasonal flu vaccines, general messaging for Ministry staff about COVID-19 vaccines, and copies of any vaccine messaging that has been sent to the school sector via the School Bulletin. These emails would then need to be manually assessed to determine whether they fall within scope of your request. This would be a significant administrative task for the Ministry to attempt to undertake.

As fulfilling this aspect of your request would significantly and unreasonably impact on the Ministry's ability to carry out its core functions, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act, due to the substantial collation and research required to respond.

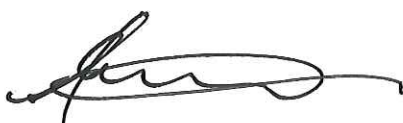
While we note your request was for information at a National and Ministry-wide level, we have considered inviting you to refine your request to a particular region or Ministry Business Unit. However, we do not consider this would enable a meaningful substantive response to be provided.

The Ministry's ten Directors of Education and the teams that support them were asked if they were aware of any instances of a school leader sharing COVID-19 misinformation. I can advise you that there has been one instance of a school leader sharing COVID-19 misinformation, which was in the Waikato in February 2021. This was reported by Radio New Zealand at the time with the original story being available at [rnz.co.nz/news/national/436315/ministry-of-education-moves-against-covid-19-conspiracy-email-sent-by-teacher](https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/436315/ministry-of-education-moves-against-covid-19-conspiracy-email-sent-by-teacher).

We have also asked the Office of the Secretary of Education, our correspondence team and our communications team that manages our COVID-19 messaging if they were aware of any instances that would fall in scope of this request. They have all advised that they hold no information that would be in scope of your request.

Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at [media.team@education.govt.nz](mailto:media.team@education.govt.nz). If you are unsatisfied with my response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review it. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Helen Hurst

**Tumu Te Hāpai ō Rāngai | Te Hāpai ō Rāngai**  
**Deputy Secretary**  
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