



9 November 2020



Reference: OIA-2020/21-0182



### Official Information Act request relating to the Isolation of the SARS-COV-2 virus

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 10 October 2020. You requested:

*"All records in the possession, custody or control of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet describing the isolation of a SARS-COV-2 virus, directly from a sample taken from a diseased patient, where the patient sample was not first combined with any other source of genetic material (i.e. monkey kidney cells aka vero cells; lung cells from a lung cancer patient).*

*Please note that I am using "isolation" in the every-day sense of the word: the act of separating a thing(s) from everything else. I am not requesting records where "isolation of SARS-COV-2" refers instead to:*

- the culturing of something, or*
- the performance of an amplification test (i.e. a PCR test), or*
- the sequencing of something.*

*Please also note that my request is not limited to records that were authored by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet or that pertain to work done by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. My request includes any sort of record, for example (but not limited to) any published peer-reviewed study that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has downloaded or printed.*

*If any records match the above description of requested records and are currently available to the public elsewhere, please provide enough information about each record so that I may identify and access each record with certainty (i.e. title, author(s), date, journal, where the public may access it).*

*I will accept PDFs or links to PDFs."*

No specific information has been identified as being held by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) relevant to your request. Accordingly, your request is refused under section 18(e) Act - *"that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found."*

I would note that the COVID-19 Response Group in DPMC has accessed a large volume of studies since the start of the pandemic and it is possible that some may have had information relevant to the request. However, these would be in public domain and to attempt to identify any such studies would involve substantial collation and research as records of all studies and research accessed by the group have not been retained. Although you may wish to search for this information yourself, for instance using Google Scholar.

Your request was for information in possession, custody or control of DPMC. If you have not done so already, you may wish to pursue your request with the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) ([enquiries@esr.cri.nz](mailto:enquiries@esr.cri.nz)) and/or the Ministry of Health ([oiagr@health.govt.nz](mailto:oiagr@health.govt.nz)).

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

We do not intend to publish this response on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Barnes  
**Deputy Chief Executive,  
COVID-19 Group**