



NEW ZEALAND
CUSTOMS SERVICE
TE MANA ĀRAI O AOTEAROA

PROTECTING NEW ZEALAND'S BORDER

WELLINGTON

The Customhouse, 1 Hinemoa Street, Wellington

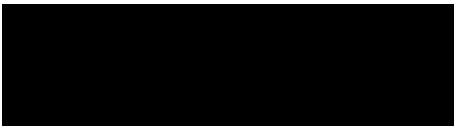
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22 October 2021

Ref: OIA 21-224



Dear 

Request for information under the Official Information Act

Thank you for your email dated 12 October 2021, to the New Zealand Customs Service (Customs) which has been treated as a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). You requested the following:

"I have been reading, with great interest, an article which discusses the case in which NZ customs fired a staff member for refusing to be vaccinated on a front line job. I was hoping to be able to get a copy of health and safety risk assessment that was carried out on the risks of both being injected and not (the risk of the virus vs the risks of the vaccine). I look forward to receiving the relevant audited documents."

In response, Customs is unable to provide you with any information regarding individual Customs staff members, therefore this part of your request is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect the privacy of natural persons.

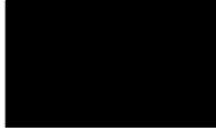
Please find attached a document titled 'Risk Assessment Associated with Customs Border Work', which contains the information you have requested. This is a generic risk assessment that Customs used with terminated staff.

You have the right, by way of complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Act, to seek an investigation and review of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available online at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz, or you can phone 0800 802 602.

Please note that Customs proactively releases responses to Official Information Act requests on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after we have sent it to you. Your name and contact details will be removed.

If you have any queries about this response, please contact in the first instance, the Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing team at OIA@customs.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Debbie Kay
Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing Manager

RISK ASSESSMENT ASSOCIATED WITH CUSTOMS BORDER WORK

We and other border agencies have used a HSW risk assessment to understand what work is at risk of spreading COVID-19 and how adding vaccination to the suite of controls impacts both the likelihood and the consequences of transmitting the virus from the border into NZ. We have also considered the impact of vaccination for staff undertaking that work on their own risk profile. The risk assessment identifies the following in relation to work that you currently undertake.

Work that provides exposure is deemed to be:

Factors that affect Likelihood of Covid-19 infection

- Work that exposes staff to airborne transmission opportunities for the virus
- Work that exposes staff to other body fluids or surfaces where the virus may reside
- Work that brings staff into contact with international passengers or crew where there could be transmission of the virus
- Work that exposes staff to close contacts of infected persons

Where any of the above factors are present for work undertaken, we know that infection Likelihood is at least **Possible**. We know this because there have been infections actually recorded.

Your current work includes the likelihood of exposure under these categories.

Any exposure to persons with COVID- 19 creates work of higher risk **regardless of frequency**. It only takes one exposure for transmission to occur. Any work, or parts thereof that provide that opportunity, are in scope for this assessment.

Factors that affect the Consequence of Covid-19 infection

- Workers who become infected, and who are not vaccinated, are more likely to become symptomatic and to infect others in the community, creating the risk of community transmission. This would be a **Severe** consequence which could cause multiple deaths and significant economic loss.
- Workers who become infected, but who are vaccinated are significantly less likely to trigger community transmission. Even so, there is a risk of death for anyone who contracts Covid-19. Risk of death for an individual cannot be rated less than **Major**.

When you put this into our risk matrix you can see that vaccination, as an additive control lowers the risk considerably.

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Insignificant (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Severe (5)
Almost Certain (5)	Medium (5)	Medium (10)	High (15)	Extreme (20)	Extreme (25)
Likely (4)	Low (4)	Medium (8)	High (12)	High (16)	Extreme (20)
Possible (3)	Low (3)	Medium (6)	Medium (9)	High (12)	High (15)
Unlikely (2)	Low (2)	Low (4)	Medium (6)	Medium (8)	Medium (10)
Rare (1)	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Medium (5)

Pre
Vax

Post
Vax

We are required to take all reasonable, practicable steps to minimise harm and with the addition of vaccination – this is an additional control that must be added to the strong controls that we have always applied prior to vaccine becoming available.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982