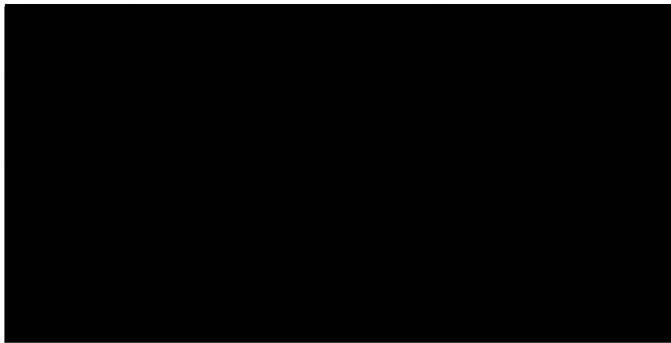


26 February 2021



Re: Official Information Act request – Covid tests taken in Northern Region

I refer to your Official Information Act request dated 28 January 2021 requesting the following information:

I request the following information under the Official Information Act from the Auckland District Health Board.

How many COVID-19 tests, taken in the ADHB/CMDHB/WDHB region between 22 January 2020 and today's date 28 January 2021, have been spoiled or damaged? Resulting in those samples not being able to be tested.

With a specific breakdown of:

- **How were the tests spoiled or damaged?**
- **When and where the samples were taken and transported to?**
- **What repercussions were there for those involved in the testing process, including the patients affected?**
- **How many patients, whose tests were spoiled or damaged, subsequently tested positive for COVID-19?**
- **Any and all copies of video and photographs of spoiled or damaged COVID-19 tests.**

The Northern Region district health boards (Northland, Waitematā, Auckland, and Counties Manukau DHBs) are operating a joint response to COVID-19 via the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC). For this reason, we are providing a combined response to your request. Please note, swabs from Northland District Health Board are processed by Auckland District Health Board and thus included under ADHB statistics for this OIA.

For context, in the time period from 22 January 2020 to 28 January 2021 Waitemātā DHB processed a total of 72,500 swabs; Counties Manukau DHB processed a total of 129,927 swabs; Auckland DHB processed a total of 307,525 swabs.

- 1. How many COVID-19 tests, taken in the metro Auckland region between 22 January 2020 and today's date 28 January 2021, have been spoiled or damaged? Resulting in those samples not being able to be tested.**

In total, just under 510,000 COVID-19 swabs were collected across the region for testing during the period of this request. Of these, 67 were reported as spoiled or damaged, representing 0.01 per cent of all swabs. This serves to demonstrate that good systems are in place across the region to successfully manage large volumes of COVID-19 testing.

Auckland DHB reported 45 swabs which were lost or damaged, Waitemātā reported four and Counties Manukau DHB reported 18.

- 2. How were the tests spoiled or damaged?**

After a person has received a nasopharyngeal swab, the sample is stored in a buffer solution to preserve the cells which may be infected with the virus. All Auckland DHB samples noted as damaged or spoiled in this response had leaked. For Waitemata, three samples had leaked and one reported lost after receipt by the laboratory. For Counties Manukau DHB, one swab had an incorrect patient ID, 13 had no swab in the vial, one the sample and form ID did not match, one sample was unlabelled and two had leaked.

- 3. When and where the samples were taken and transported to?**

All samples were collected from around the metro Auckland region, with the exception of Auckland DHB which receives samples from Northland. Samples were transported to North Shore Hospital, LabPLUS Auckland, and Middlemore Hospital.

- 4. What repercussions were there for those involved in the testing process, including the patients affected?**

The international standard NZ clinical laboratories are accredited to (ISO 15189) requires that there are processes to ensure that when the quality of the sample received is unsuitable for examination, or, for whatever reason, a result cannot be determined for a sample, this is reported to the requesting clinician. This allows the requester to decide on the best course of action in terms of the clinical management of the patient, which may include a repeat collection of the sample.

- 5. How many patients, whose tests were spoiled or damaged, subsequently tested positive for COVID-19?**

No patients who were re-tested due to their swabs being spoiled or damaged subsequently returned a positive result across the metro Auckland DHBs.

6. Any and all copies of video and photographs of spoiled or damaged COVID-19 tests.

We will not be releasing any copies of videos or photographs of spoiled or damaged COVID-19 tests under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act to protect the privacy of individual patients.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive of Te Toka Tumai (Auckland District Health Board)

