



2 February 2021

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request

You have asked for a copy of my May 2019 letter to schools regarding unvaccinated children.

A copy of that letter is attached.

Northland DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist public understanding of how we deliver our services. This includes proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been provided to you. Personal or identifying information will be redacted from any response published online. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be publicly available we will consider your views.

If you have any queries relating to Northland DHB's response to your information request please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nick Chamberlain'.

Dr Nick Chamberlain
Chief Executive



7 May 2019

Northland Principals

Dear Colleagues,

Immunisation in Northland

Northland is experiencing its lowest immunisation rates for many years and has some of the lowest rates in New Zealand. The anti-immunisation lobby and the impact of social media, anti-science and the Vaxxed movie (that was shown throughout Northland 15 months ago) have had a significant impact.

Immunisation is the most significant public health intervention in the last 200 years, providing a safe and effective way to prevent the spread of many diseases that cause hospitalisation, serious ongoing health conditions and sometimes death. Northland has in the past few weeks confirmed our first two cases of measles here and with our immunisation rates in the low to mid 80 percent we do not have protective community (herd) immunity. Other communities (Canterbury, Auckland, and Waikato) have seen rapid spread of measles following the first cases and we would like to be as proactive as possible.

Immunisation is critical for the health of children and the wider community. For immunisation to provide the greatest benefit, a sufficient number of people need to be vaccinated to halt the spread of bacteria and viruses that cause disease. The proportion of the population that has to be immune to interrupt disease transmission differs for each vaccine preventable disease, but is around 90 percent for most diseases. For a highly infectious disease like measles, this is up to 95 percent of the population.

This emphasises the need to stay vigilant and ensure high immunisation coverage rates are achieved. Those children that are un-immunised are extremely vulnerable to this highly infectious disease. If they come to school having contracted measles there is a 95 percent chance of transmission to other children within one metre of the infected child.

In other words, they WILL spread it to other un-immunised children and also to those children that have their immune system compromised (those being treated for cancer or leukaemia) as well as the elderly. Once measles has spread, it has a mortality rate of 1 in 1000. That is why school children that come into contact with a child with measles must stay home for 14 days after contact. This could have a huge impact on school attendance.

As requested previously by the Medical Officer of Health, we would ask that you check the Immunisation status of your children and staff and discuss with your boards what actions can be taken to keep people safe. We recommend all children and staff that are not immune or un-immunised receive an MMR vaccine.

Please consider excluding unimmunised children during this period of high risk i.e. at least the next two weeks. If we have more cases, it could be longer and we will keep you informed. I understand if exclusion seems too harsh or has too many unintended consequences or you simply just don't want to go there. So, if this is not possible, unimmunised children that are unwell with fever, a cough or cold, must be kept away from school as it could be the early (pre-rash) stages of measles.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Chamberlain'.

Dr Nick Chamberlain
Chief Executive
Northland DHB