



## CORPORATE OFFICE

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9(2)(a)

### RE Official information request CDHB 10536 and WCDHB 9522

I refer to your email dated 28 January 2021 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB. Specifically:

**How many COVID-19 tests, taken in the CDHB and WCDHB 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.**

Canterbury Health Laboratories (CHL) provides laboratory testing services for both Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB. From 22 January 2020 to 31 December 2020 across both DHBs, there were (in total):

- 83 COVID-19 patient samples rejected for testing due to being unlabelled or mislabelled.
- 55 COVID-19 patient samples rejected for testing due to leakage.

**Please note:** January 2021 data is not yet available.

**With a specific breakdown of:**

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

Occasionally, some patient samples can be found to be unlabelled, mislabelled or leaking, on arrival at the laboratory.

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

The patient samples were taken from various referrers across Canterbury and the West Coast. This data also includes samples received and tested from other regions across New Zealand, when necessary to provide support for surge response during outbreaks (e.g. Auckland).

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

The international standard which 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, that this is reported to the requesting clinician. This then allows the requestor to decide on the best course of action in regard to the clinical management of the patient, which may include a repeat collection of the sample.

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

This combination of data is not automatically extracted on CHL's monitoring reports and would require significant manual auditing of the data in order to collate a response.

We are therefore declining a response to this part of the request pursuant to section 18(f) of the Official Information Act, i.e. *"that the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research"*.

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

Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB do not have any videos or photographs of patient samples for COVID-19. We are therefore declining a response to this question pursuant to section 18(g) of the Official Information Act.

I trust this satisfies your interest in this matter.

You may, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act, seek a review of our decision to withhold information by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://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 Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely



Ralph La Salle  
**Acting Executive Director**  
**Planning, Funding & Decision Support**