

9 December 2025

By Email: 

Dear Wendy,

**Official information request for dates recent variants were first detected in wastewater**

I refer to your official information request received by the New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science Limited ('PHF Science') dated Thursday 13 November 2025 for the following information:

*"The Institute is in the process of producing a third edition of COVID-19 Nation Dates. As part of this process, we are interested in the dates that each significant variant or subvariant was first detected in wastewater and/or clinical samples in New Zealand.*

*Would you be able to provide:*

- 1. The date that the subvariant XEC was first detected in wastewater and/or clinical samples (approximately September 2024)?*
- 2. The date that the subvariant NB.1.8.1 was first detected in wastewater and/or clinical samples (approximately March 2025)?*
- 3. Are there any other variants/subvariants that have been detected that are not part of either list (including their dates of first detection)?*

*It would be great if you could present the information in the same format as your response to our previous OIA (our ref OIA 2024/05)"*

**Our Response**

The requested information is attached and titled 'PHF Science OIA 2025 Variant Table'.

For your reference, we have provided data for both the variants you have named in the request (XEC and NB.1.8.1) as well as variants that have been the focus of PHF Science's SARS-CoV-2 reporting during this time.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision.

Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely,

