



12 August 2021

Sebastian

By email: [fyi-request-15138-2112bc5b@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-15138-2112bc5b@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Ref: OIA-2020/21-0676

Dear Sebastian

**Official Information Act request for documents relating to Counter-Terrorism and the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques**

I refer to your request made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), received by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 17 June 2021. You requested:

*"...I would like to renew my request for a copy of the Counter-Terrorism Handbook. For clarity, my request is for the document referred to in the CT/CVE Capability Review as "Counter-Terrorism Handbook, DPMC, October 2019, RESTRICTED," as opposed to the unclassified one-page summary that is accessible on the DPMC website.*

*Further, the Counter-Terrorism Strategy Implementation Plan 2020 refers to "policy and operational frameworks" for managing New Zealand foreign terrorist fighters and their repatriation. I request copies of these frameworks.*

*I would also like to request copies of these documents referred to in the Royal Commission report:*

**ONE:** *"In June 2019, the CTCC agreed that information access and sharing were vital to understanding the threat. It suggested removing legislative barriers, leveraging open-source intelligence capability, developing online platforms for agencies to collaborate and enhancing information sharing mechanisms between Public sector agencies and selected private organisations."*  
*I request a copy of this report*

**TWO:** *"A 20 June 2019 report to the Security and Intelligence Board noted that work had not yet commenced on measuring or assessing its own governance and coordination performance..."*  
*I request a copy of this report, if it is different to the June 2019 report referred to above.*

**THREE:** *"In July 2016, the Security and Intelligence Board recognised the "urgent need for agencies to [sort out] New Zealand's counter-terrorism arrangements in line with ministerial expectations" and noted the continuing absence of an overarching strategy for counter-terrorism."*  
*I request a copy of the document containing these observations.*

**FOUR:** *"In 2017, [DPMC]... advised the Security and Intelligence Board that there were still no measures to demonstrate impact. It noted that one of the factors "stopping intelligence and assessment about the national intelligence priorities from informing decision-making and policy-making to the fullest extent" was that "current priority descriptions are not clear enough..."*

*I request a copy of the document containing these observations.*

**FIVE:** *“The last national-level counter-terrorism exercise before the 15 March 2019 terrorist attack was in 2014. Comprehensive evaluation reports are prepared after each exercise, which include lessons identified and corrective action plans to address those.”*

*I request a copy of the evaluation report and corrective action plan for the national-level counter-terrorism exercise conducted in 2014.*

**SIX:** *“In 2016, the Security and Intelligence Board was told that a CT operation identified that “the system overall appears under-prepared to facilitate effectively the sharing of highly sensitive, [compartmented] intelligence to those who need it, when they need it”. The CTCC was asked to address this, along with other matters identified in a corrective action plan following that operation.”*

*I request a copy of the report to the Security Intelligence Board that contains these observations. I also request a copy of this operation's corrective action plan.*

**SEVEN:** *“In mid-2018 the Specialist Coordinator... directed a National Assessments Bureau analyst to conduct a stocktake of Public sector agencies’ online activity to counter extremism.”*

*I request a copy of this stocktake...”*

I last wrote to you regarding this request on 15 July 2021, providing a response regarding the parts of your request for a copy of the restricted version of the Counter-Terrorism Handbook, and the part of your request for policy and operational frameworks for managing New Zealand foreign terrorist fighters and their repatriation. I also provided a response regarding parts four, five and six of your request, and advised that work remained underway on parts one, two, three and seven. I advised that the time limits for deciding on these remaining parts were extended by 20 working days, to allow for further consultation. On reflection, I have decided further consideration is required regarding the part of your request for “policy and operational frameworks” for managing New Zealand foreign terrorist fighters and their repatriation. I will respond again regarding this part of your request in the coming weeks.

With regard to the remainder of your request, I have decided to withhold information in scope of the remaining parts of your request under the following sections of the Act:

- Section 6(a) of the Act, as “the making available of that information would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand”, and
- Section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act, to “maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty”.

I can, however, provide some context and information regarding this withheld material as follows. With regard to part two of your request, the Security and Intelligence Board (SIB) document dated referred to is a one-page summary of progress on a number of workstreams. The point relevant to your request, for “[g]ood governance and coordination, priority setting, decisions taken (measuring SIB’s performance)” was described at the time the document was prepared as “no project underway, or has not been measured.”

The document quoted in part three of your request, in which SIB “recognised the urgent need for agencies to grip up New Zealand’s counter-terrorism arrangements in line with ministerial expectations”, is a one-page coversheet prepared for a SIB meeting in July 2016, following a meeting of SIB officials in June 2016. Further work regarding New Zealand’s counter-

terrorism arrangements has been undertaken since this time, including New Zealand's Counter-Terrorism Strategy (available online at: <https://dpmc.govt.nz/publications/new-zealands-counter-terrorism-strategy>).

With regard to part seven of your request, for a copy of *Stocktake of New Zealand agency activity to counter extremism online* (commissioned in 2018), the contents of this 9-page stocktake are broadly outlined as follows:

- Framework;
- Summary (including context, key finding & questions);
- Overarching work (including policy, community & civil society, and international engagement);
- Online exploration;
- Online interaction & communication;
- Action & sentencing; and
- Post-sentencing management.

The stocktake's summary notes that *"the online sphere does not exist in a vacuum and that there is significant crossover between the offline and online environments. The online environment is a key vector for violent extremist activity. Activities such as incitement, preparation, coordination, financing and the carrying out of terrorist activity can happen both online and offline. Counter extremism efforts therefore deal with the whole person, and not just online activity."*

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely



Tony Lynch  
**Deputy Chief Executive**  
**National Security Group**