



**DEPARTMENT OF THE
PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET**
TE TARI O TE PIRIMIA ME TE KOMITI MATUA

Post Operation Deans National Security System Review

Titiro whakamuri kokiri whakamua –

Look back and reflect so you can move forward

June 2019

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Introduction

Ka mua, ka muri

Walking backwards into the future

The events of 15 March 2019 were unprecedented in New Zealand; 51 people lost their lives, many more were injured, and communities were scarred. Terrorist attacks were perpetrated against people participating in a peaceful religious service. People around the country had their sense of safety impacted through exposure to violence and extremism never before experienced in New Zealand. We acknowledge all of those who suffered loss and injury as a result of these attack. Responding to the needs of the injured and the bereaved was at the heart of our response.

This event was at the extreme end of the potential terrorism scenarios against which the national security system had been exercising. Nonetheless the national security system responded effectively.

The response to the terrorist attacks required an effective and coordinated effort from agencies across government: ranging from members of the NZ Police, who rapidly apprehended the offender and began the largest homicide investigation in New Zealand history; to educators who looked after students during the ensuing lockdown; to Customs officials who facilitated entrance to New Zealand for the friends and families of victims; along with a wide range of other contributions, some visible and many not.

This process was coordinated through the national security system, under the leadership of the Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC), chaired by the Chief Executive of DPMC. NZ Police was the lead agency.

ODESC takes a continuous improvement approach to the national security system, and intends to draw lessons arising from actions undertaken in response to the 15 March terrorist attacks and embed them into the national security system, to further strengthen the system's capacity to respond to future national security emergencies of any type.

This report is a National Security Group (NSG) perspective on the performance of the national security system. It represents a compilation of commentary from multiple agencies, providing visibility across the national security system on the way in which it responded, and to ensure we are better prepared for a future national security event.

The report has several parts. The first of these discusses the national security system itself – how activity was coordinated, and how information flowed into, across, and out of the core government agencies. The second covers support provided to the response, including the victim identification process, welfare support to affected communities, and the health sector. The third section covers the relationship between the central government response and local government, the affected communities, and our international partners.

Scope

This report considers actions undertaken by core government agencies from the time of the attack on 15 March 2019 to the end of formal ODESC leadership at midday on 3 April 2019. It does not consider any activities prior to the commencement of the event; these will be addressed by the *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the attack on the Christchurch Mosques* led by Sir William Young.

This review takes place while activity in response to, and recovery from, the terrorist attacks is still underway. This report is therefore intended only to provide reflections as at three months after the event.

This review forms part of the analysis of government actions arising from the 15 March terrorist attacks. Other reviews have also been commissioned, including an independent review of the Police response, a Ministry of Education commissioned review of lockdown procedures, and a review of the National Mass Fatalities Framework and the disaster victim identification process. Readers should also be aware of the Ministerial Review 'Better Responses to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies in New Zealand', and the government's response to that, released by Hon Faafoi in August 2018.

In compiling this review, NSG was particularly interested in feedback and lessons arising from:

- the operation of the national security system and cross-government coordination;
- the national terrorism threat level, including the process for setting and communicating changes to the threat level;
- victim identification processes and the return of deceased persons to their families and loved ones;
- the relationship between central government and local government;
- the operation of the health system and welfare support; and
- the impact on New Zealand's international relationships and the security of New Zealand interests overseas.

This report focuses on these elements of the response, relating specifically to actions in the all-of-government context.

The following agencies have contributed to this report:

- Department of Corrections
- Department of Internal Affairs
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Government Communications Security Bureau
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
- Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Transport
- New Zealand Customs Service
- New Zealand Defence Force
- New Zealand Police
- New Zealand Security Intelligence Service

Where relevant, agencies coordinated information on behalf of their sector. For example, information from the Ministry of Health also included detail relating to the Canterbury District Health Board, St John Ambulance and the National Telehealth Service.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Executive Summary

The terrorist attacks of 15 March 2019 were significant for New Zealand. The skills and expertise of thousands of public servants, from across the national security, health, education, and legal sectors, and beyond, were brought to bear to ensure the offender was apprehended, crime scenes investigated, victims cared for, and the New Zealand populace was safe.

This review provides reflections on the actions of central government following the 15 March terrorist attacks at Al-Noor and Linwood Mosques. In particular, it looks at how the national security system provided leadership and coordination for agencies involved in the response. It makes observations on the process for confirming the identities of those who lost their lives in the attack, contact with the families and communities of the deceased, and the impact on New Zealand and our interests overseas.

The report finds that, in the majority, agencies were prepared for and responded appropriately to the terrorist attacks. The national security system was activated quickly, and meetings of ODESC were well-coordinated and timely. Key to an effective response to a crisis are the rapid and accurate flow of information from operational agencies to Ministers, and communication of decision by Ministers to the wider public service; agencies agreed that the flow in both directions worked well in this response. The release of the names and bodies of the deceased is acknowledged to have been slower than was expected by families and home countries of the victims, however was done with efficiency and speed, while maintaining New Zealand's adherence to the principle of 'absolute certainty' in the identification process. The NSG is heartened to see that extensive time and resources put into preparing for such an emergency paid off in the response to these terrorist attacks.

This report also finds however, that more can be done to strengthen our system to prepare for a future national security emergency. The full set of recommendations identified in the report are as follows:

1. The National Exercise Programme to continue to run exercises focused on non-natural hazards emergencies, to allow agencies to practise their response.
2. Include the policy function in future National Exercise Programme exercises.
3. DPMC and the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management to collaborate on ways to improve agencies' understanding of coordination mechanisms, including through the second Edition of the National Security Handbook; forums, conferences and training events; and the National Exercise Programme.
4. The National Exercise Programme to plan exercises based on responses led by agencies from outside the National Crisis Management Centre.
5. ODESC to review processes for sharing information outside of the core response agencies.
6. All government agencies to review their plans for changes to the national terrorism threat level.

7. DPMC and NZ Security Intelligence Service to review the alignment between agency plans for changes to the national terrorism threat level, and the process for communicating changes across government and non-government agencies.
8. DPMC, in consultation with other agencies, to review the approach to public communications with intent to establish a protocol for communicating future changes to the national terrorism threat level.
9. DPMC to complete a review of the national terrorism threat level process, including communicating changes across government and non-government agencies.
10. The Ministry of Justice, in coordination with the Disaster Victim Identification Committee, to review the National Mass Fatalities Framework and identify opportunities for improvement.
11. Following the review, the Disaster Victim Identification Committee to provide information for domestic and international audiences on disaster victim identification processes in New Zealand.
12. Ensure guidelines for First Responders undertaking interviews are available for use in future emergencies.
13. Reinforce with lead agencies that, in the context of an ODESC-led or emergency management initiated response, responsibility for coordinating the welfare services function rests with MCDem at the national level, and CDEM Groups at the regional and local levels.
14. Confirm which agency should be responsible for the broader social environment, particularly in transitioning to recovery.
15. Ensure transition of responsibility of welfare functions to a lead agency is clearly identified and understood when the ODESC response phase concludes.
16. All government agencies to continue active efforts to build capability so that they can better understand and deliver for the diverse communities they serve.
17. DPMC will incorporate lessons learned into the work programme underway to reinforce the core areas of cooperation that need to exist between central and local government in times of emergency response.
18. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, NZ Police, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and the Department of Internal Affairs to consider how to streamline information sharing about victims of mass casualty events.

Changes made to the national security system following the 15 March terrorist attacks will be just as relevant if the system is called upon to respond to an earthquake, a pandemic, or another terrorist attack.

Coordination and the National Security System

Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toiroa

Let us keep close together, not wide apart

An effective response to any emergency relies on strong leadership, clear plans, and staff at all levels being empowered and competent in their roles. This section will clarify how the component parts of the system worked together, focusing on coordination and information flows between and within strategic and operational elements of the response.

The diagram below provides detail on the way in which the national security system operates. In the strategic mode, agencies routinely meet (as the Security and Intelligence Board [SIB] and the Hazards Risk Board [HRB]) to develop policy, strategy and plans, and prepare for events. Response mode is activated when there is a real, potential, or perceived crisis, which could require a response from across government. This report predominantly focuses on the ‘convene’ component of the response mode.



National-level response

Prior to 15 March, the national terrorism threat level had been at low ('possible but not expected') since October 2014. Officials within the national security system were, however, alert to the possibility of a large-scale terrorist attack event in New Zealand, and national planning and exercising had been conducted accordingly.

The benefits of prior investment in cross-government planning and exercising were evident on 15 March and in the days afterwards as a multi-agency operation was activated.

New Zealand takes an 'all risks, all hazards' approach to national security, using a standing structure for managing any form of security threat. This approach is intended to deliver an agile, flexible, and responsive national security system.

The system has been activated a number of times, in response to a variety of national security challenges, in recent years. Many of those involved in the system response to the Christchurch attacks were therefore already familiar with their own and others' roles and responsibilities, and were able to contribute appropriately when ODESC convened. This made a significant difference to the speed and effectiveness with which the system activated.

The roles and responsibilities within the system are also regularly practised during the course of the annual national exercise programme. NSG acknowledges the ongoing importance of this programme and will ensure that lessons from this report are explicitly factored into the next counter-terrorism exercise, due to take place within the next year.

Recommendation: *the National Exercise Programme to continue to run exercises focused on non-natural hazards emergencies, to allow agencies to practise their response.*

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC)

ODESC is the lead body for official's-level decision-making, coordination of effort, and for ensuring that information is shared across government in the event of an emergency. ODESC is chaired by the Chief Executive of DPMC, and membership includes the Chief Executives of agencies relevant to the specific national security event.

The first ODESC meeting in response to the 15 March terrorist attacks was held at 1600 on 15 March 2019, two and a half hours after the attack began. As is necessary in the early stages of emergencies, the first meeting was focused on:

- increasing Chief Executives' situational awareness and understanding of what was happening;
- ensuring agencies were clear on the roles expected of them;
- bringing resources to bear on the issues of utmost importance; and
- providing a coordinated stream of advice to Ministers and decision-makers.

ODESC met a further seven times, with the final meeting held on 3 April. The purpose of these meetings was:

- providing support to NZ Police as the lead agency;
- identifying and closing gaps in the response in support of the lead agency;
- aligning agency responses to the increased national threat level;
- preparing for the transition to recovery; and
- providing collective advice and assurance to the Prime Minister.

ODESC was supported by regular meetings of the Watch Group, a group of senior officials tasked with ensuring that systems are in place to ensure effective management of complex issues. The Watch Group met twelve times between 15 March and 3 April 2019.

In an emergency, a balance needs to be struck between ensuring that agencies are aligned and coordinated, through regular meetings, briefings and other system-level engagement, while allowing agencies, and the lead agency in particular, to manage the imperatives of the response while minimising system requirements.

The view of agencies attending ODESC and associated national security meetings is that the rhythm of meetings was appropriate in the circumstances – there were enough to ensure consistency and effectiveness of the response, but not so many that it was detracting from agency effort or attendees felt that they were wasting their time in attending. Agencies found that ODESC meetings were generally well structured, addressed the necessary issues, and were a useful mechanism for sharing information.

Agencies found that the ODESC system ran well, with meetings both timely and relevant. Processes were largely smooth and reliable, albeit with some initial uncertainty as to which agencies should be invited to attend ODESC meetings. Information flows also worked well; those areas for improvement that have been identified are captured later in this report.

Support for Ministers

A key priority for agencies was providing support to the Prime Minister and her Cabinet. This included briefings from the Commissioner of Police, Chair of ODESC, and relevant officials at least once each day, ongoing communications support, and urgent policy advice. Agencies provided information and advice to support these briefings, and acted swiftly to respond to requests and direction from Ministers.

Having representatives from all relevant agencies jointly briefing key Ministers worked well; Ministers could be assured that all advice they received was coordinated and contextualised, and officials were able to confirm amongst themselves that they had understood actions correctly.

It was evident to many officials that they had underestimated the requirements – in terms both of speed and of volume – of providing coordinated policy support to the Prime Minister and her Ministers in the days and weeks after the attacks. This had a significant impact on the workloads of some agencies, which had to shift resource from other priority tasks, adding additional pressure. As this will always be a factor in any significant national security system activation, NSG proposes that the anticipated pressures on the policy function should be a theme of national counter-terrorism, and other, exercises from here on.

The majority of public communications were undertaken by the Prime Minister and Commissioner of Police. NZ Police made an active decision early in the process to have Commissioner Bush as the sole spokesperson for the operation. The Commissioner held multiple daily media stand-ups over the first days of the response, which were videoed and posted on social media. Having a small number of well-informed and credible, public faces worked well to enable trust with the media and the public, and reduced media pressure on operation staff.

Recommendation: *Include the policy function in future National Exercise Programme exercises.*

Coordination

In an emergency situation in New Zealand, the strategic leadership and all-of-government coordination of a response is managed through ODESC; the operational response is led by the relevant lead agency, supported by the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management (MCDEM) which coordinates the multiagency effort to address the consequences from the incident or emergency. Our emergency management system relies on the concept that there is a single agency leading the operational response for a given hazard, supported by government agencies that apply their capabilities to minimise the consequences of the event and speed recovery. Success depends on this being an effective partnership nationally, regionally, and locally.

ODESC activated the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) on the evening of 16 March. The NCMC provides a single, central location for MCDEM to coordinate support, and for other agencies to undertake the roles required of them. Agencies agree that in this emergency, the decision to activate was made too late, and contributed to uncertainty and a lack of cohesion over the first 36 hours. A key lesson for future responses will be to consider the immediate activation of the NCMC and the emergency management framework that sits within it.

In this instance, because of the nature of the event, the dual responsibilities (lead and support) meant two principal coordination centres; the operational response was coordinated by NZ Police from its National Command and Control Centre at NZ Police National Headquarters, and the consequence management response was coordinated in the NCMC. Having the two locations active was appropriate for this response; respondents agree on the strength of the response structure set up by NZ Police out of their national crisis coordination centre. Some agencies report challenges in having to provide resources to support both coordination centres, however this is considered a necessary and justifiable cost.

This structure presented challenges for agencies, particularly in managing information flows and requests for information. Our experience has been that, the majority of emergencies requiring the activation of the national security system are from natural hazards – agencies are most used to working to a single-point of coordination in the NCMC, and to having MCDEM in a lead-agency role. As the Ministerial Review ‘Better Responses to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies’ noted, the role of the emergency management framework and MCDEM as a support-agency is not well understood by all agencies. This was evident in the response to the 15 March terrorist attacks. The Government has responded to this review and work is underway to strengthen the system, including the establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency and necessary legislative changes.

Recommendation: *DPMC and MCDEM to collaborate on ways to improve agencies’ understanding of coordination mechanisms, including through the second Edition of the National Security Handbook; forums, conferences and training events; and the National Exercise Programme.*

Information Flows

To support decision-making and situational awareness, a series of ‘situation reports’ and ‘intelligence summaries’, were released from the NCMC and the Police National Headquarters several times per day. In particular, agencies found that the NZ Police intelligence summary, which was circulated multiple times each day, was crucial in providing a single-source update on the operation itself. The NCMC update provided a useful summary of information on actions undertaken by supporting agencies, and key updates on the all-of-government actions. Both products were praised for their utility, despite the additional resourcing impacts on individual agencies of supplying material to contribute to the updates.

Both written updates, and regular meetings of ODESC and Watch Groups meant that agencies in the core of the response were well-informed. There were, however, many agencies which played a minor or support role, that were not as well connected with the discussions and briefings provided. NSG is aware of the gap that this creates, and will propose ways to improve processes to make sure support agencies not directly engaged in the operational response are better briefed on decisions and information coming out of ODESC.

Core government agencies took responsibility for briefing their respective sectors. The Ministry of Transport, for example, provided detail to the transport crown agencies (NZTA, Maritime NZ and the Civil Aviation Authority), State-Owned Enterprises, and public transport providers. This system has been developed and refined over many years, and worked well. The Ministry has since been in discussion with DPMC about options to further improve ways in which to ensure that key information can be passed to relevant stakeholders within the transport sector.

Recommendation: *The National Exercise Programme to plan exercises based on responses led by agencies from outside the National Crisis Management Centre.*

Recommendation: *ODESC to review processes for sharing information outside of the core response agencies.*

The National Terrorism Threat level

The Combined Threat Assessment Group (CTAG), an independent, inter-agency assessment group hosted by the NZ Security Intelligence Service, produces assessments about the threats of terrorism and violent protest affecting New Zealand and New Zealanders. Its reviews provide the basis for setting the New Zealand national terrorism threat level. The consequent decision to raise the threat level, from 'low' to 'high' was made quickly, then discussed at the first ODESC meeting on 15 March, and announced by the Prime Minister at 1900 hours.

Threat Level	Definition
Negligible	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as very unlikely
Very Low	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as unlikely
Low	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as possible, but is not expected
Medium	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as feasible and could well occur
High	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as very likely
Extreme	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is expected imminently

While the national terrorism threat level can range from negligible to extreme (see table), prior to 15 March, the national terrorism threat level had never been higher than 'low'.

The expectations for government agencies as a result of an increase to the national terrorism threat level are set out in the Protective Security Requirements¹, managed by the Protective Security Requirements (PSR) team located within the NZ Security Intelligence Service. The requirements state that every agency must be able to respond to increased threat levels; 'each agency should have a clear security approach with clear allocation of responsibility for all aspects of security'. This planning should include protocols for the safety of staff and members of the public within their premises in the event of an emergency.

In response to the change to the national terrorism threat level on 15 March, the PSR team met with agencies to confirm expectations of them, and to assist with the implementation of plans. The level of planning and ability to put plans in place varied between agencies, but the team found that agencies generally had a plan, and were able to act swiftly and proportionately given agency-specific threat and risk profiles. Nonetheless, NSG is of the view that it is appropriate that all agencies review their plans for response to an increase in threat level, to incorporate lessons learnt from the 15 March terrorist attacks.

Some agencies have commenced a review of their plans. This includes the Ministry of Education, which has commissioned a review of actions and communications in the education sector in relation to the 'lockdown' on 15 March. This review, which could be

¹ The Protective Security Requirements outlines the Government's expectations for security governance and for personnel, information and physical security. Information about the requirements is available at: www.protectivesecurity.govt.nz

relevant in both a change to the national terrorism threat level and other crises, will be submitted by 5 July 2019.

DPMC and the NZ Security Intelligence Service will also review mechanisms to better calibrate plans, so that in an event where multiple locations are affected, staff and the wider public will receive consistent advice.

Effective and timely communications to the public on changes to the national terrorism threat level is essential. The Prime Minister, on the advice of ODESC, announced the change to the threat level in response to the terrorist attacks on 15 March. The Prime Minister also announced the subsequent change to the threat level a number of weeks later. This was appropriate in these circumstances. NSG, in consultation with other agencies, is reviewing the approach to public communications with intent to establish a protocol for communicating future changes to the national terrorism threat level.

Prior to the terrorist attacks, advice was being prepared on the process for setting the national terrorism threat level, including how it is set and the communication of that decision. That review will be completed and advice provided to Ministers.

Recommendation: *All government agencies to review their plans for changes to the national terrorism threat level.*

Recommendation: *DPMC and NZ Security Intelligence Service to review the alignment between agency plans for changes to the national terrorism threat level, and the process for communicating changes across government and non-government agencies.*

Recommendation: *DPMC, in consultation with other agencies, to review the approach to public communications with intent to establish a protocol for communicating future changes to the national terrorism threat level.*

Recommendation: *DPMC to complete review of the national terrorism threat level process, including communicating changes across government and non-government agencies.*

Victim Identification and the release of deceased persons

Kua hinga te tōtara i Te Waonui a Tāne

The tōtara has fallen in the forest of Tāne

50 people died on 15 March 2019 as a direct result of the terrorist attacks, and another died on 3 May as a result of injuries sustained. Families, communities, and the wider public, however, had to wait days for the deceased to be identified and the release of bodies for burial. This period was particularly difficult given the circumstances, but it should be acknowledged that the identification process in this case was significantly faster than has been the case in large casualty events in countries with similar disaster victim identification standards to those of New Zealand. A huge effort was made to expedite return of the deceased without compromising the standards for victim identification, and all of those who died on 15 March were identified and released for burial by 22 March.

The disaster victim identification (DVI) process in New Zealand operates to a principle of 'absolute certainty', whereby there is no risk tolerance for mistakes in confirming the number or identities of victims of a mass casualty event. This principle is considered appropriate in a New Zealand setting, and aligns with the approach undertaken by many of our international partners.

NZ Police-led DVI teams were deployed to manage the identification process, in conjunction with coroners, forensic pathologists, forensic odontologists, and experts from across local and central government and the NZ Defence Force. Forefront in the minds of all involved in this process was the desire to return victims to their loved ones, to provide certainty for families, and to allow for the burial of victims as soon as possible, in line with Islamic tradition. Experts worked long hours, utilising technologies such as computed tomography (CT) scanners at Christchurch hospital, and information including biometric and fingerprint data from Immigration New Zealand. The use of these technologies and data sources sped up the final confirmation process by an estimated four days.

The identification of victims was undertaken in parallel to an active criminal investigation, which required all activities to be undertaken in a manner which ensured evidential standards sufficient to withstand scrutiny in judicial proceedings.

In both the criminal investigation and the DVI process there was a focus on both precision and meticulous process, along with active efforts to proceed efficiently.

Lessons were learnt throughout this process, specifically that the very high level of interest from families, Ministers, and the media required that the system pay scrupulous attention to ensuring that updates were provided frequently and consistently throughout the process. This took several days to implement, but then served to provide important and reassuring communication to all parties.

The National Mass Fatalities Framework sets out the agreed arrangements for a situation involving a large number of deaths. It identifies planning and operational issues, defines responsibilities, and provides an inter-agency national plan for responding to mass

fatalities. The Ministry of Justice, in partnership with the DVI Committee², will be conducting a review of the framework to consider the process undertaken following the 15 March terrorist attacks, and identify opportunities for improvement. NZ Police is also undertaking a review of its internal DVI processes and management, with relevant findings to be fed into the framework review.

Agencies are aware there is more that could be done to assist public understanding of the coronial process in New Zealand. The DVI Committee, in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, will provide information to the public and for use by the Diplomatic Corps, to help explain the process undertaken in New Zealand, and assist with setting expectations of the speed with which this process can be undertaken if needed in the future.

Recommendation: *The Ministry of Justice, in coordination with the Disaster Victim Identification Committee, to review the National Mass Fatalities Framework and identify opportunities for improvement.*

Recommendation: *Following the review, the Disaster Victim Identification Committee to provide information for domestic and international audiences on disaster victim identification processes in New Zealand.*

Repatriation

Eight of the deceased were repatriated to their home countries following the 15 March terrorist attacks³. Repatriation processes are led by the New Zealand Customs Service, in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, supported by the diplomatic representatives of the deceased's home country.

The process for repatriation was managed in a manner that ensured adherence with Islamic traditions, facilitated by Customs officials with knowledge of Islam. Agencies engaged with families, Islamic communities, and diplomatic missions throughout the repatriations, to ensure that all were informed about the process and likely timings. Government agencies also made proactive decisions to ensure that arrangements were made that did not place undue demand on grieving families. This included facilitating payments for costs incurred direct to funeral homes involved.

² The Disaster Victim Identification Committee comprises the NZ Police, Ministry of Justice, Air NZ, ESR, Civil Aviation Authority, the Funeral Directors Association, Victim Support, NZ Defence Force, Ministry of Health, and the Chief Forensic Pathologist.

³ A ninth person was repatriated following his death on 3 May 2019.

Health, mental health, and wellbeing

Ehara taku toa, he takitahi, he toa takitini

My success should not be bestowed onto me alone, as it was success of a collective

Immediate response

48 patients were transported to Christchurch Hospital by St John Ambulance and through other means on 15 March. One person presented to Southern Cross Hospital and a number presented to 'after hours' medical facilities and the Emergency Department that day and in the days following.

St John Ambulance provided 24 ambulances, rapid response vehicles and support units at both incident scenes and at Christchurch Hospital. This included over 40 frontline, communication centre, and emergency operations staff. NZ Police's role in ensuring the environment was safe for other first responders to undertake their duties, the first aid provided by NZ Police officers, the rapid and professional actions of the St John staff at both mosques and the medical staff at Christchurch Hospital contributed greatly to the well-coordinated and timely multi-agency response and provision of immediate health care to the victims.

That the national health system was able to quickly adapt its services and increase resources was essential to ensuring the Canterbury health system could provide primary care.

The Ministry of Health also provided free GP visits for all people who were directly affected by the terrorist attacks.

More than 40 mental health professionals from across the Canterbury District Health Board established a presence at the Welfare Centre and Christchurch Community Hub.

Ongoing support

The health system deployed additional capacity, and increased capability, in the aftermath of the 15 March terrorist attacks. This included cultural and religious expertise, and the provision of translation and language services wherever possible. The Ministry of Health has developed a national psychosocial plan "*Supporting People after the Christchurch Mosque Attacks*" for use by professionals in the health sector and other agencies with welfare responsibilities.

The provision of nation-wide psychological support was delivered through the National Telehealth Services' 1737 text and telephone counselling service and public messaging delivered through their digital response centre. In total, the 1737 service staffing rotation comprised of over 100 experienced and qualified counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists. The service delivered a total of 9,991 call and text message sessions from 16 March 2019 to 3 April 2019.

The Canterbury District Health Board, the Ministry of Health and responding health agencies (including the National Telehealth Service) ran social media campaigns to communicate important mental health and wellbeing messages.

Following some graphic and clinically harmful media reporting, National Telehealth Service and Canterbury District Health Board, in partnership with the Ministry, developed First Responder Guidelines for those undertaking interviews. This was widely used by responding agencies.

The Ministry of Education Traumatic Incident Teams have visited 102 schools and places of learning following the attacks (as at the end of April 2019). Additional support has been offered to places with staff or students killed.

The competency and professionalism of all staff across the health and disability sector, and the coordination and supply of services from the Ministry of Health and Canterbury District Health Board ensured that support was made available to people in Christchurch and across the country.

NZ Police also deployed reassurance patrols throughout Canterbury and to support Muslims at their places of worship across the country.

Recommendation: *Ensure guidelines for First Responders undertaking interviews are available for use in future emergencies.*

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Welfare

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people! It is people! It is people!

Welfare support

Support to communities, both in Christchurch and throughout New Zealand, was coordinated nationally through the National Welfare Coordination Group (NWCG), chaired by MCDEM, via the Welfare function in the NCMC. Welfare services functions, including needs assessment, inquiry, psychosocial support, financial assistance, accommodation support, and public information management (including the development of an all-of-government factsheet, and all-of-government scripting for the 0800 Government Helpline, which was activated by the Ministry of Social Development) were developed and coordinated by the NWCG, and those responsible agencies under the National CDEM Plan 2015.

NWCG held meetings on a daily basis in the first week and then every alternative day in the subsequent weeks, to ensure the sharing of welfare intelligence and alignment of welfare service delivery. MCDEM's establishment of an all-of-government coordination 'hub' in the Justice and Emergency Services Precinct in Christchurch assisted the coordination and streamlining of central and local government engagement. Christchurch City Council established a Community Hub at the cricket ground, with a focus on supporting people affected by the attacks, and set up a coordination centre at the City Council to coordinate across the agencies involved. The Ministry of Social Development, NZ Police, Victim Support, ACC and a range of other agency staff were based at the community hub at the cricket ground throughout the time it was open, providing support and funding for the affected community. Ministry of Social Development staff with language expertise and knowledge of Islam were identified, and brought to Christchurch specifically for these roles.

With the all-of-government hub focussing on the Christchurch community, the NWCG broadened its scope of support to include community information and psychosocial support to communities outside of Christchurch, especially in metropolitan areas like Auckland with large ethnic populations. A teleconference was run by the NCMC Welfare function with the 16 CDEM Group Welfare Managers focussing on community need and Council activities. Alongside this broader support to communities, the NCMC Welfare function also collaborated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Auckland CDEM Group Welfare Coordination Group, and Auckland Airport to develop and deliver wrap around support to families of victims living overseas and travelling to New Zealand for funerals or to support family members in hospitals.

The civil defence emergency management framework is an effective way for MCDEM to coordinate effort across central government agencies (and between MCDEM and regional Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups), but not all of the welfare services arrangements under the National CDEM Plan 2015 were activated and the civil defence

emergency management framework was not fully utilised following the 15 March terrorist attacks. It is clear that the framework is still not well understood by some agencies.

The response to the terrorist attacks has reinforced the finding from the 2018 Ministerial Review into Better Responses to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies on making clear where responsibility for each part of a response lies. A number of agencies contributing to the response to the terrorist attacks did not appear to understand how the emergency management system works and as a result misunderstood how different functions are expected to come together to support the lead agency – in this case NZ Police. This caused confusion of agency roles and responsibilities and, in some cases, duplication of effort.

The government response to the Ministerial review determined that responsibility for the welfare services coordination aspects of a response should remain with MCDEM at the national level and CDEM Groups at the regional/local, however a number of agencies involved in the welfare services function following the terrorist attacks commented in the debrief process that there was a lack of clarity as to where overall responsibility for the welfare system lay. While it is important to note that any lack of clarity, or perceived absence of this framework, did not impact the material support provided to the victims and their families, there clearly is further work required to ensure agencies implement the emergency management system reforms and their roles within the framework.

While the overall responsibility for welfare services in a response has now been agreed (and the National CDEM Plan arrangements support this), there may be a need to further explore who is responsible for the broader social environment in recovery from a crisis. This issue was not contemplated in the Ministerial Review into Better Responses to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies.

At the conclusion of ODESC leadership of the all-of-government response on 3 April, leadership of the welfare aspects of the recovery transitioned from MCDEM to responsible agencies. In future crises, this hand-off of leadership responsibility should be done in a formal manner, to ensure that the leadership is clearly identified and accepted, and all agencies are aware of where responsibility lies. The Chair of ODESC should seek to notify colleagues of the handing-over of leadership at a relevant ODESC meeting, so that there is no confusion about where the responsibility lies.

Recommendation: *reinforce with lead agencies that, in the context of an ODESC-led or emergency management initiated response, responsibility for coordinating the welfare services function rests with MCDEM at the national level, and CDEM Groups at the regional and local levels.*

Recommendation: *confirm which agency should be responsible for the broader social environment, particularly in transitioning to recovery.*

Recommendation: *ensure transition of responsibility of welfare functions to a lead agency is clearly identified and understood when the ODESC respond phase winds up.*

Relationships

Ma tini ma mano ka rapa te whai

Unity is strength

Relationships with Islamic communities

The 15 March terrorist attacks were an attack on New Zealand, but more directly an attack on our Islamic community.

All agencies involved in the initial response to the terrorist attacks, and in the events of the weeks following, recognised the importance of engaging the Islamic community, and sought to ensure actions were in line with the religious and ethnic needs and expectations of the community and individuals affected. To this end, NZ Police deployed cultural experts on the evening of 15 March and ethnic liaison officers on the morning of 16 March, who were tasked with using their skills and knowledge to engage with victims and the Muslim community. NZ Police had an existing relationship with the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand and the local Canterbury Muslim community, which helped them to identify and deploy Islamic experts from across New Zealand Muslim community on 16 March to ensure the response was culturally and religiously appropriate.

Agencies that had invested significant resources in building cultural expertise and links with communities were positioned well to be able to respond to the specific needs of affected communities. However, the response highlighted a lack of depth across government in religious and ethnic diversity and language skills.

As a stopgap measure, Muslim public servants and those with language skills were deployed to assist with the operational response.

It is clear that agencies need to do more to increase their cultural and linguistic competencies, through actively recruiting for diversity, developing cultural skills and expertise, and investing time and resources in meeting with representatives of our diverse communities to understand their needs.

Recommendation: *All government agencies to continue active efforts to build capability so that they can better understand and deliver for the diverse communities they serve.*

Relationships with families

In addition to efforts to ensure actions were ethnically and religiously appropriate, government agencies made significant endeavours to proactively ease the burden on the families and communities of those affected. This included the prioritisation of visas for people travelling to New Zealand to support family and attend funerals. In the majority of cases, officials were able to expedite the visa process, to allow such visitors into the country. In cases where this was not possible, officials contacted affected individuals to explain the situation and attempt resolution.

The NZ Customs Service made special efforts when receiving the families of victims, including meeting family members at aircraft doors, and facilitating them through airport procedures.

Relationships with Christchurch and the Christchurch City Council

In responding to an emergency, the principle of local leadership applies. Central government should endeavour to act in a manner consistent with the particular wishes and needs of the affected community. Councils, with their significant links to their communities, are crucial to ensuring that this is done successfully.

The relationship between central government and the Christchurch City Council is extensive, shaped by joint action in the response to, and recovery from, the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes. Central government maintains active links with Christchurch, including through the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management, local offices of operational agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education, and the Greater Christchurch Group (a business unit of DPMC). The response was able to draw on these links and longstanding relationships, to facilitate coordination between the national and local aspects of the response.

The Christchurch City Council has extensive experience in managing emergency and recovery situations. Council provided leadership across multiple areas, including the management of burials, floral tributes and road closures, support to the community, and the establishment of the family hub. Although it is outside the scope of this report, it is also important to acknowledge the contribution to the national remembrance service provided by the Council.

In reflecting on the immediate response and the actions in the weeks following, NSG will further develop the programme of work underway to reinforce the core areas of cooperation that need to exist between central and local government in times of emergency response.

In addition to bringing the expertise and resources of the national security system, central government can work more closely with local government, to ensure connections and information flows are strong, and support local government to play a leadership role in the response, while managing their ongoing business as usual activities.

DPMC is in the process of expanding its national security system engagement programme. The objectives are to increase awareness by local and regional government leaders of the national security system, and to gain a better understanding of how they wish to engage. This should provide local and regional government with knowledge of the national security system, help them build networks with other stakeholders, and build understanding of roles and responsibilities during a national security system response.

ODESC acknowledges the mana whenua, Ng i Tahu, who were active in their outreach to Islamic communities, and who provided wairuatanga in burials and cleansing of mosques. The compassion shown by Ng i Tahu, and their actions in engaging with affected communities, contribution to the national call for prayer and national

remembrance service, and willingness to open marae as a place for remembrance and prayer were highly valued by all.

Recommendation: *DPMC will incorporate lessons learned into the work programme underway to reinforce the core areas of cooperation that need to exist between central and local government in times of emergency response.*

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

International

International links

New Zealand's very close overseas security and intelligence relationships were of great benefit in the aftermath of the tragedy of 15 March, helping to strengthen our agencies' understanding of the situation, including the social media picture that was emerging.

NZ Police's international liaison network worked with key partners to support both the response and investigation and have acknowledged their law enforcement partners from Australian jurisdictions and the FBI who joined them in New Zealand to support the response and investigation into the terrorist attack.

Agencies benefited from strong links with international partners to augment domestic capability and draw on specialised expertise. The Australian Border Force and the Department of Home Affairs provided support to the NZ Customs Service, and ensured that Australian transit visa requirements would not disrupt families travel plans unnecessarily.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade worked with the NZ Police and other ODESC agencies to draft a single-set of key messages for use when engaging with international partners. This ensured that diplomats and representatives abroad were informed and well-coordinated when engaging with our partners.

The contributions referenced above are a small subset of the support offered and received, and NSG acknowledges all in the international community who offered support to the New Zealand system.

NSG also notes the role played by the New Zealand officials who assisted with visiting international delegations. Visits were well-supported and coordinated, and delegations were appreciative of the efforts made to assist them.

International obligations

Under both international convention and domestic legislation, New Zealand has an obligation to notify other governments of the death of their nationals whilst in New Zealand, and a legal requirement to protect the confidentiality of refugees. This extends to an obligation not to notify the country of origin of the death of a refugee. Fulfilling these obligations requires formal confirmation of the identities of all deceased, so appropriate checks can be made regarding nationality and refugee status.

This is done through a process involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, NZ Police, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and the Department of Internal Affairs. Completion of this task required the finalisation of the victim identification procedures; as noted above, this process was undertaken in accordance with existing protocols and it took several days; this was longer than anticipated by some international audiences. Agencies are investigating how to streamline the process, particularly through ensuring that, as allowed by privacy requirements, nationality and refugee-status data can be shared across government.

Recommendation: *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, NZ Police, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and the Department of Internal Affairs to consider how to streamline information sharing about victims of mass casualty events.*

Security of New Zealand missions abroad

In response to the increased threat level and immediate visibility of New Zealand as the site of terrorist attacks, all New Zealand posts reviewed their security arrangements shortly after 15 March, and some made changes as a result. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and CTAG worked together to understand the risks posed to New Zealand presence overseas, and make any necessary adjustments to security arrangements.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Conclusion

The terrorist attacks of 15 March 2019 were unprecedented in New Zealand. For the national security system, it was a test of preparedness, and it is important to reflect on actions taken, and apply appropriate measures to improve where needed.

In broad terms, NSG believes that the national security system responded appropriately. The structures to support decision-makers were sound, functioned as they were designed to, and enabled effective collaboration and coordination of agencies in responding to the attacks, providing care and welfare to those impacted and communicating effectively within and beyond New Zealand.

This report identifies a number of areas where further strengthening of the national security system is warranted, and makes a series of recommendations accordingly. These recommendations are intended to enable agencies to work better together, particularly in providing support to affected communities during an emergency. The recommendations are situation-agnostic – they are designed to promote a national security system which remains agile, flexible and responsive in tackling any emergency.

NSG's recommendations are:

1. The National Exercise Programme to continue to run exercises focused on non-natural hazards emergencies, to allow agencies to practise their response.
2. Include the policy function in future National Exercise Programme exercises.
3. DPMC and MCDEM to collaborate on ways to improve agencies' understanding of coordination mechanisms, including through the second Edition of the National Security Handbook; forums, conferences and training events; and the National Exercise Programme.
4. The National Exercise Programme to plan exercises based on responses led by agencies from outside the National Crisis Management Centre.
5. ODESC to review processes for sharing information outside of the core response agencies.
6. All government agencies to review their plans for changes to the national terrorism threat level.
7. DPMC and NZ Security Intelligence Service to review the alignment between agency plans for changes to the national terrorism threat level, and the process for communicating changes across government and non-government agencies.
8. DPMC, in consultation with other agencies, to review the approach to public communications with intent to establish a protocol for communicating future changes to the national terrorism threat level.
9. DPMC to complete a review of the national terrorism threat level process, including communicating changes across government and non-government agencies

10. The Ministry of Justice, in coordination with the Disaster Victim Identification Committee, to review the National Mass Fatalities Framework and identify opportunities for improvement.
11. Following the review, the Disaster Victim Identification Committee to provide information for domestic and international audiences on disaster victim identification processes in New Zealand.
12. Ensure guidelines for First Responders undertaking interviews are available for use in future emergencies.
13. Reinforce with lead agencies that, in the context of an ODESC-led or emergency management initiated response, responsibility for coordinating the welfare services function rests with MCDEM at the national level, and CDEM Groups at the regional and local levels.
14. Confirm which agency should be responsible for the broader social environment, particularly in transitioning to recovery.
15. Ensure transition of responsibility of welfare functions to a lead agency is clearly identified and understood when the ODESC respond phase concludes.
16. All government agencies to continue active efforts to build capability so that they can better understand and deliver for the diverse communities they serve.
17. DPMC will incorporate lessons learned into the work programme underway to reinforce the core areas of cooperation that need to exist between central and local government in times of emergency response.
18. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, NZ Police, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and the Department of Internal Affairs to consider how to streamline information sharing about victims of mass casualty events.

The Deputy Chief Executive, NSG, will be responsible for ensuring these recommendations are implemented. NSG will report on this to the Security and Intelligence Board of ODESC and the Prime Minister, before the end of 2019.