



1 February 2022

Scott

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Ref: OIA-2021/22-0532

Dear Scott

Official Information Act request for eight specific national security documents

Thank you for your request made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), received on 2 November 2021. You requested:

- “ONE: The December 2018 memo titled “Our parting thoughts and wishes for the National Security System” [1819NSPD/064]*
- TWO: The December 2018 briefing titled “Prevention of Violent Extremism - Update” [1819NSPD/065]*
- THREE: The March 2019 briefing titled “Proposed Counter-terrorism Cabinet papers” [1819NSPD/094]*
- FOUR: The March 2019 memo titled “Social Media and Harmful Online Content” [1819NSPD/107]*
- FIVE: The September 2019 Cabinet paper titled “National Terrorism Threat Level and Response System” [ERS-19-SUB-0020]*
- SIX: The November 2019 Cabinet paper titled “Progress Against the National Security and Intelligence Priorities” [ERS-19-SUB-0038]*
- SEVEN: The December 2019 briefing titled “Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee Meeting 4 December 2019 - Managing National Security Information in Proceedings” [1920NSP/038]*
- EIGHT: The October 2020 briefing titled “QAnon - Designation and Dis-information” [2021NSP/014]”.*

We wrote to you on 15 November 2021, advising you that your request for Documents Five and Six (2019 papers submitted to the Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee) had been transferred to the Minister for National Security and Intelligence (Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern).

On 29 November 2021, we advised the time limit for responding to your request had been extended by 30 working days, to 1 February 2022. This additional time was needed to complete consultations before a decision could be made on the remainder of your request (Documents One, Two, Three, Four, Seven and Eight).

Documents to be withheld in full

I have decided to withhold the following documents in full.

Document One *“Our parting thoughts and wishes for the National Security System” (December 2018) [1819NSPD/064]* is withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- section 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of New Zealand.

- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion

Document Eight: “QAnon - Designation and Dis-information” (October 2020) [2021NSP/014] provided preliminary advice and is withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- section 9(2)(c), to protect the health or safety of members of the public; and
- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

Information being assessed

The consultations on the remainder of the documents you requested have taken longer than anticipated. This is due to both DPMC’s current workload and other officials’ involvement with the response due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of relevant officials, particularly over the summer period.

I will write to you again once consultations have been completed and any information for release finalised. I apologise for this delay and will respond to you on the following documents as soon as possible:

- Document Two “*Prevention of Violent Extremism - Update*” (December 2018) [1819NSPD/065].
- Document Three “*Proposed Counter-terrorism Cabinet papers*” (March 2019) [1819NSPD/094]. I note that this briefing reflected the position at a particular point in time. The briefing was submitted on the morning of 15 March 2019 and would not have been read by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, until some time later. Given the passage of time and events, including the terrorist attack on the Christchurch mosques, that have happened since this briefing was written, it does not necessarily reflect the current position.
- Document Four “*Social Media and Harmful Online Content*” (March 2019) [1819NSPD/107].
- Document Seven: “*Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee Meeting 4 December 2019 - Managing National Security Information in Proceedings*” (December 2019) [1920NSP/038].

Where information has been withheld under section 9 of the Act, no public interest in releasing the withheld information has been identified that would be sufficient to override the reasons for withholding it.

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**