

20 December 2022

John Walter
fyi-request-21129-f932d48e@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tena koe John

Request for Information

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request dated 15 November 2022, in which you sought information about Police's Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems and privacy assessments. Police's response to each of your questions is set out below.

1. *On what date did the Police first use the Auror or VIBE (vGRID) application to set up a live alert?*

We have interpreted 'live alert' to mean an active detection using the Auror 'Track a Vehicle' function; or SaferCities vGRID ANPR (formerly VIBE) 'Plate of Interest' function. The first record of an active detection being set up in the Auror portal is 4 April 2018. The first record of an active detection being set up in the SaferCities portal is 29 June 2022.

2. *When was the first Surveillance Device Warrant (tracking warrant) applied for to use either Auror or VIBE (vGRID) as a tracking device?*

A surveillance device warrant may have been applied for in relation to an active detection that has not been recorded in an ANPR platform. The system that records Police warrants is not connected to either ANPR platforms. The first record of an active detection being set up after obtaining a surveillance device warrant in the Auror portal was 4 April 2018. The first record of an active detection being set up with a warrant through the SaferCities portal was 29 July 2022.

3. *How many tracking warrants have the Police applied for to use either Auror or VIBE (vGRID) as a tracking device? This information should be readily available in light of the on-line Search and Surveillance system portal used for warrant applications and reports.*

Police's Search and Surveillance Act portal which holds records of tracking device warrants does not record in a specific field if the warrant is to be applied to an ANPR platform. An exhaustive search of free text fields in this system would be required to find references to the two ANPR platforms. This cannot be made available without substantial collation and research, and it follows that this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA.

4. *How many Auror or VIBE (vGRID) live alerts have the Police set up?*

For the purposes of answering this question, we interpret 'live alerts' as active detections.

Police National Headquarters

180 Molesworth Street. PO Box 3017, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
Telephone: 04 474 9499. 04 498 7400. www.police.govt.nz

The information relating to the Auror part of your request is currently being discussed with our platform provider. We will provide a response once we have completed our discussions.

The table below displays the number of times a vehicle has been queried using the SaferCities 'Plate of Interest' function. One query to test the functionality was conducted in May 2022 prior to making the capability available to staff in June 2022. The data reflects individual searches, including searching the same vehicle multiple times, by multiple users.

Number of vehicle tracks using the vGRID ANPR component of the SaferCities platform	
Month	2022
May	1
June	7
July	34
August	41
September	37
October	25

5. *Does Auror allow for a warrant number and case identifier to be entered with an ANPR search or live alert and what verification procedures (such as an email to a supervisor) are conducted to ensure the validity of a live alert request before data is available?*

The Auror platform requires information to be entered into the online form to use search and live detection functions. The information requirements are different depending on the information being requested. The requirements are available in our *Police Manual* chapter on ANPR, which is available on our public website: <https://www.police.govt.nz/about-us/publication/automatic-number-plate-recognition-police-manual-chapter-0>.

The Auror platform cannot verify the credentials of any approvals as it is not connected to the Police network. In instances where approval is required, a notification email is sent by the Auror system to the nominated Police approver.

- a. *Please provide a screenshot of the Auror portal for entering a live alert.*

This information is withheld under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA, because disclosure of information on the design and interface of the Auror portal would be likely to unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it to Police.

6. *How many audits have been completed for ANPR searches conducted by the police on third party hosted databases including Auror and VIBE (vGRID)?*

No audits have been completed. However, an audit has commenced, and the intention is to proactively publish summary findings in due course

- a. *In recent media statements to RNZ and the Herald the Police stated they conducted 327,000 ANPR checks last year alone. (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/475662/police-made-false-report-to->*

use-anpr-cameras-to-track-women-who-triggered-northland-lockdown) (https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/police-talk-of-auditing-its-use-of-the-powerful-surveillance-network-it-accessed-by-creating-a-fake-stolen-car-alert/COMP7B36KPEVOEQJSJULOQBAEI/) Please provide all information and correspondence from when this figure was obtained (presumably a dataset or audit?) and any further particulars of this figure

This figure was provided by Auror to Police in a recent report. This Auror-produced document contains information about Police's use of the platform and is withheld from release under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA, on the grounds that to do so would be likely to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it.

In the interests of clarification, it is appropriate to record that the 327,000 Police checks referenced in earlier media reports related to Police use of the Auror investigation and intelligence functionality, not the ANPR functionality. Overall, Police conducted approximately 165,700 ANPR queries across both the Auror and SaferCities platforms from July 2021 to June 2022.

(Was it only Police's ANPR checks or third party Auror & vGRID checks too)?

As stated above, the figure related to queries within the Auror platform, and a correction has now been made to the earlier media response.

b. If an audit was conducted, please provide the figures for each type a ANPR search (retrospective vs live).

See the above answer to question 6.

7. Have there been any investigations into the misuse of ANPR searches? How many, when, who by, and what was the search for?

Police has identified two instances where use of a stolen vehicle alert on a vehicle which has not been stolen was used to trigger alerts on third party ANPR systems. These relate to the October 2021 investigation of serious risk to public health in a unique set of circumstances, where police were aiding the medical officer of the Ministry of Health to locate persons considered at the time to be a risk to public health and safety; and an investigation in Counties Manukau District from early 2020. This matter is before the Courts and therefore we cannot comment further.

Neither of these identified instances were considered 'misconduct' and as such no internal investigations have been carried out by Police's Te Ohu Manawanui (Employment Resolutions) or Integrity and Conduct teams.

8. The number of ANPR cameras providing data to the Police when they conduct retrospective or live ANPR searches through Auror and VIBE / vGRID, two companies which have contracted to the Police (and developed) a direct access portal exclusively for Police access.

a. This request is made pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982, s 2(5), where "any information held by an independent contractor engaged by any public organisation in his capacity as such contractor shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed to be held by the public organisation."

b. Alternatively, the request is made for information held directly by the police as provided in proposals or marketing materials.

Auror and SaferCities are commercial entities which provide services to camera owners, and as such the number of cameras on their networks is a matter between them and their clients. While Police has access to information gathered through these cameras via the Auror and SaferCities platforms, we do not require or have access to a register of the number of cameras to which the portals provide access. This request is therefore refused under section 18(g)(i) of the OIA, as the information is not held by Police.

Although it has not been possible to provide every element of the information requested, we trust that you find this response helpful. If you are not satisfied with this response, however, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review Police's handling of your request. Information about how to do so is available at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Sincerely



Carla Gilmore
Manager Emergent Technology