



3 October 2024

Catherine

fyi-request-28473-bfe25621@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2024/25-0271

Dear Catherine

Thank you for your email received on 21 September 2024. You asked:

"I recently made OIAs to HWT and I am sadly concerned at the nepotism clearly playing out with HWT and with Victoria University. It concerns me that one of the responses says they will be writing policies when its clear they are on their own agenda and not one that is diverse and includes all research areas across NZ. To be clear I am in support of the idea of a research centre but there seems to be a serious silo going on.

I have also read the documents released to another requester which has raised some questions.

1: Can you please advise if DPMC have conducted reviews or engaged with the 24 students and obtained feedback ? Anon from HWT I would presume.

1.1 if not is there a plan to do this ?

2) there appears to be a lot of shoulder tapping for associates and post grad students who are travelling over the world funded they also appear to be all victoria university students. Are there plans to put in formal processes for this ?

only Masters and Phd's are advertised.

3) In a letter dated March 2024 to the Board from Bridget White it talks about HWT. It talks a lot about collaboration and partnership but from the OIA responses from HWT the opposite appears true (unless it fits in the HWT silo).

Was the aim of HWT to not engage with existing terrorism and extremism scholars outside of Victoria University. ?

(I do acknowledge that the letter also seems to remind HWT of their responsibilities and indicates awareness that something has gone astray but it also seems to do what HWT do and dismiss the fact there are other University experts more specialised in this. I have done my research).

4) are there plans to appoint another co director to balance the perspectives and reduce the silo. ? One experienced where they are not ?

5) Was the intent for Victoria to have nepotism control ? Is it not better to relocate the HWT group if this cannot be controlled

6) there was mention in documents that HWT will be writing policy briefs - is this at the request of DPMC?

6.1 If yes then is this going to also be situated solely in Victoria University (again).

6.2 If so then what steps are going to be made to make sure these "policy briefs" are not solely relied upon given the lack of academic diversity within HWT ? and within Victoria University

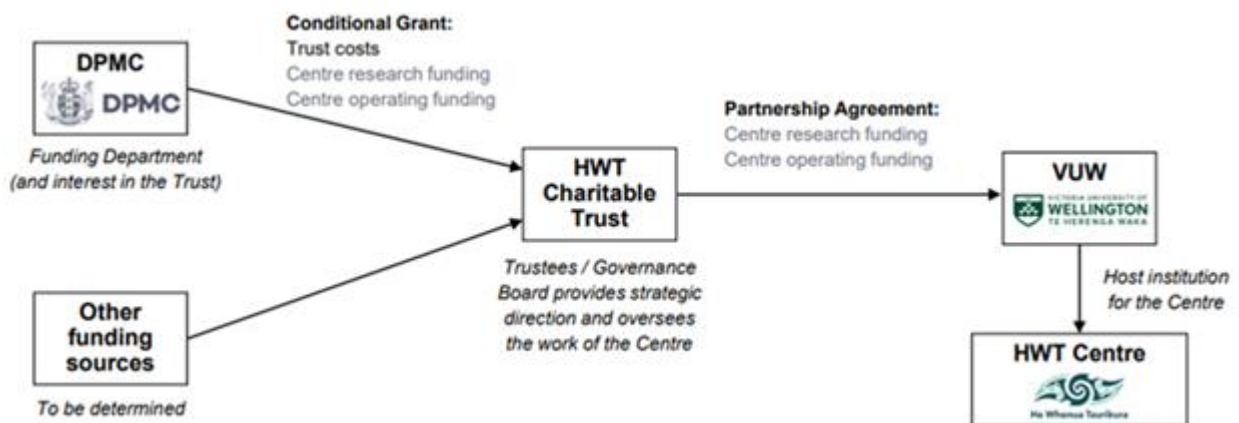
7) When is the director tenure up? and a new director appointed ?”

The questions set out in your request seek views and opinions, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet does not consider this an Official Information Act (the Act) request, as set out in section 2 of the Act. I am therefore providing a written response, addressing the matters raised in your request.

As I have not seen the responses to your recent requests under the Act to Victoria University of Wellington, I am therefore not able to comment on what was provided in those responses, nor on the consistency between their responses and our own.

I can confirm that DPMC has had no contact with the recipients of postgraduate scholarships and has no plans to do so.

It might be helpful if I explain the relationship between DPMC and the He Whenua Taurikura National Centre for Research Excellence (the Centre). The Centre, established as an independent research Centre, is hosted by Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) and operates independently of Government. It is funded and overseen by a charitable Trust, of the same name. The following diagram shows the various contractual arrangements between DPMC, the Trust, and the Centre.



As the Centre is a centre of academic and research activity hosted by the University, it does not have a separate legal identity but is part of the University. As such, its staff, resources, and activities fall within the scope of the University’s legal framework, statutes, policies, and accountabilities. DPMC does not have a direct relationship with the Centre and has no additional oversight and provides no operational direction into the activities of the Centre, except as a member of the Trust Governance Board.

In terms of plans to appoint another Director, I can advise that as a result of changes to the Centre’s future funding announced in Budget 24, the HWT Trust Board is working with the Centre Director, VUW and DPMC to consider options for a future operating model from 2025. I understand the Centre Director’s tenure with the Centre is until 30 June 2025.

You asked about the creation of policy briefs. The purpose of the He Whenua Taurikura Charitable Trust is set out in clause 4 of the [Trust Deed](#) and is “to fund, facilitate and promote research into the prevention and countering of violent extremism in New Zealand” through a range of specified activities. One of those purposes is to “create policy briefs based on New Zealand research on PCVE”. The trust deed is publicly available on the Charities Register here: register.charities.govt.nz/CharitiesRegister/Search

Since I wrote to the Board in March 2024 to encourage greater engagement and collaboration with existing and established academics in the field of PCVE, the Centre has made funding available and is working with DPMC to commission research from a variety of institutions across the country. Some of the outputs from this research may be policy briefs that will inform counter terrorism delivery agencies to further their work in these areas.

Yours sincerely

Bridget White
Executive Director
National Security Group