



9 February 2016

Police National Headquarters  
PO Box 3017  
Wellington 6011

Ms Natasha Frost

Dear Ms Frost

I am responding to you on behalf of the New Zealand Police in relation to your request to the Ministry of Justice dated 1 February 2016 made under the Official Information Act for data relating to the Witness Protection Programme.

The Ministry of Justice transferred this request to the New Zealand Police as the agency responsible for the management of the Witness Protection Programme.

Specifically you requested:

1. How much did the programme cost to run in 2015?
2. How many people were directly affected by the programme?
3. Does the Ministry of Justice give people, when the occasion presents itself, new identities?
4. Does this extend to new homes or jobs?
5. If so, how many people have been given these new identities?
6. What other alternatives does the programme offer?

The NZ Police measures our corporate years from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, as is the case with all New Zealand Government agencies. I can therefore provide you with the costs for the 2014/2015 year which spans the 12 months from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 till June 30<sup>th</sup> 2015.

The total expenditure for the 2014/2015 year was \$2,505,730. This includes staff salaries and all costs associated with the programme.

Section 65 of the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationship Registration Act 1995 allows for the creation of new identities for witnesses. Any such request must be made by the Minister of Police to the Minister responsible for the administration of the Act.

The questions regarding the number of people directly affected by the programme, the creation of new identities and the provision of employment and houses together with your questions on alternatives to the programme are refused pursuant to sections 6(c) and 6(d) of the Official Information Act.

Section 6(c) provides good reason to withhold official information where release of that information would be likely to "prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial."

Section 6(d) provides good reason to withhold official information where release of that information would be likely to "endanger the safety of any person."

The release of details relating to the Witness Protection programme would prejudice the Police's ability to protect people currently on the Witness Protection programme and maintain the law.

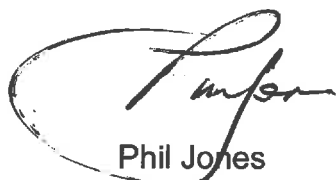
New Zealand is a small country and any information that potentially identifies the methods deployed to protect witnesses could result in not only an increased danger to those witnesses but also potentially to innocent members of the public who are wrongly suspected of being involved in the witness protection programme.

The release of the numbers of protected witnesses may also result in increased danger to these people, and reluctance for such witnesses to give evidence against serious criminals in future.

The people who take the decision to join the witness protection programme and give evidence against serious and hardened criminals do so with the knowledge that their lives, and the lives of their loved ones, are potentially at risk and will never be the same again. The New Zealand Police give a commitment to these witnesses that we will do everything possible to protect them from future danger, and I am firmly of the opinion that the release of the data requested will jeopardise not only their safety but also the relationship based on trust with the New Zealand Police.

You have the right under Section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982 to request the Ombudsman to review my decision if you are not satisfied with my response to your request.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Jones', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Phil Jones  
Inspector  
Officer in Charge, Protection Services