



**30 MAY 2016**

Paul Kelly  
[fyi-request-3989-e3bf3d04@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-3989-e3bf3d04@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Paul

**Official Information Act request**

I refer to your request, dated 10 May 2016, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982, seeking “*all communications between the Sar Secretariate the NZSAR council and David Comber in regard to land search and rescue*”.

The table below outlines the documents within the scope of your request, and whether the documents are released, withheld or refused under the Act.

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Certain information withheld</b>
1	25 July 2012	Email from Mr Comber to the SAR Secretariat regarding lessons learned.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons.
2	27 January – 11 March 2016	Daily emails (87 in total) from the SAR Secretariat to Mr Comber regarding the Search and Rescue media.	Refused under section 18(d) as the information requested is or will soon be publicly available.
3	18 December 2015	Email from the SAR Secretariat to Mr Comber regarding the appointment of an additional NZ Council member.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons.
4	5 February 2016	Email from the SAR Secretariat to Mr Comber regarding the NZSAR Consultative Committee meeting.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons.  Attachments: refused under section 18(d) as the information requested is or will soon be publicly available on <a href="http://nzsar.org.nz/">http://nzsar.org.nz/</a> .
5	22 February 2016	Email from the SAR Secretariat to NZSAR Council members regarding its upcoming meeting, including attachments.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons.  Attachments: refused under section 18(d) as the information requested is

			or will soon be publicly available on <a href="http://nzsar.org.nz/">http://nzsar.org.nz/</a> .
6	25 February 2016	Email from the SAR Secretariat to Mr Comber.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons.
7	26 February 2016	Email from SAR Secretariat to Mr Comber regarding the draft minutes from the NZSAR Consultative Committee meeting.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons. Attachment: refused under section 18(d) as the information requested is or will soon be publicly available on <a href="http://nzsar.org.nz/">http://nzsar.org.nz/</a> .
8	16 March 2016	Email from Mr Comber to the SAR Secretariat.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons.
9	9 April 2016	Emails between Mr Comber to the SAR Secretariat.	Partially withheld under section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of natural persons.

With respect to the information that has been withheld, I do not consider there are any other considerations that render it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to make a complaint about the withholding of information to the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10-152  
WELLINGTON

Yours sincerely



Nick Brown  
**General Manager Aviation & Maritime**  
for CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## Amelia Morgan

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**From:** Duncan Ferner  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 25 July 2012 2:16 p.m.  
**To:** 'outlookmedia'  
**Subject:** FW: Lessons Learned Submission  
**Attachments:** 20120725140855\_DogTrack.jpg

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**From:** website [<mailto:website@nzsar.org.nz>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 25 July 2012 2:09 p.m.  
**To:** Duncan Ferner; [cvandermeulen@transport.govt.nz](mailto:cvandermeulen@transport.govt.nz)  
**Subject:** Lessons Learned Submission

Name: Dave Comber. Taupo LandSAR

Email: [REDACTED]

Withheld in reliance on section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

Phone: [REDACTED]

Category: Land

### Description: Situation

Search for a missing pig hunter two of whose dogs had returned to his vehicle and found in the vicinity. The dogs had GPS tracking collars fitted which are commonly used by pig hunters throughout the country. Some dogs were possibly still with the missing person.

### Problem

We were advised by seemingly knowledgeable people that the only way the collars could be tracked was by using a GPS unit initialized to the individual collars. The only unit in this state was with the missing person.

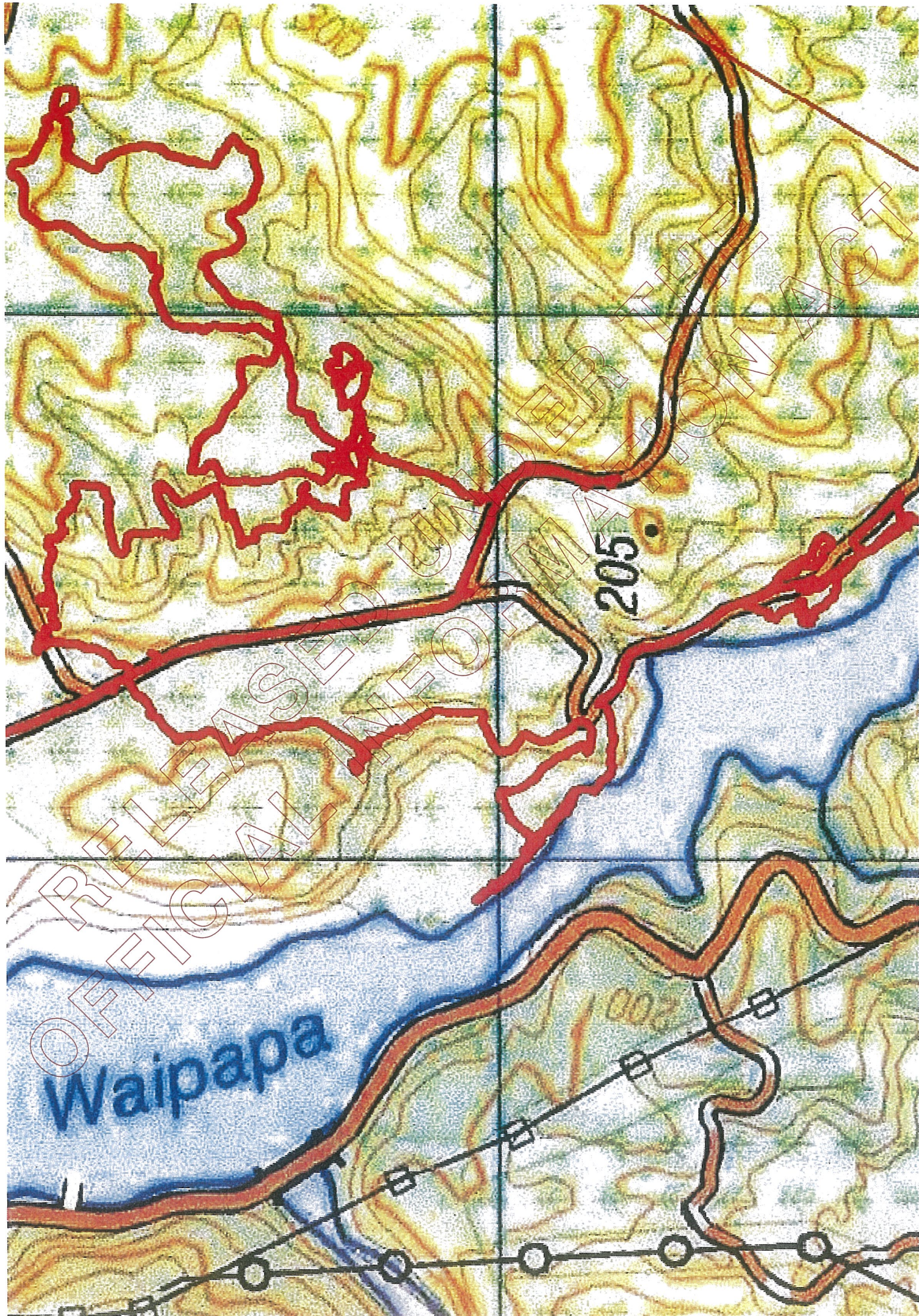
### Resolution

Not only is it possible to track collars with another unit suitably configured, but the collars themselves save the track in their GPS unit, and this can be downloaded. Both of these actions require a person with specialist knowledge and equipment. Most pig hunting clubs have within their membership a person with this capability. Unfortunately these people do not often like to broadcast the fact they can do this.

Compounding the situation is the fact these collars contravene the frequency regulations and are illegal. Attached is a map with a track downloaded from one of the dog collars. The missing person's clothing was found at the point where the track entered the river.

Attached file: 20120725140855\_DogTrack.jpg

Submitted by 125.237.171.236



Withheld in reliance on section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

**Amelia Morgan**

**From:** Carl Van Der Meulen  
**Sent:** Friday, 18 December 2015 12:11 p.m.  
**To:** [REDACTED] Carl Van Der Meulen; [REDACTED] Duncan Ferner; [REDACTED] Rhett Emery; [REDACTED] Roger Brown;  
**Cc:** Dave Comber  
**Subject:** Additional member for the NZSAR Council  
**Attachments:** Additional NZSAR Council member - Consult Comm 18 Dec 15.pdf

Kia ora and Season's Greetings,

Attached is a letter regarding the appointment of an additional member to the NZSAR Council.

Please reply directly to Duncan Ferner [d.ferner@transport.govt.nz](mailto:d.ferner@transport.govt.nz) to signal your endorsement, or to raise any queries.

On behalf of the Secretariat – Duncan, Rhett, and I – have a safe and restful holiday season and summer.

Regards

*Carl van der Meulen*

Senior Advisor  
 New Zealand Search and Rescue Secretariat  
 ☎ (04) 439 9018  
[c.vandermeulen@transport.govt.nz](mailto:c.vandermeulen@transport.govt.nz)  
[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz)  
[www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)





## New Zealand Search and Rescue

18 December 2015

NZSAR1-1

NZSAR Consultative Committee Members

### ADDITIONAL NZSAR COUNCIL MEMBER

1. At its meeting of 19 November 2015, the NZSAR Council agreed on the person specification for an additional member of the NZSAR Council to represent the non-governmental elements of the SAR sector, and on the process to appoint that person. David (Dave) Comber has now been nominated for this appointment. The Council has agreed with Dave's nomination and now seeks NZSAR Consultative Committee endorsement of his appointment to the NZSAR Council for a two year period.

2. Dave has very extensive SAR experience and also considerable leadership, managerial and governance experience. For a number of years, as a founding member of the LandSAR NZ governance board, he worked closely with the NZSAR Secretariat and Consultative Committee on a wide variety of issues. During that time we found Dave to be energetic, pragmatic and fully aligned with NZSAR goals and values. I believe Dave would be a very suitable as a representative of the non-governmental elements of the SAR sector and also a good fit for the NZSAR Council. I have spoken with Dave about this position and he is very interested in it.

3. I have enclosed a brief summary of Dave's experience. It is envisaged that Dave would attend up to 11 meetings per year being, 3 x NZSAR Council, 3 x Consultative Committee, 1 x combined meeting. Dependent on need and each agencies preference, Dave might also attend one meeting annually with the boards of LandSAR NZ, Coastguard NZ, Surf Life Saving NZ and the Emergency Helicopter Division of Aviation NZ.

4. I would be grateful if you could signal your endorsement of Dave Comber's appointment to the NZSAR Council before or at the next meeting of the NZSAR Consultative Committee.

Secretariat Manager  
New Zealand Search and Rescue

## D Comber – Summary of SAR and Emergency Management Experience

### Personal Details:

David Joseph COMBER

DoB:

Ph:

Mob:

Email:

### SAR and Emergency Management Experience:

#### 1961 – 1983 RNZAF Pilot

- NZ Coastal and South Pacific SAR on 42 and 3 Squadrons
- RCC Air Directing Officer qualified
- Final appointment CO No. 42 Squadron

#### 1983 – Present:

- Senior member of Taupo LandSAR Incident Management Team
- Managed 70 searches, mostly as Operations Manager
- Managed northern aspect of the Michael Erceg search and involved in post operation reviews
- Qualified as RCCNZ On Scene Co-Ordinator
- Currently facilitating the development of a joint Coastguard/LandSAR IMT in Taupo

#### Summer 1992/1993:

- SENZREP Scott Base with NZ Antarctic Program
- Member of JSARC (Joint US/NZ SAR Committee)
- Member of the JSAR IMT (Incident Management Team)
- Managed several joint searches including the fatal helicopter crash in Nov 92

#### 2006 – 2011 • LandSAR Organisational Review and Inaugural Board Member:

- Developed the new LandSAR constitution for acceptance by the board
- Represented LandSAR on the 2012 Police SAR Review 2012
- Served on the Expert Reference Group for the 2009 Air Sector Ambulance and SAR Service Standard Development
- Represented LandSAR on the 2009 Ambulance and SAR Service Standard Review
- Represented LandSAR on the Mountain Safety Council

#### 1992 – 2012 • Management Team Contact Energy Wairakei Geothermal Power Station:

- Co-led the implementation of the Corporate ERP solution for the transition from ECNZ to Contact Energy in 1996.
- Developed the corporate incident management and investigation solution
- Implemented ISO 9001 into the generation branch of Contact Energy
- Developed and implemented the Civil Defence and Emergency plan at Wairakei

Withheld in reliance on section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

**Amelia Morgan**

**From:** Carl Van Der Meulen  
**Sent:** Friday, 5 February 2016 12:25 p.m.  
**To:** [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
Carl Van Der Meulen; Dave Comber;  
Duncan Ferner; [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
Rhett Emery; [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
Roder Brown; [Redacted]

**Subject:** Agenda and papers for NZSAR Consultative Committee meeting - Wed 10 Feb  
**Attachments:** 7a. NZSAR RISK MATRIX (12 November 2015).docx; 8b. SAR Comms Draft TOR - Feb 16.docx; 1. NZSAR Consultative Committee - Agenda 10 Feb 2016.docx; 3. Minutes - NZSAR Consultative Committee 5 November 2015.docx; 5. JSLA monitoring report Feb 2016.docx; 6. NZSAR sector update - Nov 2015.docx

Kia ora all,

Attached is the agenda and papers for next week's NZSAR Consultative Committee meeting.

For those attending for the first time, the meeting location is on level 6 at the Ministry of Transport, SAS Tower, 89 the Terrace.

Regards

*Carl van der Meulen*

Senior Advisor  
New Zealand Search and Rescue Secretariat  
☎ (04) 439 9018  
[c.vandermeulen@transport.govt.nz](mailto:c.vandermeulen@transport.govt.nz)  
[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz)  
[www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)





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Amelia Morgan

From: Duncan Ferner  
Sent: Monday, 22 February 2016 3:30 p.m.  
To: Richard Davies - DOC  
Subject: FW: NZSAR Council Papers. For the meeting Tuesday 23 February, 1 - 3pm, Level 6 89 The Terrace

From: Duncan Ferner  
Sent: Friday, 19 February 2016 1:39 p.m.  
To: [Redacted] Dave COMBER

Martin Matthews;

Subject: NZSAR Council Papers. For the meeting Tuesday 23 February, 1 - 3pm, Level 6 89 The Terrace

Kia ora NZSAR Council Members,

- 1. NZSAR Council Meeting of 2...
- 3. NZSAR Council Meeting Minut...
- 5. JSLA monitoring report Febr...
- 6. NZSAR sector update - Febru...
- 7. NZSAR RISK MATRIX (12 Febr...
- 8. 2015 NZSAR ward Recommend..
- 9. MRO Policy - 2016 rewrite -...
- 10. Exercise concept - RAUORA
- 11. ARTEMIS Capability Brochu...
- 12a. NZSAR Governance Review
- 12b. SAR Comms on land TOR - ...
- 12c. Aviation and SAR TOR ...
- 13a. NatureSmart - Summ
- 13b. NZSAR Data Standard. In...
- 14a. Coastguard NZ VHF Freque...
- 14b. Submission - Police SA...

The papers for next week's meeting are attached FYI. Hard copies have been sent to you by courier earlier this afternoon.

We will also have representatives along from Worksafe NZ, MCDEM and NZ Fire to join your health and safety discussions.

See you next week.

Regards

Duncan

Duncan Ferner  
Secretariat Manager  
New Zealand Search and Rescue Council  
DDI (04) 439 9045 Mob (021) 249 0463 [d.ferner@transport.govt.nz](mailto:d.ferner@transport.govt.nz)  
[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz) [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz) [www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz)



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Amelia Morgan

From: Duncan Ferner  
Sent: Thursday, 25 February 2016 12:46 p.m.  
To: Dave COMBER  
Subject: Information about 'persons not located'

Hi Dave

Copy of my email below as discussed.

Dunc

Hi Team,

The SARINZ report dated 22 December 2015 for the Fiona Mills Coronial Enquiry included some data and associated analysis around missing persons being 'not located'.

Regrettably the information contained in that document is incorrect along with its associated analysis.

The best available information is below. It is drawn directly from the relevant Police and RCCNZ records. All records in our datastore come from Police and RCCNZ, hence are official statistics.

It clearly shows that the numbers are variable, with no obvious trend at all. The claims in the report about the quality of SAR training are erroneous.

The following are details from the NZSAR Datastore for land based SAR incidents over the last five years with 'casualty not located'.

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	Grand Total
Category 1	941	958	979	907	901	4686
Category 2	116	124	148	169	213	770
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1057</b>	<b>1082</b>	<b>1127</b>	<b>1076</b>	<b>1114</b>	<b>5456</b>
Cat 1 Not Located	11	24	18	12	19	84
Cat 2 Not Located	1	3	1	2	2	9
<b>Total Not Located</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>93</b>
Cat 1 with LandSAR	3	3	5	0	3	14
Cat 2 with LandSAR	0	2	0	0	1	3
<b>Total with LandSAR</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>

On the table above:

- Blue rows show the total number of land based incidents by category.
- Red rows show how many of those incidents include 'casualty not located', again broken down by category.
- Yellow rows show how many of those incidents had LandSAR support, again broken down by category.

Of note are the nine category 2 incidents listing 'casualty not located'. All of these actually have duplicated records, as they all were cat 2 incidents where RCC had police support. Only the police records include 'casualty not located' figures, the RCC records do not. The associated category 2 records from the RCCNZ daily reports are briefly summarised below:

- *Beacon in boat in driveway*
- *Beacon in rubbish truck*

- *Beacon alert from Cessna. Extensive aerial search of route and possible landing strips before confirmation that Cessna is operating normally*
- *Beacon in tip*
- *Beacon thrown onto a roof*
- *Beacon in old car on a farm*
- *17 year old beacon in a shed*
- *Unregistered beacon alert. Hunters at GPS location of the alert denied activating their beacon*
- *Stolen pack including beacon left next to a river*

So - all nine of the Category 2 records listing 'casualty not located' are incorrectly coded. None of these incidents have any not-located persons at risk.

We also believe that some Police SAR Coordinators may record a 'person not located' whenever they carry out a SAROP, even if the investigation shows there was never a person to locate. The data standard project will assist to reduce or eliminate these instances in the future.

The fatalities study will include an analysis of all the records in the data store that include 'casualty not located'. This will give us a better idea of how many incidents genuinely conclude/suspend with people known to be missing.

Regards

*Duncan*

Duncan Ferner  
Secretariat Manager  
New Zealand Search and Rescue Council  
DDI (04) 439 9045 Mob (021) 249 0463 [d.ferner@transport.govt.nz](mailto:d.ferner@transport.govt.nz)  
[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz) [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz) [www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz)

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Withheld in reliance on section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

**Amelia Morgan**

**From:** Carl Van Der Meulen  
**Sent:** Friday, 26 February 2016 1:13 p.m.  
**To:** [Redacted] Carl Duncan  
 Van Der Meulen; Dave Comber; Ferner; [Redacted]  
 [Redacted] Rhett  
 Emery; [Redacted] Roger Brown; [Redacted]

**Subject:** draft minutes - NZSAR Consultative Committee  
**Attachments:** Minutes - NZSAR Consultative Committee 10 February 2016 DRAFT.docx

Kia ora all,

Attached are the draft minutes from the NZSAR Consultative Committee meeting on 10 February.

Please let me know if there are any amendments to be made.

Regards

*Carl van der Meulen*

Senior Advisor  
 New Zealand Search and Rescue Secretariat  
 ☎ (04) 439 9018  
[c.vandermeulen@transport.govt.nz](mailto:c.vandermeulen@transport.govt.nz)  
[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz)  
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**Amelia Morgan**

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**From:** Dave Comber [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 16 March 2016 12:07 p.m.  
**To:** Duncan Ferner  
**Subject:** Risk Register  
**Attachments:** RiskRegisterAddition.docx

Hi Duncan,

Attached is an item for the agenda of the Consultive Committee for their input before consideration by the Council.

Feel free to suggest any changes you see as appropriate.

I'm off on Friday as discussed, but will check my emails most days.

Cheers,

Dave

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# NZSAR Consultive Committee

## Item for Agenda:

### Additional Risk Register Entry

#### 1. Summary

It is recommended that the following item be added to the NZSAR Risk Register.

- (a) Risk Description:**  
**SAROP Management**  
Perceived or real poor search management resulting in external investigation and/or criticism.
- (b) Reasons or Causes:**  
Dissatisfaction by family, friends or associates of the competency of the search management, and resources used, leading to the engagement of an external agency to comment and criticise publicly.
- (c) Consequences:**
- (i) Damage to the reputation of the NZ Search and Rescue community.
  - (ii) International bad publicity with respect to New Zealand as a safe destination for adventure tourism.
  - (iii) Time and expense to defend performance and refute allegations.
- (d) Likelihood:**  
Possible.
- (e) Impact:**  
Moderate.
- (f) Risk Treatments: *(Suggestions only – for discussion)***
- (i) Assessed regional IMTEX's involving multiple agencies (Police, RCCNZ, LandSAR, CGNZ, SLS) to broaden, update and standardise search management practices. Also to maximise the pool of competent and current regional search managers.
  - (ii) Regional assessed SAREXs planned and delivered by an independent provider.
  - (iii) Review of randomly or targeted SAROPs by an independent body.
  - (iv) Annual evaluation of items (f) (i) – (iii) to identify training and improvement opportunities.
- (g) Post Treatment:**  
Yellow.

**(h) Comments/Examples:**

Registration of this risk, and the identification of steps to mitigate, would be a valid tool in the defence of criticism levelled at the sector.

## **2. Background**

In December 2014, an elderly lady suffering from Alzheimer's disease went missing from her rural home. Despite the efforts of a family search and a Category 1 SAROP followed by a private, family funded, search the following month, she (or her body) was never located.

The family subsequently engaged the services of a nationally recognised training provider, with international connections, to critique the Category 1 SAROP and present the findings to the coronial inquiry. This critique represented that there were multiple shortcomings in the management of the Category 1 search. The Police and LandSAR were then put in the position of having to defend their performance, and address the issues highlighted in the report, at the subsequent coronial inquest.

The Coroner's findings have yet to be published but it is expected that, apart from a few items already identified by the post operation debrief, there will be little public fallout from the Coroner's report. In this event it is suggested that, had the items identified for improvement been implemented, they would not have materially affected the outcome of the search. This event does, however, highlight the potential for a wealthy family, possibly from overseas, to engage an international "expert" to produce a damning report on the management and conduct of a search for a lost loved one and make this very public. The consequence of this would be for the sector to be forced to publicly defend and refute the allegations at quite considerable expense and risk to reputation.

With the current paucity in SAROPs that go beyond the "Initial Response" phase comes a lack of operations for search and rescue skills to be exercised. This has led to a range of SAR capability across the country from good to less than desired. It has also led to a decrease in enthusiasm by volunteers in those areas where there is little activity. SAREXs are generally organised, run and debriefed within groups without a benchmark standard to assess performance against. It is suggested that interesting multi-agency exercises, run and assessed by independent providers, would go a long way towards addressing this issue and would provide objective feedback on capability to the provider managements and coordinating authorities.

The listings in the summary are provided as suggestions "for discussion" only.

David Comber  
NZSAR Council  
Independent Member

14 March 2016



Withheld in reliance on section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

**Amelia Morgan**

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**From:** Dave Comber [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, 9 April 2016 7:28 a.m.  
**To:** Duncan Ferner  
**Subject:** RE: Risk Register

Thanks Duncan.

I thought it should go on both agendas. My feeling is that it is a whole sector risk for both Cat 1 and Cat 2 operations, but it will be interesting to hear the discussion.

I was sorry that I missed the LandSAR strategy meeting at Ruapehu during the week. I managed to catch up with Pete Corbett in Picton on Thursday evening and he gave me a bit of a snap shot.

I'll get the photo of my passport off to you this weekend.

Meanwhile, I have a bit of a clean-up (the camper was carried on the outer deck on the ferry and is covered in salt spray) and section tidy – I suspect there might be lions and elephants in the grass ☺.

It was a good trip. 3,500 km and 500l of fuel. Warbirds were great and the Catlins quite special.

Cheers,

Dave

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**From:** Duncan Ferner [mailto:d.ferner@transport.govt.nz]  
**Sent:** 8 April, 2016 9:35 AM  
**To:** Dave Comber  
**Subject:** RE: Risk Register

Hi Dave,

I raised this with Martin. We'll include this on the two agendas for wider consideration.

There probably needs to be some discussion about if it is a NZSAR Council level (whole of system level) risk or one that might be better placed at the operational level.

Safe travels

Duncan

---

**From:** Dave Comber [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 16 March 2016 12:07 p.m.  
**To:** Duncan Ferner  
**Subject:** Risk Register

Hi Duncan,

Attached is an item for the agenda of the Consultive Committee for their input before consideration by the Council.

Feel free to suggest any changes you see as appropriate.

I'm off on Friday as discussed, but will check my emails most days.

Cheers,

Dave

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