



13 JUL 2016

Paul Kelly
fyi-request-4158-7fae1ecd@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Kelly

Official Information Act Request

I refer to your email request dated 19 June 2016, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982, seeking:

“the paper Risk Facing New Zealand Search and Rescue by Dave Comber that he presented to the New Zealand SAR Council”.

This paper was previously provided as part of my response to your OIA request dated 10 May 2016 under the title “Additional Risk Register Entry”. This was the item referred to as item 8 in the table in my letter to you dated 30 May 2016. I have attached it again for your convenience.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nick Brown'.

Nick Brown
General Manager Aviation & Maritime
for CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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