

1 December 2017

C90580

Mark Hanna
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Dear Mr Hanna

Thank you for your email of 9 and 27 November 2017, requesting more information about the recording of strip searches by Corrections. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested the following information:

- 1. I appreciate you telling me that "the data provided to you previously is not accurate" and your apology for this. It would be very useful to me if you could help me understand just what the data provided to me previously represented, and how it was obtained. For example, did it regard data on all searches rather than just strip searches, and all contraband finds rather than only those resulting from strip searches?*
- 2. I would also still like to seek information on the number, basis, and contraband find rate of searches of prisoners. I would be grateful if you could help me better understand how this is currently stored, which would help me make a request that would not need to be refused under section 18(f).*

The data provided to you previously represented all strip searches recorded in IOMS. This information, however, was incomplete as Corrections is only required to record some strip searches in this manner.

The way searches are recorded varies between prisons. Some prisons record all methods of searches as 'strip searches'. This means that our data on 'strip searches' also includes other searches, such as drug dog searches, rub downs, and scanner searches. This results in some prisons recording a disproportionately high number of strip searches.

Accordingly, we are unable to extract the total number of strip searches from IOMS. This means that accurate data about the basis of strip searches and contraband find rate is not possible to calculate.

3. *Your explanation that "Searches by way of metal detector, x-ray machine, rub-down and strip searches are all recorded in the strip search section of the Integrated Offenders Management System (IOMS)" is a useful insight, as is your explanation that the type of search is described in a free text field of each record.*

I am unsure what content may be included in these free text fields. If it would be possible to release a spreadsheet of each of these records, anonymised so that individual prisoners cannot be identified but with sufficient information for me to determine the type of search (for example, by reading the free text field myself), I would be happy with this outcome. As I said in my original request, I'd also still be happy to receive advice from you if there is other information that could be released which would better suit my purposes.

4. *I understand it may be the case that these free text fields may contain information that could identify prisoners, and the time it would take to review them for the purpose of determining which fields it is necessary to withhold in order to protect the privacy of prisoners as per s9(2)(a) would require substantial collation as per s18(f).*
5. *If this is certainly the case for one or more free text fields, I would be happy for them to be withheld and the remaining anonymised information released as a spreadsheet, which I could then analyse.*

Search types are defined as one of four categories, which are can be chosen in a drop down menu in IOMS. These categories are 'drug dogs', 'rub downs', 'scanner', and 'strip search'.

As advised above, a number of other searches are reported as strip searches. As such, in order to accurately provide data on strip searches, Corrections would need to rely on a more detailed level of information, such as comments entered by staff in a free-text field. This is a blank field for comments to be added by staff about the search conducted, and may include information such as "Routine, admitted to At Risk Unit" or "Prisoner returning from contact visit".

We are unable to provide a spreadsheet of each of these records because they are recorded in each prisoner's IOMS profile for every single search conducted. In order to collate these comments, we would be required to review a large number of files and manually copy the information from the free-text field from each individual prisoner's IOMS record. Therefore, this part of your request is declined under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

6. *As the knowledge I thought I'd gained from information released previously is apparently incorrect, all I currently have to go on is the description of the IOMS records from your most recent response to me. Before I make a revised request, I'd appreciate your advice on the feasibility of this IOMS search data being released.*

Using IOMS, we can separate search types into the four categories, outlined above. We can also separate the reasons for conducting these searches into four categories ('probable cause', 'event based – mandatory', 'event based – specified', and 'reasonable grounds'). Lastly, contraband finds can be classified by types such as drugs, drugs paraphernalia, tattoo equipment and weapons.

For the aforementioned reasons, providing the requested information broken down into categories would still not appropriately represent the strip searches undertaken by Corrections.

I hope this is helpful. If you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Department. Alternatively you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



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