

9 June 2023

Dear

Reference: OIA-2022/23-0527

Official Information Act request for documents related to the flooding in Auckland from 27 to 31 January 2023

Thank you for your two Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) requests received on 31 January 2023. You requested from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA):

- 1. Please provide copies of documents held by your national executive leadership team that were created since 6am on Friday 27 January relating to this major weather event and its aftermath, such as briefings, aide-memoires, situation updates, talking points, communications plans, correspondence with other agencies, minutes of meetings, key performance indicators, and damage assessments. To assist with your search, I am seeking key documents that provide an insight into the agency's thinking and decision-making immediately before, during and after this city-wide emergency, which will help to scrutinise the performance of its critical public functions during that period.
- 2. Please also provide, if not captured above, briefings provided to ministers relating to this weather event since Friday morning. I am open to discussing refining the request once you've conducted your initial scoping review if it helps to facilitate a timely response. However, given the unprecedented significance of this event, we believe there is an overwhelming public interest in urgent and thorough scrutiny of the department's decision-making which favours a very high level of disclosure.

You requested from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC):

Please provide copies of documents held by DPMC's executive leadership team that were created since 6am on Friday 27 January relating to this major weather event and its aftermath, such as briefings, aide-memoires, situation updates, talking points, communications plans, correspondence with other agencies, minutes of meetings, key performance indicators, and damage assessments. To assist with your search, I am seeking key documents that provide an insight into the department's thinking and decision-making immediately before, during and after this city-wide emergency, which will help to scrutinise the performance of its critical public functions during that period. I am open to discussing refining the request if it helps to facilitate a timely response. However, given the unprecedented significance of this event, we believe there is an overwhelming public interest in urgent and thorough scrutiny of the department's decisionmaking which favours a very high level of disclosure. Thank you for your email of the same date advising your confirmation of our approach and follow up request for:

I didn't emphasise this in my request, but we are especially keen for the communications (emails, texts, conference calls, etc) of the senior players in those crucial hours on Friday evening and Friday night, to be included in the scope.

I wrote to you on 1 May 2023 with a decision on your request and the release of information. I informed you that Signal messages and the Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC) Watch Group Agenda and Minutes were in scope of your request, and I had decided to release these to you. However, we required more time to prepare the information for release, as further consultations were required with the office of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Emergency Management's Office and other government agencies. I am now able to release this information to you.

Information being released

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed below, subject to information being withheld as noted. The relevant grounds under which information has been withheld are:

- 1. section 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand
- 2. section 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of individuals
- 3. section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion
- 4. section 9(2)(g)(ii), to prevent improper pressure or harassment

Item	Date	Document Description/Subject
1.	27 - 31	NEMA Signal messages_CE group
	January	
	2023	
2.	Tuesday,	Op ZEPPELIN Watch Group #1 Agenda and Minutes
	31 January	
	2023	

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act. No public interest has been identified that would be sufficient to override the reasons for withholding that information.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act. This response may be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Richards Chief Advisor to the Deputy Chief Executive, Emergency Management

NEMA Signal Messages – Auckland Severe Weather Event 27-31 January

Group title: NEMA CE Office Update

Group recipients: Dave Gawn, Charlie Blanch, Roger Ball, Sarah Holland, Stefan Weir, Anthony Richards, Jenna Rogers, s 9(2)(g)(ii), [NEMA]

Tom Wilson

Date/ Time	Sender	Content	
27 Jan 2023 2204hrs	Stefan Weir	Hi team. FYI. The min has contacted me - he's had s 9(2)(a) (an Auckland based s 9(2)(a) mp) contact him Re the Auckland situation. The min has passed ^{s 9(2)(a)} my details. If ^{s 9(2)(a)} contacts me I will pass on to ^{s 92(3)(1)} /NEMA for resolving. Hope you are all going well. Cheers	
27 Jan 2023	Anthony	Ack	
2205hrs	Richards		
27 Jan 2023 2247hrs	Stefan Weir	FYI. s 9(2)(a) just called me after the mins number. I've let mum know. Also heard PM keen to get to Auckland fist thing tomorrow.	
27 Jan 2023 2247hrs	Stefan Weir	*Let min know	
27 Jan 2023 2333hrs	Stefan Weir	FYI. PM (and we can assume Min McAnulty) to head to auck tomorrow morning. ^{Secure} is liaising with PM's office. Min Henare's NZDF PS is aware that NZDF support might be needed to get them from Wgtn to auck.	
28 Jan 2023 1003hrs	Sarah Holland	It would be worth sending an email to all NEMA staff as they've received no info. It could say NCC activated, they will be contacted if needed. Please update staff availability(?) See DIB for update. s 9(2)(g)(i) (And EMAT what's up group - well done ^{s 9(2)(a)}	
28 Jan 2023 1003hrs	Charlie Blanch	They should have received the NWS NCC activation email?	
1004hrs	Sarah Holland	Nope	
28 Jan 2023 1004hrs	s 9(2)(g)(ii), [NEMA]	Nothing received via email. The only contact I've had is a call asking if I'm available to work in the NCC tomorrow	

20 1 2022			
	Sarah Holland	Neither I , nor <mark>s 9(2)(g)(ii) NEMA</mark> have got this	
1004hrs			
	Anthony	Nor me	
1005hrs	Richards		
28 Jan 2023 1005hrs	Charlie Blanch	Understood	
28 Jan 2023 1005hrs	Tom Wilson	Nor me	
28 Jan 2023 2014hrs	Sarah Holland	I'm covering for Roger from now. I'll stay in the Beehive NCC until everyone else leaves before heading to the MAR. The Welfare team is still hard at work but will hopefully be packing up soon.	
29 Jan 2023 1639hrs	Roger Ball	Hi team FYI, I'll be in Auckland for couple of days to support the CDEM Group and NEMAs inputs. Flight back on Tues evening at this stage. No change to Director delegations, however Sarah is now covering the Signal groups and is presently at the NCC (thank you Sarah).	
30 Jan 2023 0740hrs	Charlie Blanch	I've had a chat with Intelligence function. They need to firm up the intelligence collection matrix but in the short term I've asked for a table of key numbers that will be updated regularly (pref every hour). Things like #rapid damage assessment, building assessment, estimated affected buildings, displaced, etc. Some will be high accuracy like the FENZ RDA data that we get via a geospatial package from tablets 'in the field'. Others are being collated on excel and paper (building assessments), others will be a gut feel (how many buildings affected 5 or 6000) but we need to be on the same page.	
30 Jan 2023 0741hrs	Charlie Blanch	@Roger Ball Operations Manager, Director CDEM, Controller NEMA we will need the REMAs to collate some of this s 9(2)(g)(i) . Needs a NEMA person to doorstop them in the ECC and get the numbers until the systems are in place.	
30 Jan 2023 0757hrs	Charlie Blanch	@Roger Ball Operations Manager, Director CDEM, Controller NEMA the intel team is working on a numbers on a page like you did for NT fires. Trick will be whether we lead on it or are confident that they lead on it, plus we need to reflect other regions. In the short term next few days will have to be a national product	
30 Jan 2023 0836hrs	Roger Ball	I've asked REMAs to ensure all sitreps and scripts from the media stand up's are sent through promptly, that will help. Agree we will need to use REMAs and me to doorstop. Perhaps a direct INT link?	

30 Jan 2023 0837hrs	Roger Ball	s 9(2)(g)(i)	
30 Jan 2023 1326hrs	Charlie Blanch	@Sarah Holland NEMA Chief Advisor from MetService LO: Northland and Coromandel will shortly go to a Red Rain Warning due to existing saturation and road fragility. Will be announced later this afternoon. For PM awareness not public release.	
30 Jan 2023 1432hrs	Roger Ball	9(2)(g)(i) nyway, it emerged from the call that minister is in Auckland and touring the CDCs	
30 Jan 2023 1444hrs	Roger Ball	Fyi I plan to push out return 24 hrs , returning Wednesday evening this stage.	
30 Jan 2023 1712hrs	Roger Ball	Hi team, Minister called, he is at the airport. This was my subsequent txt with him. Sarah I'll let you add this to signal update as appropriate: Hi Minister, just following up our phone call: The ECC has submitted a request to NZDF for (a) 25 pers to assist with debris clean up and (b) 150 cots/bedding for airport. The request is with HQNZDF right now. Will ask update via Signal channel once we have more info. Thanks Roger	
30 Jan 2023 1817hrs	Charlie Blanch	Roger do you know if this has gone to ncc operations or have they sent it directly to NZDF?	
30 Jan 2023 1817hrs	Sarah Holland	I let NCC ops know as a FYI	
	s 9(2)(g)(ii), [NEMA]	Neither NCC Ops or NZDF have any idea where this is come from or where it is being managed within NZDF	
30 Jan 2023 1819hrs	Charlie Blanch	NCC JFHQ LO s 9(2)(a) is trying to track it down	
30 Jan 2023 1904hrs	Roger Ball	Sorry I've been in imt and now on a meeting with local elected reps, will follow up at my end	
30 Jan 2023 2129hrs	Sarah Holland	For Dave (&Roger) , s 9(2)(a) thinks 9(2)(a) made the decision to recommend education close schools. I've got his details if you want	

30 Jan 2023 2132hrs	Roger Ball	Interesting, I will forward a relevant email string I've just found. As mentioned to Dave, s 9(2)(g)(i)	
30 Jan 2023 2133hrs	Roger Ball	Sorry just adding: I had no contact my end with MOE	
2134hrs		s 9(2)(a) has asked MoE to correct that it was AEM not NEMA	
30 Jan 2023 2135hrs	s 9(2)(g)(ii), [NEMA]	AEM had it in their sitrep this afternoon that it was directed by NEMA. Definitely worth rectifying.	
30 Jan 2023 2143hrs	Roger Ball	The AEM Controller is clear it's not NEMA. I will ask the sitrep is corrected next version	
31 Jan 2023 0740hrs	Charlie Blanch	CC Logs is looking at how we maintain a reduced physical presence in the NCC-bunker until perhaps 2200 and having reater certainty on who could be recalled during the night s 9(2)(g)(i)	
31 Jan 2023 0746hrs	Dave Gawn	Thanks Charlie	
31 Jan 2023 0752hrs	Roger Ball	Ack AEM looking at their posture for tonight as well, similar challenges, but they realise they need to be here and be visible.	
31 Jan 2023 0836hrs	Roger Ball	FYI I've been asked to join AEM deputy controller at 0930 meeting with Mayor Brown.	
31 Jan 2023 0839hrs	Dave Gawn	Ack. Let us know the outcome.	
31 Jan 2023 0841hrs	Charlie Blanch	https://twitter.com/masseyhumsocsci/status/1620144815693500421?s=46&t=OK4qUoYO7dcrBosIj61u0w Massey uni have just media released on the 2018 auckland flood report	
31 Jan 2023 0841hrs	Sarah Holland	s 9(2)(g)(i) Keep channeling the diplomacy for your 9.30am meeting (and indeed, all day)	
31 Jan 2023 0836hrs	Roger Ball	Thanks for the feedback	

	s 9(2)(g)(ii), [NEMA]	Rain forecasts have reduced to some extent. Both Whangarei and Northland EOC/ECCS have stood down for the night with staff on call. The plan is to stand down the NCC from 10pm and hand over to the MAR, with key staff remaining on call to return if required.	
31 Jan 2023 2128hrs		MetService have reduced the rain forecast in Auckland north of Orewa from 80-120mm to 50-70mm.	
31 Jan 2023 2129hrs	Dave Gawn	Thanks [NEMA] Good news. Just ensure MAR across threshold to elevate if required	
31 Jan 2023 2136hrs	Roger Ball	Ack thanks. BTW (ii), [NEMA] thanks for helping out with the Signal group, s 9(2)(g)(i)	



ODESC Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination

Op ZEPPELIN Watch Group #1 Agenda

Date	31 January 2023	Time	13:30-14:30 Hours
Location	MS Teams		
Invitees	DPMC (Chair)	MBIE	NEMA
	CAA	MetService	NZDF
	Customs	MFAT	NZP
	DIA	MfE	NZTE
	EQC	MoD	PSC
	FENZ	MoE	Reserve Bank
	HUD	МоН	Te Puni Kōkiri
	IRD	MoT	Treasury
	KiwiRail	MPI	Waka Kotahi
	Maritime NZ	MSD	

Purpose: The purpose of this meeting is to ensure consistent system awareness; agency response activities are coordinated; consideration of risks arising; and ensure appropriate communication arrangements are in place.

ltem	Торіс	Lead
1.	Introduction	Chair
2.	Situation update (including weather)	NEMA/ MetService
3.	 Agency response updates and risks Agency response structure Areas of focus Key risks/ concerns 	Chair/Key agencies
4.	Other risks arising • Concurrencies	Chair
5.	 Communications Assurance and information for Ministers Assurance and information for public Assurance and information for stakeholders 	Chair

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ltem	Торіс	Lead
6.	Resourcing	Chair
7.	Decisions and action items	Chair
8.	 Next steps Preparation for next Watch Group Triggers for escalation 	Chair



ODESC Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination

Op ZEPPELIN Watch Group #1 Minutes

Via MS Teams

Tuesday 31 January 2023, 1330-1430hrs

Introduction

- The Chair welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for their attendance to discuss the severe weather event known as Operation ZEPPELIN. The Chair noted that Operation ZEPPELIN is focused on the severe weather event nationwide, rather than Aucklandspecific. Attendees are listed in Appendix One.
- The purpose of the Watch Group was to ensure there is consistent system awareness; that agency response activities are coordinated; that there is consideration of risks arising; and ensure appropriate communication arrangements are in place.
- 3. The Chair noted an additional Watch Group had been planned for Friday 3 February 2023 for a more in-depth discussion focussing on long term strategic implications. Therefore, the Chair would only require updates from a subset of agencies relevant to the immediate system response for the first Watch Group.

Situation Update

- 4. The Chair noted that most agencies on the call would have existing knowledge about the event and were receiving the daily NEMA SITREPS. Therefore, a high-level update was requested with an emphasis on the future weather patterns.
- 5. NEMA (Charlie Blanch) gave a brief update on the upgraded rainfall warnings (to red for Northland, Auckland north of Orewa and Coromandel) as well as the situation in Northland - greater impacts from the rain than previously anticipated, with higher ground saturation and more slip activity. Blanch noted a State of Local Emergency had been declared for the Northland region, but it had not yet been publicly announced (during the Watch Group, notification was received of the publicly declared State of Local Emergency for Northland).
- Blanch provided an update on the system response highlighting NEMA's focus on supporting Auckland Emergency Management and Council leadership. The National Coordination Centre (NCC) was activated at 2327hrs on 27 January, currently operating

on a 12-hour basis with support from several agencies virtually and in-person. A smaller night shift is available for red warnings as well as a 24/7 monitoring centre.

- 7. Several challenges NEMA are currently facing are:
 - Difficulties with road and air access to deploy surge staffing (17 staff currently deployed with 11 more ready);
 - b. Multiple systems being used across the response that need to be integrated;
 - c. National and regional level concurrent event preparation.
- NEMA noted welfare is transitioning to the recovery space which will be complex and impact many agencies.
- MetService (Chris Noble) provided more information on weather patterns for Northland, Auckland and the Coromandel and noted discussion with the Bay of Plenty Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) to raise the regional warning to a red warning.

Agency Response Updates and Risks

10. The Chair called on a subset of agencies working on the immediate event response for their agency response structure, areas of focus and key concerns.

Ministry of Transport (MoT)

- 11. MoT (Bronwyn Turley) spoke to the Transport Sector on behalf of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Aviation Security Service (AVSEC), Maritime New Zealand and Kiwi Rail. The abovementioned transport agencies had stood up the Transport Response Team and were working closely with agencies to feed into the system. MoT also has a liaison officer in the NCC.
- 12. A key focus was the coordination across the regions with a high importance on Auckland International Airport given the impacts of the International Terminal closure.
- 13. MoT noted that that the perception that international flights were cancelled due to the physical damage to the International Terminal was incorrect. Flights are able to arrive and depart, but the manual processes needed are causing everything to operate at a slower pace.
- 14. Several concerns identified for the transport section include but not limited to:
 - a. The welfare of passengers waiting in the Auckland Region (or surrounding areas) for rescheduled departure flights;
 - b. The fragility of the system as it is relying heavily on staff being able to access the airport and on the weather to plateau or decrease in nature; and
 - c. Additional damage that effects airport systems or access to the airport.

15. Waka Kotahi (Paul Bagg) reiterated concerns about staff welfare, isolated areas, and vulnerable persons.

s 6(a)

Ministry of Health (MoH)

- 17. MoH (Jason Jones) stated the role MoH performs is to support the ODESC system and NCMC to NEMA by connecting Te Whatu Ora through the health system.
- 18. Constraints on resources have been identified as a key risk, should there be the requirement to assist in a MFAT Pacific response or any other concurrencies.

Te Whatu Ora

- 19. Te Whatu Ora (Chris Scahill, Debbie Sinclair-Paton) noted the establishment of a duty controller team who are coordinating operational support for regions as well as assisting with Auckland and Waikato with Public Health Advisories.
- 20. An Incident Management Team (IMT) has been set up which includes coordination for psychological support.
- 21. An emerging concern is the potential of Civil Defence Centres (CDCs) becoming super spreader events for COVID-19 as several positive individuals have turned up. Te Whatu Ora are mindful of this and are supporting CDCs where they can. Overall, there are no current significant issues across the health sector with hospitals operating at a BAU capacity (relatively high capacity), and some pharmacies are low in stock.
- 22. The Chair raised the potential health impacts from water supply given the current CO₂ shortage with DPMC (NSSD) tasked to understand the linkages and report back.

Ministry of Social Development (MSD)

- 23. MSD (Jayne Russell) informed the Watch Group about the establishment of a dedicated phone line since Saturday 28 January 2023. The phone line had generated a lot of calls, 4,000 a day, with no sign of slowing down creating pressure on BAU activity.
- 24. MSD are facing challenges in providing some support to vulnerable groups given the diverse languages and communication barriers.

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- 25. The Chair suggested connecting with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), Ministry of Ethnic Communities or Ministry of Pacific to understand what translation services they have available. DIA (Paul Barker) noted they were working on translating the government fact sheet but due to its size, it is a timely process. In addition, on the ground language barrier is proving difficult to resolve.
- 26. MSD (John Cavanagh) highlighted the welfare needs for MSD staff themselves as well as the need for policy advice regarding financial assistance.

Additional Comments

27. A collective theme from each agency update was the resource constraints and pressure on agency workforce. To create a collective perspective on resourcing pressures, the Chair requested PSC and NEMA to register what support and resources agencies need.

Other Risks Arising

Concurrencies

- 28. Several concurrencies were highlighted that could create pressure on the system if any event was to significantly escalate:
 - a. Humanitarian efforts to support the Pacific;
 - b. Ongoing Russian Ukraine war;
 - c. Operation BUBBLE (CO2 shortage); and
 - d. Accommodation sector due to Auckland airport flight delays and temporary housing.

Reputation

- 29. With a busy year of hosting events, such as the FIFA Women's World Cup in February (Play-Off Tournament from 17-23 February) and July/ August (World Cup Tournament from 20 July-20 Aug), there are reputational risks if New Zealand is unable to host an event as well as the handling of severe weather events.
- 30. MFAT (Victoria Hallum) noted their focus on the impact the event could have on international reputation; and asked to be kept closely linked in to the NEMA response, to assist in keeping the Post network well informed which helps with mitigating negative perceptions.

Communications

31. NEMA policy team confirmed they had significant engagement over the weekend with the PM and Ministers through frequent meetings and briefings.

- 32. Additionally, NEMA have resourced a 24/7 call line for MPs regarding electoral questions as well as answering a lot of questions from the private sector.
- 33. The Chair noted the importance of having consistent information to brief each Minister and therefore tasked NEMA with ensuring there is a system in place for providing coordinated policy advice to Ministers, including sharing briefings and information with all Ministers.
- 34. DPMC Communications (Catherine Delore) requested PIM contacts for all agencies to replicate key public messages (similar to the COVID-19 process) on what actions to follow as well as what support is available especially leading to Waitangi Day where the long weekend will bring increased travel.
- 35. New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) (Darryn Webb) highlighted that local NZDF staff have proceeded to assist to local and regional requests for community support, but had not received any official request for help through the NCC (specifically, that there had not been any Ministerial direction despite media reports).
- 36. NZDF noted some confusion in the system as to whether this was a NEMA- or Aucklandled response. The Chair requested NEMA to circulate a short explanation of the locally led, nationally assisted structure to avoid any confusion.

Next Steps and Actions

- 37. The Watch Group agreed that ODESC does not need to meet at this stage. A further Watch Group will be scheduled Friday 3 February with a similar attendance. The Chair noted that triggers for escalation would be:
 - Multiple local authorities stretched for resources resulting in increased pressure for agencies, specifically NEMA; and
 - b. Resourcing commitments resulting from a significant concurrency/ prioritisation needed.

	Action items					
Action item	Para	Detail	Agency responsible	Status		
1	16	Consideration of risks/ an update on Auckland Airport security measures in light of manual processes.	CAA, AVSEC	Closed		
2	22	Discussions with Op BUBBLE members to determine impact of Severe Weather Event	DPMC	Closed		

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		on water treatment process considering the CO ₂ shortage.		
3	27	Track and create a collective perspective on resourcing pressures throughout AoG.	PSC, NEMA	Ongoing
4	33	Ensure coordinated policy advice to Ministers, including sharing briefings and information with all Ministers.	NEMA	Ongoing
5	34	Ensure PIM/ Comms contacts are in contact with Catherine Delore (DPMC) to coordinate communications.	All agencies	Closed
6	3	Consideration of strategic risks and implications for the second Watch Group on Friday 3 February 2023.	All agencies	Closed
7	36	Circulate a short explanation of the locally led, nationally assisted structure.	NEMA	Closed

s 9(2)(a)

Appendix One

Attendees

Agency	Attendee	
DPMC	Marika Hughes (Chair) s 9(2)(a) (Secretariat) Catherine Delore s 9(2)(a) Dan Eaton s 9(2)(a)	s 9(2)(a)
AVSEC	Karen Urwin	
CAA	Mike Hill	
Customs	Terry Brown	Euan Staples
DIA	Paul Barker	
EQC	Tina Mitchell	
FENZ	Brendan Nally	
HUD	Jo Hogg	
IRD	Peter Frawley	
MBIE	Adrian Regnault	
MetService	Chris Noble	Norm Henry
MFAT	Victoria Hallum	
MfE	Glenn Wigley	
MoD	Anton Youngman	
MoE	Vincent Fallon	
МоН	Jason Jones	Debbie Wing
МоТ	Bronwyn Turley	
MPI	Karen Adair	
MSD	Jayne Russell	John Cavanagh
NEMA	s 9(2)(g)(ii)	Charlie Blanch Sarah Holland
NZDF	s 6(a)	Darryn Webb
NZP	David Greig	
NZTE	Sanchia Yonge	
PSC	Erik Koed	
Reserve Bank	Chris McDonald	
Te Arawhiti	Nicola Ngawati	
Te Puni Kōkiri	Jessica Smith	
Te Whatu Ora	Chris Scahill	Debbie Sinclair-Paton
Treasury	Mark Blackmore	
Waka Kotahi	Paul Bagg	