DEPARTMENT OF THE
PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET
TE TARI O TE PIRIMIA ME TE KOMITI MATUA

24 June 2026

Ref: OIA-2025/26-0744

[redacted]

Tēnā koe [redacted],

Official Information Act request relating to Police request for national security system activation and ODESC escalation

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, which was received by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 20 May 2026. You requested:

> *I refer to DPMC's response to OIA-2025/26-0671 and to the released ODESC records concerning the Parliament protest.*
>
> *The released records state that the National Security System was activated at the request of New Zealand Police, as lead agency, and that the matter escalated directly to ODESC rather than through a Watch Group.*
>
> *However, the records released to date identify "Police" only at agency level. They do not identify the actual Police decision-maker, the record of request, the threshold applied, or the evidence relied upon to justify escalation to ODESC / National Security System coordination.*
>
> *Please provide the records identifying:*
>
> *1. the Police officer, Police executive, unit, or position title that requested activation of the National Security System / ODESC process;*
>
> *2. the date and time the request was made;*
>
> *3. whether the request was made verbally, by email, by formal briefing, by situation report, by phone call, or by another process;*
>
> *4. the written record of the request itself;*
>
> *5. the statutory, policy, operational, or National Security System threshold relied upon to escalate the matter directly to ODESC rather than through a Watch Group;*
>
> *6. the DPMC official, office, or business unit that received, assessed, approved, or acted on the Police request;*
>
> *7. any record showing whether the Prime Minister, Minister of Police, Speaker, Parliamentary Service, Cabinet Office, or any Ministerial office was informed of, consulted on, or involved in the activation request before the ODESC meeting;*
>
> *8. any record showing whether conflict-of-interest, independence, impartiality, or decision-integrity issues were considered in relation to the Police request, Police Commissioner involvement, Ministerial involvement, Speaker / Parliamentary Service involvement, or DPMC's coordination role;*

Executive Wing, Parliament Buildings, Wellington, New Zealand 6011
☎ 64 4 817 9698 www.dpmc.govt.nz

9. any record identifying who approved the ODESC meeting agenda, attendees, papers, and scope;

10. any record explaining why the issue escalated directly to ODESC rather than through a Watch Group;

11. any record showing what factual evidence was supplied to DPMC or ODESC to support escalation, including any incident summaries, intelligence assessments, threat assessments, situation reports, public-safety assessments, or legal-threshold documents.

For clarity, this request is not seeking Police operational tactics. It seeks the administrative record identifying who requested national-level coordination, who approved or actioned that request, what threshold was applied, and what evidence justified escalation.

If DPMC does not hold the Police-originating request or related records, please identify the agency or office believed to hold them and transfer the relevant part of this request under section 14 of the Official Information Act 1982.

Please also preserve all records concerning the activation request, ODESC escalation, National Security System coordination, Watch Group bypass issue, meeting agenda, attendee selection, briefing preparation, and any communications between DPMC, Police, Ministerial offices, Cabinet Office, the Speaker's office, or Parliamentary Service concerning the decision to convene ODESC.

Terminology:
At the time of the Parliament Protest, New Zealand's strategic crisis management arrangements were known as the National Security System (NSS). These are now referred to as the Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security (ODESC) system. Within DPMC, the Strategic Crisis Management Directorate (SCMD) are the stewards of the ODESC system and fulfil the ODESC secretariat function. In 2022, this team was known as the National Security System Directorate (NSSD).

In response to your request under the Act, specific records do not exist for most of your questions and therefore a section 18(e) refusal applies to parts [1], [3], [4], [7], [8] and [11].

However, to be as helpful and as transparent as possible, please find below a summary of how events unfolded for the Parliament Protest ODESC system activation, as well as an explanation of how the ODESC system activates for an actual or emerging crisis. This summary covers the remainder of your request (parts [2], [5], [6], [9] and [10]).

Parliament Protest ODESC System activation timeline of events:
The Chair of ODESC (acting DPMC CE Tony Lynch) and the Police Commissioner (Andrew Coster) were in regular contact from the start of the protest, as were members of DPMC's then-National Security System Directorate with Police counterparts. This contact was most often through phone conversations. At its earliest stages, the protest activity did not overtly meet the thresholds for consideration for ODESC system activation (detailed below). Individuals have a right to peaceful protest, and it was considered that Police as lead agency were able to manage their operational response through their District as per their usual process.

As the situation developed, and Police announced the establishment of a national operation to support the response to the Parliament protest and other protests around New Zealand on

15 February 2022, the Chair of ODESC proactively emailed the Police Commissioner that same day, offering to convene an ODESC meeting. A copy of this email is attached for you as Item [1].

A specific record does not exist of the Police Commissioner subsequently requesting the Chair of ODESC to activate the ODESC system nor is there a written record asking for an ODESC meeting to be held.

In practice, these requests are often made via a phone call or in-person discussions between the Chair ODESC and a Chief Executive. Requests can also be made at lower levels by officials and then considered by the Chair ODESC. A specific record capturing any request to activate the ODESC system is not common nor is there any formal requirement for a request to be made in writing. Once the decision is made to activate the ODESC system, and/or to convene an ODESC system meeting, the Strategic Crisis Management Directorate is informed (again, this is most often done verbally and no specific record is captured), and they make the necessary meeting preparation arrangements including notifying relevant Chief Executives (via email) that the ODESC system is activating.

The Parliament Protest ODESC system activation occurred on 16 February, the day after the Police Commissioner's request. As per usual practice, an email was sent to relevant Chief Executives advising them of the activation, and that an ODESC would convene the next day (17 February). The agenda for the ODESC meeting was sent with this email. A copy of this email is attached as Item [2].

Prior to the agenda being disseminated, a draft agenda was sent via email on 16 February 2022 to the Chair of ODESC for their review and approval. This included the scope of the ODESC meeting as well as suggested agencies to invite. A copy is attached as Item [3]. A record does not exist to capture the agenda being approved; again, this is commonly done verbally, and no written record is captured.

How the ODESC system is activated

A comprehensive 'all-hazards, all-threats' approach is taken when considering what may constitute a strategic crisis and when the strategic crisis response arrangements should be initiated (referred to as ODESC system activation). There is no one single definition used for 'crisis' in the New Zealand context; rather, a crisis is an event that meets one or more of the following criteria (collectively referred to as the 'triggers' to consider ODESC system activation for crisis response):

- Has unusual features of scale, nature, intensity or consequence;
- Conveys significant challenges for sovereignty or nationwide law and order;
- Suggests multiple or inter-related problems – creating national or systemic risk;
- Involves a high degree of uncertainty or complexity;
- Is beyond the ability of one lead agency to manage;
- Concurrency of events (impacting system resources); and/or
- Is an emerging issue that might meet the above criteria in the future and would benefit from proactive management.

The ODESC system is based on the expectation that a lead agency for a particular hazard, threat or risk will coordinate appropriate all-of-government operational activity to respond to emergencies and crises. As emerging or actual crisis occurs and depending on the scale/nature of the situations, agencies are expected to consult with either the Chair of ODESC (Chief Executive, DPMC), the Chair of Watch Group (Deputy Chief Executive, National Security and Resilience Group), or the Strategic Crisis Management Directorate, at the earliest opportunity to determine whether there is a need to initiate coordination through activation of the ODESC system. In practice, activation decisions are made by the Chair

ODESC; activation occurs in consultation with the lead agency and is taken on a case-by-case basis, as no one situation evolves in exactly the same way.

For the Parliament Protest ODESC system activation, the specific triggers which were considered were:

- Conveys significant challenges for sovereignty or nationwide law and order;
- Suggests multiple or inter-related problems – creating national or systemic risk; and
- Concurrency of events.

If you would like more information regarding the ODESC system and the administrative arrangements used to ensure agencies can come together flexibly and quickly in times of crisis, this can be found in the National Resilience System Handbook, which is available on the DPMC website.

Please note some information is withheld from the release documentation under the following sections of the Act:

- 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand
- 9(2)(c), to protect the health or safety of members of the public
- 9(2)(g)(ii), to prevent improper pressure or harassment.

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 outweigh 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 will be published on the DPMC 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.

Nāku noa, nā



Jeremy Clarke-Watson
Deputy Chief Executive
National Security and Resilience Group

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii) **[DPMC]**

From: Tony Lynch [DPMC]
Sent: Tuesday, 15 February 2022 1:04 pm
To: COSTER, Andrew
Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii) [DPMC]
Subject: ODESC matters

~~RESTRICTED~~ UNCLASSIFIED

Andy – in Brook's absence, Peter has asked that I chair ODESC as necessary – and we may well be convening at some near point should the Russia/Ukraine situation deteriorate.
Have been following obviously the challenges you and the Police team are facing with managing the Parliament protests – and have absolute confidence in Police as lead agency.
That said, should you feel at any point that there would be merit in calling an ODESC, for whatever reason, please don't hesitate to get in touch, and we can bring this together quickly (and would talk through who should be there).
I've copied in s9(2)(g)(ii) – if you'd see value in a call at any point too, please do get in touch.
Best for a challenging time!
Tony

Tony Lynch
Deputy Chief Executive
National Security Group
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
P +64 (4) 819 8235
M s9(2)(g)(ii)
E tony.lynch@dpmc.govt.nz



The information contained in this email message is for the attention of the intended recipient only and is not necessarily the official view or communication of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. If you are not the intended recipient you must not disclose, copy or distribute this message or the information in it. If you have received this message in error, please destroy the email and notify the sender immediately.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii) **[DPMC]**

From: s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii) [DPMC]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2022 4:02 pm
To: s6(a); Andrew.Coster@police.govt.nz; ^GCSB: Andrew Hampton; NZSIS: Rebecca Kitteridge; Ashley.Bloomfield@health.govt.nz; ^TRANSPORT: Peter Mersi; Christine.STEVENSON@Customs.govt.nz; Paul.James@dia.govt.nz; Tony Lynch [DPMC]; Carolyn.Tremain@mbie.govt.nz; chris.seed@mfat.govt.nz; Bridgman, Andrew; ^Parliament: Rafael Gonzalez-Montero; ^SSC: Peter Hughes; ^Transport: Bronwyn Turley; Jeremy.lightfoot@corrections.govt.nz; andrew.kibblewhite@justice.govt.nz
Cc: Strategic.Coordination@customs.govt.nz; emergencyresponse@dia.govt.nz; ^NZSOC: NZSOC; MBIENSS@mbie.govt.nz; dom.operations@mfat.govt.nz; HILLYER, Cecile (ISED); nhcc_spoc@health.govt.nz; s9(2)(c) @transport.govt.nz; s6(a) NCCC@Police.govt.nz; ^SSC: Helene Quilter; ^DIA: Paul Barker; @NSComms [DPMC]; Dan Eaton [DPMC]; Pip Swaney [DPMC]; Hayden Wilson [DPMC]; John Howard [DPMC]; Julian Grey [DPMC]; NSSD [DPMC]; Hamish Rogers [DPMC]; Oliver Barrett [DPMC]; Tania Warburton [DPMC]; s6(a) s9(2)(g)(ii) @mbie.govt.nz; s9(2)(g)(ii) @mbie.govt.nz; ^Defence: Bronwyn Evans-Kent; s9(2)(g)(ii) @defence.govt.nz; Jason Jones; Nick Paterson; Euan.Staples@customs.govt.nz; WILDY, Daniel (Dan); Tim.Blackmore@police.govt.nz; s6(a) s6(a) @gcsb.govt.nz; s6(a) @nzsis.govt.nz; s6(a) @nzsis.govt.nz s6(a) @nzsis.govt.nz; Katie.Wilson@justice.govt.nz; nss@corrections.govt.nz
Subject: Parliament Protest ODESC #1
Attachments: 4488762_2022-02-17 Parliament Protest ODESC#1 Agenda.DOCX

~~RESTRICTED~~ UNCLASSIFIED

Kia ora koutou Chief Executives,

Copied to agency Single Point of Contacts (SPOC) and Senior Officials,

This email is to advise you that at the request of New Zealand Police we are activating the National Security System in response to the ongoing protest at Parliament.

CEs are requested to attend an ODESC at ***1000hrs Thursday 17 February at Defence House***. The purpose of this ODESC will be to ensure agencies have a consistent understanding of the situation, ensure risks and implications are identified and appropriately managed, and to consider any communications issues. This ODESC will be held at RESTRICTED, and an agenda is attached.

The following agencies are requested to attend:

- DIA
- Department of Corrections
- DPMC
- GCSB
- MBIE
- MFAT
- MoD
- MoH
- MoJ
- MoT
- NZCS
- NZDF

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

NZSIS
Police
Parliamentary Service
PSC

An invitation will be sent shortly with specific details, including COVID-19-related requirements for entry into Defence House.

To note, we will be treating this response as a concurrent event within the context of the COVID-19 framework, and as such will be using the following guidance for response activities as discussed at ODESC in December 2020:

a. **Prioritise preservation of life** – Any immediate threat to human life caused by a concurrent event should be prioritised over the possible COVID-19 harm to public health.

b. **Ensure public health mitigations are in place** – As much as is reasonably practical, all efforts should be made to ensure mitigations are in place to limit any negative impacts to public health. This may include opting for technological solutions rather than personal interactions, when appropriate.

c. **Provide an agile approach to response** – Existing response plans should be utilised where suitable, and modified when necessary, to ensure the desired system wide outcomes are achieved. This may require novel approaches, partnerships and resources.

d. **Ensure early, consistent and transparent communications** – Decisions need be clearly articulated across Government, stakeholders and the wider community. Consistent messaging should be delivered to the public, especially when a decision may otherwise confuse the public or require their immediate action.

e. **Ensure a culturally appropriate response** - Appropriate community, cultural and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership considerations should be factored into decision making and communications.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Ngā mihi,
s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)
Principal Advisor
National Security Systems Directorate
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

P s9(2)(g)(ii)
M s9(2)(g)(ii)
E s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)@dpmc.govt.nz

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii) **[DPMC]**

From: s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii) [DPMC]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2022 11:57 am
To: Tony Lynch [DPMC]
Cc: NSSD [DPMC]
Subject: RE: For review Parliament Protest ODESC agenda

My apologies Tony. Rafael Gonzalez-Montero Chief Executive Parliamentary Service would also be invited.

Ngā mihi,
s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)
Principal Advisor
National Security Systems Directorate
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

P s9(2)(g)(ii)
M s9(2)(g)(ii)
E s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)@dpmc.govt.nz

From: s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii) [DPMC]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2022 11:54 am
To: Tony Lynch [DPMC] <Tony.Lynch@dpmc.govt.nz>
Cc: 'nssd@dpmc.govt.nz' <nssd@dpmc.govt.nz>
Subject: For review Parliament Protest ODESC agenda
Importance: High

~~RESTRICTED~~ UNCLASSIFIED

Kia ora Tony,

Please find attached for your review a draft agenda for tomorrow's ODESC regarding the Parliament Protest.

At this stage, we intend to invite the SIB agencies as well as MoT, MoH, DIA, and PSC. The Police Commissioner may also consider inviting Department of Corrections, and Ministry of Justice, if he considers that significant arrests (and subsequently court processing etc.) may occur.

Additionally, we consider it appropriate to hold this ODESC meeting virtually to align with current COVID building protocols however, as you know, these can be overridden for National Security System activations.

Ngā mihi,
s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)
Principal Advisor
National Security Systems Directorate
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

P s9(2)(g)(ii)
M s9(2)(g)(ii)
E s6(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)@dpmc.govt.nz



Released under the Official Information Act 1982