



4th December 2024

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Ref: OIA-2024/25-0371

Dear [Redacted]

Official Information Act request relating to staff restructuring at GNS Science

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 22 October 2024. You requested:

“...Copies any reports, documents, memoranda, correspondence, legal advice or emails, both internal and external, that the DPMC - including the National Emergency Management Agency - holds in respect to the recent staff restructuring at GNS Science and its implications.

This includes briefings to relevant ministers of the change, along with communications with any and all outside parties.”

Under section 15A of the Act, the time frame for responding to your request was extended by 10 working days. This was because consultations were needed before a decision could be made on your request. Following this extension, I am now in a position to respond.

Information to be released

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed below, subject to information being withheld as noted. Please note that Items 1 and 6 are provided as extracts of in scope information from two documents entitled *Notes on GAP Meeting*, dated respectively 18 July 2024 and 14 October 2024. The relevant grounds under which information has been withheld from the other four items below are:

- section 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of individuals
- section 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the confidentiality of advice tendered by or to Ministers and officials
- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion
- section 9(2)(g)(ii), to prevent improper pressure or harassment.

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	18/07/2024	Extract of notes on GAP meeting	Release as extract per s16(1)(e), some information withheld under s9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i).
2	30/09/2024	Email with attachment (GNS Slide Pack for Geonet GeoNet Steering Group – see below)	Release in part – some information withheld under s9(2)(g)(i), some information marked as out of scope.
3	03/10/2024	Internal NEMA email	Release in part, some information withheld under s9(2)(a), s9(2)(f)(iv), and s9(2)(g)(i); some information marked as out of scope.

4	07/10/2024	Memo to NEMA Executive Leadership Team	Release in part, some information withheld under s9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i).
5	10/10/2024	Email with attachment (Item 4 above)	Release in part - some information withheld under s9(2)(a), s9(2)(g)(i), and s9(2)(g)(ii); some information marked as out of scope.
6	14/10/2024	Extract of notes on GAP meeting	Release as extract per s16(1)(e).

Information to be withheld

There is additional information covered by your request that I have decided to withhold in full under section 9(2)(ba)(i) of the Act – to protect the supply of similar information in the future.

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	30/09/2024	GNS Slide Pack for Geonet GeoNet Steering Group (attachment to email, see Item 2 above)	Withhold in full under section 9(2)(ba)(i).

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 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,



**Stefan Weir
Chief of Staff**

Extract of in-scope information from document: Notes on GAP Meeting, dated 18 July 2024

Response to Budget '24

- s 9(2)(g)(i) [redacted]
- A bit of important context:
 - NEMA had limited ability to engage with the stakeholder process that developed this. s 9(2)(g)(i) [redacted] NEMA did, however, convey that our highest priority is information for life safety warnings, and in particular for tsunamis.
 - s 9(2)(g)(i) [redacted]
- NEMA has indicated that we are not wedded to the 'how' as long as the 'what' is right. ie as long as the content, speed, accuracy and uptime of advice meets requirements, we are open to how GNS/GeoNet delivers that (panels, Duty Officers, NGMC etc). Work is required from NEMA here to clarify and prioritise those requirements; this then dictates what options might be viable. s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i) [redacted]

Internal notes and questions for NEMA that would help our stance/response:

- Discussions have highlighted the risk of losing specialist science skills, and emphasised GeoNet's reliance on the wider expertise of the GNS science staff 'ecosystem'. What is the right balance for GeoNet funding to support GNS retention of this science expertise, especially if this is at the expense of life safety 24/7 capabilities and their speed/resilience? **(possible talking point, pending our stance)**
- What kind of up-time/resilience does NEMA expect from various GeoNet services? Will the proposed changes meet them?

From: [Lara Bland \[NEMA\]](#)
To: [Thomas Wilson \[NEMA\]](#); [Wendy Wright \[NEMA\]](#); [Benita Murray \[NEMA\]](#)
Subject: Slide_Pack_SG_1_Oct_Lara comments.pdf
Date: Monday, 30 September 2024 4:37:08 pm
Attachments: [Slide_Pack_SG_1_Oct_Lara comments.pdf](#)

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Hi team,

FYI here are my notes against the slide pack for tomorrow's meeting (included as comments).

My main points will be:

- **Out of Scope**
[Redacted]
- Probing the move of some GeoNet-specific positions into roles that take on shared scope with other GNS work. s 9(2)(g)(i)
[Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

Out of Scope
[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Cheers
Lara

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From: [Thomas Wilson \[NEMA\]](#)
To: [John Price \[NEMA\]](#); [Jenna Rogers \[NEMA\]](#)
Cc: [Wendy Wright \[NEMA\]](#); [Benita Murray \[NEMA\]](#); [Lara Bland \[NEMA\]](#); [Rima Khorshid \[NEMA\]](#)
Subject: Quick and dirty report back from GeoNet Steering Group meeting on Tuesday
Date: Thursday, 3 October 2024 9:01:06 am
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

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Kia ora JP and Jenna

Out of Scope

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

General

1. s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]
2. The NEMA team conveyed to the Steering Group that considerable agency time was being devoted to the challenges on funding and operational elements of GeoNet, including CE and DCE time. Reassurance we are taking these issues very seriously and GNS is a valued partner should be repeated messages from NEMA.

Specifics

3. **Out of Scope** [Redacted]
 - [Redacted] s 9(2)(g)(i) [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - b. NEMA (TW) noted it may be time to consider a more 'transformational' change to the GeoNet and particularly the NGMC operating model may need to be considered – given changes to:
 - i. Funding
 - ii. Rapid and substantial technology change in this field
 - iii. Changing end-user requirements

4. **Out of Scope** [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]

5. The Steering Group was not confident the proposed revised (reduced) programme management structure for GeoNet (driven by the GNS restructure) would provide sufficient leadership capability or capacity during the current and upcoming period of change:

- a. Steering Group is going to write to the GeoNet Advisory Group (GAP)

Out of Scope

[Redacted]

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Out of Scope

Ngā mihi

Tom

Thomas (Tom) Wilson, PhD ([he/him](#)) | Chief Science Advisor

National Emergency Management Agency Te Rākau Whakamarumarū

Mobile: **s 9(2)(a)** | www.civildefence.govt.nz

Level 2 Justice and Emergency Services Precinct, 40 Lichfield Street, Christchurch 8011, New Zealand

Empowering communities before, during and after emergencies.



My position is part time (0.5 FTE) and I typically work on Tuesday and Wednesday, with a floating half-day. If anything urgent, please call me on my NEMA mobile: **s 9(2)(a)**.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



Memorandum

To	NEMA Executive Leadership Team	Prepared by	Wendy Wright, Tom Wilson, Lara Bland and Benita Murray
From	NEMA GeoNet Steering Group Members (Wendy Wright, Tom Wilson, Lara Bland and Benita Murray)	Date	7/10/2024
Title	GeoNet Steering Group (SG) Meeting Report and Key Implications for NEMA		

Purpose

- This memorandum summarises the key issues raised at the GeoNet Steering Group (SG) meeting on 1 October 2024, with a focus on preparing NEMA's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) for the upcoming GeoNet Advisory Panel (GAP) meeting. The content highlights NEMA's concerns regarding the operational impact of GNS's restructuring, ongoing funding constraints, and the strategic priorities for ensuring the continued delivery of life safety services. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Key Concerns

1. GNS Restructuring and Leadership Gaps

Context: As part of the GNS Financial Sustainability Change Programme (FSCP), the full-time GeoNet Programme Lead role has been disestablished, and the responsibilities will be split – partly covered by additional duties in an existing Science role, and partly by a function within the new Service Delivery Team.

NEMA's Position: The loss of a dedicated Programme Lead poses a significant risk to GeoNet's ability to manage its functions effectively. Given the complexity and operational demands of the GeoNet programme, having part-time leadership diminishes the focus and capacity needed to ensure the seamless delivery of critical services. s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i)

NEMA is concerned that this restructuring will weaken strategic engagement, stakeholder communication, and day-to-day operational oversight, all of which are essential for managing GeoNet's life safety outputs.

At the GAP meeting, NEMA should advocate for the reinstatement of a full-time, dedicated GeoNet Programme Lead with expertise in service delivery in operational environments, to ensure the integrity of operations and strategic oversight during this highly dynamic and critical time.

2. *User-Focussed Planning and Reporting to Support Funder Decision-making*

Context: To date, workplans and accompanying reporting have been presented in technical language. s 9(2)(g)(i)

NEMA's Position: Significant changes are required to how workplans and reports are presented, to enable effective governance. We welcome GNS signalling that these changes are in progress and encourage them to be prioritised, especially in light of the new funding structure that will require more prioritisation decisions and communication to Ministers.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

An increased need to understand GeoNet costs and products on a 'by user/funder' basis is already manifesting and it would be beneficial for GNS to consider how it can re-cast some of its information to support this need.

At the GAP meeting, NEMA should welcome the intention to improve reporting and planning and reiterate the need to convey the 'so what' for funders. NEMA should also note the increasing and pressing need to understand GeoNet costs and products on a 'by user/funder' basis

3. *Resource Allocation and Transparency*

Context: The SG meeting raised concerns about the lack of transparency around how resources are shared between GNS and GeoNet, particularly in cases where roles overlap or resources are shared. This raises questions about how funding is being allocated and whether GeoNet's resources are being diluted for other GNS functions. In the new environment, more transparency and auditability will be required.

NEMA's Position: Clear differentiation between GeoNet's operations and GNS's broader statutory roles (ie responsibility to provide hazard advice) is necessary to ensure that costs are attributed appropriately. There must also be transparency in how shared resources are allocated and tracked to ensure that GeoNet functions are not compromised or delayed by concurrent duties for GNS. Cost allocation between GNS and GeoNet should also be available.

At the GAP meeting, NEMA should advocate for a) clear delineation of what advice is provided under GNS responsibilities under legislation, and what is provided/funded through GeoNet and b) clarity on how resources 'shared' between GeoNet and GNS will function – both in terms of providing financial transparency and ensuring delivery of GeoNet deliverables.

4. *Funding Constraints and Service Continuity*

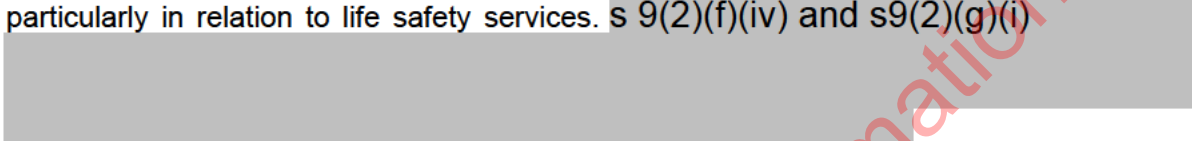
Context: GNS leadership had expressed hope for additional government funding to alleviate the constraints imposed by the FSCP. However, NEMA's position at the SG meeting was clear: s 9(2)(f)(iv) GeoNet must be prepared to operate within its current budget.

NEMA's Position: Given the current funding realities, NEMA's absolute priority from GeoNet is the continued reception of the rapid information that allows us to issue life safety warnings (tsunami and significant volcanic activity). There is an acknowledgment that some service degradation may occur, but NEMA requires assurances that critical services will be maintained. Products for situational awareness, and long term benefits to resilience are important, but secondary when set against the ability to issue timely effective warnings.

It may also be time to consider a transformational change to GeoNet's operating model, particularly within the National Geohazards Monitoring Centre (NGMC). This would involve rethinking how the programme is structured in light of the following:

- Funding constraints
- Rapid technological changes
- Shifting end-user requirements

Additionally, there was tension between stakeholder agencies over the outputs from GeoNet, particularly in relation to life safety services. s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i)



At the GAP Meeting, NEMA should push GNS to present a clear plan outlining how critical life safety services will be protected under current financial limitations, and what steps are being taken to address any potential degradation. NEMA should also note there is a ring-fenced \$6M/a allocation for enhanced geohazard monitoring – which we are grateful is administered by MBIE but is for delivery of services for the EM portfolio.


5. **Programme Management Structure Concerns**

Context: The Steering Group expressed doubts about whether the proposed reduced programme management structure for GeoNet, driven by the GNS restructuring, would provide the necessary leadership capability and capacity. This is a particular concern given the complexities of managing life safety services under constrained funding and resource environments.

NEMA's Position: The reduced programme management capacity may not be sufficient to handle the operational and strategic challenges facing GeoNet in the coming period. The current structure risks undermining the programme's ability to deliver critical services during a time of significant change.

At the GAP meeting, reinforce the need for a robust and capable programme management structure within GeoNet. NEMA should advocate for a stronger leadership framework to support the programme through this transitional phase.

6. s 9(2)(f)(iv)



s 9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Key Actions for the GeoNet Advisory Panel (GAP)

7. Acknowledge this has been a challenging time for GeoNet and GNS, who are one of NEMA's most valued partners. Also note considerable NEMA time has and is being devoted to the challenges on funding and operational elements of GeoNet, including CE and DCE time.
8. Restate that NEMA's absolute priority, when considering trade-offs, is information for life safety warnings – tsunami and large scale volcanic activity. Acknowledge the value and contribution to resilience other products make. s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i)
[Redacted]
9. Leadership Capacity: Advocate for the reinstatement of a full-time, dedicated GeoNet Programme Lead. The addition to a science role may not provide sufficient capacity to manage the programme's operational and strategic demands, particularly in light of GeoNet's current challenges and the complex requirements of life safety services.
10. User-focussed Planning and Reporting: We welcome GNS signalling that changes are in progress to make plans and reports more meaningful to the reader by connecting them to user/funder outcomes. We encourage this change to be prioritised, given the new funding structure that will require informed prioritisation decisions and communication to Ministers/boards.

In addition the need to understand GeoNet costs and products on a 'by user/funder' basis is already manifesting and it would be beneficial for GNS to consider how it can re-cast some of its information to support this need.

11. Resource Allocation and Transparency: Request greater transparency and accountability of how resources and funding are shared between GeoNet and GNS. NEMA requires assurances that critical GeoNet functions are prioritised and not diluted by overlapping responsibilities or resource-sharing arrangements. We acknowledge that complexities and interdependencies exist; we need to simplify this, not exacerbate it.
12. Funding and Service Continuity: Request a clear plan from GNS outlining how core life safety services, such as warning advice, will be maintained under current budget constraints. With no additional funding expected in the near term, NEMA should push for a realistic strategy to mitigate potential service degradation and secure the continuity of essential services. NEMA is very keen to work with GNS (and other partners) develop a plan. This is also an opportunity to challenge GNS to consider what a more transformational change might look like.

In addition, NEMA notes there are multiple funders with different priorities for GeoNet. ^{s 9(2)(g)(ii)}

[REDACTED] We note there is \$6m/a allocation ring-fenced for Enhanced Geohazard Monitoring services, primarily to provide faster and more reliable tsunami warnings. This should be reflected in prioritisation going forward.

13. Programme Management Structure: Raise concerns about the adequacy of the reduced programme management structure following GNS's restructuring. NEMA should advocate for a stronger leadership and delivery framework to ensure GeoNet has the capacity to deliver critical services effectively during this period of transition and beyond.

14. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Conclusion

15. The challenges facing GeoNet, particularly the effects of GNS's restructuring and ongoing funding constraints, present significant risks to the continued delivery of critical life safety services. NEMA's concerns, including s 9(2)(g)(i) [REDACTED] tensions between different funders' priorities, transparency in resource allocation, s 9(2)(g)(i) [REDACTED] should be addressed urgently. s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i)

[REDACTED] The upcoming GAP meeting is crucial for ensuring that these issues are resolved, and that GeoNet's ability to deliver essential services is protected in the long term.

From: [Lara Bland \[NEMA\]](#)
To: [Jenna Rogers \[NEMA\]](#); [Dave Gawn \[NEMA\]](#)
Cc: [Wendy Wright \[NEMA\]](#); [Thomas Wilson \[NEMA\]](#); [Benita Murray \[NEMA\]](#); [Rima Khorshid \[NEMA\]](#); [John Price \[NEMA\]](#)
Subject: Report-back from GeoNet Steering Group and points for upcoming GAP
Date: Thursday, 10 October 2024 2:31:29 pm
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[Memorandum - GeoNet Steering Group Q1 Meeting 01.10.24 Report Back.docx](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

Good afternoon all,

Further to Tom’s quick report below, please find attached a more fulsome report of the main issues, and the proposed discussion points for the GAP meeting (which Jenna and I will attend on Monday). Many thanks to Benita for putting this together and to Tom and Wendy for their review.

Once the papers for the GAP arrive, we will have a better idea of what else might be raised.

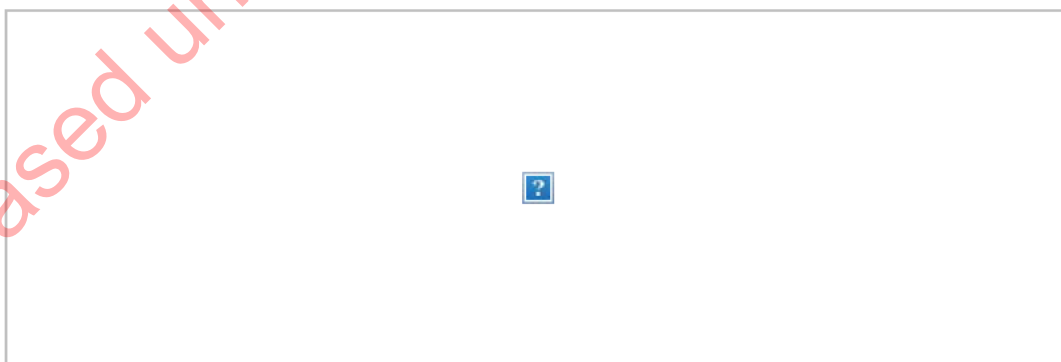
Jenna, Sydean has managed to squeeze us in a catch up on Monday morning to touch base prior to the meeting.

Thanks, and please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Lara

Lara Bland Principal Advisor, Hazard Risk Management | Risk & Recovery Unit
National Emergency Management Agency Te Rākau Whakamarumarū
 Direct Dial: **s 9(2)(a)** | Mobile: **s 9(2)(a)** | www.civildefence.govt.nz
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Emergencies can happen any time, anywhere. You can take steps to be prepared



I work 0.9 with alternate Fridays as non-working days. My apologies if I am not available/responsive on those days.

From: Thomas Wilson [NEMA] **s 9(2)(g)(ii)**

Sent: Thursday, October 3, 2024 9:01 AM

To: John Price [NEMA] s 9(2)(g)(ii) ; Jenna Rogers [NEMA]
s 9(2)(g)(ii)
Cc: Wendy Wright [NEMA] s 9(2)(g)(ii) ; Benita Murray [NEMA]
s 9(2)(g)(ii) ; Lara Bland [NEMA] s 9(2)(g)(ii) ; Rima
Khorshid [NEMA] s 9(2)(g)(ii)
Subject: Quick and dirty report back from GeoNet Steering Group meeting on Tuesday

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Kia ora JP and Jenna

Out of Scope

General

1. s 9(2)(g)(i)
2. The NEMA team conveyed to the Steering Group that considerable agency time was being devoted to the challenges on funding and operational elements of GeoNet, including CE and DCE time. Reassurance we are taking these issues very seriously and GNS is a valued partner should be repeated messages from NEMA.

Specifics

3. **Out of Scope**
s 9(2)(g)(i)
So we are well justified having a clear NEMA position on what is essential for us.
b. NEMA (TW) noted it may be time to consider a more 'transformational' change to the GeoNet and particularly the NGMC operating model may need to be considered – given changes to:
 - i. Funding
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 - a. Steering Group is going to write to the GeoNet Advisory Group (GAP)
6. **Out of Scope**

Out of Scope

Ngā mihi

Tom

Thomas (Tom) Wilson, PhD ([he/him](#)) | Chief Science Advisor
National Emergency Management Agency Te Rākau Whakamarumarū
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My position is part time (0.5 FTE) and I typically work on Tuesday and Wednesday, with a floating half-day. If anything urgent, please call me on my NEMA mobile: s 9(2)(a) .

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Extract of in-scope information from document: Notes on GAP Meeting, dated 14 October 2024

1. Financial Sustainability Change Process

- a. Acknowledge this has been a **challenging time for GeoNet and GNS**, who are one of NEMA's most valued partners. Also note considerable NEMA time is being devoted to the challenges of GeoNet, including CE and DCE time.
- b. advocate for the reinstatement of a **full-time, dedicated GeoNet Programme Lead** with expertise in service delivery (needs requisite focus, capacity, skills given challenges and innate complexity)
- c. advocate for a) clear delineation of what advice is provided under **GNS responsibilities under legislation**, and what is **provided/funded through GeoNet** and b) clarity on how resources 'shared' between GeoNet and GNS will function – both in terms of **providing financial transparency and ensuring delivery** of GeoNet deliverables.

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