



11 December 2024

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Ref: OIA-2024/25-0410

Dear [REDACTED]

### Official Information Act request relating to He Whenua Taurikura Funding

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 5 November 2024. You requested:

*Under the OIA may I please request all briefings, reports, advice and similar on the risks of ceasing to fund He Whenua Taurikura research centre.*

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

### Information being released

Please find attached a copy of a memorandum in scope of your request titled '*PCVE Research Funding – operating model*'. Some information is withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- s6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand;
- 6(b)(i), to protect the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government;
- s9(2)(b)(ii), to protect the commercial position of the person who supplied the information, or who is the subject of the information;
- s9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the confidentiality of advice tendered by or to Ministers and officials; and
- s9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

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



Bridget White  
**Executive Director, National Security**

# Memorandum

## PCVE RESEARCH FUNDING – OPERATING MODEL

To	Ben King, Chief Executive DPMC	Prepared by	Rachel Sutherland
From	Bridget White, Executive Director NSG	Date	2/10/2024

### Purpose

1. This memo provides advice and recommendations for you on the most effective and efficient operating model for use of DPMC funding for research on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

s9(2)(f)(iv)

### Background

3. The He Whenua Taurikura National Centre of Research Excellence was launched in June 2022 by the then Prime Minister, in response to recommendation 14 of the RCOI<sup>1</sup>. The Centre aims to bring together research organisations and institutes, iwi, civil society organisations, and government to research preventing and countering violent extremism, with a focus on understanding diversity and promoting social cohesion.
4. The Centre is funded from a non-departmental appropriation managed by DPMC, which prior to Budget 24 decisions consisted of:
  - a) Operational funding – for the running of the Centre, primarily staff salaries; and
  - b) Research funding – for a variety of research, including projects and student scholarships.
5. For the last two years, this funding has been provided to a charitable trust established by DPMC specifically to enable the operation of the Centre independently from government. The Trustees, appointed by DPMC, also operate as the Governance Board for the Centre. The operating costs of the Trust (totalling approximately \$150k, including fees for Board members and other expenses) have previously been separately funded from DPMC baseline. DPMC's relationship regarding the Centre is with the Trust.
6. The Trust has a three-year contract in place with Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), who host and operate the Centre. VUW are the employers of the Centre staff, including the sole current Director of the Centre.
7. All of the funding to date for the Centre has been provided by DPMC, through the Trust.

<sup>1</sup> The Centre's creation directly responded to RCOI recommendation 14, for the government to establish a programme to fund independent New Zealand-specific PCVE research.

8. Prior to Budget 24, the planned ongoing funding for the Centre was \$1,325,000 per year. This was the same as the funding for the Centre provided by DPMC for the 2024 academic year.
9. In Budget 24 decisions announced on 30 May 2024, future funding has been reduced to \$500,000 per year. This change in funding has taken effect from 2024/25, corresponding to the start of the 2025 academic year. This necessitates decisions on how this revised funding level should be spent most efficiently and effectively in future years to deliver the highest possible value PCVE research.

### **System needs for research in preventing and countering violent extremism are enduring, but have changed since the HWT Centre was established**

10. High quality, evidence-based, current research insights are crucial for the counter-terrorism system to continuously inform our understanding of preventing and countering violent extremism, as we evolve our prevention approaches and build our capabilities. s9(2)(g)(i)  
[REDACTED]
11. The agencies of the Counter-Terrorism Coordination Committee (CTCC) have identified several areas of research that are priorities for building understanding in prevention to continue advancing our system capabilities, particularly in disengagement, emerging technology, and online responses.
12. There are practical opportunities for PCVE researchers to work much more closely alongside operational agencies (and organisations outside government) to support key prevention work. For example, over the last year operational agencies have identified working together to measure effectiveness of risk-assessment models as a priority, and community / civil society projects funded the PCVE Fund would benefit from technical expertise and evaluation.
13. There is also a need to support credible commentators and academics to provide expertise and cultivate and sustain an informed public conversation on terrorism and violent extremism issues. This is a key part of the 'Understand' pillar of our national *Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy*, building understanding of these complex issues as well as supporting community resilience. The Israel / Gaza conflict, ongoing Coronial Inquiries, and the recent release of the NZSIS's annual Security Threat Environment assessment are all examples of opportunities for researchers with expertise in PCVE to provide valuable evidence-based public contributions, based on work we can support with this funding.
14. New Zealand is now participating more actively within international working groups in countering violent extremism, s6(b)  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Research outputs from New Zealand would be highly valued by this and other international forums we participate in.
15. More broadly, the nature of the threat has shifted substantially. The international terrorism environment has significantly deteriorated and is increasingly unstable, and domestically we face an increasingly complex and demanding violent extremism threat. There is an increasing trend of mixed, unstable, or unclear ideologies, and a wide range of individual motivations in play, making assessment of threat difficult at times. Having New Zealand-specific research and a strong evidence base is central to addressing our current and future challenges.
16. s6(a)  
[REDACTED] As we refocus effort to continue develop our capabilities to meet these challenges within a more resource-limited fiscal environment, we need to sharpen the focus of PCVE research to deliver high-quality evidence-based understanding and insights to inform our national approaches.

## We have considered a range of PCVE research operating model options

17. Final decisions regarding the use of this non-departmental appropriation from 2024/25 onwards rest with you as the Chief Executive of DPMC. Our initial analysis in support of this identified a range of potential future operating model options for PCVE research:

- Option 1: Maintain current Centre-based research model.
- Option 2: Research / scholarship programme administered by the current HWT Centre.
- Option 3: Research / scholarship programme administered:
  - 3(a) – by the HWT Trust, i.e. the Governance Board.
  - 3(b) – elsewhere outside government [**recommended option**].
  - 3(c) – by an appropriate government agency.

18. Whilst there are other key stakeholders in this decision (most notably VUW and the Centre's Director and staff), under the current operating model DPMC's direct relationship is with the Trust and Governance Board.

19. These options were therefore provided to the Chair of the Board on 12 June (DPMC 4890145), seeking the Board's input and advice on these and any other options that they may consider to be viable. The Board's advice was received on 30 August<sup>2</sup>. Based on this advice, our subsequent analysis is set out below.

### Option 1: Maintain current Centre-based research model

20. Our initial analysis following Budget 24 decisions in May was that \$500,000 per annum is very unlikely to be sufficient to maintain a credible National Centre of Research Excellence.

s9(2)(b)(ii)

23. Given current operating costs alone exceed the available ongoing funding of \$500,000, we assess that continuation of the Centre-based research model is unfeasible without either significant additional research funding sources and/or very significant staffing reductions.

24. The Board's advice is consistent with our assessment, although they note that retaining the existing National Centre of Research Excellence model (with its current broad scope) would be their preferred option, if funding levels were higher.

25. In line with the Board's advice, our view remains that this option is unfeasible. No significant additional research funding sources have been proposed and it is very uncertain that sufficient funding could be obtained in the current fiscal environment to enable a strong and credible National Centre of Research Excellence to be maintained.

26. This operating model is **not recommended**.

<sup>2</sup> The full Governance Board includes Andy George (CT Strategic Coordinator, NSG). Given his conflict of interest as a DPMC employee, Andy was not involved in any Board discussions or decisions regarding their advice on these operating model options.

<sup>3</sup> Per the Centre's financial reports for January-August 2024.

## Option 2: Research / scholarship programme administered by the current HWT Centre

27. An alternative option provided to the Board for their consideration and advice was to retain the Centre but reduce its remit to concentrate solely on delivering and administering a contestable research and scholarships grant fund<sup>4</sup>. This would be a narrower scope than the broader additional roles currently undertaken by the Centre, which has primarily focused on in-house research projects, supporting a network of research associates, and undertaking related activities such as creating a podcast series.
28. In essence second option would create an *He Whenua Taurikura Research and Scholarship Fund*, administered externally to DPMC by the Centre. This would maintain the existing National Centre of Research Excellence construct and brand, directly supported by DPMC, with the potential – if additional funding were found – to expand the Centre’s role and profile in the future.
29. The Board’s advice was that this is their preferred option and the one that should be considered and developed. They noted that the funding for 2025 and beyond will require a rethinking of FTE to align with the budget. The Board proposed:

*“[The Option 2] operating model is best supported by the Centre being hosted by Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka through a contract directly between DPMC and the University. This is a standard model that the university is very familiar with. ... It is also noted that the Centre, in keeping with other University centres, would also be seen as a facilitator and coordinator of research activity rather than be seen as solely responsible for the majority of the delivery of the research.”*

30. The Board acknowledged in its advice that there have been particular challenges that the HWT Centre, the Board and DPMC have faced that have made it more difficult for the Centre to fully undertake its work. However, the Board also expressed confidence the Centre is well positioned to facilitate research of deep significance to New Zealand and that aligns with international research calls.
31. The Board’s advice was that under this option *“the funding for 2025 and beyond will require a rethinking of FTE to align with budget”*. In line with this, we assess that if very significant reductions were made to Centre staffing levels to ensure the majority of funding goes directly to supporting PCVE research and scholarships, Option 2 could be a viable operating model.
32. However, we assess that this model is not the most effective and efficient use of the limited public funding available to deliver high-quality outputs from PCVE researchers across the country.
33. To date, the Centre has focused on directly delivering research projects, primarily undertaken in-house by Centre staff or through its network of selected research associates. The Centre has expanded the breadth of PCVE research being conducted in New Zealand through the scholarships programme and support of early career researchers through their Manu Taki roopu, whilst the research associates network has broadened the range of disciplines and academics conducting research in this area. Although not all PCVE academics in New Zealand have been invited to be part of this network or supported by the Centre, this community of practice has been a positive initiative and would be a loss if it were discontinued.
34. Whilst acknowledging this considerable progress, DPMC raised several concerns to the Board in March 2024 regarding the HWT Centre’s approaches:

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<sup>4</sup> The key purposes we focused on for funding any future operating model are effectively and efficiently delivering contestable research funding, as recommended by the Royal Commission of Inquiry, and student (likely primarily Master’s) scholarship funding. These are the first and third of the nine purposes of the current HWT Trust, and hence of the current HWT Centre.

- There are some existing and established academics with a range of expertise in the field of countering terrorism and violent extremism who seem to not yet view the Centre as a mechanism to support their work.
  - s9(2)(g)(i)
- Ensuring that the Centre's work is focused entirely on research directly related to countering terrorism and violent extremism.

s9(2)(g)(i)

- Providing and facilitating advice to government and other groups and organisations on preventing and countering violent extremism in New Zealand, with a subsequent condition that not less than a quarter (25%) of the research funding being provided by DPMC in 2024 is used by the Centre to directly respond to the research needs of agencies, through fully open, transparent, and contestable processes.

s9(2)(g)(i)

35. Based on the Board's advice and our experience of working with the HWT Centre since its inception in June 2022, we assess that a future operating model based around the existing Centre working closely with DPMC and other government agencies to administer an open, contestable research / scholarship programme is potentially viable. However, this would require very significant changes to the Centre's approaches, to transition from the current self-directed in-house research model to a focus on supporting and enabling PCVE research that is conducted by others across the country, based on priorities to be agreed in partnership with DPMC. It is unclear whether the level of change this would entail is feasible.

s9(2)(b)(ii)

**We assess that this option is not the most effective and efficient use of public funding for the ongoing delivery of a contestable PCVE research and scholarship fund.**

**This operating model is not recommended. No further funding for the Centre should be provided by DPMC and all other direct DPMC support to the Centre should end on 31 December 2024.**

To use the Centre's 2024 underspend most effectively and support staff transition, DPMC should seek to establish a time-bound contract with VUW for 2025 for existing Centre staff to deliver an HWT PCVE Research Programme, with outputs agreed with and monitored by DPMC. See paras 62-64 below.

**Option 3: Research / scholarship programme administered elsewhere**

37. The final set of options provided to the Board for their consideration and advice (Options 3-5 in the letter sent to them) were all variations of a model based around DPMC funding an external organisation to administer a PCVE Research Fund supporting New Zealand-specific research on preventing and countering violent extremism.

38. The PCVE Research Fund would be hosted and administered externally to DPMC by either: (a) the HWT Trust, i.e. the Governance Board; (b) elsewhere outside government; or (c) an appropriate government agency.

➤ **Option 3(a), fund administered by the HWT Trust (the Governance Board)**

39. The previous DPMC Chief Executive decided that operating funding for the Trust and Governance Board would not be provided by DPMC beyond 2023/24. No other source of funding for the Board has been identified.

40. The Board has previously discussed and endorsed (subsequently reiterated in their recent advice to DPMC) that the Trust should be disestablished.

41. Neither we nor the Board support this option. This operating model is **not recommended**.

➤ **Option 3(b), fund administered elsewhere outside government**

42. Under this model, future DPMC funding for PCVE research would be granted to an external research-related institution (e.g. a New Zealand university or the Royal Society) to administer the PCVE Research Fund. This is a relatively common operating model for funding of research, both within New Zealand and internationally.

43. Whilst this option would end the National Centre of Research Excellence model, it maintains a level of independence from government as well as ensuring close linkages to the research community and an ability for a range of PCVE research projects to be supported across the country, with an open, transparent process for allocation of funding.

44. The costs associated with this model would depend on the provider chosen and the details of the service they are providing, but would be lower than the current full National Centre of Research Excellence model.

45. The Board did not comment on or provide support for this approach, although (in discussing Option 2) their advice did cover how a contestable research grants fund might best operate:

*“Given the quantum of the funding there is concern on whether contestable funding will be of a level to ensure sufficient interest and quality of research proposals. It needs to be considered if Request for Proposal calls should be limited to one theme area each year determined by the research committee in consultation with stakeholders or if commissioning should be explored.”*

46. To ensure DPMC funding is used to best effect to deliver high-quality evidence-based understanding and insights to inform our national approaches, DPMC should coordinate the setting of annual research priorities and have some form of a significant role in the process to select the research projects to be funded. Further advice will be provided on this if this operating model is your preferred approach.

**We assess that this option is the most effective and efficient use of public funding for the ongoing delivery of a contestable PCVE research and scholarship fund.**

**This is our recommended future operating model.** s9(2)(f)(iv)



➤ **Option 3(c), fund administered by an appropriate government agency**

47. It would not be feasible for DPMC or another CTCC agency working directly on PCVE issues to host and administer the Fund, as this activity does not fit within our or their core roles or expertise, and in the current climate of staffing and reprioritisation pressures, agencies are unlikely to be willing to take this on.
48. However, it could be feasible for an agency with expertise in research and/or fund administration to host the Fund, such as the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) or the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). This would be a similar model to the Safer Communities Fund and the PCVE Fund, which are both administered on DPMC's behalf by DIA.
49. The Board did not support this approach. Whilst their reasoning is not set out, from previous discussions with them it is likely that Board members had concerns that this operating model would result in a loss of research independence.
50. We agree with this view – there are practical and perception disadvantages to having a government agency making decisions on which PCVE research to fund, and in maintaining oversight and coordination of research projects. We would almost certainly lose any external thought leadership or community of practice of researchers under this option, and we know there are researchers in this field who would have significant reservations about being funded directly by government.
51. Neither we nor the Board support this option. This operating model is **not recommended**.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

52. Subject to your agreement to end DPMC's funding and direct support for the Centre, the key steps for transition from the current Centre-based PCVE research model s9(2)(f)(iv) are detailed below:
- a) Disestablishment of the Trust and Governance Board (underway);
  - b) Ending DPMC's funding and direct support to the Centre (by 31 December 2024);
  - c) Agreeing a contract with VUW for an HWT PCVE Research Programme for 2025; and
- s9(2)(f)(iv)

**Disestablishment of the Trust and Governance Board**

53. Having previously discussed and endorsed that the Trust should be disestablished, the Board reiterated in their recent advice to DPMC that the formal process for this should be started immediately to ensure a smooth transition. Work is underway, led by DPMC in conjunction with the Board members as Trustees, to complete this as soon as possible and at the latest by 31 December 2024.
54. Under clause 11.3(e) of the Deed of Trust, the written approval of the Chief Executive of DPMC is required in order for the Trust to be wound up. I recommend that you approve this, subject to the Trustees passing a resolution seeking to wind up the Trust under clause 14.1 and them requesting this from you in writing.

s9(2)(b)(ii)

56. There is significant value in retaining the Governance Board for a further three months to provide advice and support through the process of the disestablishment of the HWT Centre. The Board will therefore remain in place until the end of December 2024, paid from the existing

funding held by the Trust (which are sufficient to cover this as well as the costs associated with the Trust's disestablishment).

57. All remaining Trust funds should, prior to the Trust being wound up, be transferred s9(2)(f) [redacted] for use in 2025 or returned to DPMC. (iv)

#### Ending DPMC's funding and direct support to the Centre

58. No further DPMC funding will be provided for the operation of the Centre and DPMC's direct support to its operation will cease on 31 December 2024. DPMC will work with the Governance Board and VUW (as host of the Centre and the employer of Centre staff) to manage this transition and enable VUW to support its staff. This will include developing a transition plan and communications plan.
59. The Trust's existing Partnership Agreement with VUW for hosting and funding of the Centre is for three years and expires on 31 December 2025 unless terminated earlier. This Partnership Agreement will be voided with VUW as part of the process of disestablishing the Trust, and contractual arrangements will be put in place as necessary between DPMC and VUW to cover until the end of 2024, in the absence of the Trust.
60. If VUW wishes to maintain the Centre beyond 2024 (funded from elsewhere), DPMC should seek to enable this if possible, for example by permitting their ongoing use of the He Whenua Taurikura name and brand.
61. Whilst the Centre – should it continue to exist – would be eligible to be considered for receiving funding for research projects s9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted], it would not receive preference over other research groups.

#### Agreeing a contract with VUW for an HWT PCVE Research programme for 2025

62. s9(2)(b)(ii) [redacted] This is not projected to be spent in the Centre's forecast budget for 2024 (the Board agreed with the Director that the Centre would deliberately take a conservative approach to spending in 2024, given budget uncertainties). s9(2)(b)(ii) [redacted]
63. In addition, the Centre has also separately received research funding from DPMC via the Trust. s9(2)(b)(ii) [redacted]
64. To use the Centre's 2024 underspend most effectively and support staff transition, DPMC should seek to establish a time-bound contract with VUW for 2025 for existing Centre staff to deliver an HWT PCVE Research Programme, with outputs agreed with and monitored by DPMC. This will ensure the completion of some existing PCVE research projects and the delivery of valuable research outputs, as well as assisting VUW to support existing staff working on PCVE topics by providing certainty and continuity through a substantial transition period.

s9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]


### Recommendations

66. I recommend you:

- a) **agree** no further DPMC funding for the He Whenua National Centre of Research Excellence will be provided;  Yes /  No
- b) **agree** all other direct DPMC support to the Centre will end on 31 December 2024;  Yes /  No
- c) **agree** DPMC will seek to establish a contract for Victoria University of Wellington to deliver an HWT PCVE Research Programme in 2025, using the Centre's 2024 underspend;  Yes /  No
- d) **agree** to approve the winding up of the HWT Trust, subject to Trustees passing a written resolution to this effect and requesting this from you;  Yes /  No

s9(2)(f)(iv)



- f) **agree** all remaining Trust funds should (prior to the Trust being wound up) s9(2)(f)(iv)  Yes /  No  
 returned to DPMC.


Bridget White
Executive Director
National Security Group
02/10/2024

Approved

Ben King
Chief Executive, DPMC
15.10.24

s9(2)(f)(iv)



Released under the Official Information Act 1982