



24 March 2025



Ref: OIA-2024/25-0691

Tēnā koe ,

**Official Information Act request relating to Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination meeting 17 February 2022**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 24 February 2025. You requested:

*"I refer to this article*

*<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/461708/government-security-group-meets-over-protests-at-parliament>*

*It states ODESC - the Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination was meeting on or around 17 February 2022 in relation to the parliament protest*

*I seek a copy of all meeting notes from ODESC - the Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination relating to the parliament protest (being from 8 February to 3 March 2022)"*

**Information being released**

Please find attached a copy of the relevant minutes titled '*Parliament Protest ODESC #1 Minutes 17 February 2022 1000hrs*'.

I have decided to release this document, subject to information being withheld as noted. The relevant section under the Act which information has been withheld are:

- s6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand
- s9(2)(g)(ii), to prevent improper pressure or harassment
- s9(2)(k), to prevent disclosure or use for improper gain or advantage.

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.

Nāku noa, nā,



Sean Bolton  
**Executive Director**  
**Risk and Systems Governance Group**



# ODESC

Officials' Committee for Domestic  
and External Security Coordination

## Parliament Protest ODESC #1 Minutes 17 February 2022 1000hrs Rms 1.24-1.26 Defence House

### Attendees

Agency	Attendee	
DPMC	Tony Lynch (Chair) Marika Hughes	Catherine Delore s9(2)(g)(ii) Tania Warburton
Department of Corrections	Jeremy Lightfoot	
DIA	Paul James	
GCSB	Andrew Hampton	
MBIE	Oliver Valins	Carolyn Tremain (from 10:30am)
MFAT	Audrey Sonerson	
MoD	Bronwyn Evans-Kent	
MoJ	Andrew Kibblewhite	
MoH	Ashley Bloomfield	
MoT	Bronwyn Turley	
NZCS	Christine Stevenson	
NZDF	Tony Davies	Darryn Webb
NZSIS	Rebecca K	
NZ Police	Andrew Coster	Jane Archibald
Parliamentary Service	Rafael Gonzalez-Montero	
Public Service Commission	Helene Quilter	

### Introduction

1. The National Security System has been activated, at the request of New Zealand Police (the lead agency), regarding the ongoing protest activity at Parliament (known as the Freedom Convoy protest). The purpose of this ODESC was to ensure agencies have a consistent understanding of the situation; and to discuss risks and implications related to response options.

2. The Chair of ODESC welcomed attendees, thanked them for convening quickly, and noted that this issue had escalated straight to ODESC, rather than via a Watch Group.

## Situation

3. The Police Commissioner provided an overview of the current situation. The Freedom Convoy arrived at Parliament on 8 February and became unlawful quickly with vehicles blocking key thoroughfares as well as structures erected on Parliament grounds. Police deployed more resources in response, and this was met with passive resistance. Police made 120 arrests before resources (staff and infrastructure) reached capacity. These resourcing constraints, limited number of Police cells and vehicles, remain.
4. The Police Commissioner noted the challenge of finding an appropriate intervention that would be successful and balance the risk of a significant escalation of unlawful behaviour causing harm. Some of the significant constraints the Police are facing in seeking to minimise disruption, clear blocked roads, etc include:
  - The sophisticated tactics the protesters are using when confronted with Police action – there is “a readiness to obstruct Police activity” at play. For example, protesters sitting in vehicles to resist towing which is a practice observed at other protests internationally.
  - The wider support base (financial, logistical and physical), not only enabling protesters to remain onsite, but providing surge capacity through calls on social media (growing numbers from 300 plus into a much larger crowd at short notice). When the crowd swells, it could quickly overwhelm Police capacity to manage.
  - The limited ability to detain people for lengthy periods given that they tend to be arrested for more minor offences with limited grounds to oppose bail (meaning they return to the community/back to the protest within a short timeframe).
5. The Police Commissioner noted that they are engaging with some of the protest leaders, although there is not one coherent voice. The protesters are mainly united by anti-mandate sentiment, and are looking for engagement from Government, although it is unclear what conditions they would accept as a pre-requisite for dispersal (other than an end to the mandates).
6. Protests are also occurring in Auckland, Picton, Christchurch, and Dunedin. Connection is occurring via social media, and there is concern that enforcement activity at one of these locations would trigger a response at another.
7. The Chief Executive, Parliamentary Service, noted the significant damage that has been done to the Parliamentary complex, and the flow-on effects the protest is having related to the safety and security of MPs, both in Wellington and at their constituency offices. Parliament is still sitting and the option of Parliament sitting virtually was raised; however Police are concerned this could escalate behaviour at the protests rather than make a positive difference.

## Response options

8. Police would like to reach an outcome without significant harm to people. The Police Commissioner outlined the four options under consideration:

- *Maintaining the status quo.* This involves police being present, relationship building, and engaging in dialogue with protest influencers.
  - *Minor escalation.* Police would strengthen their response and chip away through minor disruption such as supply chain, but engagement-first would also occur.
  - *Cordon and contain.* Establish border control in order to cease the flow of occupiers in and out of the area, including disrupting movement of additional vehicles. This may require emergency powers to be activated and **ODESC advised Police to seek legal advice regarding this.**
  - *Large-scale intervention.* High-level Police deployment focusing on physically restraining, arresting occupation participants, and clearing vehicles.
9. ODESC suggested a fifth option being de-escalation by finding a pathway to compromise.
  10. ODESC noted the risks identified for each option, ranging from the potential for gradual deterioration of crowd behaviour and the potential for counter-protest associated with the status quo option, to the potential for significant escalation and risk of extreme action associated with a large-scale intervention. As noted above, events at one protest site could trigger escalation at another. Additionally, due to the dynamic nature of this event, options and resources need to be kept available however Police are not requesting other agency's resources at this stage.
  11. To further inform planning, at ODESC's direction, **DPMC will convene inter-agency work** with Police and other relevant agencies to identify wider strategic considerations, and risks associated with the options identified, using a range of scenarios. Work will also be undertaken to understand legal thresholds and pathways regarding accessing emergency powers and additional resources.
  12. Chief Executives from Corrections and Customs (previous Deputy Chief Executive at Corrections) shared their experiences from responding to prison riots and associated protests. They agreed that the response options outlined by the Police Commissioner appear to be the "right" ones, and also discussed the effectiveness of engaging local community, and iwi/Maori leadership in the discussions regarding pathways to an effective resolution.
  13. ODESC agreed that positive engagement with the protesters is key to maintaining stability while the protest continues, but that there may be a limited window in which this engagement can occur to result in effective de-escalation, given the lack of coherent voice which may fracture quickly.
  14. ODESC also briefly discussed what other countries are doing to manage similar protest situations, such as Canada's use of emergency powers. Police are in regular contact with their international counterparts, and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) will reach out via their posts to seek any additional advice on what effective measures are being utilised.**

s6(a)

17. In response to questioning, the Director General of Health did not raise concerns for any significant public health issues connected to the protest, apart from the escalation leading to a mass casualty event.
18. The Chief Executive of the Department of Internal Affairs mentioned local government have reported a rise in vandalism of an anti-authority nature as well as other disruptive activity. They also reflected on the 2011 Occupy Protests, and the difficulty in moving protesters once they have established at a location.
19. Police advised **they would establish an information flow to keep ODESC agencies informed.**

### Key risks and implications

20. ODESC canvassed several risks and implications arising from the continued protest activity:
  - Loss of public trust and confidence for perceived inaction in ending the disruption; and limited resources to maintain enforcement in relation to protests in other parts of New Zealand should the protests expand or new ones emerge.
  - The risk of escalation of current protest activity to target critical infrastructure, including critical transport routes, as has been observed in other jurisdictions.
  - While the Wellington protesters have shown some willingness to “clean up” (both in respect of their aggressive behaviour and physically at the location) in reaction to public sentiment, it is a volatile situation. If it continues, protesters could become more disruptive again, with little notice.
  - There are also risks associated with an extended duration including from fire or other emergencies on site, with limited abilities for emergency services to respond because of blocked access.
  - The Chief Executive of the Ministry of Justice asked ODESC to specifically note the significant impact the protest activity is having on the judicial system, with trials needing

s6(a)

to be cancelled because of the lack of safe access to the courts. This could be perceived as a breakdown of law and order.

- The impact on surrounding business owners was noted as a significant factor. **MBIE is considering options for possible relief for those impacted**, although there is no neat solution.

## Communications

21. Police and DPMC's Strategic Communications Teams would **develop consistent media lines**. These will be distributed to ODESC agencies' communications teams for their information.

## Next meeting

22. A further ODESC meeting will be held next week if the protest remains unchanged, and would come together earlier should Police as lead agency request another meeting. Consideration will also be given to convening if:

- There is major escalation in protest activity and/or behaviour.
- There are further copycat protests in New Zealand

## Action items

Para	Action	Lead
8	Police to seek legal advice regarding thresholds for declaring a State of Emergency.	Police
11	DPMC will convene inter-agency work with Police and other relevant agencies to identify wider strategic considerations, and risks associated with the options identified, using a range of scenarios	DPMC
s6(a)		
17	Police to establish an information flow to ODESC agencies.	Police
18	MBIE to consider options for activating support for affected businesses.	MBIE
19	Police and DPMC's Strategic Communications Teams to develop consistent media lines.	Police Communications and DPMC Communications