

4 August 2016

**Ref: 16/3231/1**

Kyle Sutherland  
fyi-request-4045-15041e52@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Sutherland

I refer to your Official Information Act request dated 23 May 2016, in which you requested more information about Police's estimation<sup>1</sup> that the destruction of 132,000 cannabis plants during Operation Dee had prevented in excess of \$500 million of socio-economic harm.

Police are able to estimate the social cost of drug related harm using the Drug Harm Index (2016). The Drug Harm Index is published by the Ministry of Health, who have made information about the index available on their website:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/research-report-new-zealand-drug-harm-index-2016>

The Drug Harm Index includes two components of the total cost of social harm that are relevant to Police:

- The cost of harm to individuals as a result of their drug use, including physical health, psychological wellbeing, and personal wealth;
- The cost of harm to the community, including crime attributable to drug use and injury to others.

Police do not include the cost of interventions associated with illicit drug use in estimates of harm prevention.

Our estimates of harm prevention with regard to cannabis seizures during Operation Dee were derived as follows:

- Police seized and destroyed 132,356 plants.
- Police conservatively estimate an average yield of 8 ounces (0.2272 kilograms) of plant material per plant.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/cannabis-raids-net-132-000-plants-in-six-month-police-op>

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- The 132,356 plants can therefore be estimated to yield 30,071 kilograms of plant material.
  - The Drug Harm Index estimates that the individual harm caused per kilogram of cannabinoid has a cost of \$9,000 and that the cost of community harm caused per kilogram is \$26,000. We can therefore estimate the total cost of social harm caused per kilogram as \$35,000.

Using the information outlined above, Police estimate that the destruction of 132,356 plants during Operation Dee prevented potential social harm of up to \$1,052,485,000.

If you are not satisfied with the response to your request, you have the right to refer the matter to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely



Chris Page  
Detective Inspector  
Acting National Manager  
National Criminal Investigations Group