

NZ Police Consultation on cost recovery for Police Vetting Service

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NZ Police ask the public to submit opinions on the proposal to seek cost recovery for a variety of Police activities, which are not seen as 'primary functions'. They define primary functions as including law enforcement and crime prevention.¹ This consultation covers two related matters:

1. Seeking public comment on the general concept of cost recovery and asking what areas of police activities might be considered appropriate for cost recovery, citing examples from overseas including attending events, providing information, licensing, vehicle removal/disposal, and other such as custody for immigration, attending false alarms, traffic management for business/events.²
2. Seeking specific comment on the proposal to charge all organisations including government agencies \$5-7 (GST inclusive) for a standard police check and \$10-14 (GST inclusive) for an urgent check.³

NZ Police consider that cost recovery for these activities would improve policing outcomes by:

- Reducing demand
- Self-funding ongoing demand
- Improv[ing] the overall quality of [police] services.⁴

The consultation document identifies criminal record checks or police vetting as an example of police services that 'go beyond general public policing'⁵ and which 'generates a predominantly private benefit'.⁶ Police vetting is used extensively in the social services and education sectors by organisations seeking to engage new employees or volunteers to work with children and/or vulnerable people. This is one of the many uses of police vetting; other people subject to similar checks include commercial business licence holders, individuals who apply to own or control sensitive NZ assets, NZ citizenship applicants, and those seeking national security clearance.⁷

This paper discusses only police attendance at not-for-profit community events and police vetting used by organisations for potential new employees and volunteers who would work with children and/or vulnerable people.

In the case of community events WAVES recognises the significant contribution our local police make to events like the annual White Ribbon Day March through Henderson township. Waitakere police provide both service and support in terms of crowd control and keeping the peace, but more importantly their participation in the march brings valuable visibility and builds community trust and connection. Events like the White Ribbon Day March generate no income or profits and proceed on strength of community and organisational goodwill and commitment to challenging the destructive force of family violence. Arguably police presence at such events is as important an aspect of

¹ New Zealand Police, *Cost Recovery for Certain Police Services: Public Consultation Paper December 2012– March 2013*, Wellington, 2012, pp. 7–8, <http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/about-us/cost-recovery-dec-11-2012.pdf> (Accessed 18 February 2013).

² NZ Police, p.10

³ NZ Police, pp.21–2.

⁴ NZ Police, p.26.

⁵ NZ Police, p.8.

⁶ NZ Police, p.15.

⁷ NZ Police, p.18.

preventative policing as other initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Cost recovery for police attendance would require a radical reframing of event's ethos to enable fundraising and/or income-generation to the detriment of both the event and the reputation of our community-focused police force.

With regard to police vetting of potential employees and volunteers, WAVES Trust argues that this practice is not outside the realm of general public policing – rather it is an important aspect of the NZ Police's work towards crime prevention and protecting public safety. Many organisations do background checks to ensure that their workforce is safe for vulnerable clients and to weed out prospective employees or volunteers with a known history of abusing trust. We foresee that cost recovery may lead organisations that are not mandated to conduct such checks foregoing this very necessary service raising risks for children and vulnerable people.

WAVES Trust does not support the proposal to seek cost recovery for police attendance at non-profit public and community events or for police vetting provided to NGO organisations, charities, and religious organisations.

We suggest that the best way to challenge the proposal is to argue that 'private benefit' is not accrued by community and non-government organisations and that public benefit for police in terms of crime prevention and building goodwill should be considered adequate recompense for 'costs' incurred in policing public events and police vetting.

Do you have any other suggestions or concerns you would like us to address?

The questions asked by the Consultation document are:

1. Do you believe that Police should be able to recover all or some of the costs of providing certain services?
2. Do you agree with the stated principles for cost recovery (must be fair; must further Police and Government outcomes and meet standards; be simple and predictable; clear and transparent methodology for charging)
3. Do you support allowing the Police to recover the full economic cost of providing certain services, and not just the direct cost? If not, why not?
4. Do you believe Police should be able to charge for services that generate a largely private benefit?
5. Do you think that the criteria used to identify services suitable for cost recovery are appropriate? Can you think of a better way of assessing services for cost recovery?
6. Do you agree with the proposed process for determining the level of cost recovery to be applied (i.e. a public/private benefit analysis of the identified service)?
7. Do you consider the Police vetting service to be suitable for cost recovery?
8. What are your views on the proposed charges for Police vetting services? In particular, how do you think this will affect you and your business or organisation?
9. What other impacts might this proposal for cost recovery have on you? These impacts could be social, economic, compliance related, cultural or health related. Are you able to quantify these impacts?
10. Are there any other comments or issues that you would like to raise on the cost recovery proposals outlined in this consultation document?