



Headquarters
New Zealand Defence Force
Defence House
Private Bag 39997
Wellington Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045
New Zealand

OIA-2025-5377

18

August 2025

[redacted]@rnz.co.nz
cc: [redacted]@ombudsman.parliament.nz

Dear [redacted]

I refer to your email of 21 March 2025, requesting the following information concerning HMNZS Manawanui:

RNZ is not aware of any environmental testing report being made public by NZDF or any other entity.

If there has been, pls provide it or a link to it; or advise on which entity RNZ should approach to seek the report/s

In addition, RNZ requests release in full and in fully copyable and searchable format:

- *Any and all reports of any kind NZDF is in receipt of, has generated or is aware of** about the impacts of any fuel released from the ship on the environment*
- *Any and all scientific test reports re that*
- *Any and all communications* of concern about impact on the environment between NZDF and any Samoan entity*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). I apologise for the significant delay in providing this response. Unfortunately, as a result of a high volume of work, staff illness and absence, and a reduction in staffing, this request was not actioned when it was received. This was not realised until you emailed on 5 May 2025 seeking an update. Additional time has been spent collating the information held by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) and undertaking consultation with relevant New Zealand and foreign government agencies.

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) has not undertaken any environmental testing. NZDF media updates have stated that regular testing has been undertaken by the Government of Samoa's agency, the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS). While the NZDF holds copies of these reports and associated information, it is withheld in accordance with section 6(b)(i) of the OIA. You may wish to contact the Chairperson of the Marine Pollution Advisory Committee, the Chief Executive Officer of Samoa's Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure directly.

The NZDF has publicly released updates since the sinking of HMNZS Manawanui that have included the following information regarding the environment:

- Analysis of sea water after the sinking in October 2024, showed elevated levels of hydrocarbons which prompted the Government of Samoa to implement a Precautionary Zone which contained a warning on fishing. Further rounds of sea water sampling and

monitoring conducted by SROS continued to show low levels of hydrocarbons in seawater and marine life tested, enabling a significant reduction of the Zone in December 24 and again in January 25 and then complete removal of the Precautionary Zone in early February 2025, with SROS reporting the seawater and marine life in the area clear and uncontaminated.

- In March 2025 the salvors successfully completed the work to remove the diesel fuel and other pollutants from the ship and removed this environmental risk.
- The salvors have been extremely careful and thorough, checking all tanks, as well as compartments and locations that diesel fuel, oil and other pollutants might be. If any residual diesel fuel and oil does remain, it would be trace only and present in such small quantities as to pose minimal, if any, harm to the environment.
- Over 320,000 litres of diesel fuel mixed with seawater has been removed. From this just over 300,000 litres of usable diesel fuel has been extracted.
- Another 45,000 litres of liquid including waste oils and diesel fuel/seawater has also been removed.
- When the ship ran aground it was carrying about 900,000 litres of light commercial diesel fuel, commonly used by commercial and military vessels.
- The actual volumes of diesel fuel that burnt off, was captured by divers, and what was lost to sea is unclear.
- Continuous environmental monitoring has shown diesel fuel that did escape to sea, dissipated relatively rapidly, evaporating from wind and wave action, as this type of light diesel fuel is known to do – this was also confirmed by an independent international assessment.
- Regular testing by SROS has reported consistently low hydrocarbons and confirmed the seawater and marine life in this area are clear and uncontaminated. As a result, the Precautionary Zone in the area that carried a warning on fishing was reduced and then removed.
- With the environmental risk of diesel fuel and other pollutants removed, the frequency of seawater testing in their monitoring plan has reduced from fortnightly to monthly.

You retain the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

GA Motley
Brigadier
Chief of Staff HQNZDF