



Hon Annette King, M.P.
Minister of State Services
Minister of Police
Minister of Transport
Minister for Food Safety
MP for Rongotai including the Chatham Islands

Ref: 7502889

30 October 2007

Jon Shannow
tino-rangatiratanga@yahoo.com

Dear Jon Shannow

Thank you for your correspondence of 26 October 2007 about the police operation that resulted in a number of arrests for alleged firearms and other offences.

I must emphasise that the Government has had no involvement whatsoever in this operation. It is simply not possible in New Zealand for a Minister of the Crown or a politician to tell the Police to arrest a person or to direct the Police in any way in their conduct of a police operation.

This separation between Police and politicians in operational police matters is an important convention that has applied in New Zealand for a very long time. It exists to ensure that law enforcement and investigation by the Police remain free of any political influence or interference. The convention has been consistently upheld by the courts and was the subject of an authoritative opinion by the then Solicitor-General in 1993 (a copy of "*The Constitutional Relationship between the Commissioner of Police and the Minister of Police*" is available at www.crownlaw.govt.nz/publications/opinions). It is a principle that this Government is committed to upholding and we expect other political parties to do likewise.

If any member of the public is dissatisfied with any action of the Police, the proper and appropriate body to go to is the Police Complaints Authority, the civilian oversight body created to deal with complaints of misconduct or neglect of duty by the Police.

It will be a matter for the courts to determine the outcome of any police prosecution resulting from this operation. I cannot comment further on these matters while they are under investigation and before the courts.

I do appreciate that the actions taken by police have surprised many people. I think this reaction demonstrates how unusual it is for New Zealand Police to undertake an operation of this nature and scale. As I have publicly stated, I urge people to wait to see and consider the evidence Police provide before deciding whether such action is warranted.

Yours sincerely

Hon Annette King
MINISTER OF POLICE

P.S. I read all my mail!
AK