

Whanganui Prison Inspection – October-November 2025

Quick-read summary

Mā te titiro me te whakarongo ka puta mai te māramatanga -
By looking and listening, we will gain insight.

This report was published in September 2026 by the Office of the Inspectorate.

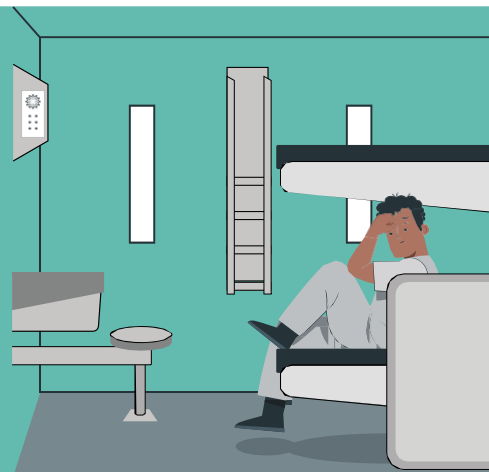
The Inspectorate is part of the Department of Corrections but works independently. We inspect prisons to make sure prisoners are treated fairly.

What we did:

- We visited Whanganui Prison (including the New Plymouth Remand Centre) on 29 October 2025 - 7 November 2025 to carry out the inspection.
- We talked to **102 prisoners.**
- We talked to **172 staff and service providers.**
- We got information from the prison and Corrections.

At the time of the inspection:

- There were **522 prisoners.**
- **182** were on remand.
- **308** were Māori.
- **8** were aged under 20.



What did prisoners say?

- Most felt safe, although some reported bullying and standovers.
- Most staff were approachable, positive and respectful.
- The programmes in the Māori-focused unit were good, but outside of this unit there were no Māori-focused programmes and only limited cultural support.
- Some first-time prisoners did not receive enough information about prison life on arrival.
- Young prisoners were bored, with little to do.
- Those employed in prison industries were often working towards a qualification.

What did we find?

We found some positives and some things that could be better, including:

- Staff across the prison interacted positively with prisoners.
- A range of employment and education opportunities were available to many prisoners.
- Giving controlled medications to prisoners had become more efficient through a new approach and collaboration between health and custodial staff.
- Prisoners were provided free on-site electrical safety checks for their property, reducing delays.
- Views of leadership were generally positive, but some staff reported bullying and confrontational behaviour by some senior managers.
- Non-custodial staff reported instances of being locked in interview rooms with prisoners and feeling unsafe.
- The prison had no Management Unit or Youth Unit, and the at-risk cell at the New Plymouth Remand Centre was in an unsuitable location.
- At-risk prisoners at the New Plymouth Remand Centre could remain on restrictive observation levels longer than needed.
- Health appointments were not always prioritised appropriately.
- Health staff had not completed primary mental health training.
- Delays in approving visitors and the lack of weekend visits limited contact with family and whānau.
- Case Managers who met with young prisoners were not aware of a key assessment used for youth placement.
- Rehabilitation opportunities were limited for high security, remand and segregated prisoners.
- Staff were not always subject to further checks after activating the metal detector at the gatehouse.
- Rub-down searches of prisoners were not always completed thoroughly.

What happens next?

After an inspection, the prison creates an action plan to try to fix any problems.

The prison sends the action plan to the Inspectorate and Inspectors check on progress.

Thank you to all
who talked with
us and helped
with this report.

More information

The full inspection report is available in prison libraries and online at:

<https://inspectorate.corrections.govt.nz>