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Tēnā koe Janis

### **Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Waikeria Prison Riot**

I am writing to provide the Department of Corrections, Ara Poutama Aotearoa, (Corrections') fifth update on progress against the above report.

Since our last formal update, the new 596 bed facility at Waikeria Prison has officially been opened. Designed to prioritise safety, security, and rehabilitation, the facility provides a fit-for-purpose and secure environment for staff, visitors, and prisoners. Situated across 21 hectares and consisting of 28 buildings, the site features advanced biometric security, modern health and visitation centres, industry training spaces, and comprehensive staff amenities.

In response to the rising prison population, the expansion of Waikeria ensures that Corrections has the necessary capacity and resources to uphold public safety and support effective rehabilitation. In line with the build-up plan, the first 52 men were received on site from court in the week beginning 8 September 2025. Additional cohorts of 50 men will continue to be received each week until full capacity is reached. A key early focus has been placing men in the 96 bed Hikitia mental health and addiction unit – Te Wai O Pure. To support operations, 300 additional frontline staff have been recruited, and planning is underway for a further expansion, adding 810 beds by 2029.

The commissioning period has provided an opportunity to test, refine, and embed new ways of working as we strive to deliver a safe, fair and humane system.

### **Progress against Recommendations**

Corrections' is continuing to make progress against the 118 accepted and partially accepted recommendations, having completed a further eight since our last update. As at 30 August 2025:

- 64 recommendations have been completed.
- 2 recommendations are considered complete by system leads, pending assurance, and
- 52 recommendations are pending or underway.

Although progress is continuing, and as we have said before, a number of recommendations are complex to deliver and will take time, collaboration, and investment to address

effectively. We're mindful that competing priorities and fiscal constraints are likely to shape both how we respond and the speed at which we can move forward.

An updated dashboard is attached, highlighting areas of focus for the next six to nine months and those recommendations projected to be completed by June 2026 or beyond.

As in our previous correspondence, relevant recommendations from the report are referenced by bracketed number throughout the below update.

### **Monitoring and assurance**

We have an ongoing responsibility to ensure the formal complaints process is properly explained to people in prison during their induction, and that complaints information is readily available (13). The Complaint Resolution Team (CRT) has completed a complaint-focused review of Corrections' prison-based induction procedures and resources, as well as an assessment of how these were being applied at site level. The review identified areas for refinement and possible solutions.

The CRT will coordinate this work and begin by investigating channels that can influence staff perception regarding prisoner complaints, so they are viewed as an opportunity to learn (for example, the Corrections Officer Development Pathway, or prison General Manager forums). The team will work with the Custodial Practice team to update relevant sections of the Prison Operations Manual (POM), including PC.01 Prisoner Complaint Rules and POM - Induction, to ensure procedures, forms, and resources are up to date, user-friendly and accessible. They will also investigate the development of a standardised induction booklet template that meets POM requirements, allows for site-specific customisation, and is accessible to a broad audience. In addition, they will explore the inclusion of a complaints tile on the prison kiosks and look into updating induction material currently on the prison television system, and the possibility of adding complaint related content. This work builds on the induction pack and promotional posters already available at prison sites, and significant developments in complaints handling since the time of your report, including the establishment of permanent Complaint Support Lead roles and the introduction of a complaint's facility onto the prison kiosks. On this basis, we consider this recommendation has now been met.

### **Infrastructure & digital**

Roof and gutter inspections have been incorporated into regular inspection protocols, and this recommendation (34) is now complete.

Facility-wide checks of all prisons have been conducted (32). This assessment involved reviews of yard coverings, mesh, and rooftops, as well as the removal of any waste or loose materials that could be used as weapons. Lessons learned from this process are actively informing updates to the Design Standards Framework, particularly in areas such as yard designs and roofline pitches. The National Design Lead from Asset Management is currently drafting these updates. Ongoing work is being carried out across the estate to remediate any facility features that could provide access to heights. This recommendation is complete pending the release of the Anti-climb guidelines.

## **Professional Practice and Capability uplift**

Corrections has reviewed its Corrections Officer Development Pathway (CODP), and we are now in the process of redesigning and implementing new induction and core training for Corrections Officers. Our aim is to ensure that the initial training provided to new staff is fit for purpose and adequately prepares staff for their job (15). We have almost finished designing new core training for Senior Corrections Officers, which is due to be piloted prior to Christmas. The design of new frontline manager training will be completed in the first half of next year (this will include Principal Corrections Officers). We expect to roll out this new training from 30 June 2026.

A renewed organisation wide Leadership Approach and Leadership Development Framework was launched in February 2025 as part of the Ara Rangatira approach to capability. Development opportunities and reflection tools are available to every staff member; this includes our Korero Whakawhanake 1:1 performance and development conversations, that all people leaders are expected to have with their direct reports. Together, these lay out clear behaviour expectations for every person in our organisation, which are measurable via the app and dashboard. It is expected that our focus on leader's behaviour will have a positive impact on the culture of the organisation. This recommendation is now closed (16).

We previously committed to having all Fire Evacuation Schemes for custodial sites lodged with Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) by the end of the financial year. However, due to resourcing constraints, this work is currently on hold while recruitment for new staff is underway. The evacuation scheme is different from a Fire Evacuation Plan which our Prison General Manager's must, and do, have in place. A Statutory Compliance FTE is now being recruited to continue and strengthen fire compliance work, ensuring sustained focus and oversight across all relevant operational areas (51).

## **Safety and Wellbeing**

In response to the recommendation to assess recording options within the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and the National Coordination Centre (NCC), it has been demonstrated that existing technology is already fit for purpose. During the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) activation for the significant diesel spill at Christchurch Men's Prison, both the transcription and recording functions available through Microsoft Teams were successfully used for ECC meetings and governance updates. This experience confirms that adequate tools are already in place and can be effectively deployed across EOC, ECC, NCC, and alternate NCC environments to support accurate record-keeping and operational transparency. As a result, this recommendation is now considered closed (89).

## **Strategy, policy & procedures**

Amendments to the Corrections Regulations, which will come into effect on 30 September 2025, include changes relating to prisoner haircuts and facial hair (29). This will mean that all prisoners, regardless of whether they are on remand or are sentenced, may keep or adopt a hairstyle of their choice and may grow or retain facial hair. Custodial General Managers must ensure that tools for maintaining haircuts and grooming or removing facial hair are available

to prisoners, as far as is reasonably practicable, having regard to available resources, safety, and security. This recommendation is now complete.

The Optimising our Services Governance Board continues to meet monthly, with the programme actively working to better meet the rehabilitation and reintegration needs of people in our care, both in prison and in the community (4). The programme is focused on developing an enterprise-level understanding of population needs and assessing how effectively and efficiently our service delivery system responds to those needs. Currently, efforts are underway to shift from a supply-driven system, based on assumptions about past prison and community populations, to a demand-driven service delivery model that recognises the changing needs of those we manage. This approach is also informed by the direction set by Hōkai Rangī, which highlights the need for our services and delivery methods to evolve. Work against this recommendation is ongoing.

We are working to ensure prison sites are offering recreational and educational activities that are meaningful and deliver the best possible results to reduce reoffending. Last year the Government committed \$78m for Corrections to extend rehabilitation programmes to include prisoners on remand. We have started extending the delivery of non-offence-focused rehabilitative services in remand and will start delivery of offence-focused rehabilitation services to remand convicted prisoners by 30 September 2025.

### **Emergency Management and Tactical Response**

On 2 April 2025, Corrections' Emergency Management and Business Continuity teams met with Christchurch Women's Prison management and around 30 subject matter experts from key emergency and support agencies, including FENZ, Police, Hato Hone St John, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM), Aviation Security, Christchurch Airport Company, and Downer NZ. Using a detailed scenario, participants tested and reviewed emergency plans for relevance, clarity, and effectiveness to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and enhance multi-agency response capability. Co-developing these plans is essential for improving interoperability, enabling joint planning, coordinated training, and realistic emergency exercises. Crucial to this system are emergency operations plans (EOPs), which clearly define roles, responsibilities, resources, and authorities before, during, and after an emergency.

The recent incident at Spring Hill Corrections Facility in August demonstrated improvement in our operational response and readiness. When faced with prisoners behaving aggressively and small fires during a routine unlock, staff acted swiftly and appropriately. The situation was resolved within three hours, with all individuals safely secured and no injuries reported. Our emergency protocols were activated immediately, with Spring Hill negotiators and the Advanced Control and Restraint team called in, ensuring the right people and tools were in place before de-escalating the situation. While external emergency services were contacted and attended the site, the rapid resolution meant their assistance was not required, though their availability provided reassurance. Property damage was minimal, and the fires either self-extinguished or were put out by unit sprinkler activation relatively quickly. Feedback from Police colleagues was highly positive, particularly regarding early engagement and the

quality of briefings provided. Following the incident, we held a debrief with FENZ and reviewed feedback and suggested improvements, which we have taken on board.

Engagement with sites that have Site Emergency Response Teams (SERT) is currently at 100%, while sites without SERT are actively supported by the Principal and Senior Adviser through advice, guidance, bite-sized training, and practice leadership. The Principal and Senior Adviser are also trialling a camera system for large-scale emergencies to enable real-time footage and live streaming. As part of the Advanced Control and Restraint (ACR) framework, the importance of having a dedicated videographer is reinforced through all training modules (87). ACR manuals and operational plans are under review to ensure incidents are documented using body-worn cameras or other video technologies. Further to our previous update, our Custodial Services team is comfortable we have sufficient Body Worn Camera's (BWC) to meet our needs, and staff receive appropriate reminders on correct use (86). Custodial staff undergo BWC training as part of site inductions, this is signed off by the relevant Security Manager. Ongoing training and reminders are delivered through site custodial leads, tactical options training, daily site briefings, and in Use of Force review panels. The expectation is that custodial staff are issued BWC 'when carrying Pepper Spray, High and High/Medium Security, and Escort duties' and otherwise on a risk-based approach. This recommendation is now complete.

Corrections has reviewed the SERT model, leading to the development of a SERT National Improvement Pathway that is now in its final endorsement stage. With enhanced training and national support, SERT teams are better equipped to respond to serious incidents. While guidance continues to reinforce expectations around deployment, SERT teams remain under the direction of Prison GMs, with decisions made based on site-specific needs. This recommendation is now complete (72).

Unique identifiers have been adopted and distributed for use on ACR staff helmets. These identifiers are supported by audit processes conducted quarterly by Unit Commanders, with oversight from Regional Tactical Operations Advisers to ensure compliance and assurance. The most pressing operational need for identifiers is during planned use of force, where clarity and accountability are paramount. To address this, Corrections has embedded design requirements into the new SRBA (Stab Resistant Body Armour) currently being procured. These requirements include velcro or other fixings to enable the attachment of unique identifiers. The SRBA tender was released in August 2025, with evaluation scheduled for September and final recommendations expected by February 2026. While the concept of adding ID numbers to epaulettes was considered, it is impracticable to implement across all staff. Retrofitting would require reissuing all epaulettes, which is disproportionate to the scale of the issue. When rank and epaulettes are next reviewed, the inclusion of unique identifiers will be in scope for consideration, ensuring alignment with broader uniform and identification strategies. The combination of helmet identifiers for ACR staff and future SRBA integration addresses both current and future operational needs, and this recommendation is now closed (77).

As part of planned work, sites have confirmed they have an active and up-to-date Risk Action Plan (20), that the risk of riot is included within those plans (19). These recommendations are likely to be ready for closure soon.

We are seeking confirmation from all sites that there is either a system in place to ensure appropriate levels of prison clothing supply, or, that clothing management has been added to the Risk Action Plan for regular discussion and site ownership (17). There is second line assurance across site risk action plans through the Business Partnering Organisational Resilience & Learning Assurance (ORLA) team, who carry out bi-monthly monitoring and reporting.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss any aspect of this response should you have any questions. We look forward to keeping you and your team involved and updated as this work progresses.

Nāku noa, nā



Richard Waggott

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