

Hawke's Bay Regional Prison Inspection – February 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 November 2025 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 Hawke's Bay Regional Prison on 20 –28 February 2025 to carry out the inspection.
- We talked to **109 prisoners.**
- We talked to **187 staff and service providers.**
- We got information from the prison and Corrections.

At the time of the inspection:

- There were **682 people in the prison.**
- **418** were sentenced.
- **264** were on remand.
- **475** of the people were Māori.



What did prisoners say?

- They generally felt safe, but many told us of bullying in their units.
- Double-bunked cells in the high security units were cramped.
- Some high security prisoners spent 22 hours a day locked in their cells.
- Some cells were uncomfortably hot in summer.

What did we find?

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

- Nearly **100 prisoners** worked in a variety of prison jobs.
- In-person visits took place five days a week.
- All prisoners were offered the minimum entitlement of at least one hour in the open air every day.
- A good range of offence-focused and other rehabilitation programmes were available.
- There was a wide range of constructive activities, including jobs, education, programmes and volunteer activity.
- There were some concerning safety, security and integrity related issues.
- Many custodial staff had less than two years' experience and some needed support.
- Many of the health staff were new to prison nursing.
- Many non-custodial staff said it was often difficult to access prisoners in high security units.
- Many non-custodial staff said they often felt unsafe on site.
- Contraband (such as drugs and cell phones) was an issue on the site.
- Many prisoners had not received an induction.
- Some Māori prisoners had access to cultural practices and programmes.
- Many prisoners said they were subject to 'taxing' by other prisoners for nicotine replacement lozenges and telephone PIN numbers.
- Some prisoners were likely experiencing solitary confinement by being in a cell for 22 hours a day with no meaningful contact for over 15 days
- Property was an issue, with delays between six weeks and five months for prisoners receiving property.
- Nurse clinics were well-organised, but many people had appointments rescheduled.
- Health staff and mental health clinicians had an effective joint approach to providing care for prisoners.
- Health staff worked to meet the needs of prisoners with disabilities.

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/>