

15 May 2019

C107164

Kate McIntyre  
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Tēnā koe Ms McIntyre

Thank you for your email dated 15 April 2019, requesting information about prisoners involved in the Release to Work (RtW) programme. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

RtW allows minimum security prisoners who are assessed as suitable to engage in paid employment in the community, in order to help them gain employment on release. The purpose of RtW is to assist prisoners in their reintegration by maintaining, developing or re-establishing work skills and habits, providing contact with the wider community, and providing the opportunity to save money for re-establishment on release.

Prisoners who are eligible for RtW must have a minimum security classification and be serving either a sentence of 24 months or less, a sentence over 24 months but who have reached their Parole Eligibility Date, and those with low and low-medium security classifications and have a release date set by the New Zealand Parole Board. An eligible prisoner can apply to be considered for RtW at any time.

Further information regarding RtW can be found on our website:  
[www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/policy\\_and\\_legislation/Prison-Operations-Manual/Movement/M.04-External-movement-transportation-of-prisoners/M.04-7.html](http://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/policy_and_legislation/Prison-Operations-Manual/Movement/M.04-External-movement-transportation-of-prisoners/M.04-7.html)

You have requested:

1. *The total number of prisoners employed via the Release to Work scheme per annum, as far back as records permit.*

Following prisoner Phillip Smith's escape to Brazil in November 2014 we took immediate steps to ensure public safety. One of these steps was to provisionally suspend the temporary release of prisoners, with some specific exemptions for those taking part in release to work, supervised programmes or with exceptional circumstances.

This was a temporary measure to ensure public safety while a comprehensive review into our procedures surrounding prisoner activities outside the prison perimeter was completed.

In October 2015 we introduced a new, strengthened process to ensure the robust assessment of prisoners to be temporarily released to undertake reintegrative activities outside of prison.

Please see below the number of prisoners on RtW for each financial year, as far back as records permit.

Financial Year	Prisoners on Release to Work
2017/18	260
2016/17	199
2015/16	241
2014/15	466
2013/14	806
2012/13	645
2011/12	561
2010/11	465
2009/10	609
2008/09	676
2007/08	627

- 2. The snapshot number of prisoners employed via the Release to Work scheme on March 31, 2019.*

RtW data is recorded every Friday. The number of prisoners on RtW on Friday, 29 March 2019 was 121.

- 3. Can prisoners on release to work join a union which covers their area of employment outside of prison?*

Corrections does not prevent prisoners on RtW from joining a union which covers their area of employment outside of prison. Corrections does not have any policies regarding prisoners on RtW joining unions and the decision is for the prisoner to make.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with Corrections. Alternatively you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of fluid, connected strokes that form a stylized representation of the name Rachel Leota.

Rachel Leota  
National Commissioner