



8 November 2019

C114228

Kirsten Gibson
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Tēnā koe Ms Gibson

Thank you for your email of 12 October 2019, requesting information about women prisoners on Release to Work. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Release to Work (RtW) allows minimum security prisoners, who are assessed as suitable, to engage in paid employment in the community. The RtW programme is an important stepping stone in the rehabilitation of a prisoner and assists 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. It gives prisoners real work experience, employment skills and job stability, making it easier for them to find work on release, which reduces their likelihood of reoffending.

Having sustainable work after being released is one of the key motivators for an offender to turn their life around and reduce the likelihood they will reoffend. Many prisoners have limited work experience and a large number of prisoners are unemployed before coming into prison.

A RtW placement also gives an employer the opportunity to access a pool of skilled workers and employ someone on a fixed term basis. It also offers them the satisfaction of knowing they have made a real difference in somebody's life by giving them a second chance.

Potential employers must meet certain criteria to be considered for a release to work placement. Criminal history checks are conducted on employers before a prisoner is placed in their employment. The prisoner's history along with other factors are also taken into account to ensure that they are being placed in an appropriate workplace.

To be eligible for RtW, prisoners must have a minimum security classification and be serving either a sentence of 24 months' imprisonment or less or a sentence over 24 months' imprisonment but have reached their Parole Eligibility Date, or have a low or low-medium security classification 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. The prisoners on RtW programmes have been assessed by an advisory panel and have shown that they can be trusted and have a desire to be productive members of their communities.

Public safety is Corrections' number one priority. RtW employees are monitored with the use of GPS ankle bracelets where possible, and are supervised by their employer.

Prisoners are employed in a wide range of industries, including manufacturing, technology and engineering, construction and farming, forestry and horticulture.

In June 2017, Corrections launched *Wahine – E rere ana ki Pae Hou: Women's Strategy 2017 – 2021*. One of the focus areas of the Women's Strategy is offering access to education, skills training, work opportunities, reintegration services and support to enhance women's abilities to build stable lives in the community and maintain meaningful employment. The Women's Strategy will investigate and pilot new learning and work skills options relevant to what women want to develop and to the job market. Options identified include in the construction industry, hairdressing, beauty therapy and barista trades. More options will be investigated and added in the future.

You requested:

Could I please be supplied (in xls or excel compatible format, not PDF) the numbers of prisoners incarcerated in women's prisons in New Zealand on 'Release to Work' initiatives for all of the years from 2000 to 2018?

Can I also have this data broken down by ethnicity?

Unfortunately, Corrections did not centrally record this information prior to 24 May 2014. Instead, this information is held on individual prisoner files and in order to identify this type of specific information, we would be required to manually review a large number of files. Therefore, this part of your request is declined under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

Please find the requested information from 24 May 2014 to 31 December 2018, broken down by calendar year and ethnicity, in the attached Excel spreadsheet.

Please note that the same prisoner may be on the table more than once, across different years. This will occur where the prisoner is on RTW during a period that spans over two separate years, or where a prisoner has been released from prison and then imprisoned again and took part in RTW in another year.

All ethnicity information is self-reported by prisoners upon their reception, but this is not validated or checked by Corrections. Prisoners are able to identify

with multiple ethnicities. The information provided is based on their primary ethnicity.

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 black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, connected strokes that form a stylized, somewhat abstract shape.

Rachel Leota
National Commissioner