

26 October 2021

C142538

Vinetta Plummer
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Tēnā koe Vinetta

Thank you for your emails of 1 October 2021, to the New Zealand Parole Board (the Parole Board), requesting information about people being released from prisons during COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4.

As you are aware, the Parole Board transferred the below requests to Corrections on 11 October 2021 under section 14 of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). Your request has been considered under the OIA:

You requested:

Have any prisoners been released later than their expected release date during COVID Alert Level 3 and 4 lockdowns? If so, how many times has this happened?

No one has been released later than their Statutory Release Date due to COVID-19.

Corrections does not decide who is in prison or who is in the community, this is ordinarily determined by the Courts or the Parole Board. Corrections' Chief Executive does not hold the powers to grant early releases or to hold people in prison beyond their statutory release date.

People serving imprisonment sentences of less than two years are released after serving half of their sentence. They are not seen by the Parole Board but may be subject to release conditions imposed by the court that sentenced them.

Unless the court has imposed a longer minimum non-parole period, all people serving imprisonment sentences of more than two years become eligible for parole after serving one-third of their sentence. If granted parole, the New Zealand Parole Board must impose at least standard release conditions and it may also impose special conditions on the offender.

Information about statutory release from prison is available here:
https://www.corrections.govt.nz/working_with_offenders/prison_sentences/release

While release from prison at higher Alert Level settings does present some challenges, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Corrections has continued to work together with our justice sector partners to enable people to be released in line with Court and the Parole Board decisions

It is important we do this without compromising the health, safety and wellbeing of any person required to be released, our staff, or our wider communities. Our efforts are focussed on ensuring that people required to be released from prison have the best pre-release plans in place which includes safe accommodation options that will allow them to self-isolate, in particular in regions operating at Alert Levels 3 and 4 settings.

Please provide me with an excel spreadsheet with the expected release date and actual release date for each of these instances. I do not require the names of prisoners in this information.

As there are no instances of this, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the OIA, as the information requested is not held by Corrections, and we have no grounds for believing that it is held by another agency or more closely connected with the functions of another agency.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise them 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



Rachel Leota
National Commissioner