



14 August 2015

C72393

Gregory Soar
Fyi-request-2878-0014d35b@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Soar

I refer to your email to the Ministry of Justice dated 25 June 2015, requesting information about the cost of managing offenders convicted of cannabis related offences. As you are aware, your request has been transferred to the Department of Corrections as it is more closely connected to the functions of this agency. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Public safety and reducing re-offending are the Department's foremost priorities. In order to help reduce re-offending the Government has signalled its commitment to safer communities through a 25 percent reduction in re-offending by 2017. This means there will be 600 fewer re-imprisonments, 4,000 fewer people being reconvicted on community offences and 18,500 fewer victims. Through a combination of interventions such as increased alcohol and drug treatment, greater access to education, skills training, employment programmes, expanded reintegration services and innovative rehabilitation programmes, we will make a difference to people's lives.

Providing Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) treatments to offenders will significantly contribute towards reducing re-offending. More than half of the prisoners in New Zealand have substance abuse problems and over 50 percent of crime is committed by people under the influence of drugs and alcohol. By tackling this issue, we can contribute to people leading an offence-free life once they leave prison or complete their community sentence. As a result, we have developed an Alcohol and Drug Strategy to provide a wider range of interventions across prisons, including:

- AOD Screening and Brief Interventions
- AOD Brief and Intermediate Support Programmes
- Drug Treatment Unit - three and six month programmes
- AOD Intensive Treatment Programmes.

All prisoners receive *AOD Screening* when they enter a prison, and can receive *Brief Interventions* where appropriate. This process enables staff to make appropriate decisions on the amount of support that prisoners require. Staff ask prisoners a series of targeted questions about their substance use, and provide a 'brief intervention' in the form of feedback and advice where appropriate. This

means that every prisoner now undergoes screening for addictions, health, mental health and education on entering a prison.

The *Brief and Intermediate Support Programmes* are suitable for prisoners on remand, and prisoners on short sentences that require motivation to address their substance abuse problems. This is a group based programme aimed at raising awareness of the risks associated with alcohol and drug use, and addressing ambivalence about behavioural changes. The programme consists of four sessions over a two week period.

Intermediate Support Programmes are suitable for prisoners who are motivated to address their substance abuse problems, but require assistance. The group based programme is intended for prisoners who are at moderate risk of substance abuse harm, or do not have time in prison to attend a longer more intensive programme. The programme is aimed at enhancing and maintaining a prisoner's motivation to change their behaviour, and provides an introduction to strategies to help them stop substance abuse. The programme consists of eight sessions over a three to four week period.

The *Drug Treatment Unit* (DTU) is a group based programme aimed at reducing re-offending by assisting participants to address their substance dependence. There are two types of DTU programmes; a three-month intensive programme for prisoners serving sentences of between four and 12 months, and a six month programme for prisoners serving sentences of over 12 months. We have recently expanded the number of DTUs from six to nine, and there has been a substantial rise in the number of participants since 2008.

The *Intensive Treatment Programmes* are run by the Salvation Army at Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility (ARWCF), and by the Northland District Health Board at Northland Region Corrections Facility (NRCF). Both programmes are suitable for prisoners who have a moderate to high substance abuse problem, and are serving a sentence that is too short to enable them to participate in a DTU programme. The aim of the programmes is to reduce dependency, and to positively impact on prisoner health and well being.

You have requested, "*the total cost of incarceration of people for cannabis related offences for an entire year using the latest set of available figure*".

Please note that prisoners are often sentenced to imprisonment for multiple offences of varying degrees of seriousness. A number of people who are convicted and sentenced for serious crimes each year also have a conviction for cannabis in the offence mix. However, this is not generally the most serious offence for which they receive a sentence of imprisonment. As a result, it can be misleading to draw the link between a cannabis offence and a sentencing outcome.

The Department does not capture the cost of managing offenders by offence type as part of our centrally collated records. The information that you request does not currently exist in a form that can be readily supplied to you, and would

instead require initiation of a project to extract, analyse and present the data in the form requested. Therefore, this part of your request is declined under section 18(g) of the OIA, as the information requested is not held by the Department, and we have no grounds for believing that it is held by another agency or more closely connected with the functions of another agency.

Although we do not record the cost of managing offenders by offence type, we do record the average overall cost of managing prisoners and community based offenders. This information is publicly available in our annual reports, which are accessible on our website via the link below:

<http://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/annual-reports5.html>

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jeremy Lightfoot', written over a circular stamp or watermark.

Jeremy Lightfoot
National Commissioner