



Office of Hon Judith Collins

MP for Papakura
Minister of Corrections
Minister of Police

Alex Harris

fyi-request-3655-110994d6@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Alex Harris

Thank you for your email dated 19 February 2016 requesting the following information:

- *How often are you informed of MP's visits to prisons, and the basis on which you are informed of them? Are you informed of all visits, only visits to certain prisoners, or only visits by certain MPs? Have you demanded this information from the Department of Corrections, or is it provided automatically under a "no surprise" approach policy.*
- *If you have specifically requested information on visits by MPs, I'd like copies of the request (if you have laid down broad parameters), or the last five requests (if you have requested information on the activities of individual MPs)*
- *Any advice you have received on the consistency of your being informed of prison visits with s161 Corrections Act 2004.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Section 161 of the Corrections Act 2004 provides that Members of Parliament (MP) may, "*whenever the member considers it appropriate, enter a prison and examine the condition of the prisoners, and may inform the prison manager of his or her observations.*" However, to maintain the safety and security of the prison including the safety of visitors it is appropriate that there are protocols in place to support these visits. Arrangements for MP visits to prisoners are facilitated by the Corrections Private Secretary in my office.

You may be aware that earlier this month I wrote to my parliamentary colleagues setting out the protocols for prison visits. A copy is attached for your information.

If you have any concerns with this response you may raise them with the Office of the Ombudsman. The contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143

Yours sincerely



Hon Judith Collins
Minister of Corrections



Office of Hon Judith Collins

MP for Papakura
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3 March 2016

All Members of Parliament

All Ministers

Via: Email

Dear Parliamentary Colleagues

As Minister of Corrections, I am immensely proud of the work that is quietly and professionally carried out every day in our prisons. Corrections staff work hard to keep New Zealanders safe and support offenders to turn their lives around. I would encourage all MPs to visit our prisons during their term in Parliament. All MPs are entitled to visit prisons pursuant to s. 161 of the Corrections Act 2004.

I would like to remind you, however, that there are certain expectations and protocols that should be followed when arranging a visit to a prison, or when raising issues on behalf of offenders, designed to keep everyone safe.

Prison visits

Facilitating a visit to a prison by an MP requires a significant amount of organisation by a number of people to ensure a visit goes safely and smoothly. Corrections staff are proud of their facilities, and are happy to accommodate visitors provided certain protocols designed to ensure safety and security are followed.

- Requests for visits should be directed via the Corrections Private Secretary in my office. They will ensure the right people in Corrections are contacted and will facilitate the arrangements for your visit, including any support material you may need.
- Please give a reasonable amount of notice of your intention to visit.
- The Prison Director is the most appropriate person to guide you during your visit. Our prisons contain the country's most difficult and dangerous people. The Prison Director and their team understand how dangerous situations can arise and are trained to deal with them. The Prison Director has responsibility for your safety and I urge all MPs to follow their advice at all times.
- Take some time to familiarise yourself with prohibited items. For example, cell phones, tobacco, lighters and recording devices are prohibited in a prison.

Correspondence relating to offenders:

From time to time you may wish to raise issues on behalf of an offender. Should this be the case you should address your correspondence to myself as Corrections Minister or to the Corrections' Chief Executive at info@corrections.govt.nz or Department of Corrections, Private Bag 1206, Wellington 6140.

Recently, I became aware of an email sent directly by one MP to an individual female Corrections staff member. This email openly copied in an offender with a long track record of criminal behaviour, including violence against women. This potentially compromised the safety of the staff member. I would urge you all to consider the safety of staff when raising these issues.

Thank you for observing these simple guidelines and safeguarding the welfare of our Corrections staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith Collins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Judith Collins
Minister of Corrections