

21 April 2017

C84438

Ti Lamusse  
[fyi-request-5572-07f8e169@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-5572-07f8e169@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Ti Lamusse

Thank you for your email of 17 March 2017, in which you request information about the Department's suicide prevention strategy. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The Department is committed to preventing unnatural deaths and life threatening incidents of self-harm in prisons. As you may be aware, prisoners have a higher prevalence of mental health disorders and illnesses than the general population. In order to understand and address a prisoner's mental health, we conduct health screenings when a prisoner is received into prison, and when they are transferred between prisons. We have also introduced a specialised Mental Health Screening Tool and developed a framework to support the review of practice and reduce the risk of self harm and suicide by prisoners and community based offenders.

If a prisoner is screened as 'positive' during the Mental Health Screening Tool they will be referred to Forensic Services for further specialised assessment of their mental health needs. Prisoners assessed by Forensic Services as having mild to moderate mental health needs are referred back to the prison health centre where a decision is made to refer the prisoner to a medical officer, a registered nurse or to a contracted provider for a Package of Care.

Packages of Care are interventions offered to prisoners, which can include self-guided tools, group sessions or individual sessions. The content of the packages include education about healthy lifestyles, mental illness, medications, recovery and resilience. Additionally, they may include advice about mental health well being, problem solving strategies, solution focused therapy, and cognitive behavioural therapy. Prisoners who were assessed as having serious mental health issues receive treatment directly from Forensic Services.

All prisoners who are identified as at risk of self harm are housed in designated At Risk Units (ARUs). Prisoners who are not initially deemed at risk may be reassessed at any time if mood, behavioural or situational change gives rise for concern. These units are set up to ensure that prisoners are managed in the safest environment possible.

Staff in ARUs are experienced in managing prisoners who are undergoing a period of crisis, and in identifying the warning signs of suicidal behaviour and thoughts. We have reduced opportunities for self-harm by replacing ventilation grilles in the ARUs and introducing new clothing for prisoners considered to be at risk of suicide.

You requested the following information, to which I have responded below:

- *'Please release any policy document produced by the Department of Corrections that contains "suicide prevention strategy" in its title.'*
- *'When was the "suicide prevention strategy" produced?'*
- *'What steps has the Department of Corrections taken to implement its "suicide prevention strategy"'*

The Department is one of eight government organisations that are responsible for the implementation of the Government's overarching Suicide Prevention Strategy. I understand that the Minister of Corrections, Hon Louise Upston, recently wrote to you providing you with some information on this.

The Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy, coordinated by Ministry of Health, may be viewed online:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/mental-health-and-addictions/working-prevent-suicide/what-government-doing-prevent-suicide>

I am advised that Corrections implemented a framework with the purpose of reducing the rates of suicidal behavior by offenders in prison and the community. Additionally, we made a number of operational changes aimed at caring for prisoners' mental health and minimising opportunities for self-harm. These are outlined above but have not been collated and recorded in a formal strategy. Your request is, therefore, declined under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or cannot be found.

The Department also has a strategy for investing in better mental health services, which takes suicide prevention into consideration. This is publicly available on our website:

[http://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/strategic\\_reports/investing\\_in\\_better\\_mental\\_health\\_for\\_offenders.html](http://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/strategic_reports/investing_in_better_mental_health_for_offenders.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 read 'V. Arbuckle', enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval.

Vincent Arbuckle  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Corporate Services