

25 May 2018

C96266

Jason McIntosh
fyi-request-7853-97a452ab@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr McIntosh

Thank you for your email of 17 May 2018 requesting information regarding unused prison beds. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested:

How many prison camps are currently sitting idle and unused in our prison system?

To enable Corrections to create an effective network of working prisons, facilities need to be modern, fit for purpose, secure, and make the best use of beds and services. The quality and condition of these facilities directly affects Corrections' ability to reducing re-offending, manage offenders safely and securely operate a cost effective network.

Following a review in 2012, approximately 680 prisoner places were deemed 'end of life' as they were no longer fit for purpose, did not facilitate prisoner rehabilitation or reintegration and were becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to operate safely, securely and humanely. This included four 60-bed units that were retired at Tongariro Prison in 2015.

There are currently no prison camps that are owned by Corrections sitting idle and unused in our prison system. As a result of the closures at Tongariro Prison, the Government returned 8,500 hectares of Crown land to Ngati Tuwharetoa. Under the settlement, Corrections retains the prison buildings and leases the land that makes up the prison, including the 700 hectare training farm.

Corrections must at all times ensure there is sufficient fit for purpose capacity across the prison network to accommodate prisoners in a safe, humane and secure manner. This is an ongoing exercise reflecting the dynamic operating environment, particularly in relation to changing prisoner numbers. To address the rising prisoner population Corrections has recently added approximately 770 prisoner beds by reopening previously closed units, commissioning the use of disaster recovery capability and increasing the number of double-bunked cells. This increase is because in the last two years, the prison population has increased at a rate considerably higher than forecast. Corrections is continuing to look at options to increase prisoner accommodation.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Emma Coats', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Emma Coats
Principal Adviser Ministerial Services
Corporate Services