



**New Zealand House of Representatives**  
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

**Justice Committee**  
Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Ture

54th Parliament  
July 2025

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## **2025/26 Estimates for Vote Corrections**

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Presented to the House of Representatives  
by Hon Andrew Bayly, Chairperson

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**Correction:** This committee’s report on the 2023/24 Annual review of the Department of Corrections stated that Mount Eden Corrections Facility was placed on Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill. We note that this is incorrect, and it is Auckland Prison that has been placed on the fast-track list.

## Vote Corrections

### Recommendation

The Justice Committee recommends that the appropriations for the year ending 30 June 2026 for Vote Corrections, as set out in Parliamentary Paper B.5, Vol.6, be accepted.

## About Vote Corrections

The Minister of Corrections is responsible for all the appropriations in Vote Corrections. Funding under the Vote is administered by the Department of Corrections | Ara Poutama Aotearoa.

As of 31 March 2025, the total prison population was 10,680, a 12.3 percent increase from the previous year. A further 30,387 were serving community-based sentences and orders.

We met with the Minister of Corrections, Hon Mark Mitchell, to discuss this Vote. He was joined by the Department of Corrections.

### Funding sought in 2025/26

In 2025/26, the appropriations sought for Vote Corrections total \$2,918.2 million. This is \$24 million (0.8 percent) more than estimated actual expenditure in 2024/25 of \$2,893.7 million.

The three largest appropriations are:

- *Public Safety is Improved*—just over \$2,142 million for managing offenders serving custodial and community-based sentences and orders
- *Re-offending is Reduced*—about \$420 million for providing rehabilitation interventions, reintegration, and support services
- *Capital expenditure*—just over \$342 million for the purchase or development of assets.

There are two notable changes compared with Budget 2024. Funding for the *Public Safety* appropriation increases by about \$125 million, to respond to increasing prisoner numbers and remuneration pressures. The new funding also addresses cost increases from infrastructure, digital, and other suppliers due to inflation. Capital expenditure decreases by \$137 million with the scheduled completion of the Waikeria Prison Development project.

### Trends in the Vote

For comparison, the table below shows the amount sought in Budget 2025 against spending over the previous three years.

	2022/23 Actual \$million	2023/24 Actual \$million	2024/25 Estimated Actual \$million	2025/26 Estimates sought \$million
	2,259.9	2,487.4	2,893.7	2,918.2
% Change		10.1	16.3	0.8

## **Investment in personnel**

### **Recruitment of frontline staff**

The Minister acknowledged that prioritising public safety entails a large cost. He told us that increasing the number of frontline staff is part of this cost, and an additional \$22.7 million has been allocated to fund staff remuneration. We heard that since its current recruitment campaign began in February 2024, Corrections has received 117,000 applications and 925 full-time staff have joined the department. The attrition rate has decreased from 15 percent to 7 percent. Corrections explained that it had made some changes, such as improving the work-life balance of staff by varying their working hours, which contributed to this decrease.

We asked whether Māori were proportionally represented in the recruitment of the new 925 frontline staff, given the overrepresentation of Māori in the justice system. Corrections told us that it decided to reduce some of its international recruitment to ensure that the people it recruits match the population being managed.

Some of us expressed concern that the Budget is playing catch-up as it is only now enabling an increase in the recruitment of non-custodial staff such as nurses, probation officers, and case workers. The Minister accepted that Corrections was short of medical staff when he was given the Corrections portfolio but stated that the department has focused not just on corrections officers, but also the wider workforce. Corrections explained that Budget 2024 funded 685 new frontline roles, which included nurses, case managers, and probation officers. It added that Budget 2025 funds 580 new frontline staff to account for the projected increases in the prison population. The department stressed that the number of case managers and probation officers it employs is not static. Corrections continually assesses the need for any change in personnel in response to a prison population that has increasingly complex needs.

### **Changes to pay equity claims**

We are aware that two of the pay equity claims cancelled by the Government after changes to the Equal Pay Act 1972 were for Corrections psychologists and Corrections probation officers and senior practitioners. Some of us expressed concern that community corrections is an underpaid, women-dominated area that requires a high degree of training compared to custodial staff. We asked whether the Minister had consulted with the unions before the claims were cancelled. We heard that the Minister and the department have good relationships with the Public Service Association and the Corrections Association of New Zealand. The Minister told us that a pay negotiation is under way, and that he and the chief executive aim to introduce as much equity into the system as possible through that process. We discussed the confidence the department has in recruiting more psychologists after the pay equity changes. The Minister told us that he is very confident that Corrections will still be able to attract outstanding people because there are “opportunities for advancement, and it’s a world-class agency”.

## **Funding for rehabilitation programmes**

We note that over \$420 million has been appropriated for *Re-offending is Reduced*, which funds rehabilitation interventions and reintegration programmes. These programmes aim to

address the underlying causes of criminal offending and reduce re-offending. Corrections told us that the *Optimising our Services* work programme identified rehabilitation services that have a positive effect on those who have committed serious and violent offending, child sex offending, and sexual offending. We heard that efforts are focused on funding psychologists and programme facilitators for intensive treatment programmes and special treatment units for these types of offending.

A tagged contingency of \$78 million from Budget 2024 supplements the funding for *Re-offending is Reduced* to provide rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to people on remand. We heard that carrying over this funding to 2025/26 gave the department time to organise its programmes and services to better respond to prisoners held on remand. Corrections said one example is a short rehab programme for remand convicted prisoners at Christchurch Men's Prison. We heard that this programme for offence-related treatment has had a positive impact on prisoners who participated.

We expressed interest in what improvements in rehabilitation and reintegration can be expected from the \$700–800 million investment in phase 1 of the redevelopment of Christchurch Men's Prison. The Minister told us that the design of the nearly completed Waikeria Prison, with its strong focus on providing treatment for mental health and addiction issues, is a benchmark that has been set for the redevelopment of Christchurch Men's Prison. Corrections explained that, in addition to the 240 beds that will be created, a 52-bed intervention support unit will support prisoners with mental health needs. Phase 1 will also include facilities to respond to physical health conditions that will reduce offsite treatment.

## **Measurable outcomes for the Hōkai Rangi strategy**

We note that in December 2024 Corrections refreshed its Hōkai Rangi strategy. We asked whether this refresh included measurable performance outcomes. Corrections told us that, given the overrepresentation of Māori in the corrections system, Hōkai Rangi helps the department focus on this problem and tailor approaches that are effective for Māori. It explained that the second iteration of Hōkai Rangi is anchored to a performance framework that has a clear purpose and clear measurable outcomes. This performance framework takes the three interconnected organisational objectives—reducing re-offending, improving public safety, and reducing the overrepresentation of Māori—and measures against outcomes for Māori. These outcomes determine whether Corrections needs to change its approaches towards Māori.

## **Overrepresentation of Māori women**

We discussed what funding has been set aside to address the overrepresentation of wāhine Māori in the corrections system. The Minister said that the Government recognises the importance of rehabilitation and is investing accordingly. He told us that even if Corrections provides the means for rehabilitation, it is up to the individual to want to make a change.

Corrections acknowledged the concern we expressed about the overrepresentation of Māori women during our hearing on the department's 2023/24 annual review.<sup>1</sup> It told us that it had given thought to how it can use existing resources and services to further complement the

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<sup>1</sup> See the Justice Committee's report, 2023/24 Annual review of the Department of Corrections, p 6.

work it already does in this area. One example is the use of high-intensity therapeutic environments that address barriers to the successful and timely completion of rehabilitation programmes.

## **Accommodation options for women held on remand**

We are aware that the number of women in prison has increased by nearly 30 percent between March 2024 and March 2025. We asked whether a woman is more likely to be held on remand because of a lack of appropriate housing for them while on bail, compared a man who commits the same offence but is released on bail. The Minister stressed that it is the courts that decide whether an accused can be held on remand or released on bail. He stated that it is the role of Corrections to meet the expectations of the court and look after an accused after they enter the corrections system. Corrections explained that while 46 percent of men are held on remand compared to 60 percent of women, comparatively more women are held on remand awaiting sentencing than men. This is because the court process differs for women and causes a prolonged period of being convicted on remand, awaiting sentencing.

In response to our concern over a lack of secure bail housing, Corrections told us that the achievement of bail, being a court decision, is often more complex for women than men. We heard that issues around childcare, protection orders, or domestic violence contribute to the low utilisation of bail housing for women. The department added that the main reason why women are held on remand is due to compliance issues rather than a lack of secure bail housing. Corrections said its research on accommodation highlighted that women prefer not to be in supported accommodation for several reasons: the location of accommodation, proximity to family and children, or sharing accommodation with large groups of women.

## **Infrastructure and capacity**

We note that projections by the Ministry of Justice estimate a 36 percent increase in the prison population over the next 10 years, for both the remand and sentenced population (14,230 prisoners).<sup>2</sup> We asked whether the corrections system has the capacity for this increase in prisoners. The Minister told us that the projections are based on changes to legislation, such as the Sentencing (Reform) Amendment Act 2025 and the Sentencing (Reinstating Three Strikes) Amendment Act 2024. We heard that Corrections has a plan to respond to capacity pressures in the short, medium, and long term. Some of us are disappointed that the Minister could not clarify whether double-bunking would be an option for any pressure on prison capacity. Meanwhile, some of us were reassured by the Minister's confidence in the ability of Corrections to plan for short, medium, and long-term capacity pressures.

We discussed the further expansion of Waikeria Prison, which is due to be completed in 2029 and will add 810 beds to Corrections' capacity. Corrections told us that it is negotiating the expansion with the contractor that completed the Waikeria Prison development project. We heard that the existing contract with Cornerstone Infrastructure Partners enables Corrections to make changes, including negotiations for further work. The contract also

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice | [Justice Sector Projections 2025 – 2035](#).

allows Corrections to open a public procurement process if Cornerstone Infrastructure Partners is unable to meet performance standards.

## Other matters considered

- **Support for assaults against staff**—We discussed funding allocated to support staff who are victims of assault by prisoners. The Minister told us that Corrections identifies and responds to the needs of victims through a review of an incident. (*Transcript p 8.*)
- **Safety gear for community-based officers**—We heard that there is no consensus among community-based officers on the use of stab-proof vests. The Minister stressed that Corrections recognises the risk to officers in the community and is committed to ensuring staff safety. (*Transcript pp 8–9.*)
- **Intervention support units**—Corrections explained that not every prison has an intervention support unit, but mental health teams have been established at 12 sites. It establishes mental health teams at those prisons where there is a need to address moderate to severe mental health needs. (*Transcript pp 10–12.*)

## Appendix

### Committee procedure

We met on 16 June 2025 to hear evidence on Vote Corrections. We heard evidence for 1 hour and 30 minutes from the Minister of Corrections, Hon Mark Mitchell, and the Department of Corrections. We received advice from the Office of the Auditor-General. We sent written questions to the Minister for response. We met again on 24 July 2025 to finalise this report.

### Committee members

Hon Andrew Bayly (Chairperson)

Hon Ginny Andersen

Jamie Arbuckle

Carl Bates

Tākuta Ferris

Rima Nakhle

Tom Rutherford

Todd Stephenson

Hon Dr Duncan Webb

Vanushi Walters

Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan

Cameron Luxton, Dr Tracey McLellan, and Tamatha Paul participated in some of this review.

### Related resources

In addition to the standard Estimates documents, we considered the following documents as evidence and advice. They are available on the [Parliament website](#), along with the [Hansard transcript](#) and [recording of our meeting on 16 June 2025](#).

- Standard Estimates Questionnaire responses (Vote Corrections).
- Minister of Corrections (Responses to written questions).
- Office of the Auditor-General (Briefing on Vote Corrections).