

CORRECTIONS Communicator

Updating the community on the South Auckland Men's Corrections Facility

New facility brings inmates home

Some 1,200 male inmates currently in New Zealand prisons are from the wider region around the Hampton Downs Road site. This equates to about 20 percent of all male inmates nationwide.

Currently, over half of these inmates are imprisoned out of the area, some in institutions as far south as Wellington and Christchurch.

Under the Regional Prisons Policy, inmates should as much as possible, be accommodated near to their families/whanau and other support networks. This helps in their rehabilitation and efforts to put a stop to their life of offending. There are obvious benefits to the whole community when this happens.

Contact us

If you would like to change your contact details, add someone else or be removed from the mailing list (copies will be sent to libraries, etc), please contact us on freephone 0800 263 880.

Corrections Communicator is the newsletter of the Department of Correction's Regional Prisons Programme. Letters and comments are welcome.

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Keeping inmates close to their home areas relieves the burden on families, many of whom currently have to endure significant expense and effort to visit inmates in other parts of the country.

Readers will be aware that New Zealand currently has corrections facilities in northern and central Auckland. These facilities cater for most inmates from the northern, central and western areas, but there are no facilities to accommodate inmates from the area of Huntly north to Manukau City.

The proposed South Auckland Men's Corrections Facility, about 30 minutes from Manukau City and 20 minutes from Huntly, will meet this need. The challenge for the Department was to find a site of suitable size so that there was a likely building platform and a reasonable buffer zone.

The Hampton Downs Road site met all the criteria for a site. It is away from any extensive housing area, yet close enough to southern Auckland to allow easy access for staff and visitors. These features were stressed in public feedback to us earlier in the project.



DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS

Welcome

Greetings and Kia ora. We hope you found the first issue of *Corrections Communicator* to be informative and interesting. This newsletter is for you and your community, so let us know if there are any issues you'd like covered and we'll endeavour to include them.

As the end of the year draws closer, we're continuing our programme of consultation with your community. Recently most of our meetings have been with individuals or small groups.

But we're keen to ensure we reach the wider community as well. As this issue of *Corrections Communicator* goes to print, we will be holding two public Information Days for the communities around the proposed corrections facility site.

The first of these is being held at the Meremere Community Hall on Wednesday 14 November and a second event will be held at the Rugby Clubrooms in Te Kauwhata on Thursday 15 November.

We hope that many of you will be able to attend one of these events and take the opportunity to meet with Department staff to talk about the new corrections facility in a more informal situation.

As you will read in this issue, we are also widening our consultation with iwi. We have just started a new series of visits to marae to discuss the project with as many local Maori as possible.

William Whewell
National Property Manager

Hui planning underway

Charlie Tawhiao, Cultural Perspectives Manager, is facilitating consultation with local hapu about the proposed South Auckland Men's Corrections Facility.

"We're developing a process for direct consultation. We want to make sure that local hapu have as much information as possible so that they can provide feedback on issues around the proposed site and facility.

"Our hope is that we will be able to visit all of the marae in the region that have a close association to the site and the facility so that we can explain what we're doing. We'll be listening to their concerns and will report back to them on how we propose to address these.

"In the long-term, the relationship with iwi represents an opportunity that has

not been available in the past, and is only beginning to develop in Northland. We are looking to work in partnership with tangata whenua to run our facilities in a better way.

"The message from iwi so far is that we need to change the culture of our facilities. The Department and iwi have a common goal to see more emphasis on healing and rehabilitation in prisons. By working together, we can realise that goal more effectively.

"This means building those goals into the physical design as well as into the design of the operating systems, programmes and services, and management philosophy. My hope is that local hapu and iwi will contribute to these aspects as work on them begins."

Local services upgrade

Quite understandably, we've been getting a lot of questions about the effects that the corrections facility will have on local water supply and sewerage systems. People have been asking whether the present systems will be able to cope with the extra demand and who will pay the additional costs.

We can assure local ratepayers that they will not pay for the extra demand on water and sewerage systems that the new corrections facility will create. For both services we are seeking to link into the community systems, rather than operate independently.

The services will require upgrading to accommodate the extra demand that will be created by the new facility. This upgrading would otherwise have

occurred at a later date, but will be hastened with our arrival.

The operation of the upgraded plant will also bring economies of scale that may assist in reducing the operating costs per household for these services.

The Department's obligations and commitments as a long-term ratepayer would also offer Waikato District Council some certainty in planning improvements to local services.

We want to make sure that we do not impose any extra costs on local people for the provision of services needed for the new facility. In the case of water and sewerage services, we're able to provide real benefits to the community.

In September's *Corrections Communicator* we looked at the location of the proposed South Auckland Men's Corrections Facility. Continuing our series to address commonly-raised issues, we look this month at the use of farming land for the facility, inmate employment and inmate security.

Use of farming land

Many people have asked why we are using good farming land for a corrections facility. In fact, the building area of the facility will only cover about 14 percent of the site. Much of the remaining 180 hectares will be kept for agricultural production. This may include both inmate employment activities and leasing land to local farmers for grazing stock.

Inmate employment

Inmate employment is an important aspect of rehabilitation. Its purpose is to provide inmates with work habits, experiences and skills that will help them get jobs after their release from prison.

In existing facilities, inmates are employed in a variety of jobs that include prison maintenance and industries, community service and land-based work. Some jobs, such as those in forestry, farming and industries give inmates the chance to gain formal qualifications, which again increases their chances of gaining employment on release.

The Department has checks and balances in place to ensure that it does not compete unfairly in the market place. There are around 1.6 million people employed in New Zealand. Total

Your issues in focus

inmate employment makes up less than 0.2 percent of this total (less than 3,200 people nationwide).

At this stage we cannot state the exact types of work that will be available at the new men's facility, but it is likely to include onsite farming work, as well as prison maintenance and industry work such as gardening, laundry and catering.

Careful security measures are in place to screen and supervise inmates, particularly those who work outside facilities. These jobs are only available to inmates who are near the end of their sentences. Because these inmates have a great deal to lose by escaping, they are considered to be low-risk and pose little threat to the public.

Security concerns

Many people have raised concerns about inmates escaping from the new facility. We understand these fears, but it is important for people to know the real risk of escapes. Here are some facts:

- The rate of escapes has been declining in recent years to a rate of less than one percent of the daily average prison population.
- Most inmates escape to see family members or resolve external issues. The location of the new South Auckland Men's Corrections Facility close to inmates' families will mean that inmates will be less likely to escape for these reasons.
- Most inmates who escape are minimum-security inmates.
- More than 75 percent of escapees are recaptured within one week of escaping and 50 percent within one day.



Inmates at work in a prison plant nursery

- Escapees generally aim to leave the area around the prison as quickly and unobtrusively as possible.
- Modern, sophisticated security systems and new-style management practices will also minimise the risk of escapes from the new facility.

It is also important to note that crime rates around existing corrections facilities are amongst the lowest in the country.

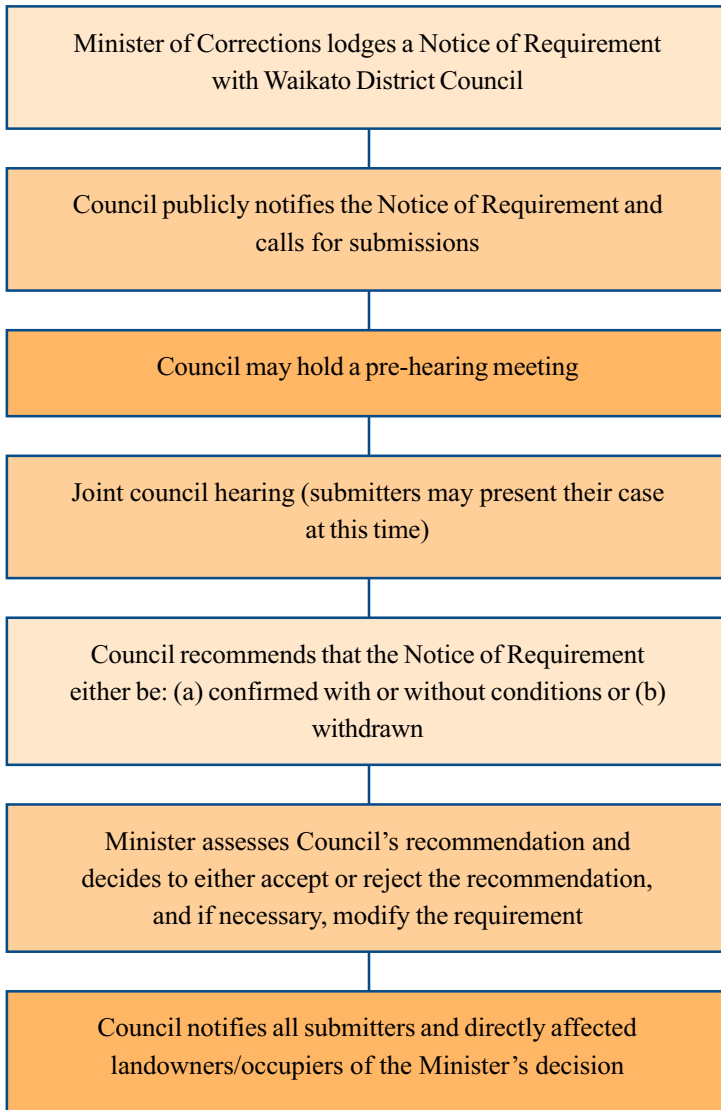
It is our experience that prison visitors leave the immediate area soon after their visits and do not linger around the area.



An example of modern security fencing around a corrections facility

Key steps in the designation process

Now that the preferred site has been identified for the facility, the next step is to seek to designate it for prison purposes. In a future issue of *Corrections Communicator*, we will discuss how individuals and groups with an interest in the project may participate in the designation process. The key steps in the designation process are:



What is a Notice of Requirement?

This lets the Council know that a designation is required. It outlines points such as:

- the effects of the prison
- how these can be minimised
- alternative sites considered
- consultation undertaken
- resource consents needed.

What is a designation?

Put simply, a designation is a provision in a District Plan that: (a) relates to a specific area of land, and (b) allows activities to be carried out on that land that fit within the site's designated purpose. In this case, the site's designated purpose will be "prison purposes."

Resource Consents

This process is run by Environment Waikato and is very similar to the designation process. At this point, we are intending to apply for resource consents for earthworks, discharge of stormwater to land/water and diversion of water.

A joint hearing between Environment Waikato and Waikato District Council on resource consents and the designation will take place.