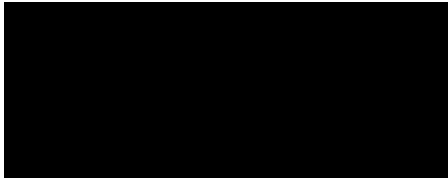



08 December 2022

C159587



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 13 October 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about staff at Northland Region Corrections Facility (NRCF). Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Corrections frontline staff deal with some of New Zealand’s most difficult and challenging people on a daily basis. People in prison often come into our management with significant learning, disability, mental health, and addiction needs. Corrections takes our duty of care seriously to do everything we can to help people rehabilitate, improve their wellbeing, and safely reintegrate back into their communities.

Corrections places significant emphasis on employing the most capable people for the job. We do this by ensuring robust recruitment and selection processes. Our pre-employment screening procedures support the high standard of conduct and integrity that we expect from our staff. We provide extensive training and development for our staff to ensure that they can meet the expectations placed on them. A wellbeing officer is made available to staff on a regular basis, along with ongoing discussions on how to access resources.

As has been widely reported, Corrections has been facing staffing challenges across many of our prisons. To respond to this, and as COVID-19 cases in prisons have now dropped considerably across the country, we have been temporarily moving some people to different prisons to alleviate pressure on staff at our most affected sites to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing is not put at risk. This is also about making sure we can increase minimum entitlements (including unlock hours, which mean more time out of their cells) and access to rehabilitation programmes for people in prison, alongside resuming in-person visits with family and friends as soon as possible.

You requested:

I would like to understand what the required number of staff is per ward per shift and how many staff are currently working at the facility and how many are still needed to fill positions.

Corrections is making a concerted effort to recruit, retain and train staff. We are actively working to recruit new Corrections Officers (CO) across the country and our staff have also been carrying out recruitment activities in their local communities (for example, information evenings for people interested in working with us).

We have seen a significant increase in the number of applications nationally, with almost 1,600 applications to be a CO in a three-month period, from August to October 2022. Over the last six months, there have been five outreach events for the purposes of recruitment held in the region. As at 21 November 2022, there were 16 applicants at different stages of recruitment specifically for NRCF, three new staff have been confirmed to be starting at the site shortly and an additional eight currently on their Corrections Officer Development Pathway. The Corrections Officer Development Pathway (CODP) is training that encompasses all staff safety and tactics for new COs.

As at 4 November 2022, NRCF has a current frontline staffing level of 189 against a roster designed for 212 staff members. Positions can be unrosterable for a number of reasons, such as initial training being undertaken, sick leave, or ACC leave.

Each prison, and within that each unit, has highly variable operational procedures in place with respect to its daily schedule and staffing will reflect this. The release of the number of staff per unit per shift, could compromise the safety of staff and the safe and secure operation of the prison. Therefore, the part of your request for the '*required number of staff is per ward per shift*' is refused under section 6(c) of the OIA, which protects the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

I would also like any information about the number of prison guards who have resigned in the past 12 months from Northland Region Corrections Facility and what portion of those have given the reason it has been because of health and wellbeing concerns.

A number of those who left NRCF recently have retired following a long period of service. These retirees have been offered part-time work which many have accepted as it better suits their lifestyle, helping to provide continued support to the site through the valuable experience they can offer.

The table below provides the number resignations by COs, Senior COs, and Principal COs, recorded in the Corrections' Employment Relations Database, broken down by financial year from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022 at NRCF. This table only includes people who have resigned from Corrections, and not people who have resigned from a position to take up another internal position within Corrections.

Reasons for resignation	Number of resignations
Resigned	29
Retired	9
Medical Retirement	7
Vaccination Status	6

Corrections does not centrally record statistics on the reasons an employee resigns outside of the categories provided in the table above. As such, the part of your request for *'what portion of those have given the reason it has been because of health and wellbeing concerns'* is refused under section 18(g) of the OIA, as the information requested is not held by Corrections, and we have no grounds for believing that it is held by another agency or more closely connected with the functions of another agency.

As with all professions the reasons people leave their jobs can be varied. This includes retirement, to pursue other career options, lifestyle options (shift work does not suit everyone), family reasons, medical issues, or they may move out of the region. Like any organisation, Corrections has a natural turnover of staff and a level of vacancy is built into our operating model.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response 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.

Ngā mihi



Leigh Marsh
National Commissioner (acting)