

To: Hon Kelvin Davis, Minister of Corrections

## Measures to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19

<b>Date</b>	23 March 2020	<b>Decision needed by</b>	No decision required
<b>B number</b>	B4006	<b>Priority</b>	Medium

### Recommendations

**Note** the contents of this briefing.

### Consultation

Justice  Social Development  Police  Health  Other:

Key comments: No consultations.

### Contacts for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Contact number	First contact
Jeremy Lightfoot	Chief Executive	9(2)(a)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Andy Milne	Deputy National Commissioner		<input type="checkbox"/>
Rebecca Powell	General Manager Public Affairs		<input type="checkbox"/>

## Key messages

This briefing is to update you on the measures Corrections is taking to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19.

A Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) structure has been established within Corrections to coordinate the organisation-wide response.

Business continuity protocols have been activated to ensure critical functions remain operational.

Heightened prison border control measures will be implemented at 1am 24 March 2020. These measures include the suspension of visits and protective measures for vulnerable prisoners.

Community work activities undertaken by those serving community sentences have been temporarily suspended from 1am 23 March 2020.

Wider sector engagement is progressing, and this is ensuring appropriate Departmental action to changes being made elsewhere

s9(2)(f)(iv)

Corrections has moved to ensure all future work is aligned with the Government alert levels 1-4.

## Background

- 1 The Department of Corrections is a critical public service, responsible for delivering services that keep New Zealand communities safe.
- 2 Corrections has been preparing for the impact of COVID-19 on our operations since January 2020. Initially this included providing all staff with information from the Ministry of Health about practising good personal hygiene and ensuring that our business continuity plans are up to date and fit for purpose. As the situation evolved, we continued to support staff by providing information through a dedicated section on the staff intranet, Tātou, along with regular email updates from the Chief Executive and National Commissioner.
- 3 As the situation evolved, and self-isolation measures were introduced for people returning to New Zealand from overseas, we moved quickly to ensure that staff who had recently travelled or were overseas at the time were well supported to comply with any obligation to self-isolate.

## Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) structure

- 4 To coordinate our response to managing the impact of COVID-19 on our operations, Corrections has now commenced an Emergency Coordination Centre using the Coordinated Incident Management System model.
- 5 The initial Incident Management Team is led by Megan Main (Deputy Chief Executive) as Incident Controller. The Controller is supported by the following functions Health, Safety & Wellbeing, Intelligence, Planning, Operations, Sector, Logistics, and Public Information Management. The Controller is also supported by a Response Manager, technical experts (Human Resources and Legal), and Iwi/Māori representation. The four Regional Commissioners also form part of the Incident Management Team. Appendix One shows the structure of the Incident Management Team.

## Prison border control measures

- 6 Corrections recognises the criticality of stopping the spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, from 1am Tuesday 24 March 2020, all private and volunteer visits, Release to Work activities and other non-essential movements in and out of our prisons have been suspended. Non-essential movements include non-essential visits from National Office and Regional Office staff and other groups. Non-critical training will also be suspended.
- 7 There are risks associated with the suspension of visits in relation to increased tension and possible disorder events. To mitigate these risks, communication material has been prepared and is being utilised to brief staff, prisoners and their family and friends. These briefings are now underway. We will ensure that senior staff are in units to support custodial staff as they communicate these changes to prisoners.
- 8 Prisoners will be provided alternative means to communicate with friends and whānau. These measures include all prisoners receiving a \$5 phone card every week until visits resume. There will also be more phones in units and an increased use of prisoner email. Custodial staff have been asked to increase their engagement with prisoners.
- 9 We are also aware that these measures are likely to lead to an increase in complaints. The Inspectorate is well briefed and will ensure an increased focus on the complaint procedure. Other independent monitoring bodies such as the Office of the Ombudsman have been advised of this. Unions have also been engaged and are supportive.
- 10 Volunteers and Release to Work employers are important stakeholders in terms of the reintegrative support they provide. Specific communication material has been prepared for these groups.
- 11 Legal and statutory visits, including those from lawyers and the Office of the Ombudsman, are excluded from these changes.
- 12 The cessation of visits and other restrictions described above will be in place for 14 days and will be reviewed every 14 days thereafter. A daily teleconference will be conducted with Regional Operations Leads to ensure effective support is provided by the Incident Management Team.

## Vulnerable Prisoners


- 13 Corrections is aware of the need to protect those prisoners who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Vulnerable prisoners have been defined as: 70 years or older; or identified by prison health staff as being vulnerable. With effect from 23 March 2020, a number of actions have been implemented to protect vulnerable prisoners. These actions include:
  - Prison Directors restricting association with other prisoners
  - Each site considering moving vulnerable prisoners to a single unit, or making other suitable and lawful arrangements for their care
  - More detailed practice advice is being prepared by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing teams

- Assessing whether certain prisoners that meet the vulnerable prisoner criteria may be suitable for release, based on their risk profile and practical considerations such as the availability of suitable accommodation.

### Temporary suspension of community work activities

14 Corrections has also stopped all Community Work from 1am Monday 23 March 2020. This covers both Community Work Supervisor led and Agency Placements. This decision was made on the basis that the risks of managing people together in confined spaces (including vans) were too high. It was also not possible to guarantee Health, Safety and Wellbeing practices in agency placements.

15 s9(2)(h)




16 All those serving Community Work sentences will be advised not to report in this week. Probation Officers will be contacting people serving community work sentences over the course of the next few days to explain what the suspension of community work activities will mean for them. The focus for Community Corrections sites and Community Work Supervisors this week will be to connect with Project Sponsors and Agencies to communicate this decision.

17 Unions have been consulted in undertaking this action and are supportive. The suspension will be reviewed regularly by the Chief Probation Officer.

### Wider Sector Engagement

18 A sector lead within the Incident Management Team is working with the wider sector to ensure the implications of changes being made across the sector are being considered.

s9(2)(f)(iv)



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### Operational Settings

- 21 Corrections has moved to ensure all future work is aligned with the New Zealand COVID-19 alert levels. Future planning undertaken by the Incident Management Team will be consistent with these levels. This would, for example, guide our actions if an outbreak was to occur within an individual site, versus our actions if a wider outbreak was to occur.
- 22 Acknowledging that level 2 includes the need for physical distancing and alternative ways of working, we have taken actions regarding non-essential functions working from home that are also consistent with the alert levels. As part of this the Executive Leadership Team has been split into two teams - A and B. Team B is working from home this week. Any movement up the levels is anticipated in our forward planning.

### Vulnerable Staff

- 23 Alert level 2 also includes a requirement that high-risk people remain at home. This, alongside our own health and wellness obligations to staff has meant that certain actions have been taken with respect to vulnerable staff. These actions are:
  - Staff of 70 years and over to stay at home
  - Staff taking immunosuppressive medicines, to stay at home
  - Staff who have certain conditions or situations such as pregnancy, heart conditions, hypertension, lung and kidney conditions, or who are living with people with these conditions, continue with their work as normal, provided that their condition is such that they are well enough to come to work.
- 24 The decision in relation to vulnerable staff will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and when alert levels change.

**Recommendations**

25 It is recommended that you:

- a) **Note** the contents of this briefing.

YES/NO



Jeremy Lightfoot  
Chief Executive

Hon Kelvin Davis  
**Minister of Corrections**

Date signed:

/ /

**Minister's comments**

Proactively Released

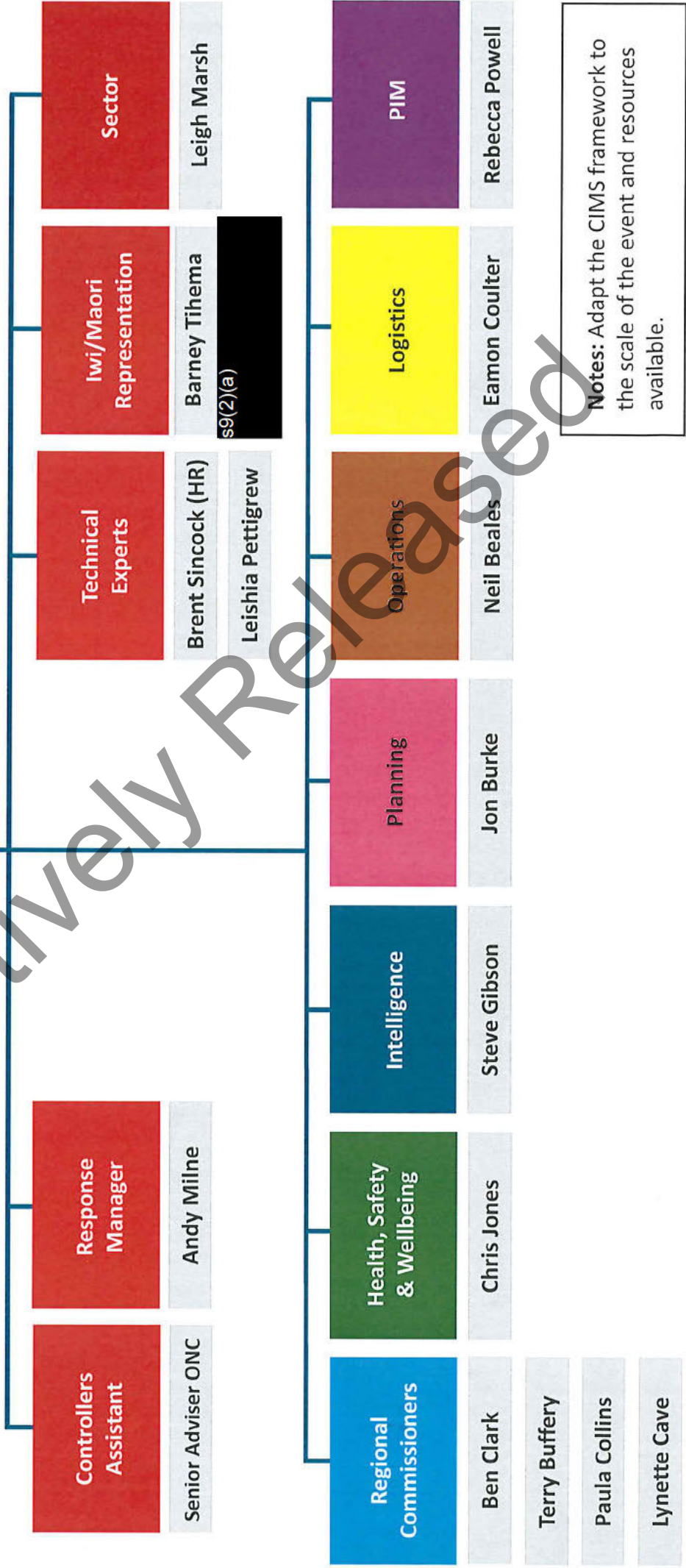
# National Coordination Centre (NCC) Incident Management Team (IMT)

Event: National COVID

Controller

Date: 20/3/20 Time: 02.54pm

Megan Main



Notes: Adapt the CIMS framework to the scale of the event and resources available.