

12 April 2024

C178244



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 14 February 2024 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting various information relating to Corrections' recruitment campaign and staffing levels. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Like many other organisations and businesses around the country, we have experienced a number of staffing challenges over the last few years. We fully acknowledge the pressure this has placed on staff working in prisons, which is why we are making a concerted effort to recruit, retain and train frontline staff.

This includes launching a new recruitment campaign in October 2022 and a second recruitment campaign in February 2024, alongside strengthening our recruitment processes, improving our onboarding processes, implementing new rosters which provide our staff with better work/life balance and help them to avoid fatigue, and continuously working to improve staff safety. Our staff have also been carrying out recruitment activities in their local communities (for example, information evenings for people interested in working with us).

Retaining existing staff is also a priority for us. We are focused on investing in the training and capability of our frontline staff, as well as making sure people have clear pathways to build a long-term career at Corrections. We also expect the recently settled prisons-based collective agreement to help support staff retention, and we continue to work with unions on matters concerning staffing levels and staff safety.

We received more than 26,700 applications for frontline custodial roles between 1 October 2022 and 19 March 2024. More than 1,300 people have been recruited into corrections officer roles, with many more in the recruitment pipeline.

We are continuing our recruitment efforts, with our recent advertising campaign resulting in a sharp increase in applications for corrections officer roles. More than 6,200 applications have been received since the launch of our new recruitment campaign, *Stories from the Inside*, on 4 February 2024.

While we have previously only trained new staff at the National Learning Centre in Wellington, the growth in the number of new recruits joining us has required us to adapt the way we deliver the Corrections Officer Development Programme (COPD), and we are now also conducting training at local centres.

Applicants for corrections officer roles continue to undergo a rigorous selection process, including multiple assessments to ensure their suitability for the role. Due to the high level of integrity required of staff working in prisons, thorough pre-employment checks are out. These include Police vetting, drug testing, a physical fitness test and medical check, and reference checking prior to employment.

You requested:

This is a request under the Official Information Act for information relating to Corrections' 'recruiting now' ads, and staffing numbers.

Under the Act, please provide the following:

** The approximate date when the 'recruiting now' television and online advertising campaign (such as the 'what do you do?' ad) began*

On 22 February 2024, you clarified that the information you were requesting related to the recruitment campaign that commenced in October 2022.

The 'What do you do?' advertising campaign ran from October 2022 to January 2023.

** The total cost to date of this campaign, including cost of producing the commercials, cost of airing them, plus cost of any print and radio advertising if applicable*

The 'What do you do?' advertisement campaign cost \$3,433,412. This figure includes the cost of creative development, video production, advertising, media placement costs and audience research and testing. Material produced for this campaign then continued to be used as part of our standard recruitment advertising until the launch of our second campaign in February 2024.

** The total number of Corrections officers in NZ at the time the campaign began.*

The total number of corrections officers in New Zealand as at 1 October 2022 was 3,514. Please note that this figure includes corrections officers, senior corrections officers, principal corrections officers, and recruit in training.

** The total number of Corrections officers in NZ now*

The total number of corrections officers in New Zealand as at 14 February 2024 was 3,824. Please note that this figure includes corrections officers, senior corrections officers, principal corrections and recruits in training.

** Total attrition of officers (retirement, resignation, dismissal etc) in that time period.*

The total number of terminations between 1 October 2022 and 14 February 2024 was 711. Please note that this figure includes corrections officer, senior corrections officers, principal corrections officers, and recruits in training. Please also note that terminations refer solely to people ceasing to work at Corrections, and does not include internal movements of corrections officers to other positions within the organisation.

Please note that staff retention has improved, with a 15.4 percent drop in the average number of corrections officers leaving per month in the 2023/24 financial year compared to 2022/23 financial year.


As previously mentioned, retaining existing staff is a priority for us, and we have implemented a number of staff retention measures. This includes:

- Continuously working to improve staff safety
- Investing in the capability and training of our frontline staff
- Implementing new rosters
- Continuing to work with our union partners on matters concerning staffing levels and staff safety
- Improving our wellbeing initiatives, including injury management, wellbeing, and health promotion
- Making sure people have clear pathways to build a long-term career at Corrections.

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



Rebecca Powell
Acting Deputy Chief Executive People and Capability