

30 July 2021

C138409

S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 2 July 2021, requesting information about weddings in prisons. We note that Corrections' Media team has responded to part of your request, and part of your request was transferred to the Ministerial Services team for response on 7 July 2021. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Corrections acknowledges the importance of positive relationships in reducing re-offending, and the significant role that friends, family and spouses can play in an individual's rehabilitation and reintegration. It is Corrections' policy to support the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships, including marriage in prison, where it does not pose a threat to the safety of the community, our prisons, or any member of the public.

A person in prison can make an application to the Prison Director to facilitate a wedding or civil union. The Principal Corrections Officer of the person's unit will interview the individual, collect all required information and complete an *F.09.Form.01 Application for wedding, civil union service* form. The Prison Director must then forward the completed application to the Regional Commissioner for approval.

Once approval has been received, the Prison Director determines who may attend the prison ceremony depending on the security arrangements required. No more than 12 people can attend a ceremony. All expenses, including catering, are paid for by the person in prison, their intended spouse, their families, or another source approved by the Prison Director. Further information regarding prison weddings and civil unions is available on our website at:

[https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/policy\\_and\\_legislation/Prison-Operations-Manual/Prisoner-finance-activities/F.09-Prisoner-wedding-civil-union](https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/policy_and_legislation/Prison-Operations-Manual/Prisoner-finance-activities/F.09-Prisoner-wedding-civil-union)

You requested:

*How many weddings have been held in prisons in the year to date, and during 2020 and 2019?*

*For the wedding, can you tell me the date they were held, the prison they were held at, who the bride and groom were, and what the theme was?*

The below table shows the number of weddings that have been identified as taking place in New Zealand prisons from 2019 to 2021 as at 2 July 2021, broken down by year and prison site. The number of weddings in prisons is not centrally recorded data and the information about them is held on individual files. As such, the numbers provided rely on staff recollection, and are provided to the best of Corrections' ability.

Prison	2019	2020	2021
Auckland South Corrections Facility	1	0	0
Mt Eden Corrections Facility	0	0	0
Auckland Prison	0	0	0
Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility	0	0	0
Northland Region Corrections Facility	2	1	0
Tongariro Prison	0	0	0
Spring Hill Corrections Facility	0	0	0
Manawatu Prison	0	0	0
Waikeria Prison	0	0	0
Hawke's Bay Regional Prison	0	0	0
Rimutaka Prison	1	0	0
Arohata Prison	0	0	0
Whanganui Prison	2	0	0
Christchurch Men's Prison	0	0	0
Christchurch Women's Prison	0	0	0
Rolleston Prison	0	0	0
Otago Corrections Facility	0	0	0
Invercargill Prison	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

Under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA we are statutorily required to protect the privacy of natural persons, as such we are withholding the names of those involved in all ceremonies. As per section 9(1) of the OIA, we are also required to consider whether there are countervailing public interest considerations favouring the release of the requested information. We do not believe such considerations outweigh the individuals' right to privacy in this case.

Additionally, a wedding theme is not information held by Corrections, therefore we are refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA as the information requested does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

*Who officiated each of the weddings?*

During the application process, the person in prison can select a celebrant of their choosing, pending approval from the Prison Director. Some ceremonies are officiated by the prison chaplain. To protect the privacy of those that officiated any weddings in prison, as well as the individuals' involved, we are withholding this part of your request, under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA. As per section 9(1) of the OIA, we are also required to consider whether there are countervailing public interest considerations favouring the release of the requested information. We do not believe such considerations outweigh the individuals' right to privacy in this case.

*Have there been any recorded incidents during the weddings, and what were they?*

There have been no recorded incidents during any of the seven weddings identified as taking place in prisons from 1 January 2019 to 2 July 2021.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise them 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



Rachel Leota  
National Commissioner