

10 April 2024

C178684

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 23 February 2024 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about the Drug Treatment Programme (DTP) at Arohata Prison. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested:

*When did the Drug Treatment Unit (DTU) programme at Arohata prison close?
When and where did the DTU programme re-open?*

The DTP at Arohata Prison was suspended in September 2022 and then permanently discontinued in March 2023.

As has been widely reported, Corrections has been managing ongoing staffing pressures in recent years. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of both staff and people in prison, we undertook a regional consolidation plan, which involved transferring some sentenced people and redeploying staff to other prisons. This included transferring some women from Arohata Prison to enable staff to assist at Rimutaka Prison, which was, and continues to experience significant staffing pressures. As a result, as stated above, the DTP at Arohata Prison was suspended in September 2022.

Concurrently during 2022, Corrections conducted a needs analysis of the alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment programmes across our entire prison network. One of the findings of this analysis was that Arohata Prison was not the right location for the women's DTP, but that it would instead be better placed at Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility (ARWCF). This was due to the majority of attendees on the Arohata DTP having to transfer from ARWCF to take part. Requiring women to transfer from ARWCF to Arohata to take part in the DTP was impacting the number of women willing to engage with the programme at Arohata as fewer women were choosing to travel to attend treatment. Subsequently the decision was made for the DTP at Arohata to be permanently discontinued in March 2023, and a new residential AOD service to be established at ARWCF to meet demand at this site.

The new residential AOD service, Te Ira Oranga, began operating at ARWCF the week of 15 May 2023 with comprehensive assessments, including the development of individualised treatment plans and matching the support to the specific needs of each wāhine. This was followed by the full programme beginning at the end of June 2023.

Te Ira Oranga extends what was previously available (a three month treatment programme) to also offer a six month treatment option for those with a higher level of AOD need.

We are currently considering brief interventions for those on remand and establishment of co-existing problem (CEP) clinicians to meet the needs of women at Arohata Prison. This will be progressed as soon as custodial staffing allows. As mentioned earlier, Corrections has experienced significant staffing challenges, and we are making a concerted effort to recruit, retain and train frontline custodial staff. This includes launching recruitment campaigns, strengthening recruitment processes, improving onboarding processes, implementing new rosters which provide staff with better work/life balance and help them to avoid fatigue and continuously working to improve staff safety. We have seen a strong increase in the number of job applications received for new Corrections Officers. As at 18 March 2024, we have received 26,794 applications since 1 October 2022, with 1,356 people recruited into Corrections Officer roles.

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



Dr Juanita Ryan
Deputy Chief Executive Pae Ora