

30 September 2020

C122527

s9(2)(a)

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Tēnā koe s9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 28 May 2020, requesting information about incidents of violence in prisons involving people with gang affiliations. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). I apologise for the delay in providing this information to you.

Gangs in various forms have existed in New Zealand communities and prisons for several decades and are heavily embedded in parts of the community. This is a societal issue that will take a whole of government and community response to change. Gang violence is not something Corrections can resolve or manage alone. Social and welfare issues, employment, education, health and mental services and support for families all need to combine in order to reduce the impact of gangs. As it has in the community, the proportion of people in prison identified as gang members has been steadily increasing over the last thirty years. This is an on-going problem recognised by both Corrections and the New Zealand Police.

Corrections implemented a five-year Gang Strategy 2017-2021, which aims to:

- Contain the negative influence of gang members in the custodial environment
- Disrupt the efforts and capabilities of gang members to organise and commit crime from within prisons and in the community
- Reduce reoffending through meaningful rehabilitation and reintegration and engagement
- Reduce the harm caused by gangs in prisons and in the community.

Key initiatives of our current focus include site-based gang-management plans, a framework to facilitate direct engagement with gang members and their whānau, gang tattoo prevention and improved intelligence tools to inform staff and support the development of safe prison environments.

People in prison can be identified as being connected to a gang by various means, including by one or more of the following:

- Gang tattoos/markings
- Gang documentation/paraphernalia
- Information from other agencies

- Admission to staff
- Staff observations
- Intelligence information from other sources.

Corrections takes all reasonable steps to discourage people in prison from gang membership by providing a safe custodial environment. The ability to access and participate in individually planned rehabilitation and reintegration pathways also provides opportunities for gang affiliated people who are motivated to change can access programmes to address their offending behaviours, and reintegration support to address the ongoing drivers that lead to and maintain gang membership.

Corrections is committed to working with gang affiliated people through effective engagement and providing opportunities for positive involvement and participation within their wider communities. This can also include support to disassociate from gangs through building alternative support networks, or accessing services such as tattoo removal.

You have requested:

*1. Corrections to provide statistics relating to the number of violent incidents reported to have been committed by persons registered as gang members in New Zealand prisons, in the last four years. I would like Corrections to provide statistics so this can be compared against the total number of violent incidents committed by prisoners overall.*

*1.2 When identifying the number of violent incidents, I would like Corrections to identify how many incidents have been committed by each identified gang where possible.*

Please note, Corrections records information regarding anyone who is presently recorded as having a connection to a gang, including prospects and associates as well as patched members. It is not possible to accurately break these figures down further to specify individuals who are 'registered as gang members', as specified in your request, versus those identified as gang associates.

Please also note, Corrections records incidents of assaults in prisons according to three categories:

- No injury – victim subjected to physical violence that did not result in physical injuries or require any form of medical treatment (e.g. kicking, shoving, jostling, striking, or punching that did not result in injury);
- Non-serious – victim subjected to physical violence that resulted in physical injuries that may have required medical treatment, and/or overnight hospitalisation as part of initial assessment or medical observation but not on-going medical treatment (e.g. blood nose, x-ray required, cuts requiring minimal stitches, gouging, or bites);
- Serious – an act of physical violence that involves one or more of the following: bodily harm requiring medical intervention by medical staff followed by overnight hospitalisation (beyond initial assessment or medical observation) in a medical facility; bodily harm requiring extended

periods of ongoing medical intervention; or sexual assault of any form and degree where Police charges are laid.

Please find the requested information attached as Appendix One and Appendix Two.

The New Zealand gang landscape is dynamic. Relationships between gangs and gang members are complicated, varied, and often contradictory. The complex nature of these relationships influences the development of traditional, and creation of new, alliances and rivalries. Within this complex environment, gang tensions flare up intermittently, often resulting in conflict and the use of violence and weapons. In recent years we have seen gang-related violence increasing in frequency and severity, with gang-related violence now more planned and deliberate.

Gang violence in prisons is also a nuanced issue, and the number of members affiliated to each gang are just one element in a complex story. When analysing the numbers provided, it is important not to assume all incidents of violence perpetrated by gang members are related to their gang membership or affiliation. While some incidents of violence in prison arise from gang tensions, some incidents involving gang members are unrelated.

Some gangs may be involved in greater numbers of incidents largely due to the amount of members of that particular gang; however, some of the gangs whose numbers in prison may be smaller, are often responsible for more serious acts of violence, and can have a deeper reach due to their fluidity in who they align themselves to.

If you would like to further discuss the complexities of gang violence and management in prisons, you can contact Chief Custodial Officer Neil Beales at s9(2)(a) [REDACTED] to arrange a conversation.

*2. Any documents, briefings, aide memoires, or reports submitted by Corrections to the Minister for Corrections in relation to gang activity within the last twelve months.*

There have been no documents, briefings, Aides Memoire or reports submitted by Corrections to the Minister of Corrections in the 12 months preceding your request in relation to gang activity in the last twelve months. Therefore, this part of your request is declined under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the documents requested do not exist.

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

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

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of fluid, connected strokes that form a stylized, somewhat abstract shape.

Rachel Leota  
National Commissioner

## Appendix One

Serious assaults incidents in New Zealand prisons committed by persons with a recorded gang-affiliation ,1 July 2016 to 30 June 2020.

Financial Year	No injury/Non Serious Assaults – prisoner on prisoner		Serious assaults – prisoner on prisoner		No injury/Non Serious Assaults – prisoner on staff		No injury/Non Serious Assaults – prisoner on staff	
	Total Incidents	Gang Involvement	Total Incidents	Gang Involvement	Total Incidents	Gang Involvement	Total Incidents	Gang Involvement
2016-17	1,152	550	25	14	441	247	22	15
2017-18	1,179	662	42	27	557	314	12	9
2018-19	1,231	655	46	25	625	401	29	18
2019-20	1,366	733	41	27	871	529	18	12

### Note for table:

- ‘Gang Involvement’ represents the number of assault incidents in prisons where the perpetrator had a recorded gang affiliation.



**Appendix Two** – Gang affiliation of those who committed assaults on staff and other prisoners in New Zealand prisons from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2020.

Gang Affiliation	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Total
316		5	1	3	9
Aotearoa Natives		2	4	3	9
Bad Troublesome Ward			1		1
Bandenkrieg				1	1
Bandidos MC	1	7	7	9	24
Barbarian Stormtrooper				1	1
Black Power	138	164	187	190	679
Black Power Outbackz	1	2	1	2	6
Bloods	22	38	36	71	167
Comanchero MC	1	2	5	4	12
Crips	111	120	165	181	577
Epitaph Riders MC				1	3
Evil Souls		2	2	3	7
FBI (Full Blooded Islanders)			1		1
Filthy Few MC	6	5	2	5	18
Greasy Dogs	3	2		1	6
Head Hunters MC	52	43	52	66	213
Hells Angels MC	4	7	6	8	25
Highway 61 MC	1		2	3	6
Killer Beez	107	112	120	158	497
King Cobra	23	21	21	39	104
Lone Legion	1				1
Mangu Kaha	1	1	1	1	4
Mongrel Mob	231	317	330	342	1220
Natives	1	1	4	3	9
Never Snitch Krew	1	2	1		4
Nomads	42	52	36	79	209
Other	1	1	1		3
Outcast MC			1		1
Outlaws MC			1		1
Rebels MC	10	16	14	22	62
Road Knights MC		1	1	3	5
Skin Heads		2	1		3
Southern Vikings MC	1				1

Stormtrooper	5	4	5	5	19
Tribal Huks	2	3	3	3	11
Tribesmen MC	38	51	41	49	179
Uru Taha	3	1	9	6	19
Westside – Tauranga	5	5	6	9	25
Westside Outlawz	1	2	1	5	9
White Power	6	16	16	23	61
Who Fucken Kares	5	5	13	2	25
Wolf Pack			1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>1099</b>	<b>1301</b>	<b>4238</b>