

06 May 2021

C132925

S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 8 March 2021, requesting information about double bunking at Manawatu Prison over the past five years. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Corrections takes its duty to safely manage individuals in custody extremely seriously. Double bunking has been a long-standing practice in the New Zealand prison system and is common practice internationally.

As the prison population has reduced in recent years (from a peak of 10,820 people in March 2018 to 8,728 as at 28 February 2021) we have been able to reduce our use of double bunking. There has been around a 40 percent reduction in the number of people double bunked since the peak in March 2018. Approximately 32% of people in prison are currently double-bunked.

Corrections has a range of policies, processes and tools in place to identify and mitigate any safety concerns about double bunking. In particular, Corrections staff use a comprehensive assessment tool, the Shared Accommodation Cell Risk Assessment (SACRA), to review the compatibility of individuals before they are placed in a shared cell. The SACRA does not replace staff judgement, but is an important additional tool to help inform their decision-making and minimise any potential risk.

The SACRA tool identifies key risk factors to consider before placing a person in a shared cell. The assessment captures a range of information about a person, including their age, security classification, offending history, history of imprisonment, gang affiliation, notable physical characteristics, mental health concerns and any other special needs.

A copy of the SACRA compatibility guidelines is available on our website at: [www.corrections.govt.nz/ data/assets/pdf file/0016/6460/1.08.Res.01-v.04-280817.pdf](http://www.corrections.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/6460/1.08.Res.01-v.04-280817.pdf).

No one who is identified as posing an obvious or detectable threat to another individual will be double bunked. Where it is determined that an individual is not suitable to share a cell, a Not to Double Bunk alert is placed on their electronic file.

You requested:

*As at the end of February, how many prisoners at Manawatū Prison were being double-bunked? How many of these were sentenced prisoners and how many were being held on remand?*

*As at the end of February, how many prisoners around New Zealand were being double-bunked? How many of these were sentenced prisoners and how many were being held on remand? Which prisons in New Zealand use double-bunking?*

*Can I please find out the equivalent figures, for Manawatū Prison and New Zealand, at the comparable time for each of the past five years?*

Please see Appendix One for the number of people in prison on remand who are double bunked, broken down by prison for the last five financial years.

Appendix Two provides the number of people in prison who have been sentenced and are double bunked, broken down by prison for the last five financial years.

Corrections normally reports this type of information based on a snapshot of the prison population at the end of the financial year, as at 30 June. However, in line with your request and in order to provide the most up to date available data as at the end of February 2021, figures are a snapshot of the prison population as at 28 February each year. All prison populations fluctuate on a daily basis due to court outcomes, arrests and scheduled release dates.

The remand population accounts for 37% of the current prison population. By law, people on remand must be segregated from people who have been sentenced. Unit placement is therefore a critical factor in the safe management of an individual. Remand facilities across sites have predetermined capacity and due to the volume on remand there are inevitably more people on remand double bunked than compared to sentenced people. Single cell occupancy is facilitated wherever possible, or if an individual is identified as required single cell occupancy.

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 nui



Rachel Leota  
National Commissioner