

BEFORE THE OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER OF

the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

of the hearing of submissions on the
Proposed Otago Regional Policy
Statement

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF RUTH TURNER
ON BEHALF OF ARA POUTAMA AOTEAROA, THE DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONS (Submitter # DPR-00102)**

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Ruth Turner. I am the Manager Network Configuration at Ara Poutama Aotearoa, the Department of Corrections (**Ara Poutama** or **the Department**). I have been with the Department for almost 16 years (since February 2007) and in this current role for just over 3 years.
- 1.2 My responsibilities as Manager Network Configuration include:
 - (a) Providing data, information and analysis to a range of internal stakeholders to inform operational and strategic decisions on current and future network requirements.
 - (b) Influencing and supporting short and longer term decisions on capacity utilisation and capital investment.
 - (c) Leading and/or contributing to long-term asset management and planning.
 - (d) Developing a Long-term Network Configuration Plan (5 – 10 years).
- 1.3 In the context of my current role, 'network' refers to prisons and community based facilities, including community corrections and housing support services, that are used for, or are associated with:
 - (a) Housing people remanded in custody or serving a custodial sentence; or
 - (b) Providing services and/or accommodation in the community to people remanded on bail, serving a non-custodial sentence, those released from prison on conditions or those requiring support to integrate back into the community upon release.
- 1.4 Between 2014 and 2016, and again from 2018 to 2019, I worked in a number of different roles related to prison capacity programmes of work. This included Implementation Manager for Stronger Prisons, the lead on Prison Configuration Phase Two and National Manager Operational Readiness for the Prison Capacity Programme. All of these roles included:

- (a) Managing the implementation of capacity changes (both adding and removing capacity) across the prison network, including identifying risk, issues and impacts at a site, regional and national level.
- (b) Responsibility for the establishment, on-going management, and integration of national, regional and site based implementation teams.

2 **SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

- 2.1 My evidence is in support of Ara Poutama's submission¹ on the EIT – Energy, Infrastructure, and Transport provisions of the Proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement (**Proposed RPS**) requesting that the Otago Corrections Facility and community corrections activities be included in the definition of *regionally significant infrastructure*.
- 2.2 The purpose of my evidence is to provide further details of the Department's operation, with particular consideration of the interconnected nature of prisons, community corrections activities and the corrections system. It provides information, from a network configuration perspective relative to the population² we manage, that outlines the way in which the Department's custodial (prisons) and non-custodial (community based) facilities operate as an integrated network at a local, regional and national level.

3 **RESPONSIBILITIES OF ARA POUTAMA**

- 3.1 The Department is responsible for:
 - (a) providing information and administrative services to the Courts and New Zealand Parole Board (**NZPB**);
 - (b) maintaining the integrity of the justice system by upholding the sentences and orders imposed by the Courts and NZPB;
 - (c) the safe management of people serving sentences imposed by the Courts and NZPB, whether those people are on remand, serving

¹ DPR-00102-001.

² Population in this context refers to those people in our care who are serving a custodial or non-custodial sentence, being released from prison into the community with conditions or being supported to transition back into the community.

sentences in prisons, or serving sentences or orders in the community; and

- (d) providing a range of rehabilitation programmes, reintegration services and other interventions aimed at giving people the skills they need to address the causes of their offending, develop life and living skills, address their health needs (including addictions, in conjunction with health partner services), re/connect with their culture and whānau; and access education, qualifications, training and employment.

3.2 Overall, it is focused on keeping communities and those in the corrections system safe by securely accommodating the prison population, effectively monitoring and supporting those serving a sentence in the community or reintegrating back into the community, and reducing reoffending.

3.3 I note that Section 5 of the evidence of Maurice Dale provides an overview of Ara Poutama's statutory responsibilities under the Corrections Act 2004. I agree with Mr Dale's comments regarding Ara Poutama's role.

4 **OPERATION OF THE CORRECTIONS SYSTEM**

4.1 Operationally, the Department has four regions - the Northern Region (NR), Central Region (CR) and Lower North Region (LNR) in the North Island, and the Southern Region (SR) in the South Island. Each region is led by a Regional Commissioner who is responsible for prisons, community corrections and housing support services, psychological services, programmes and interventions, and training education and employment for that region. Regional Commissioners report to a National and Deputy National Commissioner.

4.2 The Department has prisons and community based facilities across the North and South Island that are utilised to manage and meet the differing needs of the men and women in our care who may be:

- (a) Remanded in custody or remanded on bail.
- (b) Sentenced and serving custodial or non-custodial sentences.

(c) Released from prison into the community on conditions.

(d) Being supported to transition from prison back into the community.

4.3 The separate components of the network do not operate in isolation of one another, and an individual's journey through the corrections system is likely to touch a number of different parts of the organisation for the duration of their sentence and interaction with the Department.

4.4 For example, when an individual is remanded into custody the Department will seek to have that individual located in a facility close to the court where their case will be heard. Depending on the sentence received, they might continue to stay in that location, be transferred to another facility, or transferred to a facility where the individual can attend a particular program such as drug treatment. While serving his or her sentence, that individual may be moved around the network between different facilities as needed depending on demand and capacity as discussed below. When returning to the community, the Department tries to place that same individual in a facility close to the community where they wish to reside. Their transition will involve a local community corrections facility for reporting, as well as coordination of support services for that individual (which may include parole officers, psychiatrists, housing, etc) in that community in advance of their reintegration. To support the individual's journey through the corrections system, coordination of numerous ancillary services – transport, security, kitchen services, laundry services, education, health services, facilities maintenance and grounds work, etc – are also required.

5 **PRISONS**

5.1 The Department currently manages around 8,100 people in 18 prisons, with a Prison Director located at each site. Within the Otago Region, the Department operates the Otago Corrections Facility (**OCF**), which is located at Narrowdale Road, Milburn.

5.2 The decision on where individuals are located in the prison network is determined by a range of factors including proximity to courts if they are on remand, attendance at special treatment units or the need for specific programmes, proximity to whanau, etc. The prison population is

not static. People come into and out of prison and move across the prison network all the time for a variety of reasons. The Prison Population team, who are responsible for moving people in our care across the prison network, are based in each of the regions with oversight and support from National Office based staff.

- 5.3 Alignment between population (demand) and capacity (beds) in prisons is complex and requires integrated consideration on a regional and national level in order to provide resilience in the network, optimise capacity use, and effectively provide for the safety and well-being of the prison population, their family, facility staff and the wider community.
- 5.4 Population is broken down by gender, sentenced status (remand or sentenced), security classification (maximum/high/low/minimum security), and whether they are mainstream or on voluntary protective custody. The size and make-up of the population has changed over time and continues to evolve.
- 5.5 Capacity is broken down by gender and security classification (maximum/high/low/minimum security), and then by the way in which the capacity is used (e.g. holding remand or sentenced prisoners, or providing specialist treatment units). If the Department is considering changes to the size or make-up of the network capacity (e.g. adding or taking away beds) at an individual prison site, the impact of that change is considered at a regional and national level with decisions made from a whole of network perspective.
- 5.6 The capacity available at a site or local level does not always align with the population we need to manage at that site, meaning that regional and national level consideration of capacity and population are critical. For example:
 - (a) OCF is traditionally a high security facility. After permanently closing a number of high security beds at Christchurch Men's Prison, the population in those beds was transferred to other prisons as capacity allowed within the network with the idea that they would eventually be transferred to OCF.
 - (b) The riot at Waikeria Prison resulted in reduced high security capacity, which had to be found elsewhere in the system in a way

that appropriately addressed the individual considerations for the displaced population.

- 5.7 In some instances (such as the Christchurch example above), when this misalignment occurs it is not just the population that moves, but upgrades to the physical environment at a facility and changes to staffing need to be considered.
- 5.8 On a smaller scale, decisions requiring a holistic and integrated consideration of the flow of population through prisons continually occur to ensure the corrections system operates effectively.

6 **COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ACTIVITIES**

- 6.1 The Department currently manages around 27,000 people in the community across around 124 facilities. These break down into:
- (a) **Service centres** which provide for probation, rehabilitation and reintegration services. Offenders report to probation officers as required by the courts or as conditions of parole. The Department's staff also use service centres to undertake assessments and compile reports for the courts, police and probation officers. Service centres may also be used as administrative bases for staff involved in community-based activities.
 - (b) **Community work facilities.** Community work is a sentence where offenders are required to undertake unpaid work for non-profit organisations and community projects. Offenders will report to a community work facility where they subsequently travel to their community work project under the supervision of a Community Work Supervisor. The community work facilities can be large sites with yard-based activities and large equipment and/or vehicle storage. Service centres and community work facilities may also be co-located on the same site.
 - (c) **Supported and transitional accommodation** which purpose is to assist with rehabilitation, transition and integration back into the community for some people in the Department's care. This transition may be following release from prison, whilst on bail or as part of community-based sentences (eg. home detention). There is a wide range of housing, rehabilitation, reintegration and

support provided in these facilities (depending on the needs of the residents).

6.2 Within the Otago Region, the Department operates the following Community Corrections Facilities:

- (a) Dunedin Central Community Corrections – 100 Lower Stuart Street, Dunedin.
- (b) Dunedin South Community Corrections – 97 King Edward Street, South Dunedin.
- (c) Oamaru Community Corrections – 10 Wear Street, Oamaru.
- (d) South Otago Community Corrections – 62 Narrowdale Road, Milburn.
- (e) Balclutha Community Corrections – 7 Renfrew Street, Balclutha.
- (f) Alexandra Community Corrections – 1 Dunorling Street, Alexandra.
- (g) Queenstown Community Corrections – 12/204 Von House, Hawthorne Drive, Queenstown.

6.3 The community based population includes both offenders sentenced and managed in the community, and prisoners who have served a term of imprisonment who are then managed in the community on their release.

6.4 Given the large number of community corrections facilities operated by the Department, each of the four regions is broken down by districts. National Office based teams support the delivery of services at a regional and local level. Regional Commissioners and District Managers operate at the regional and district level. The number and geographical spread of facilities are both factors that strengthen the need for network oversight and integration at a local, regional and national level.

6.5 Staff based in community facilities may also work in prisons located in the same district or region. For example, Psychologists and Programme Facilitators provide services in both the prison and community. For individuals who are released into the community on conditions, the ability for community staff to engage with these people before they are

released is crucial to enabling a smoother transition from prison to the community. The integrated reality of managing the population between prisons and community based facilities, and the links that community based facilities have to community partners and other agencies, helps to support effective engagement between key stakeholders, including Iwi, whanau and the people in our care, reduced reoffending and better outcomes for the community.

7 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 As outlined above, the Department's facilities serve an important social function which is necessary for effective functioning of the justice system, and the health, safety and well-being of all New Zealanders.
- 7.2 To that end, the Department's prisons and community based facilities operate as an integrated network at a local, regional and national level. The individual needs of those in the Department's care must be carefully considered and balanced with available capacity and resources within the system. Decision-making is complex and has flow on effects which must be effectively managed.

Ruth Turner
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