

16 May 2022

C149938

Felix Lee

fyi-request-19005-4b00a5fb@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Felix

Thank you for your email of 29 March 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about the Bank Accounts Upon Release (BAUR) Scheme. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Hōkai Rangī, Ara Poutama Aotearoa Strategy 2019-2024, was published in August 2019 and represents a new strategic direction for Corrections. The objective of the Strategy is to address the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system through uplifting the *oranga* (wellbeing) of people and their *whānau*. Further information on *Hōkai Rangī* is available on Corrections' website via the below link:

www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/strategic_reports/corrections_strategic_plans/hokai_rangī

Corrections' *Hōkai Rangī* Strategy includes the following short-term action, created to improve how people released from prison can reintegrate and participate in society:

6.2: *Provide opportunities for all people to gain basic living skills such as cooking skills, parenting skills, and basic hygiene, and also tools that enable participation in society including identification, driver licenses, and bank accounts.*

The BAUR scheme is the first of its kind in New Zealand and ensures people in prison have access to banking when released to assist their reintegration. Having a bank account and suitable identification is essential for people reintegrating into the community. Without having a bank account, people find it hard to get a job, pay rent, receive a benefit, or do many other daily tasks.

The BAUR scheme became available at all prison sites in December 2021, following a successful pilot programme in collaboration with Westpac. The objective of the scheme is to create an opportunity for people who are leaving prison to have access to photo identification (ID), an active bank account, and a debit card with a pin number. On release, they will have the tools needed to access their funds immediately, removing barriers to reintegration, and ultimately, increasing the likelihood of their safe, successful transition into the community.

You requested:

1. *What are the types of ID provided and the total number for each ID type provided in this program?*
2. *How do you decide what type of ID each prisoner gets?*

Your two questions are answered together below.

Identification needs vary and depend on the circumstances of the person applying. For this programme, Westpac require one of the following forms of ID to meet their legislative business requirements:

- Kiwi Access Card and birth certificate
- Driver license
- Passport

Corrections does not operate any database or electronic system to centrally record or store the total number for each type of ID provided through the BAUR scheme. To answer your request for *the total number for each ID type provided in this programme*, we would need to manually review information held within each individual's file who applied to open a bank account (see the response to Question 4). As such, Question 1 is partially refused in accordance with 18(f) of the OIA as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

In accordance with sections 18A and 18B of the OIA we have considered whether fixing, charge, extending the limit or consulting you would enable us to provide a response. We do not believe these options would enable the request to be granted in this instance.

3. *Who pays for the ID?*

This depends on the needs and circumstances of the person applying, which are assessed on a case by case basis. In some cases the person applying meets the costs. In other cases Corrections provides funding.

4. *How many prisoners applied for bank accounts, how many were successfully opened, and how many were rejected?*

There have been 83 completed applications. Of these, 68 bank accounts have been opened and 15 applications were declined. Westpac considers all applications to ensure compliance with the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering of Financing of Terrorism Act 2009 so some applications may be declined for this reason. These figures do not include applications that may have commenced but were not completed by the person in prison.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and a long horizontal tail.

Rachel Leota
National Commissioner