

07 July 2022

C152968

B. G. McDonald

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Tēnā koe B. G. McDonald

Thank you for your email dated 4 June 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about COVID-19 stage settings used in prisons. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

As an organisation, Corrections' top priority is safety – of the public, staff, visitors, and the people Corrections manages in prisons and the community. Since March 2020, Corrections has put in place extensive plans to manage the risk presented by COVID-19, and we have continuously refined these plans in response to changing Alert Level settings and the introduction of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (traffic light system). This has involved restrictions on some activities in prisons, including visits, to keep people in prison and our staff safe.

A key objective for Corrections moving forward is to build resilience to COVID-19 across all parts of the organisation. In late May 2022, we began transitioning towards a new COVID-19 Custodial Resilience Operating Framework (CCROF) in prisons. This will provide the flexibility and support required to deliver rehabilitation and reintegration services in prison, while still keeping staff and people in prison safe.

Corrections' website has been updated to include information about the CCROF, at: [https://www.corrections.govt.nz/news/corrections\\_covid-19\\_update](https://www.corrections.govt.nz/news/corrections_covid-19_update).

We know how important visits from friends and whānau are to people in prison, and to supporting a person's rehabilitation and reintegration.

Prisons are currently working on plans to resume activities over the coming weeks, including visits from friends and whānau, in a safe and sustainable way. Not all prisons will be ready to resume visits at the same time – this will depend on levels of COVID-19 at different sites and staffing availability. The safety and wellbeing of our staff, the community, and people in prison is our highest priority, and visits will resume at sites when they can be safely undertaken.

You requested:

- *I am interested in finding out what Covid-19 Stage settings have been used in all Corrections-run prisons since their implementation on 3 December.*
- *I would like to know what Stages each prison has been at (individually) and at what dates these changed (if applicable).*

As you are aware, on Friday 3 December 2021, Corrections implemented a three-stage model for custodial environments to support our approach to keeping COVID-19 out of the prison population. Prisons operated at one of three COVID-19 stages, which reflected the level of risk for each site, regardless of the traffic light setting. This model retained many of the key features of the approach we have taken in prisons throughout our response to the pandemic.

The three-stage model could be applied at any traffic light setting. Community transmission was the primary consideration when assessing the risk to prisons, whereas the Government took a much broader range of factors into account when making decisions on traffic light settings.

The stages supported our frontline prison staff to balance keeping COVID-19 out of prisons, while giving the greatest level of access to whānau, health, and reintegration and rehabilitation services possible. The model supported greater availability and access to core and essential health services, including mental health and addiction services, across all stages.

Prison Directors were able to make decisions, supported by a decision-making framework, on whether specific activities which pose a higher level of risk could continue at different stages. PPE, good hygiene practices, and staff staying home when sick played an important role in our response to COVID-19 under the model.

Appendix One provides a further breakdown of the three-stage model. Appendix Two provides a breakdown of what stage each prison has been at, and the date these changed. Note that this information also includes Auckland South Corrections Facility, which is managed by Serco under a Public Private Partnership but was also subject to the three-stage model.

As noted above, the CCROF was introduced in prisons in late May 2022, replacing the three-stage model and Corrections' website has now been updated to include information about this new framework.

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



Ben Clark  
Acting National Commissioner

## Appendix One: Breakdown of the Three Stage Model

### Stage 3

Stage 3 reflects a very high level of community transmission and is our most restrictive setting. Stage 3 may be used at any traffic light setting if positive cases in a prison are no longer confined to quarantine units. Stage 3 reflects the potential need for sites to operate with reduced staffing levels.

This means:

- No Face-to-face visits for personal, legal, and specified visitors. Virtual / phone options may also be available if possible.
- Strict entry controls – only essential persons allowed on-site at any time.
- 4-point PPE required across the site. PPE use for prisoners enforced.
- Internal staff contact tracing systems will be maintained.
- Construction contractors can enter for critical maintenance only.
- Health screening for all people entering prison, including the use of thermal cameras will be maintained.
- Shielding (separate bubbles) of vulnerable prisoners to be implemented.
- Essential health, mental health, and addictions services continue as usual with some services delivered virtually.
- NZ Parole Board hearings undertaken virtually via Corrections laptops / teleconferencing with Board members at home.
- All face-to-face group programmes, including rehabilitation and reintegration activities, and prisoner forums pause unless they are assessed as safe to proceed.
- Remote delivery of Case Management only.
- Release to Work and Guided Releases paused.
- Health assessments / screenings continue to be completed prior to release.
- Information and support provided to prisoners being released around the traffic light system, and to access My Vaccine Pass if vaccinated.

### Stage 2

Stage 2 reflects a medium to high level of community transmission and places restrictions on certain activities. Stage 2 is likely to be used for regions in Orange or Red settings (where there is high community transmission and/or a lower level of prisoner vaccination) or areas subject to localised protections under the traffic light system. Any positive cases in the prison will be confined to our quarantine units.

This means:

- No Face-to-face visits for personal and legal visitors. Virtual / phone options will be available where possible as the primary option.
- PPE and good hygiene practices will continue to be maintained, including the use of 4-point PPE for higher risk areas / activities of the prison (Receiving Office, separation, quarantine, prisoner movements). PPE encouraged but not enforced for prisoners.
- PPE continues to be required for all staff.
- Internal staff contact tracing systems will be maintained.
- Construction contractors can enter for critical maintenance only.
- Health screening for all people entering prison, including the use of thermal cameras will be maintained.
- Shielding (separate bubbles) of vulnerable prisoners to be implemented.
- All health, mental health, and addictions services continue as usual.
- NZ Parole Board hearings undertaken via virtual meetings, with all in-person meetings suspended.
- Face-to-face individual rehabilitation and reintegration can occur where assessed as safe.
- Remote delivery of Case Management in most circumstances.

- Health assessments / screenings continue to be completed prior to release.
- Information and support provided to prisoners being released around the traffic light system, and to access My Vaccine Pass if vaccinated.

### **Stage 1**

Stage 1 is our least restrictive stage. Stage 1 reflects a low level of community transmission, and any positive cases in the prison will be confined to quarantine units. Stage 1 is likely to be used for prisons in Green or Orange settings of the traffic light system.

This means:

- Face-to-face visits continue in prisons for personal, legal, specified, and statutory visitors. Virtual / phone options will also be available where possible.
- PPE and good hygiene practices will continue to be maintained, including the use of 4-point PPE for higher risk areas / activities of the prison (Receiving Office, separation, quarantine, prisoner movements). PPE will continue to be available for prisoners.
- Staff and visitors need to wear a face mask.
- Internal contact tracing systems will be maintained.
- No restrictions on maintenance / construction contractor entry.
- Health screening for all people entering prison, including the use of thermal cameras will be maintained.
- NZ Parole Board members able to access prison sites to hold hearings virtually from a different location to prisoner. A mixture of virtual hearings from the NZPB Offices as well as face-to-face Boards in prison where NZPB criteria are met.
- Face-to-face rehabilitation and integration programmes continue with PPE, hygiene, and distancing controls.
- All health, mental health, and addictions services continue as usual.
- Case Management continues as usual.
- Health assessments / screenings continue to be completed prior to release.
- Information and support provided to prisoners being released around the traffic light system, and to access My Vaccine Pass if vaccinated.

## Appendix Two: Breakdown of stages per prison

Prison	Prison Stages by date					
	03/12/2021	23/01/2022	11/02/2022	14/02/2022	04/03/2022	09/03/2022
Northland Region Corrections Facility	1	2	-	-	3	-
Waikeria Prison	1	2	-	3	-	-
Tongariro Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Hawke's Bay Regional Corrections Facility	1	2	-	-	-	3
Whanganui Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Manawatu Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Rimutaka Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Arohata Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Christchurch Men's Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Christchurch Women's Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Rolleston Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Otago Corrections Facility	1	2	-	-	-	3
Invercargill Prison	1	2	-	-	-	3
Auckland Prison	2	-	3	-	-	-
Mt Eden Corrections Facility	2	-	3	-	-	-
Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility	2	-	3	-	-	-
Auckland South Corrections Facility	2	-	3	-	-	-
Spring Hill Corrections Facility	2	-	-	3	-	-

### Notes:

- Figures denote a change in the stage implemented at each prison on the specified date. Where no figure is noted the prison remained at the same stage for that period.
- All prisons remained at Stage 3 until the introduction of the Custodial Resilience Operating Framework (CCROF) in late May 2022, which has replaced the three-stage model.