



23 June 2017

C86343

Sophie Buchanan  
[fyi-request-5970-f89ce7f0@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-5970-f89ce7f0@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Sophie

Thank you for your email of 5 June 2017, requesting information about female prisoners being held in male prisons. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The rising prison population has led to the re-opening of a unit on the grounds of Rimutaka Prison to accommodate female prisoners, that had most recently been utilised for training purposes.

In the past two years, the prison population has increased at a rate considerably higher than forecast, reaching 10,000 in November 2016. The Department must at all times ensure it has enough beds of the required standard across the prison network, the increasing prison population has also seen an increase in the female population, necessitating additional beds for females.

To help meet the demands of this increase, the Department worked with unions and staff to expand the capacity of some prisons, while ensuring security, staff safety and prisoner welfare.

For female prisoners, 56 beds were added to the operating capacity of Arohata Prison by re-opening a separate unit on the grounds of Rimutaka Prison to accommodate female prisoners.

The unit was closed in 2015 based on the projected future population at the time. The unit has been brought up to standard and more staff recruited to ensure the ratio of staff to prisoners is maintained. Female prisoners located at "Arohata Upper Jail" will continue to have access to programmes and other activities, similar to that of the rest of Arohata.

The unit is geographically isolated from the main male prison with prisoners in each site being unable to see each other. There are also separate services and both have their own perimeter fence. It has had a phased reopening, that commenced on 15 February 2017. Staff have been seconded to the unit until new staff are recruited and trained.

This will take Arohata Prison's capacity from 103 to 159 beds. Prior to the Arohata Upper Jail being opened, extra capacity had been achieved at Arohata Prison in June 2016 with the addition of fifteen extra beds through double bunking. A new 60-bed unit is also being built at the prison and is expected to be completed next year.

The Department takes the safety of prisoners, staff and the public extremely seriously and these changes to capacity will not compromise the safety of staff, prisoners or the security of our sites.

You have asked how many female prisoners are currently accommodated in male prisons. I can advise that no females are housed in male prisons, as the capacity was added to Arohata Prison.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Leota', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rachel Leota  
Acting National Commissioner