

13 September 2021

C140114

Moka Harris

fyi-request-16415-08f0524f@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Moka

Thank you for your email of 16 August 2021, requesting further information about the Freeview channels and faith-based services offered in prisons. This relates to your previous correspondence with Corrections (our ref. C131237) from January 2021. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Please note that some of your questions have been reworded for ease of response.

You requested:

“...you say that faith services are available in prison. This is not the case. If there is no volunteers there are no services. And if there is no staff from movement there is no service. Many people don't get to attend these so called provided services.”

As previously advised in our response of 1 April 2021, Corrections is committed to providing support for religious and spiritual needs to those in custody that want it. Corrections contracts Prison Chaplaincy Service of Aotearoa (PCSANZ) to provide these services across all of Corrections-managed prison sites. This can be in a number of different formats including structured religious group services, individual support, and connecting people in prison with community-based faith organisations upon release. However, an individual's participation in group religious services may be limited based on availability and their unique security needs. Additionally, religious services depend on the overall safety and security of the prison and may not always take place as scheduled. Alternative religious support would continue to be offered in such cases.

For more information about what PCSANZ does, you can visit their website here:

<https://pcsanz.org/>

If there is a specific instance where you believe someone is not having their religious or spiritual needs met, we would advise you to have them speak with unit staff in the first instance. Unit staff can get them in touch with the Prison Chaplain or a volunteer to offer support.

“In regards to N.R.C.F., my understanding is that inmates in mainstream, sentenced units do not receive the standard Freeview Christian Channels such as, Hope Channel, FirstLight and Shine... In fact Auckland South Corrections Facility and Mount Eden Corrections Facility have some of the mentioned channels... why is it that only these two prisons have available faith channels?”

As previously advised, there are 12 channels available across prisons, which consist of nine Freeview television channels, one Corrections television channel and two Freeview radio channels. The number of television channels available in prisons is limited by supporting infrastructure. All prison units are connected to the prison site's distributed television network and available television channels do not vary between any Corrections-managed prisons. We have confirmed that the channels that people at Mt Eden Corrections Facility receive in their cells do not differ from any other Corrections-managed prison.

However, Auckland South Corrections Facility is managed through a Public Private Partnership with SecureFuture, who have subcontracted Serco to operate the prison. As such, some operational elements differ from Corrections-run prisons, which can include access to varying television channels.

“How can we make these channels that are available at A.S.C.F and M.E.C.F available to the rest of New Zealand prison facilities in order to support CORRECTIONS ACT 2004 SECTION 79(1)?”


Prisoner TV channels are recommended by the Chief Custodial Officer based on appropriate content and what is best received by people in prison. These recommendations then must be approved by the National Commissioner. Due to the limited infrastructure, new channels cannot be added, only swapped for other ones, after they've gone through the recommendation and approval process.

Corrections Act 2004, section 79(1) states that the Chief Executive must ensure that in every prison, so far as is reasonable and practicable, appropriate provision is made for the various religious and spiritual needs of the people in prison. This includes ensuring people have access to religious texts, religious items such as a crucifix or prayer beads, and access to spiritual advisers and mentors. As mentioned above, there are many ways Corrections provides opportunities for religious and spiritual support in line with the Corrections Act 2004.

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. 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brydie Raethel', written over a horizontal line.

Brydie Raethel
Principal Adviser Ministerial Services
People and Capability