

27 May 2026

C212475

P Peach

fyi-request-34266-b778c3ad@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe P Peach

Thank you for your request dated 27 March 2026 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about interpreting and translation services procured by Corrections. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Corrections currently manages more than 11,000 people in prison, and 25,000 people on a community-based sentence or order. At any one time a proportion of people in Corrections' management will be foreign nationals. When a person in prison identifies as a foreign national, or where staff believe that they could be, they are advised of their rights under the Corrections Act 2004. They are also advised of their rights under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations to have the diplomatic representative of their country advised of their imprisonment and to have access to a consular representative.

It is this generally this group, or occasionally people who hold residency in New Zealand but speak English as a second language, who would require translation services facilitated by Corrections. Where a need is identified, Corrections uses telephone, video and in-person interpreting services from the Ministry of Ethnic Communities (MEC) Open Syndicated Agreement panel for interpreting services, and for written documents, translating services are procured from the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), who Corrections currently has a terms and conditions agreement with. As of May 2026, a more formal arrangement with DIA is currently being drafted.

Please note that when Corrections signed our participating agency agreement on 5 May 2025, the Ministry of Business, Employment and Innovation (MBIE) was the lead agency for providing interpreting services. They ran procurement to establish panels and subsequently created the agreements with Corrections. However, functions relating to interpreting services subsequently transitioned to MEC as the lead agency. This work became business as usual for MEC from 1 July 2025. Therefore, although MBIE was the agency that set up Corrections' services under this agreement, we understand that MEC is now the lead agency who run this service.

In preparing a response to your request, we have noted that many of your questions are framed in relation to Corrections' participation in the MEC Open Syndicated Agreement panel for interpreting services, and our terms and conditions agreement with DIA for translating services, but they effectively relate more closely to the functions of MEC and DIA.

In this instance, we have not sought a transfer of your request to MEC or DIA under section 14 of the OIA. We note you made similar requests to MEC and DIA, and have received responses from them directly. Therefore, we will answer your questions as they relate to Corrections. We understand MEC's and DIA's responses to you provided more detailed information in response to some parts of your request.

Please also note that if you have specific concerns or a complaint relating to interpreting services used by Corrections, you are welcome to provide more information to Corrections that would enable us to investigate. You can do so by writing to info@corrections.govt.nz or by referring to the information available at this page: <https://www.corrections.govt.nz/about-us/getting-in-touch/complaint-resolution>.

Your requests are addressed in turn below. Please note that some of your questions have been combined for ease of response. You requested:

SECTION A: SUBCONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS

- 1. Whether Corrections' interpreting and translation providers are permitted to subcontract assignments to third parties, including overseas-based agencies or individual contractors located outside New Zealand.*
- 2. Any conditions or restrictions in Corrections' contracts with interpreting and translation providers regarding the use of subcontractors, including any requirements that subcontractors be based in New Zealand or hold an appropriate New Zealand work visa.*

None of the interpreting and translating providers Corrections uses are permitted to subcontract assignments to third parties without approval from the lead agency. The telephone and video translating service Corrections uses from the MEC Open Syndicated Agreement panel has offices and interpreters in Australia.

However, we have been advised that the agreement requires the proportion of calls assigned to New Zealand resident Interpreters is 90%. This is reported monthly to the Lead Agency.

- 3. Whether Corrections requires providers to disclose the identity, location, or credentials of individual interpreters or translators — including subcontractors — who carry out assignments on Corrections' behalf.*

Corrections has not required providers to disclose any of this information about its interpreters or translators. As noted above, Corrections uses interpreting services from the MEC Open Syndicated Agreement panel and translating services through DIA, and therefore,

Corrections has not required providers to disclose any of this information about its interpreters or translators.

4. Whether Corrections has any knowledge of, or has sought information about, assignments being routed to interpreters or translators located outside New Zealand.

As noted above, the telephone and video interpreting service providers Corrections uses through the MEC Open Syndicated Agreement panel has offices and interpreters in Australia. Where an interpreter with the language skills being sought cannot be first sourced within New Zealand, then the provider's Australian based pool of interpreters will be utilised to provide the service.

5. Any instances where Corrections became aware that an assignment was conducted by a person located outside New Zealand or by an uncredentialed subcontractor, and any action taken as a result.

Other than the circumstances outlined in the response to Question Four, no interpreter that is located outside of New Zealand, or that is uncredentialed, has been used by Corrections.

SECTION B: NAATI CREDENTIAL COMPLIANCE

6. What mechanism, if any, Corrections uses to verify that individual interpreters and translators carrying out assignments on its behalf — including those engaged through subcontracting arrangements — hold a valid NAATI credential or Working Towards NAATI (WTN) status.

Please refer to the response to Question Three.

7. Whether Corrections requires its interpreting and translation providers to maintain and supply a current register of credentialed practitioners working under Corrections contracts, and if so whether Corrections has received and reviewed such registers.

Corrections, as a participating agency in the MEC Open Syndicated Agreement for its interpreting needs, and translating needs through our agreement with DIA, does not require additional assurance in this regard as MEC and DIA are the lead agency of these agreements.

8. Any audits, spot checks, or compliance reviews conducted by Corrections on its interpreting and translation providers since 1 July 2024 to verify NAATI credential compliance, including the methodology and findings of any such reviews.

Corrections has not conducted any audits or reviews of this kind. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

As per section 18B of the OIA, we have considered whether consulting with you would enable the request to be made in a form that would remove the reason for the

refusal. However, we do not consider that the request can be refined in this instance due to the specific nature of the request.

9. Any instances since 1 July 2024 where a provider was found to have used an interpreter or translator who did not hold the required NAATI credential or Working Towards NAATI (WTN) status, and any consequences or remedial action taken.

Corrections is not aware of any instances where a non-NAATI credentialed interpreter was used.

10. Any complaints received by Corrections since 1 July 2024 from staff, prisoners, or members of the public regarding the qualifications or conduct of an interpreter or translator engaged through Corrections' services.

Corrections is not aware of any complaints about the qualifications of any interpreter.

The only matter considered within scope of your request was a privacy concern, in which a video-based interpreter service's verification methods did not meet Corrections' expectations to protect the privacy of prisoners and our staff. The provider modified their practices to resolve the issue.

SECTION C: INTERPRETER AND TRANSLATOR PAY VISIBILITY

11. Whether Corrections has any information about the rates or fees paid by its providers to individual interpreters or translators for assignments conducted on Corrections' behalf.

This information is not specified within the MEC Open Syndicated Agreements of our participating agency requirements for the interpreting services we use, and has not been requested by, or provided to, Corrections.

12. Whether Corrections has ever sought, as part of contract negotiations, tendering processes, or performance reviews, any information about the pay or working conditions of interpreters or translators engaged through its provider contracts.

This has never been discussed with Corrections. As a participating agency to the MEC Open Syndicated Agreements for all our interpreting services (telephone, video, face-to face, and sign language), these are not matters Corrections has raised.

13. Any internal policies, briefings, risk assessments, or correspondence within Corrections regarding the fair remuneration or employment conditions of interpreters and translators working under its contracts, including any concerns raised about the margin between rates paid to providers and rates passed on to practitioners.

14. Whether Corrections' tendering or procurement criteria for interpreting and translation services include any consideration of whether providers pay practitioners at or above a minimum rate, living wage, or industry standard.

Corrections does not hold any internal policies, risk assessments or correspondence regarding the fair remuneration or employment conditions of interpreters and translators working under its contracts. Corrections also does not hold any policies about the tendering or procurement criteria for interpreting and translation services. Therefore, these parts of your request are refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

As per section 18B of the OIA, we have considered whether consulting with you would enable the request to be made in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal. However, we do not consider that the request can be refined in this instance, due to the specific nature of the request.

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.

If you have any concerns with this response, we encourage you to raise them with Corrections. Alternatively, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by contacting them on 0800 802 602 or by post to the Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alice', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Alice Sciascia
Deputy Chief Executive
Strategy and Corporate Services