

31 January 2017

C82138

Luke Chandler
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Dear Mr Chandler

Thank you for your email of 16 December 2016, requesting information about the prison population for cannabis-related offences and prison population data from 1990 to the present. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Drug and alcohol abuse is a major driver of crime. More than half of the prisoners in New Zealand have substance abuse problems and over 50 percent of crime is committed by people under the influence of drugs and alcohol. By tackling this issue, we can contribute to people leading an offence-free life once they leave prison or complete their community-based sentence. As a result, we have developed an Alcohol and Drug (AOD) Strategy to provide a wider range of interventions across prisons, including:

- AOD Screening and Brief Interventions
- AOD Brief and Intermediate Support Programmes
- Drug Treatment Unit - three and six month programmes
- AOD Intensive Treatment Programmes.

All prisoners receive *AOD Screening* when they enter a prison, and can receive *Brief Interventions* where appropriate. This process enables staff to make appropriate decisions on the amount of support that prisoners require. Staff ask prisoners a series of targeted questions about their substance use, and provide a 'brief intervention' in the form of feedback and advice where appropriate. This means that every prisoner now undergoes screening for addictions, health, mental health and education on entering a prison.

You have asked for the following information:

- 1) *The prison population for cannabis related offences.*

There were 57 offenders serving a prison sentence where a cannabis-related offence was the primary cause of their imprisonment, as at 30 November 2016.

Note that there will be other offenders in prison where a cannabis-related offence is among the offences comprising the sentence, but it is not the primary

cause of their imprisonment. The data also excludes prisoners held on remand where a cannabis-related offence is one of the active charges.

2) *New Zealand prison population data since 1990 (ie the total number of inmates, back to 1990 if possible)*

Please find the average prison population totals since 1990 enclosed as Appendix One.

Prisoner numbers are dependent on factors outside Corrections' control, including legislative changes, judicial decisions, policing trends and crime levels. The recent increase in the average prison population is due, in part, to more people being held in prison on remand. Legislative changes have also meant prisoners serve more of their sentence in prison; and there has been an increase in people serving longer sentences for more serious crimes.

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



Jeremy Lightfoot
National Commissioner

Appendix One – Average prison population totals from 1990 to 2016

Average prison population totals from 1990 to 2016	
1990	3939
1991	4083
1992	4193
1993	4151
1994	4395
1995	4550
1996	4979
1997	5336
1998	5508
1999	5623
2000	5910
2001	5822
2002	6094
2003	6404
2004	6865
2005	7603
2006	7733
2007	7706
2008	8011
2009	8253
2010	8523
2011	8400
2012	8647
2013	8548
2014	8629
2015	8834
2016	9602