

Ombudsman to publish prison inspection reports

6 July 2017

The Chief Ombudsman today published his report on an unannounced inspection of Hawke's Bay Regional Prison, and said he will make these inspection reports publicly available from now on.

"The Ombudsman is part of a national system of independent monitoring of places of detention, such as prisons, to make sure detainees receive decent, humane and dignified treatment", Peter Boshier said.

"With funding from Parliament, we're developing a more extensive monitoring programme, making more in-depth inspections using formalised standards and criteria. The inspection of Hawke's Bay Prison trialled this new set of standards, which we'll continue refining over the coming year."

Peter Boshier said that publishing the inspection reports would support the strengthened inspections and monitoring programme and was part of his Office's push toward greater transparency.

"We report on what we find, including good practice, and make recommendations for improvements where needed", Peter Boshier said. "People in detention are among our most vulnerable citizens, whether that be in a prison or a health and disability or aged care facility.

"As a signatory to the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, New Zealand must meet its international obligations for the care and treatment of detained persons", the Chief Ombudsman said.

The report on Hawke's Bay Regional Prison identifies good practice at the Prison, including its efforts to establish itself as a working prison with close links to employers. However, it finds significant challenges and areas of serious concern in the high-security side of the prison, particularly relating to safety.

Recommendations include that the Prison develop anti-bullying and gang management strategies, both of which are underway. The Department of Corrections' comments on the findings and recommendations are included in the report.

The next Ombudsman prison inspection report will focus on Spring Hill Prison and is expected to be released within the next month.

A copy of the *'Report on an unannounced inspection of Hawke's Bay Regional Prison under the Crimes of Torture Act 1989'* is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

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Additional information: New Zealand and OPCAT

- In 2007, New Zealand ratified the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).
- OPCAT establishes a system of regular visits by an independent body to places where people are detained, to ensure the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Under the Crimes of Torture Act 1989 (COTA), New Zealand's Ombudsman is a National Preventive Mechanism for places of detention including prisons and court cells, inspecting and making recommendations for improvement in the treatment or condition of detainees.
- We've received funding from Parliament from 2017/18 to increase our number of OPCAT inspectors from three to eight full-time staff, enabling us to increase the intensity and frequency of prison inspections.
- Our OPCAT team does in-depth thematic reports as well as site inspections. In March this year the Chief Ombudsman released *'A Question of Restraint'*, the results of OPCAT enquiries into care and management for prisoners considered to be at risk of suicide and self-harm.