

CCTV use in cells concerns Ombudsman

22 August 2022

Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier says it is unacceptable that prisoners could be seen on CCTV while undressing, showering and going to the toilet.

Mr Boshier made the comments in his report on an unannounced inspection of Otago Corrections Facility.

The inspection was carried out in October 2020 and the provisional findings were sent shortly afterwards to Corrections Te Ara Poutama in May 2021. The report is now being published following delays caused by pandemic-related issues.

“My report is a reflection of what I found at the time of my inspection. It is important, as a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) that New Zealand is treating prisoners at a certain standard,” Mr Boshier says.

“This issue of CCTV coverage of showers and toilets is a matter I continue to find in Corrections facilities. As a minimum, the men in the care of Otago Corrections Facility should be able to carry out their ablutions with some privacy. I note that some of the prisoners include those under the age of 18. It is completely inappropriate that CCTV covers showers and toilets.”

Mr Boshier also raised concerns at use of force events at the prison, including the use of pepper spray and around record-keeping.

“Corrections Te Ara Poutama says use of force is used as a last resort. I hope that this is an approach taken across the entire Corrections system. I look forward to seeing a reduction in use of force events in future inspections,” Mr Boshier says.

[Read the report here](#)

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Editor's note

New Zealand ratified the United Nations' Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) in 2007. The Protocol requires states to establish independent National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs) to regularly inspect places of detention and report on the treatment and conditions of those held within them.

The Chief Ombudsman was originally designated as a National Preventive Mechanism under OPCAT in 2009 which means he monitors places of detention designated to him, such as prisons, to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

He can recommend practical improvements to address any risks, poor practices, or systemic problems that could result in a service-user being treated badly. Follow-up inspections are conducted to look for progress in implementing previous recommendations. Reports are written on what is observed at the time of inspection.

Find out more about the Chief Ombudsman's role in examining and monitoring places of detention, and read our other OPCAT reports, at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/opcat

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