PROTECTING THE PUBLIC; HOLDING CRIMINALS TO ACCOUNT

National is committed to a Corrections system that protects the public from criminals and holds them accountable for their actions. We have tightened parole and sentencing laws, overhauled the probation service and are making use of new technology to monitor dangerous offenders in the community.

Since coming into office in 2008, National has halted the relentless growth in the number of prisoners inherited from Labour. The prison population has now stabilised and is forecast to drop in the coming years.

Breaking the cycle of imprisonment and reoffending

National is also committed to breaking the cycle of imprisonment and re-offending. Reducing reoffending is all about preventing future crime and creating fewer victims. We know why offenders go on to commit more crime – they have serious drug and alcohol problems, no job skills and little education.

Two-thirds of prisoners have substance abuse problems and over 50 per cent of crime is committed by people under the influence of alcohol. As many as 90 per cent of prisoners have difficulty reading and writing, and 60 per cent were unemployed prior to their arrest.

To reduce reoffending, we need to get prisoners off drugs and alcohol, put them into intensive rehabilitation programmes, give them an education, and provide them work skills so they can hold down a job.

Since coming into office in 2008, National has halted the relentless growth in the number of prisoners inherited from Labour.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- Achieved the lowest crime rate in 35 years.
- Re-offending rates have fallen 12 per cent in the past three years.
- Our approach to reoffending means around 2,300 fewer re-convictions each year, about 9,000 fewer victims, and now over 80 fewer offenders returning to prison every year.
- Worked with Courts on a $27.8 million upgrade of the audio-visual link system between prisons and courts, which means better safety and security for the public, prison officers and court staff.
- Put thousands of prisoners through drug and alcohol rehabilitation programmes.
NATIONAL IS...

STRENGTHENING DRUG & ALCOHOL TREATMENT

✓ Significantly increased drug and alcohol treatment, work training and education programmes in prisons and in the community to reduce re-offending.

✓ Expanded the number of specialist Drug Treatment Units in prisons from six to nine and increased the number of prisoners participating in them.

✓ Introduced a mental health screening tool, which sees every male prisoner assessed for mental health issues on arrival at prison so they get the treatment they need.

MODERNISING THE PRISON SYSTEM

✓ Introduced private sector expertise into the prison environment through the contract management of Mt Eden Corrections Facility, exposing our prison service to new ideas and innovation.

✓ Started construction of a new 960-bed prison in South Auckland to address a shortage of prison beds in the greater Auckland region.

✓ Committed to upgrading our oldest prisons to improve safety and security, and provide better facilities for prisoner rehabilitation and training.

IMPROVING EDUCATION AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

✓ Established an Independent Education Advisory Group to support a new education strategy for prisoners.

✓ Introduced an education assessment for every prisoner entering prison to develop an individual learning and training plan.

✓ Introduced three working prisons, where prisoners do a 40-hour week of work, rehabilitation, education, and employment training.

IMPROVING SECURITY

✓ Introduced GPS monitoring of high-risk offenders in the community and low-security prisoners working outside the prison perimeter.

✓ Improved security by expanding the use of audio-visual technology between courts and prisons, allowing prisoners to attend their hearing from prison.

✓ Passed laws to give Corrections greater powers to search for contraband.

✓ Improved the safety of Corrections Officers by introducing pepper spray, batons, spit-hoods and stab-resistant vests to staff working in high-risk areas.

✓ Trialing on-body cameras for staff working in high-risk areas as part of a pilot to improve staff safety.

TOUGHERNING SENTENCES FOR THE WORST OFFENDERS

✓ Introduced maximum prison sentence with no parole for the worst serious violent offenders under the Three Strikes law.

✓ Strengthened sentences for crimes against children and for membership in a criminal gang.
OUR RESULTS SO FAR

MORE PRISONERS COMPLETING REHABILITATION & EDUCATION

3,700 prisoners had access to treatment for their addictions in 2013/14, up from just 234 in 2007/08.

The number of prisoners gaining qualifications increased by 830 per cent, up from 197 in 2008/9 to 1,833 in 2012/13.

FEWER ESCAPES

Escapes from prison are at record lows.

The amount of contraband getting into prisons has reduced. The number of prisoners returning positive drug tests fell from 13.3 per cent in 2008 to 4.3 per cent in 2014 – at the lowest levels on record.

Mental healthcare in prisons is improving, with the number of self-harm threat to life incidents falling nearly 80 per cent since 2008.
LESS REOFFENDING

Re-offending rates have fallen 12 per cent in the past three years.

National has halted the relentless growth in prisoner numbers inherited from Labour, with the prison population now stabilised and forecast to drop in the coming years.

Total crime is down by 16 per cent and violent crime down by 11 per cent. Total crime is now at its lowest rate in 35 years.
WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT...

1. MAKE EVERY PRISON A WORKING PRISON

→ Make every publicly managed prison a working prison by the end of 2017.

In a working prison, every eligible prisoner will have a structured timetable and be engaged for a minimum of 40 hours per week in rehabilitation and reintegration activities – education, employment and programmes – or constructive activity that supports reducing re-offending.

The majority of prisoners have poor education and very limited work histories. Working prisons provide prisoners with the skills they need to remain offence-free following release.

The activity at each prison would be tailored for the type of prisoner held at the site. For example, maximum and high security prisoners would have a structured day of activity securely within the prison perimeter, while lower security prisoners would have access to a wider range of work programmes, including outside the prison.

Working prisons can be established through a reprioritisation of resources. National would not seek additional funding to roll out the next four working prisons in 2015. A major work programme is already underway to improve rehabilitation and employment training infrastructure at older prisons.

2. SUPPORT DRUG & ALCOHOL REHABILITATION

→ Deliver after-care for prisoners who have undertaken a drug treatment programme in prison following their release

Two-thirds of prisoners have substance abuse issues and many receive intensive alcohol and drug addiction treatment in prison. But many face challenges to remain substance-free following release from prison. After-care will provide them with the support they need following release to keep off drugs and alcohol, and away from crime.

Prisoners who have attended a three- or six-month drug treatment unit programme will be required to attend a specialist after-care programme following release from prison, and while they are on parole or released on conditions. Around 1,000 prisoners start a programme per year and about 75 per cent successfully complete it.

Currently these prisoners only receive an end-of-programme report, which includes recommendations on where they can gain support in the community following release (such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous). Under this policy, these prisoners would be required to attend a Corrections-funded after-care programme following their release.

Corrections would require new funding to provide after-care for prisoners. The costs are likely to be between $2 million and $6 million a year, based on similar Alcohol and Other Drugs initiatives.

3. FURTHER REDUCE REOFFENDING

→ Achieve our Better Public Services target of reducing re-offending by 25 per cent by 2017.

Achieving this target will result in 600 fewer re-imprisonments, 4,000 fewer re-convictions and 18,500 fewer victims a year.

Re-offending rates have already fallen 12 per cent in the past three years.

To achieve our goal, we will dramatically increase the number of rehabilitation programmes in both prisons and the community to give offenders the skills they need to turn away from a life of crime.
4. INTRODUCE ALCOHOL-MONITORING BRACELETS FOR HIGH-RISK OFFENDERS

→ Pass legislation to introduce alcohol-monitoring bracelets for high-risk offenders in the community.

Alcohol is a major driver of crime, and this is another tool to increase public safety and reduce re-offending.

Ankle bracelets detect the presence of alcohol through the skin and will act as a deterrent to high-risk offenders to stop them from drinking, making it less likely they will commit more crimes.

5. LEGISLATE TO EXPAND EXTENDED SUPERVISION ORDERS

→ Pass legislation to expand the use of Extended Supervision Orders beyond child sex offenders to adult sex offenders and violent offenders, and make them renewable.

Extended Supervision Orders allow Corrections to apply for and monitor conditions of child sex offenders for up to ten years following an offender’s release from prison.

New legislation will make these orders renewable and expand their use to a greater range of high-risk offenders to better protect the community.

6. UPGRADE PRISONS

→ Complete an $81.3 million upgrade of New Zealand’s oldest prisons.

National will complete upgrades of Invercargill, Whanganui, Tongariro-Rangipo, Waikeria and Rolleston Prisons to improve their safety and security, and to provide better facilities for prisoner rehabilitation and training.

→ Rebuild Auckland Prison’s maximum security wing to provide a secure, safe and modern facility, which will deliver improved mental health services.

This facility will put staff safety first and will include a mental health unit for prisoners with moderate to severe needs.

DON’T PUT IT ALL AT RISK

Labour and the Greens would:

❌ Return to a Corrections system where decisions are based on ideology and “state knows best” rather than focusing on what works and being open to new ideas and innovation.

❌ Believe re-offending can be reduced by talking about rehabilitation and increasing the number of back office bureaucrats to write strategies rather than actually delivering programmes that work.

❌ Re-introduce failed policies. National inherited a Corrections system that was broken. Our prisons were overflowing, prisoners were driven around in the back of vans, violent criminals were released on parole and the probation service was under-resourced and failing.