

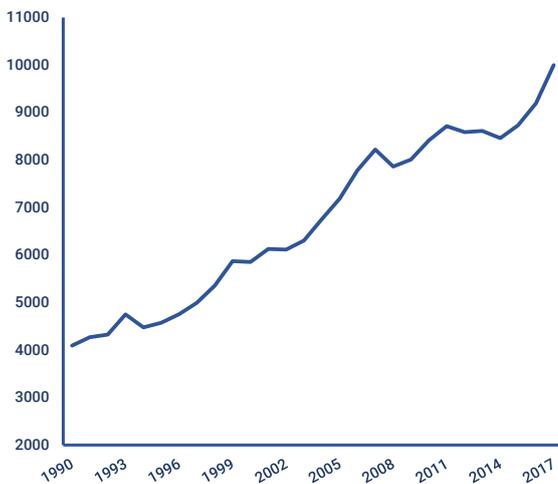
The Prison Population Problem.

ACT believes the prison population is too high. Recently the number of people incarcerated in New Zealand exceeded 10,000 for the first time. There has been a small reduction in reoffending but it is far below the government's targets. To paraphrase Bill English, this is a "moral and fiscal failure".

Over two-thirds of people starting a prison sentence in New Zealand have been sentenced before. That means a huge amount of the crime committed is recidivist offending. Our corrections system is supposed to break the cycle - each person's first time in prison should also be their last. ACT believes prisons must balance punishment and deterrence with rehabilitation and putting offenders on the path to living a productive life.

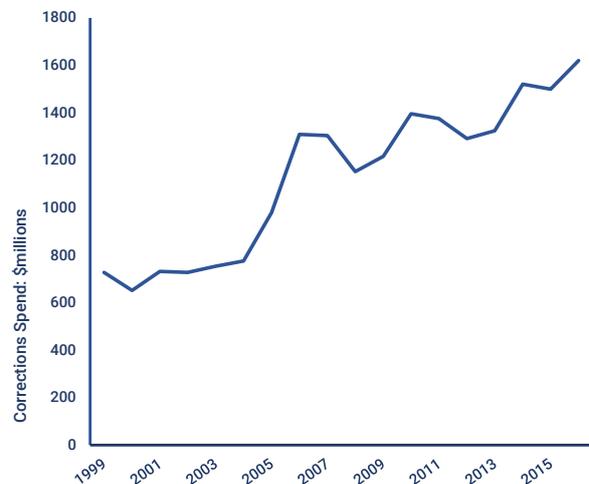
The cost to taxpayers of imprisoning repeat offenders is enormous. The Government has been forced to announce extra prison capacity of 1800 beds, at a cost of \$1 billion. This money could have gone towards tax cuts or paying down public debt.

NZ's Prison Population Blowout



The prison population has blown out. Last year it peaked at over 10,000 for the first time. In 1990 there were 12 prison inmates for every 10,000 in the population, today it is nearly 20.

The Cost of Corrections



Spending on prisons is out of control. It costs \$105,000 per year to keep a person in prison. We have to break the cycle of reoffending to reduce crime and the cost of imprisonment.

Education and Training in Prisons:

70% of prisoners have low levels of literacy and numeracy. This is a major barrier to gaining employment upon release. Of the 10,000 people in prison, 3,240 participated in a literacy or numeracy programme in 2016. There is little incentive for prisoners to take responsibility for their own success, and no reward for their hard work.

Red Tape Is Getting in the Way:

There are 2,500 volunteers registered to provide support to prisoners. ACT believes non-government organisations and civil society should be more involved in providing education and training to prisoners to help them turn their lives around. The state does not have a monopoly on good ideas, and too often government fails in its goals, despite good intentions. There is a mass of red tape that prevents groups like the Howard League from doing more to support prisoners to turn their lives around through literacy and job-readiness training.

Getting Smart on Reoffending.

ACT believes that the primary responsibility of government is to protect the personal safety and property of all citizens. We believe that New Zealanders deserve to feel safe.

ACT believes that incentives matter; that personal responsibility works. Penalties should be tough on repeat offenders. At the same time, we believe prisoners need positive incentives to become productive, law-abiding citizens on release from prison.

Rewarding Self-Improvement in Prisons:

Our policy is to allow prisoners to earn a reduction in their overall sentence by successfully completing literacy, numeracy, job-readiness and driver licensing courses. The purpose of this is to provide a positive incentive for prisoners to upskill. The programme won't apply to the worst violent or sexual offenders. It also won't help white-collar criminals study diplomas or degrees.

Eligible participating inmates would be able to earn up to a maximum of six weeks for every year of their term, depending on the types of courses completed. The policy would only cover the basics: reading, writing, school-level mathematics, and driver training. Attainment will be assessed against National Standards, the same as in schools. The purpose is to ensure more prisoners leave prison able to do things like read and respond to job ads, complete a household budget, and drive legally to work.

Prisoners who enter prison with a higher level of educational attainment would also be eligible for incentives if they act as mentors to other prisoners, helping them to learn.

A Community-Led Response:

ACT would reduce the burden of compliance on community groups like the Howard League who coordinate volunteer-run rehabilitation programmes for prisoners. There are willing volunteers who can't get approved to do this vital work in prisons.

The state doesn't always get this type of work right. Our policy supports the development of non-government prisoner education alongside that run by Department of Corrections. Community organisations are well placed to provide unique prisoner education that suits the educational requirements of individual prisoners.

The Carrot and the Stick:

Our policy gives a positive incentive to prisoners to break the cycle of crime through education, but ACT remains tough on repeat offenders. Our three strikes for violent crime policy is keeping the most violent criminals behind bars. We will continue to call for a three strikes law for burglars, to penalise those who refuse the opportunity to change their lives, and return to a career of crime upon release.

How it Will Work:

A person commits a crime and is sentenced to, say, 3 years in prison.

They enter prison with low levels of literacy and numeracy.

If they complete a basic literacy course, such as the Literacy in Jails programme, they earn a credit off their sentence.

The credit is capped at six weeks per year of the sentence. So this person will get a maximum of 18 weeks - if they complete courses of sufficient value.

Decisions on suitability for parole remain with the Parole Board, at the date the prisoner becomes eligible.



Prison should no longer be the one part of our society that doesn't reward hard work. ACT has a plan to change this.

David Seymour - ACT Leader