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# National's Plan to Address Prison Violence

Working in a prison is a dangerous job and National is very grateful to those New Zealanders who work in our prisons and keep the rest of New Zealand safe. Unfortunately we have seen our prisons become more and more violent over recent years.

Over the past three years prisoner assaults on Corrections Officers have increased by 92 per cent, despite a significant drop in the prison population. Prisoners are becoming more violent simply because they are not held to account for their actions.

The majority of people serving a prison sentence are violent offenders. National wants to make sure our Corrections Officers have the tools they need to keep themselves and other prisoners safe. We will not tolerate the levels of violence Corrections Officers are currently experiencing. Clearly changes need to be made.

The National Party has put forward five policies that would go some way to reducing the amount of violence in our prisons and making sure our prison staff have the tools they need to do their job properly. With these changes National will make sure offenders are held to account for their actions, and our Corrections Officers are better equipped to continue working in a safer environment. National will not tolerate Corrections Officers being assaulted at the levels they are currently. National will hold offenders to account and better equip our Corrections Officers to keep them safe on the job.

## **Mandatory reporting of assaults to Police**

Currently Corrections Officers who are assaulted by a prisoner are not required to report the assault to the Police.

National will:

- Require mandatory reporting of prisoner on Corrections Officer assaults to the Police. This will address the gap in the system where offenders are not held accountable for their actions due to under reporting of assaults to the Police.

## **Reform the disciplinary regime**

We have heard from the frontline that the current disciplinary regime is not fit for purpose and fails to hold prisoners who assault Corrections staff to account. The disciplinary regime has not been changed since 2004. The prison environment has changed and the dangers Corrections staff face are increasing, with an increase of gang members ending up in prison and an increase of offenders on remand in prison.

National will:

- Introduce Legislation which would be similar to the Protection for First Responders and Prison Officers Bill that Labour blocked. The Bill would see prisoners convicted of assaults on Corrections Officers receive an additional prison sentence over and above the sentence the prisoner is currently serving.

## **Frontline Safety Improvement Programme**

The training Corrections Officers are receiving is currently too online focused. Staff need practical training that can be applied on the frontline to help keep themselves and prisoners safe.

National will:

- Make sure Corrections Officers receive practical training on how to better manage high risk situations. This will include improved self-defence training, improved restraining standards and improved tactical communications.

## **Ensuring Personal protective equipment is fit for purpose**

Corrections Officers need the right tools and technology to enable them to do their jobs and help keep them safe. The last time PPE was reviewed was in August 2016, the environment and equipment available has changed since then, we should be making sure our Corrections Officers have the right gear to do their job.

National will:

- Review PPE to make sure Corrections Officers have the right PPE that is required for the modern prison environment.
- Trial a use of tasers in one or two prisons. Tasers will be placed with the emergency response teams/and or the Principle Corrections Officers in each custody unit. Tasers would be used in situations where an offender needs to be urgently restrained and all other tactical options are either inappropriate or insufficient to mitigate the risk the prisoner presents to other prisoners and staff. This would follow the approach adopted by some Australian States such as Western Australia and Tasmania.

## **Better staffing and resourcing**

Corrections Officers need to be well resourced and all units within a prison should be sufficiently staffed. While the prison population has decreased, we are still hearing Corrections Staff are feeling under pressure and under resourced to do their job properly.

National will:

- Conduct a review as to how resources and staff are deployed throughout our prisons.
- Provide improved mental health services for staff.