

Hon Kelvin Davis

MP for Te Tai Tokerau

Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti

Associate Minister of Education

Minister of Corrections

Minister of Tourism



Meg de Ronde
Executive Director
Amnesty International New Zealand
PO Box 5300
Wellesley Street
Auckland 1141

Via email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe Meg,

Thank you for your letter dated 8 April 2020 regarding reports of extended 'lockdown' hours at correctional facilities. I appreciate you taking the time to write to me to express your concerns about this important matter.

I agree with your comment that human rights standards need to be upheld, even during these exceptionally difficult times. This is a matter that I have raised with my officials as they work to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into prisons. I have received assurances that Corrections continues to ensure that prisoners receive their minimum entitlements under the Corrections Act 2004 such as access to legal representation, physical exercise, and telephone calls.

In regard to your request for information, as above, I have received assurances that while some prisons are operating shorter unlock periods in some units in order to manage physical distancing, no prisons are routinely using extended lockdown hours as you have described.

I am aware of the media reports you mention in your letter and I would encourage any prisoner who has concerns that they may have been denied their minimum entitlements to talk to staff about this. As you will be aware, the independent Office of the Inspectorate continues to be available to receive prisoner complaints, and Corrections has been working closely with the Office of the Ombudsman to ensure they can continue to perform their important oversight functions in these difficult circumstances.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kelvin Davis'.

Hon Kelvin Davis
Minister of Corrections