

# Auckland Region Women's Correction Facility

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## Introduction

Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility (ARWCF) opened in 2006 and was the second of four new prisons constructed as part of the Department's Regional Prisons Development Project.

ARWCF, which was purpose built for women, was constructed to accommodate a growing number of female prisoners and services in the upper North Island.

The facility can accommodate 456 low to maximum security female prisoners.

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## Design

ARWCF incorporates design and features intended to promote safety, security and rehabilitation.

The design is consistent with modern prison design internationally and the Department's experience operating New Zealand prisons.

ARWCF consists of a range of separate units set in a large open space, within a secure enclosure. Accommodation units are clustered around centrally located services such as kitchens, industry areas and programme rooms.

The entire facility is enclosed by a highly secure perimeter fence, which allows a more open internal prison environment, where prisoners can move through a planned day.

The layout is intended to protect the public and staff, reduce stress and prisoner management issues and provides a more effective environment for treatment, training and work programmes.

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## Security

Public safety is the Department's highest priority and this is accomplished through the secure incarceration of prisoners.

The level of physical security at each prison varies and is dependent on the type of prisoner accommodated. Because ARWCF is a high security prison and accommodates prisoners assessed as a potential risk to the public, the level of physical security is high.

ARWCF has a highly secure perimeter, which comprises a taut wire fence topped with electrical wires and motion sensors. The facility has a single controlled point of entry, where all visitors to the site are scanned and their belongings x-rayed. The facility is monitored by CCTV cameras.

Inside the wire, the prison is built on two sides of a central building, known as the 'spine', which houses rehabilitation spaces such as the textiles and distribution workshops, as well as other facilities such as the prison library.

On one side of the spine are the high/medium security accommodation blocks. This side of the site has high remotely controlled fences to prevent prisoners from moving out of their accommodation area.

There is one high security Management/Separates Unit with 24 beds: 18 management beds and 6 separates beds. There are also two high-medium security units, one for sentenced and one for remand prisoners, each with 90 beds. There is also a 32-bed assessment unit. Many cells can accommodate two prisoners through double bunking.

The low-medium and low security units are located on the opposite side of the spine. This side of the site is basically an open space with one secure perimeter fence and prisoners are responsible for their own movement around the site.

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There are two low-medium security units, which together hold 197 prisoners through double bunking. There are also eight self-care units, each holding 4 prisoners, providing 32 low security beds.

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### **Reducing re-offending**

Reducing re-offending is critical to meeting the Department's overriding objective of improving public safety. Reducing re-offending means fewer offenders commit crime after completing their sentence – resulting in fewer victims, a reduction in the cost of crime and safer communities.

ARWCF provides prisoners with a range of programmes and interventions that are designed to address the primary causes of their offending and to prepare them for release.

The most intensive interventions are targeted at prisoners who are assessed as having a high-risk of re-offending, that have severe needs that caused their offending and are motivated to make positive changes in their lives.

Every prisoner entering ARWCF develops an offender plan with their case manager, which they are expected to comply with. The focus of the offender plan is on reducing re-offending on release and is developed following an assessment of a prisoner's risk, needs and motivation. This ensures they are placed on the most appropriate and timely programmes and interventions to address the underlying causes of their offending.

Rehabilitation programmes and interventions provided at ARWCF fall into four main categories: motivational, cognitive-behavioural, employment and education, and reintegrative.

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### **Motivational programmes**

Motivational programmes are designed to increase motivation and to encourage and prepare prisoners to confront the causes of their offending.

There are two primary motivational programmes used at ARWCF: the Tikanga Maori Programme and the Short Motivational Programme.

The **Tikanga Maori Programme** uses Maori philosophy, values, knowledge and practice to help prisoners increase their understanding of their Maori identity and their values, and improve their self-esteem so they become motivated to address the causes of their offending.

The **Short Motivational Programme** aims to increase motivation by increasing a prisoner's problem awareness and recognition, reduce ambivalence, address cognitive distortions, and help them consider options and formulate goals.

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### **Cognitive-behavioural programmes**

Cognitive-behavioural programmes aim to reduce re-offending by helping prisoners address the causes of their offending and teach them to identify, analyse and solve problems and make decisions to better their lives. Prisoners also learn how to understand the consequences of their actions and gain control over their own behaviour.

ARWCF provides the **Kowhiritanga Rehabilitation Programme** to prisoners. Kowhiritanga ('Making Choices') is specifically for female prisoners and addresses their unique needs – many female prisoners have suffered from abuse during childhood and in their current relationships. Most of the programme is based on cognitive-behavioural therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, group psychotherapy, recreational psychology and a narrative approach to therapy.

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### **Specialist units**

ARWCF has a specialist **baby bonding unit**. Prisoners with babies aged under nine months being cared for in the community are permitted daily visits in secure, purpose-built facilities where they can feed and bond with their child. These facilities replicate a domestic lounge setting with a bathroom, kitchenette and sleeping room for the baby. There is also an external courtyard. This allows a mother to spend up to 12 hours a day with her baby. It also allows the baby to bond with the caregiver raising the child while the mother serves her sentence.

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Some prisoners with babies (up to nine months) may be eligible to live in **self-care units** where they have greater ability to manage their own living arrangements. A special Mother & Baby facility houses up to 6 women with children up to two years of age.

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## Prisoner employment

Prisoner employment, managed by Corrections Inmate Employment (CIE), plays an integral part in the rehabilitation of prisoners as it provides prisoners with essential work skills and habits. The last prison census in 2003 found that over half of all prisoners were not in paid employment prior to sentencing.

Prisoner employment increases the chance a prisoner will find sustainable work on release and research shows this will result in fewer prisoners being reconvicted.

ARWCF offers two main types of employment:

- internal activities, such as food preparation and laundry
- business-like industries, distribution centre for prisoner purchased goods and a photocopier assembly plant

Prisoners are able to earn credits under the National Qualification Framework, allowing them to work towards qualifications whilst they are engaged in employment and training.

Minimum security prisoners who are nearing release may also be eligible to participate in Release to Work, a form of temporary release that allows prisoners to be in paid work in the community during the day. It provides prisoners with a stable work record and the job is often carried on after a prisoner's released from prison.

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## Education

There is a strong relationship between a lack of education and criminal behaviour. At the time of the last prison census in 2003, 51.7 per cent of all prisoners had no formal qualifications.

Educational achievement and participation can equip prisoners for self-sufficiency and reduce the barriers to living an offence-free life. A prisoner can enrol in any subject or education programme they consider themselves capable of achieving.

There are five main types of education offered to prisoners at ARWCF:

- **Foundation Skills** – allows prisoners to develop their reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, numeracy and problem solving skills
- **National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA)** – run in conjunction with the Correspondence School
- **Trade and Technical National Certificates** – offered by Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics and delivered in prisons
- **Industry Training Qualifications** – earned on-the-job with Corrections Inmate Employment
- **Self-Directed Tertiary Study** – distance learning initiated by prisoners and supported by the Department.

In addition, some computer and hobby classes are also available.

ARWCF also runs a range of skill and developmental programmes offering activities such as weaving, religious groups, cultural groups and other education programmes.

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## Reintegration

Reintegration programmes aim to reduce re-offending by addressing problems likely to increase a prisoners' risk of re-offending on release.

Being imprisoned can have significant social consequences for a prisoner. They are likely to have lost their job and accommodation, they are unlikely to be able to support their families and their relationships can be adversely affected in other ways. Combined, this can lead offenders into a cycle of institutionalisation.

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ARWCF provides two reintegrative programmes:

- **Living Skills** – a broad-based programme to give prisoners skills and knowledge on how to function effectively in society on their release
- **Parenting Skills** – a group programme designed to teach parenting and relationship skills.

**Case managers** also work with high-need prisoners at ARWCF Prison to address their specific reintegrative needs and help them prepare for release in the community.

ARWCF has eight **Self-Care Units** where longer-serving prisoners may be eligible to spend time as they near release. These are residential-style units inside the prison that let prisoners get used to living in a flatting type environment and give prisoners an opportunity to learn and practise the skills they will need to live independently after release. The Living Skills Programme is also delivered in the Self-Care Units and many prisoners participate on the Release to Work programme.

Prisoners who find sustainable employment on release are less likely to re-offend. Permanently based at ARWCF, **Work and Income work brokers and case managers** help prisoners nearing release to find suitable work before they are released.

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## Working with the community

The community has an important role to play in the rehabilitation and transition of prisoners back into the community by supporting and encouraging prisoners to live an offence-free life.

Many sectors of the community are involved in rehabilitating offenders and helping them move back into the community.

The Department developed ARWCF in conjunction with local iwi representatives Puukaki ki te Aakitai. In their role as guardians or kaitiaki, Puukaki ki te Aakitai were actively involved in the development and construction of ARWCF and have an ongoing connection to it through the rehabilitation programmes that operate there.

ARWCF has a cultural space called the 'papamauri' in which kaitiaki are contracted to run educational and spiritual programmes for prisoners.

ARWCF also works with a number of support agencies, including the Auckland Prisoner's Aid and Rehabilitation Society (Auckland PARS), Prison Fellowship and the Salvation Army, to support the successful reintegration of prisoners back into the community.

A large number of people also regularly donate their time, energy and expertise as volunteers with ARWCF.

Volunteers provide invaluable support for prisoners and their families and give prisoners the opportunity to spend their free time constructively through music, art or sport.

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## Contact details

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