

Področje:

**Druga področja – Tuji jeziki**

Naslov naloge:

**The use of language and image as a tool to slant readers' opinions on  
the topic of rehabilitative incarceration**

**II. gimnazija Maribor**

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## Table of Contents

Povzetek .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Aim.....	1
1.2 Methodology .....	2
1.3 The news agencies.....	2
2 EXPLORATION.....	4
2.1 Stuff News analysis.....	4
2.2 Newstalk ZB analysis.....	7
2.3 NZ Herald analysis.....	11
2.4 Results .....	16
3 CONCLUSION .....	19
3.1 Findings.....	19
3.2 Extension.....	20
4 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT.....	22
5 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	23
6 APPENDIX .....	

## Images

Figure 1: Featured image on McDonald’s article (McDonald, 2015).....	5
Figure 2: Featured image on Burrow’s article (Burrow, 2016).....	8
Figure 3: Prisoners in rehabilitation programmes (Shaskey, 2023) .....	13
Figure 4: Pictures of Julian Hannam, Judge Gregory Hikaka and Sir Ron Young (Shaskey, 2023) ....	15

## **Povzetek**

Raziskovalna naloga preučuje, kako osrednji mediji posredno izrazijo pristranskost v poročanju. Osnova za nalogo je sledeče raziskovalno vprašanje: Kako tri novozelandske novinarske agencije uporabljajo vizualne in literarne prijeme z namenom posredno vplivati na oblikovanje pristranskega stališča ciljnega občinstva. Analizira tri novozelandske novinarske članke in prikazuje, kako uporaba jezikovnih in vizualnih prijemov vpliva na bralčevo dožemanje teme v skladu z avtorjevim pristranskim stališčem.

Naloga najprej predstavi namen raziskave in nato neposredno analizira novinarske članke ter učinke različnih jezikovnih prijemov na stališče bralcev. Sledi primerjalni del, kjer so pod drobnogled vzete podobnosti in razlike jezika, uporabljenega v besedilih. Ugotovitve kažejo, da članki temeljijo predvsem na čustvenem nagovarjanju bralcev in da svoje argumente gradijo na čustvenih odzivih ciljnega bralca, s čimer učinkovito usmerjajo mnenja v ustvarjanje pristranskega mnenja o dani temi.

**Ključne besede:** rehabilitacija, zapor, čustven nagovor, posredno dožemanje, pristranskost.

## **Abstract**

This research paper explores how mainstream media outlets may subtly introduce bias into their reporting. It did so with an analysis of how three New Zealand news agencies utilise language and visual techniques to slant readers' opinions into one reflective of the authors. The research question guiding the paper is "how and to what effect do New Zealand news agencies employ visual and literary techniques to inexplicitly persuade their audience into a biased viewpoint?"

After outlining the problem, the research paper sets out to directly analyse the three articles and the effects that the journalists' visual and literary techniques have on readers' opinions. Later the paper compares the articles and their methods of convincing readers of their biased viewpoint. Here we discuss the differences and significant similarities between the techniques used by all the articles to influence their readers' opinions.

The research paper found that ultimately all three journalists rely heavily on appealing to people's emotions. Their arguments build upon an appeal to emotional human nature, thus slanting the readers' views into particular biased viewpoints. While these findings cannot reveal any generalisations as to how news media in New Zealand (or around the world) may influence readers or discuss the issue of rehabilitative incarceration, it gives us an insight into how various techniques can be used by authors to very subtly influence how we perceive certain topics.

**Keywords:** rehabilitation, prison, emotion, slant, bias.

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Aim**

When reading the news, one assumes that the journalist's report is accurately representative of the events it discusses, providing an unbiased and truthful narrative. However, it turns out that this is by no means the case, as reading news on controversial topics, a reader cannot expect accuracy (even from mainstream media sources). Instead, the authors of such articles present a narrative which slants the news towards one-sided positions (Mullainathan and Shleifer, 2004). They often do this in an effort to cater to specific readers, under the assumption that readers hold beliefs which they like to see confirmed by the news media they consume (Mullainathan and Shleifer, 2004). Yet while this may be economically beneficial for the news agencies, doing so can serve to reinforce the readers' pre-existing views and can lead to a positive feedback loop of polarisation between news media and its consumers. This, in turn, can severely affect the credibility of news and can fan the flames of radicalisation and polarisation – issues which are all too common in the world today.

Yet simply knowing about an issue of such magnitude may not be enough to avoid its polarising influence. This research paper will therefore be exploring how news reporting in mainstream media can be slanted in much more subtle ways. This kind of slanted reporting will be exhibited through an analysis of news articles discussing a particularly polarised topic. To this end, this paper will look at news articles covering the issue of rehabilitative incarceration, more specifically the effectiveness of rehabilitating criminals either during, after or instead of incarceration. For the sake of this exploration, rehabilitative incarceration is defined as judicial punishment and/or incarceration with the primary aim of rehabilitation of prisoners, facilitating their reintegration into society (i.e. through parole or other specific rehabilitative programmes).

Given the context, this research paper's analysis of news articles discussing contentious issues will likely find that authors use language and image as a means to persuade readers. The authors are unlikely to approach the topic in an unbiased manner, instead opting to use various techniques to subtly slant readers' opinions into a certain viewpoint.

## **1.2 Methodology**

Overall, this research paper will be looking at how and to what effect three New Zealand news agencies employ visual and literary techniques to inexplicitly persuade their audience into a biased viewpoint. Doing so will help shine a light on how mainstream news outlets utilise language and various other editorial choices to affect their audience's perception on the topic of rehabilitative incarceration.

To show this, it will analyse articles from three different mainstream media outlets. All the articles will cover the same topic, the effectiveness of rehabilitative incarceration, while taking different positions. These analyses of authorial choices will then be compared and contrasted. While only analysing one article from each outlet (and only looking at three outlets) may limit the generalisability of any observations, it can still give us a deeper understanding of how news agencies are able to subtly influence readers. We must also note that the different representations of the chosen issue are probably not representative of *all* news outlets in New Zealand or around the world.

Nonetheless, to ensure the highest chance of notable and significant results, the chosen news agencies are all based in the same country, New Zealand, and have different political leanings, according to an April 2023 poll rankings (Curia Market Research, 2023). Of the listed New Zealand news outlets, Stuff News is most politically left wing, Newstalk ZB most right wing, and the NZ Herald most centrist. To this end, this research paper will focus on articles from these three New Zealand news agencies. News agencies from New Zealand were chosen specifically to see whether news media bias can be observed even in a country generally known as highly uncorrupted and unpolarised (Corruption Perceptions Index, 2023).

## **1.3 The news agencies**

Stuff News is New Zealand's largest news website owned by the news conglomerate, Stuff Ltd. It publishes articles covering breaking news, weather, sport, politics, business, entertainment and more (Wikipedia Contributors, 2020). Their target audience is the general New Zealand public, although specifically those with centre-left political leanings.

Newstalk ZB is a New Zealand nationwide news/radio network, operated by NZME Radio. They cover news, interviews, music, sports and more (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024). Their target audience is the general New Zealand public, although specifically those with center-right political leanings.

The New Zealand Herald is a daily newspaper owned by New Zealand Media and Entertainment. Their website is viewed 2.2 million times a week and covers a variety of news topics (Wikipedia Contributors, 2004). Their target audience is the general New Zealand public.

## 2 EXPLORATION

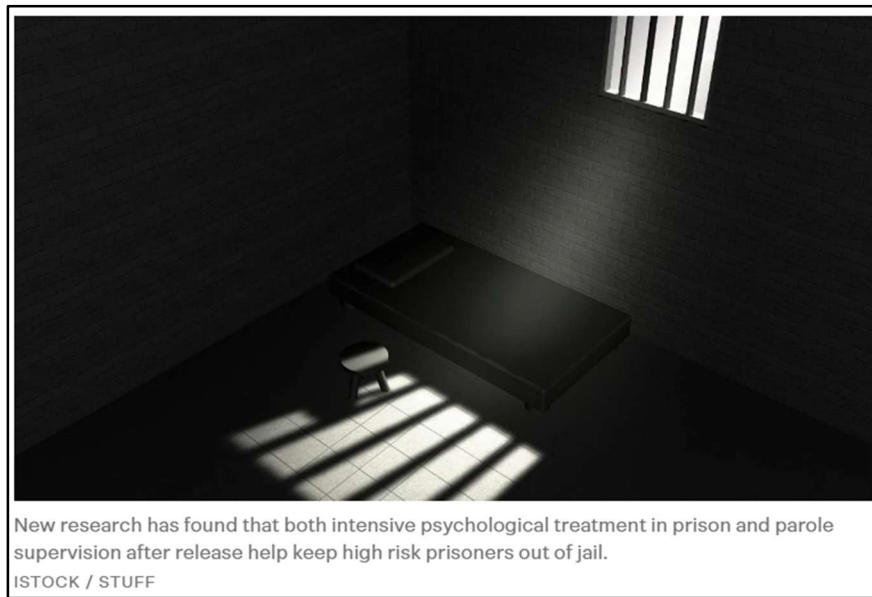
### 2.1 Stuff News analysis

Looking at the top articles published by Stuff News on the topic of rehabilitative punishment, the majority discussed prisoner rehabilitation in a positive light, advocating for the implementation of rehabilitative practices or spreading information regarding the limitations of conventional punishment. To this end, the article chosen for analysis is a relatively representative sample of other Stuff News articles on this topic.

In the chosen Stuff News article titled *Treatment and parole are more effective than full sentence at reducing reoffending - research*, written by Nikki McDonald and published on 16 July 2015, the author uses a number of different techniques to shine a distinctly positive light on the topic of rehabilitative punishment. She argues that rehabilitative punishment is significantly more effective than conventional prison sentences.

Firstly, McDonald displays her positive view of rehabilitative sentencing through the conventions used in the title of the article. She titles the article “treatment and parole are more effective than full sentence at reducing reoffending - research”. By using the descriptor, “research”, at the end of the title, McDonald enhances the perceived credibility of her article by implying that her views on the topic (which are clearly stated within the title itself) are supported by credible research. Appealing to the audience's ethos, the author entices them into believing the claim made within the title before ever reading the article or learning more about the research and its results.

Figure 1: Featured image on McDonald’s article (McDonald, 2015)



In addition, the author uses an article image to highlight the negative consequences and ineffectiveness of non-rehabilitative incarceration. As seen in Figure 1, the start of the article features an eye-catching image of a dark and gloomy prison cell with the only light falling in from a small barred window. The focus of the image is a prison cell bed and stool with no prisoner in sight. The cell and all its contents are dark and monochromatic creating a clearly oppressive mood. This lack of colour highlights the negative and unnatural environment prisoners undergoing non-rehabilitative incarceration are subjected to. Doing so appeals to the audience's empathy for anyone having to spend an extended period of time in such a cell. This use of pathos helps prime the reader for the author's subsequent arguments against conventional imprisonment, as the readers' mental image of such a sentence is already defined as negative and oppressive by the image at the top of the article. In doing so the author makes the audience more susceptible to agreeing with her later arguments and highlights the negative effects of imprisonment.

In the first paragraph of the article, McDonald incorporates pre-modifiers to intensify her view on the issue. She does this when saying, "...parole is far more effective at reducing reoffending...[than] full prison sentence". In using the intensifier, "far", McDonald displays her position on the matter, obviously in favour of rehabilitation. Additionally, by making such a claim in the first paragraph, McDonald further emphasises the argument she will be making

throughout the rest of the article. She then ends this claim with “...new research shows”, a persuasive ploy to convince readers that her position on the issue of rehabilitative incarceration is justified and correct by increasing the perceived credibility of her claim.

McDonald also uses citations and statistics to positively present rehabilitative punishment as well as to create a sense of logic and credibility in her article. She does so by stating how prisoners undertaking rehabilitative programs are “37 per cent less likely than similar but [non-rehabilitated] prisoners to be reimprisoned within a year of release” and by referencing the researcher who conducted this study, “Victoria University psychology professor Devon Polaschek.” By citing statistics and an expert opinion, the author bolsters her argument regarding the effectiveness of rehabilitative incarceration, making it seem more substantiated and thus more effectively convincing readers of her view on the issue. Later, McDonald quotes professor Polaschek to portray rehabilitation programmes such as the Special Treatment Unit Rehabilitation Programme (STRUP) as something fundamentally good and effective. She writes how Polaschek claims STRUP is more effective than heart disease or cancer treatments. By doing so McDonald non-explicitly compares untreated prisoners to cancer or heart disease, both serious and chronic conditions in desperate need of effective treatments. In doing so the author emphasises a sense of urgency in regards to the lack of correctional punishment. She implies that society needs STRUP and other prisoner rehabilitation programmes with the same urgency as cancer patients need cancer treatments - an effective metaphor speaking to the urgent need of such programmes.

Furthermore, her use of the quote within the article's structure continues to highlight the importance of effective rehabilitative incarceration. She does this by placing the quote in a jarring manner, using the one-sentence quote as its own short paragraph. By singling out Polaschek's effective metaphor, McDonald bolsters her argument championing prisoner rehabilitation.

Finally, McDonald uses her portrayal of aggressors and victims to emphasise the effectiveness of prisoner rehabilitation - even through more conventional methods such as parole. She does so initially by outlining a study conducted by professor Polaschek which found that “prisoners released on early parole were 30% more likely to avoid reconviction”. The author then

immediately follows this positive portrayal of parole with statistics regarding the significant decline in approved parole hearings, where the “Parole Board approved only 26% of [parole] hearings last year, compared with 49% in 2002/2003.” These statistics clearly paint the Parole Board as an aggressor due to their reduced parole hearing approval despite the clear effectiveness of parole in rehabilitation. McDonald later quotes renown justice advocate, Kim Workman, on how “the Parole Board say [reducing parole approval] is in the interests of public safety when in fact it's in the interests of the Parole Boards reputation.” By telling readers about the effectiveness of parole in rehabilitation, then moving directly on to the decrease in hearing acceptance rate statistics, McDonald clearly portrays the prisoners as victims, as she shows readers how the Parole Board’s (the aggressor’s) rulings take away prisoners’ chances for effective rehabilitation through parole. This sense of prisoner victimisation due to their lack of access to parole is then compounded by the author's quote of Workman, which further highlights the aggressors’ self-interest and their disregard for successful rehabilitation.

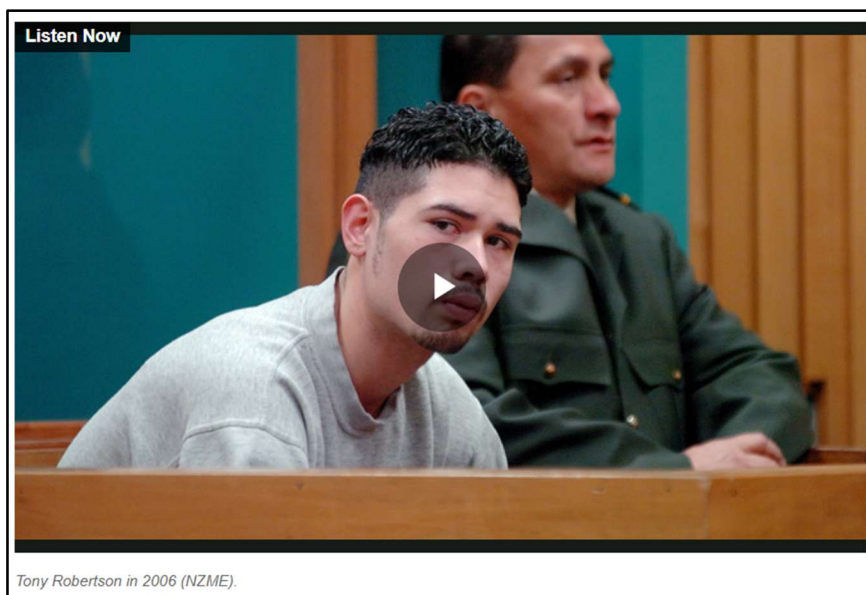
## **2.2 Newstalk ZB analysis**

Unlike with Stuff News, the top News ZB articles on the topic of rehabilitative incarceration were roughly evenly split between those highlighting its effectiveness and those highlighting its ineffectiveness. The chosen article *Enforcing rehabilitation on prisoners wouldn't work - expert* by Alicia Burrow, published on 18 May, 2016, will therefore be relatively representative of Newstalk ZB overall, when it discusses the issue in a distinctly negative light and highlights the ineffectiveness of prisoner rehabilitation programmes.

Firstly, Burrow uses modality and other conventions within the title of the article to highlight the ineffectiveness of rehabilitative incarceration. She does so when titling the article, “enforcing rehabilitation on prisoners wouldn't work - expert”. By making such a claim with word choices such as ‘enforced’ and ‘on prisoners’, Burrow implies that rehabilitation is something fundamentally negative and paints all prisoners as unwilling to ever cooperate with mandatory rehabilitation. Additionally, with her use of the modal ‘would[n’t]’, Burrow changes the certainty with which the claim was written. By using a future tense hypothetical, Burrow increases the certainty of the statement to a degree where she implies that prisoner rehabilitation would never work, both presently and anytime in the future, and hypothetically proposing

otherwise is absurd. Next, Burrow’s use of the descriptor “expert” generates a sense of trust with the reader by increasing the perceived credibility of the claim made in the first part of the title. This credibility derived from Burrow’s appeal to ethos makes the audience more susceptible to any following arguments made in the article to support the author’s initial claim (the ineffectiveness of mandatory rehabilitation).

Figure 2: Featured image on Burrow’s article (Burrow, 2016)



Secondly, Burrow also structures the article in an unconventional manner. Rather than a still image, Figure 2 shows how the article is headed with a video featuring a photo of Tony Robertson in court, along with an 11.5 minute voiceover interview about how ‘enforcing rehabilitation on prisoners wouldn’t work’. In doing so the author makes the article easier to consume, allowing the audience to choose between listening to the video and reading the article. These options and ease of access is supported by Burrow’s unconventional structuring of the article itself as each sentence is given its own paragraph. In doing so, the author makes information much clearer and easier to consume, making the arguments within the article easier to get behind. Additionally, the image of Tony Robertson seen in Figure 2 is used to further highlight the limitations of rehabilitative incarceration. The image shows Robertson in the foreground, looking past the camera with a distinctly dark and serious look on his face. In light of him raping Blessie Gotingco after undergoing rehabilitation, featuring such a serious picture

of Robertson in court after a repeated offense serves to demonstrate the severe limitations of mandatory prisoner rehabilitation. Even after being imprisoned and supposedly rehabilitated Robertson, back in court, looks highly unremorseful for his grievous repeated offence.

Next, Burrow uses narrative tone and professional opinion to highlight the ineffectiveness of prisoner rehabilitation. She incorporates a very critical tone when discussing the current limitations of the rehabilitation system, by writing that “too much risk assessment lies with probation officers [with limited training in psychological techniques] ... [professor Polaschek quotes that] ‘sex offenders have explicit and complicated feelings, thoughts and behaviours [which] are very challenging things for anyone to gauge and should be left to psychologists’”. Thus, she highlights the systemic flaws in the current rehabilitation system, specifically referring to the risk assessment decisions made by probation officers who are unqualified to do so. This critical narrative tone helps demonstrate how current prisoner rehabilitation is undoubtedly ineffective due to systemic faults such as the lack of qualified professionals involved in the process. This is then supported by the expert opinion of professor Devon Polascheck, who also states that the rehabilitation of prisoners, especially those involved in violent cases, is very challenging and should not be left to unqualified personnel.

Additionally, Burrow uses emotionally loaded adjectives, repetition and conditional statements to outline an aggressor and victim, thus highlighting the failure of the prison rehabilitation system. She does so by quoting the Corrections Minister, that “the person responsible for the murder was Tony Robertson, and Tony Robertson alone... he is a determined, vicious killer who's now thankfully in prison for life”. Thus, Burrow uses repetition to effectively shift the responsibility for Mrs Gotingcos murder solely onto Tony Robertson, outlining him as the clear aggressor in the situation while victimising Mrs Gotingcos and, by extension, the criminal justice and rehabilitation system. This is supported by the tone created with the lexical cluster “determined” and “vicious” used to describe Robertson, as well as the word “thankfully” when talking about Robertsons life imprisonment. This helps reach the audience by showing Robertson as a clear aggressor, while rehabilitation programmes are deemed ineffective due to “vicious” perpetrators such as him. Another authorial choice Burrow uses a conditional statement when saying that “if [Robertson] had been sentenced to preventative detention, Blessies (Mrs Gotingcos) death could have been prevented.” This appeals to the readers

emotionally, implying how while rehabilitation is a good ideal, it is ineffective and its failures have real and severe consequences for innocent people - as seen with the case of Tony Robertson.

Throughout the article, we see that Burrow repeatedly uses anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of rehabilitation. She focuses heavily on the case of Tony Robertson and how the failure of the current system helped lead to the murder and rape of Blessie Gotingco. In doing so, she tries to generalise this specific case, implying that the inability to rehabilitate Tony Robertson was a consequence of the ineffectiveness of the prison rehabilitation system and how this failure can have devastating consequences. She highlights how rehabilitation can only be effective when the participant is willing to change, making the current mandatory rehabilitation ineffective as prisoners “will reject treatment even more if they’re forced to be there”. This point is demonstrated in the case of Robertson, as he "refused all rehabilitation" and continued to plead innocence even after the murder and rape of Mrs Gotingco. By showing this anecdotal case of Tony Robertson, Burrow attempts to generalise, suggesting that “there will always be offenders who are beyond rehabilitation”. This in turn supports her claims on the ineffectiveness of rehabilitation, where she highlights that such systems fundamentally cannot work with prisoners who “don’t want rehabilitation” such as Tony Robertson.

Lastly, Burrow uses structure and sequencing to further show the audience the ineffectiveness of rehabilitative punishment. She does so through her use of the penultimate paragraph in which she states that “on May 22, 2015, Robertson was found guilty of the rape and murder of Mrs Gotingco. He was sentenced... to life imprisonment with the minimum period of imprisonment of 24 years for murder, and... 10 years for rape”. The severe punishment - presented in a factual and impartial tone - emphasises to the audience the ineffectiveness of prison rehabilitation given the despicable murder/rape was only able to take place due to the systems failure to initially rehabilitate Robertson. Burrow even more effectively conveys this to the readers by sequencing this as one of the very last paragraphs of the article. In doing so, this information is most easily remembered by the audience, giving them the final impression that current prisoner rehabilitation measures are ineffective and can result in the recidivism of violent convicts.

### 2.3 NZ Herald analysis

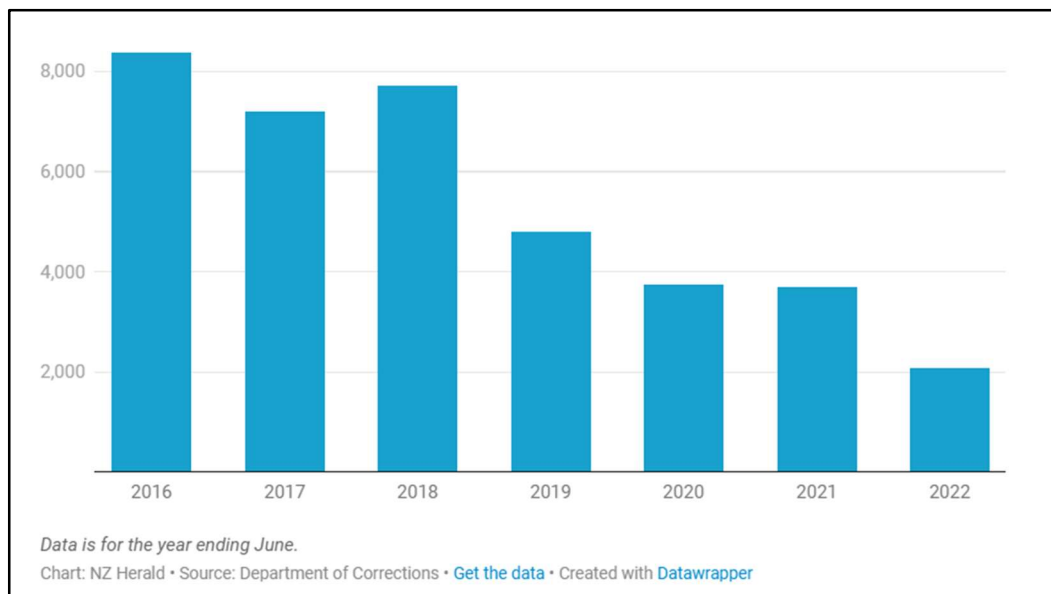
The NZ Herald article titled *Corrections 'failing' prisoners and public as lengthy delays for rehabilitation programmes continue*, was written by Tara Shaskey and published on 21 October 2023. In it the author uses a number of linguistic and visual techniques to highlight the inadequacy of current prison rehabilitation measures – condemning the current system for this failure. She argues that rehabilitative punishment is highly needed, however the current care being provided is not enough for success.

First and foremost, Shaskey uses the personal anecdote of Blake Hollins-Apiata to highlight how the rehabilitation system is not widespread enough to care for inmates properly, thus conveying the current system's significant shortcomings. The article starts off with an emotionally charged deck discussing how the “teenage offender [Hollins-Apiata] with alcohol and violence issues sat behind bars, in a cell neighbouring his father’s, for more than a year without receiving any rehabilitative treatment.” The article then closely follows the story of Hollins-Apiata, using his case as an example of the failings of the prison rehabilitation system. This anecdote of a nineteen year old teenager with serious issues – and his inability to receive the much needed help and rehabilitation – serves to emotionally appeal to readers. Shaskey presents Hollins-Apiata as a clear victim of the system, condemning the Department of Corrections for their inability to care for their prisoners’ rehabilitation – especially that of at-risk teen offenders. The emotional charge of the anecdotal example is further emphasised with Shaskey’s focus on Hollins-Apiata’s dysfunctional family, where his years growing up were “marred by parental drug and alcohol abuse” with the “teen’s recidivist and absent father [coming] in and out of prison”. This image of dysfunctional interpersonal support then culminates to a stark image of him having to share “side-by-side cells in the same prison” with his father. This picture of Hollins-Apiata’s background paints him as a clear product of his environment, highlighting the lack of support and opportunity that many teenage offenders experience. This tragic anecdote further emphasises both the desperate need for rehabilitation in the prison system as well as the lack thereof. Shaskey speaks to how “properly directed interventions” could give Hollins-Apiata “an opportunity to modify his behaviour and turn his life around”. This optimistic language supports the anecdotal example the author has been following, allowing readers who are already invested in the story of Hollins-Apiata to perceive

rehabilitation as crucial to allowing offenders from disadvantaged backgrounds to make a change for the better.

Next, throughout the article Shaskey uses loaded diction to further slant readers' opinions and condemn the prison system for the lack of rehabilitative care. She does so with the use of condemnatory lexical clusters when talking about the Department of Corrections, such as "stalled in the prison system", "thwarted by lengthy delays", "lambasted the Department", "failing the prisoners" and "inadequate resourcing". In doing so, she shines a distinctly negative light on the current system, highlighting their negligence of prisoners' need for rehabilitation during incarceration. It brings the reader's attention to the lack of much needed effective rehabilitation programmes, blaming the Department of Corrections for being unable to rehabilitate prisoners. Later Shaskey highlights the need for such rehabilitation by contrasting the condemnatory language with optimistic lexical clusters which are used to describe rehabilitation programmes and their effectiveness. She does so when describing how "good, properly directed interventions," would have provided Hollins-Apiata with the "opportunity to modify his behaviour and turn his life around". In doing so the author highlights the inherent goodness and opportunity offered by prison rehabilitation programmes, stressing their significant positive effect on prisoners' lives. Furthermore, the contrasting diction compared to that used when describing current rehabilitation measures, helps emphasise the severe lack of rehabilitative programmes. Doing so shows the impact this has on inmates such as Hollins-Apiata, appealing to readers in the hopes of convincing them of the need for more effective prison rehabilitation.

Figure 3: Prisoners in rehabilitation programmes (Shaskey, 2023)

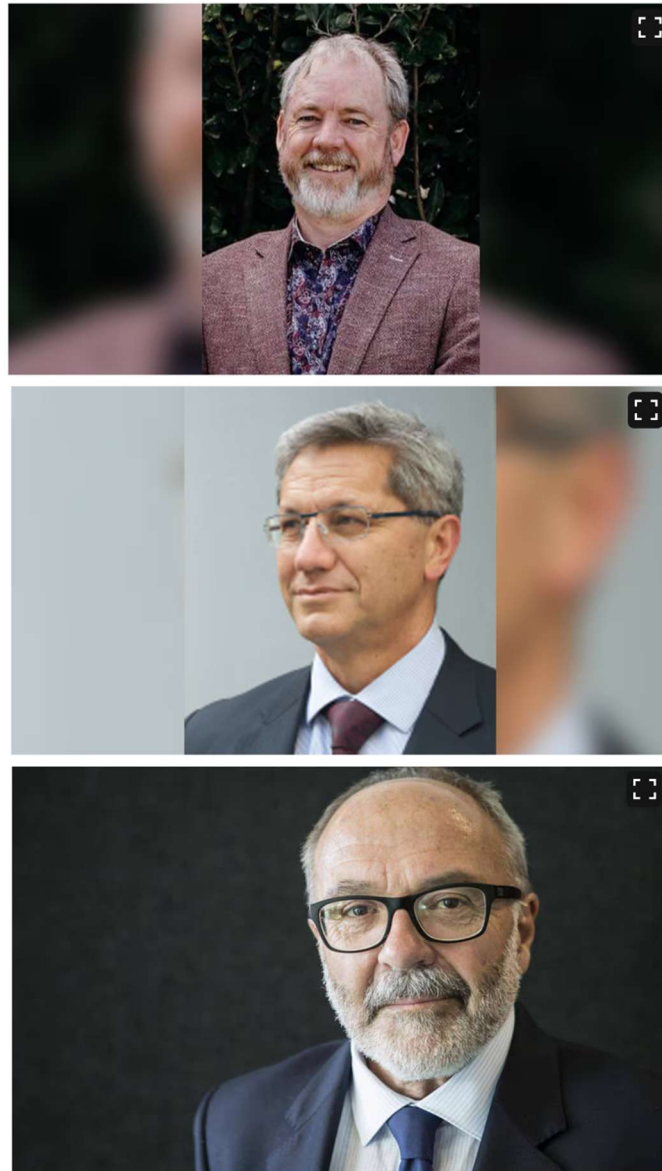


Next, Shaskey utilises statistics to highlight the shortcomings of the current rehabilitation system. As seen in Figure 3, the author uses visual elements such as the chart to clearly show readers the tremendous inadequacy of rehabilitation in prisons. The graph highlights how the number of prisoners in rehabilitation programmes in New Zealand has plummeted in recent years, from well over eight thousand in 2016 to barely two thousand in 2022. This clear and visually illustrated statistical data serves primarily to capture readers’ attention while explicitly bringing to light a serious systemic problem of worsening prison rehabilitation measures. Furthermore, the graphed statistics appeal to the readers through ethos, serving to make them trust in the soundness of Shaskey’s arguments throughout the article. On the other hand, the author also uses statistical diction to achieve a similar effect, even when the information did not stem from fact and research. For example, she quotes a lawyer who said that “100 percent of the time he represented a prisoner on their first bid for parole, the offender was still on a waitlist for [rehabilitation]”. This use of hyperbole and statistical diction further gains the readers’ trust, thus bringing to light the ineffectiveness of the prison rehabilitation system and the pressing need for them to address this issue.

Additionally, Shaskey references expert opinions, both to create a sense of trustworthiness and reliability in her article, as well as to highlight the inadequacy of current rehabilitation measures in prison. She does so with her reference to a Parole Board’s decision acknowledging their

failures in the Hollins-Apiata case, where they state that “it is fundamentally wrong for a young man who is only 19 years of age to be stalled within the prison system”. This explicit self-acknowledged failure from the Parole Board themselves, highlights the lack of rehabilitative care that prisoners receive. Furthermore, the fact that the Parole Board is directly quoted adds a sense of reliability to the article and the argument being made for the need for better prison rehabilitation programmes. Supporting this, Shaskey also mentions a letter written by Sir Ron Young, a member of the Parole Board, in which he “criticised the department [of Corrections] and explained the need for significant improvement” in prison rehabilitation measures. These references of the Parole Board and its members gives Shaskey’s argument credibility as even a national authority on rehabilitative incarceration expresses the need for such. Secondly, the author quotes Judge Gregory Hikaka and Hollins-Apiata’s lawyer, Julian Hannam, to support the Department of Corrections’ rehabilitative shortcomings. Judge Hikaka said that it is “hard to understand. Why those rehabilitative options could not be initiated as soon as [Hollins-Apiata] got to that environment, particularly given [his] young age.” This reference to an expert – a Judge who has been privy to the corrections system for a long time – works to portray the situation as unacceptable and avoidable, further supporting the article’s perspective that systemic issues are to blame. Additionally, Hannam was quoted saying that through “good, properly directed interventions...Hollins-Apiata had an opportunity to modify his behaviour and turn his life around”. In doing so, Shaskey emphasises the effectiveness of prison rehabilitation when it is actually incorporated. Therefore, through the use of these expert opinions, Shaskey brings to light the systemic failures of prison and their lack of rehabilitative measures. Simultaneously she advocates the need and effectiveness of such measures with the case of Hollins-Apiata.

Figure 4: Pictures of Julian Hannam, Judge Gregory Hikaka and Sir Ron Young (Shaskey, 2023)



Adding to the use of professional opinion, Shaskey shows photos of the people she quotes: Julian Hannam, Judge Gregory Hikaka and Sir Ron Young. This very personal use of image helps connect with the audience both through ethos. As seen in Figure 4, all three individuals are smiling and well dressed. This serves to simultaneously make them likeable to readers as

well as build a heightened sense of trust. This built-up sense of trust makes readers more likely to believe the quotes Shaskey uses, while also making them more inclined to see the issue of prison rehabilitation from the same perspective as Shaskey and the kind and professional looking people she quotes.

## **2.4 Results**

All three news outlets' articles look at the effectiveness of prisoner rehabilitation. Given that their claims and conclusions differ vastly, this section will be looking at whether or not the authorial choices that they employ to convince their readers may also differ.

Alicia Burrow of Newstalk ZB, displays rehabilitation as ineffective and highlights how this ineffective system can have dire consequences. On the other hand, Nikki McDonald of Stuff News discusses the effectiveness of current rehabilitation measures, both through new programmes such as STRUP and more traditional practices such as parole. Similarly, Tara Shaskey with the NZ Herald argues that prisoner rehabilitation is highly needed and effective, however she criticises the current Department of Corrections for the lack of care that prisoners get in terms of rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Throughout their articles, the authors utilise a number of similar techniques even though the content of their arguments are at times fundamentally opposite. Firstly, both Burrow and McDonald incorporate modality and descriptors within the title of their articles to initially appeal to their readers' ethos and establish a sense of credibility. Differing slightly but to similar effect, Shaskey uses visual statistics (such as graphs) early in her article, which also serves to appeal to ethos. In doing so the authors prime the audience to be more susceptible to any further arguments. Any subsequent points made, either for or against the effectiveness of prisoner rehabilitation, will appear to be logical and credible after the initial appeal to readers' ethos.

Additionally, all three authors play on the reader's emotions to build their argument, although they achieve this in different ways. McDonald uses the article image and the display of victims and aggressors to highlight both the effectiveness and the need for rehabilitation in incarceration. She does so by victimising the prisoners, both through her use of the photo showing the gloominess of traditional incarceration, as well as with regards to prisoners being

victims of the Parole Board who may not have their best interests at heart but rather their own reputation. On the other hand, Burrow and Shaskey incorporate emotion through the use of anecdotal examples as the foundation for their articles' arguments. In Shaskey's article this takes the form of the victimisation of Hollins-Apiata, using stark and emotional diction to describe his dysfunctional childhood and inability to get rehabilitation in prison. This serves to appeal to the reader's empathy, clearly conveying the desperate need for rehabilitation measures for prisoners like Hollins-Apiata. Meanwhile Burrow uses emotion with the heinous Tony Robertson case and the emotionally charged adjectives she uses to describe Robertson himself. Basing the article on the case of Tony Robertson, Burrow plays on her readers' emotions and immediately pits them against prisoners and their rehabilitation, due to the instinctual association between prison rehabilitation and Tony Robertsons vicious recidivism. This appeal to emotion is reinforced with Burrows choice of adjectives when describing Robertson, using lexical clusters such as "vicious" and "determined", thus pinning the blame on him and his unwillingness to cooperate with any rehabilitation measures. Lastly, all the authors also incorporate the citation of professionals to lend credibility to their arguments. To this end, Burrow and McDonald both quote the criminal justice psychology professor Devon Polaschek as the professional voice on the matter, while Shaskey quotes the defense attorney Julian Hannam, Judge Gregory Hikaka and Sir Ron Young of the Parole Board.

However, while there are a number of techniques the articles have in common, there are also some which they do not share. We can note, regarding the use of ethos, that while all three authors cite professional opinions on the matter, McDonald and Shaskey focus more heavily on other statistical information and diction to build their arguments. While they use some quotes, the bulk of their arguments are also supported by statistics and research. Meanwhile Burrow opts to emphasise professional opinion, using it as a base for her article's credibility. She does so when quoting individuals like Devon Polaschek and Corrections Minister Judith Collins.

With the techniques being used, we see a distinct difference between how the articles' arguments are made. McDonald relies predominantly on statistical information to support her argument, while Burrow and Shaskey play more on pathos with their arguments hinging on the anecdotal cases of Tony Robertson and Blake Hollins-Apiata respectively. However, even here these two articles differ slightly, as while Burrow doubles down on the emotional appeals and

professional opinion, Shaskey also incorporates a mixture of statistical information and diction. These differences in how the articles are presented are also reflected in the structure of the articles themselves. While Burrow uses sentence-long paragraphs to support her emotionally charged techniques, McDonalds and Shaskey use a more traditional paragraph structure that is well suited to supporting the credible logical argument created through their use of statistics and quotes.

## 3 CONCLUSION

### 3.1 Findings

All the news agencies this paper analysed employ various authorial techniques such as statistics, structure, image, citations and more, to influence their readers. These identified techniques were meticulously chosen and incorporated so as to shine a certain light on the issue of rehabilitative incarceration. While Stuff News and the NZ Herald championed rehabilitative incarceration, showing it in a positive light, Newstalk ZB discussed it in a distinctly negative light. The previously mentioned techniques – and the perception they created about the topic – ultimately resulted in the introduction of the authors' bias into the articles. While the authorial choices themselves did not explicitly make the audience biased, they aided in inexplicitly persuading them to see the issue in a certain light. All three articles used statistics and credible sources as the basis of their arguments, however the way in which the authors presented the information, and their expert use of various literary techniques, slanted the articles' narratives. Doing so helped the authors effectively persuade their readers to agree with their specific viewpoints.

Delving deeper, this research paper's analysis found that the journalists used emotion and an established sense of credibility to effectively petition their views to their target audience. In doing so, they bring use of pathos and ethos to the forefront of their arguments, seemingly prioritising them over use of logos. Firstly, this prioritisation of pathos can be seen with Burrow's and Shaskey's use of anecdotes. Both authors' articles hinge upon specific cases of prison rehabilitation (Robertson and Hollins-Apiata respectively). The highly emotionally charged anecdotal evidence they present to the audience is then generalised to support the authors' claims on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the whole rehabilitative incarceration system. Secondly, the authors' prioritisation of ethos can be seen in McDonald's and Burrow's selective citation of Devon Polashek. Both their articles reference her quotes and research findings despite the fact they are making completely opposite arguments as to the effectiveness of rehabilitation. Thus, both authors are prioritising the perceived credibility (ethos) gained by referencing a professional opinion, regardless of the fact that Polashek's quotes can obviously be spun to support arguments for both the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of prisoner rehabilitation.

Given these analytical observations, we may look at what the implications they may have for consumers of mainstream news media. Overall, they seem to highlight a key issue in reporting, namely the fact that even mainstream news outlets tend not to report with fact and logic as the priority. Instead, journalists utilise the news outlet's credibility and the readers' emotions, incorporating various authorial choices to make arguments for or against certain issues. An explanation for this phenomenon could be the polarised nature of the topics discussed. Since readers have strong emotional opinions on such issues, they tend to reject rational approaches to news reporting, instead responding more to emotional arguments – which they find ways to rationally justify later (Bariso, 2021). While slanting news and media in this way seems highly provoking, the authors are in fact incentivised to do this in the capitalistic context of the mainstream news media market. Discussing highly polarised issues has been seen to boost both profits and ratings to a much higher degree than robust and unbiased reporting of important events (Sabga, 2022). Therefore, it seems that while one would hope for the prioritisation of fact in the news, both the news agencies' business model and the readers' emotional human nature are not conducive to unbiased reports. Evidence of this highly polarising system that is the news, can be seen in this paper's analysis and the different news agencies' use of language and image to slant reporting in a manipulative manner.

In conclusion, the analysis of the three articles has successfully shown how a news agency's use of language can be used to accentuate differences in opinion, even on the same topic. More specifically, it brings attention to the importance of these language choices in appealing to a specific audience, thus highlighting how mainstream media utilises language to create slanted and emotional arguments rather than impartial, factual reports. As readers of news media, the observations of this research paper give us a valuable insight into the tools used to instil bias under the pretext of factuality. Being aware of these tools in the modern age of misinformation is a big step towards preventing unintentional manipulation.

### **3.2 Extension**

In extension to this research paper, it would be sensible to look more widely at how language is used in news media across the world (not just in New Zealand). This would give us a generalizable sample, allowing us to draw more widescale conclusions and testing whether the trends observed in this research paper are more universally true. Alternatively, one could study

the actual changes in views and behaviours of news readers. This could be achieved through surveying consumers of news media and directly testing the effects that the journalists' language choices have in changing readers' opinions on a specific topic.

#### **4 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT**

In the process of researching and writing this paper we strived to ensure a high degree of ethical rigor. We did not impede on anyone's human rights or intellectual property, ensuring to credit others where appropriate. We ensured to minimise our environmental footprint by limiting our paper waste and keeping our work online as much as possible. When discussing the highly sensitive and polarised issues throughout the article we ensured to keep our own views outside of the paper's scope, thus eliminating the risk to offend those reading our paper. Furthermore, exploring the methods and effects that language and image can have in mainstream media, shines a light on the subtle ways one can be coerced by others. In doing so the research helps readers stay aware of the language and visual techniques used by those around them, thus helping them responsibly evaluate sources of information – a skill especially useful given the rise of misinformation and manipulation through the internet.

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## 6 APPENDIX

### 6.1 Stuff News article

# Treatment and parole are more effective than full sentence at reducing reoffending – research

Nikki Macdonald

July 16, 2015 · 10:11pm

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New research has found that both intensive psychological treatment in prison and parole supervision after release help keep high risk prisoners out of jail.  
ISTOCK / STUFF

Intensive psychological treatment and early release to parole is far more effective at reducing reoffending among high risk prisoners than serving out the full prison sentence, new research shows.

Offenders who completed the Correction Department's intensive Special Treatment Unit Rehabilitation Programme (STURP) were 37 per cent less likely than similar but untreated prisoners to be reimprisoned within a year of release, according to the study *Surviving the first year*, by Victoria University psychology professor Devon Polaschek.

"That's a huge effect - better than some treatments for heart disease or cancer," Polaschek said.

The STURP programme is offered at four prisons nationwide and is only available to offenders serving a sentence of more than two years who have a 70 per cent risk of reimprisonment within five years of release. An 8-12-month residential programme, it helps prisoners understand why they offend and teaches tools to calm high risk situations before they get out of control.

Polaschek's research, which tracked 271 high risk offenders, also found that both treated and untreated prisoners released early to parole were 30 per cent more likely to avoid reconviction over a period of more than two years. The longer the parole period, the more reconvictions fell, even when taking into account the factors making early-release prisoners more likely to succeed.

"There's something good happening on parole," Polaschek said.

Rethinking Crime and Punishment spokesman Kim Workman said the research reinforced the importance of supportive parole, which was becoming harder to get. The Parole Board approved parole in only 26 per cent of hearings last year, compared with 49 per cent in 2002/2003.

"The Parole Board say that it is in the interests of public safety when in fact it's in the interests of the Parole Board's reputation," Workman said.

He would also like to see a programme similar to STURP offered as part of a community sentence, instead of only being offered in prison.

Corrections Department chief psychologist Nikki Reynolds said the department already had a similar, but much shorter, community programme in Hamilton, called Tai Aroha. While the STURP programme's success was encouraging, it could not easily be expanded to other prisoner groups, as subjecting lower risk prisoners to high intensity programmes could be counterproductive.

The finding that longer parole could reduce reoffending was useful, Reynolds said.

"That indicates that the earlier we can get them to a point where the Parole Board consider that their risk is reduced enough for them to get out, the longer we can have them on parole, the more beneficial that is."

The Sensible Sentencing Trust did not accept the study's findings. Founder Garth McVicar said the decline in high risk offenders being granted parole was helping reduce crime. The parole system was offensive to victims and should be abolished, he said.

The Parole Board declined to comment on the research.

- **Stuff**

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## 6.2 News ZB article

HOME › NEWS › CRIME

# Enforcing rehabilitation on prisoners wouldn't work - expert

NEWS | CRIME

Alicia Burrow, Wed, 18 May 2016, 6:28pm



Tony Robertson in 2006 (NZME).

Asking a probation officer to gauge the explicit feelings of a prisoner and their risk to society, is too much responsibility.

This observation's come in the wake of a government inquiry into how Tony Robertson was managed by government departments, before he raped and murdered Blessie Gotingco.

**LISTEN ABOVE: Devon Polaschek talks to Newstalk ZB reporter Alicia Burrow**

**MORE: New public protection orders could have saved Blessie Gotingco - expert**

The inquiry has found no one but Robertson is to blame for Mrs Gotingco's death, but made 27 recommendations.

One recommendation suggests too much risk assessment lies with probation officers, and if the system's going to stay the way it is, they need more training in psychological techniques.

Professor of Criminal Justice Psychology Devon Polaschek said sex offenders have explicit and complicated feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

She said they are very challenging things for anyone to gauge and perhaps should be left to psychologists.

The inquiry also reveals Tony Robertson refused all rehabilitation, bar one expression of interest to see a psychologist which he eventually received, but he continued to plead his innocence saying he didn't need to be rehabilitated.

The inquiry did recognise that it's difficult for high risk offenders to take part in group therapy because of the risk of an altercation.

Specifically to Mr Robertson, there were concerns over what other inmates might do to him due to his previous convictions.

But Professor Devon Polaschek said even if you could enforce rehabilitation on prisoners in a safe environment, it wouldn't work.

She said people have to want to change themselves, and will reject treatment even more so if they're forced to be there.

She doubts the inquiry's recommendation that rehabilitation earlier in his life will have resulted in a different outcome in this case because it's often not until later in life that a prisoner seeks rehabilitation.

On what laws the parole board could have used to keep Mr Robertson in jail for longer she said she wasn't sure why preventative detention wasn't used, but eluded to his young age of 19 at the time.

However, she noted the Public Protection Order, if it had come in sooner, could have saved Blessie Gotingco's life.

Clinical Psychologist Barry Kirker said a shortage of psychologists means there's a growing waiting list of prisoners to see a psychologist.

The inquiry shows it took 14 months for The Department of Corrections to set up Mr Robertson with regular sessions.

Mr Kirker said he, and his colleagues are responding to letters from inmates wanting help because they're on the waiting list and not being seen.

He said there's a rise in the use of group therapy in prisons, but again, we need psychologists to determine exactly what programme will work for which inmate.

Mr Kirker said some prisoners may attend group therapy without genuine intentions to take something positive from it.

He added some are psychopaths and it may not be the best idea to put them in a room together.

Yesterday Corrections Minister Judith Collins said what is very clear, is that the person responsible for the murder was Tony Robertson, and Tony Robertson alone.

She said he is a determined, vicious killer who's now thankfully in prison for life, on preventative detention.

She admitted that if he had been sentenced to preventative detention, Blessie's death could have been prevented.

But she added that he was only 19 at the time and it would have possibly been the first time a 19 year old had been given preventative detention in New Zealand.

She said there will always be offenders who are beyond rehabilitation, don't want rehabilitation, and all you can do is keep them in prison for life.

On May 22, 2015, Robertson was found guilty of the rape and murder of Mrs Gotingco. He was sentenced in August 2015 to life imprisonment with a minimum period of imprisonment of 24 years for murder, and preventive detention with a minimum period of imprisonment of 10 years for rape.

An appeal by Robertson against the conviction and sentences is outstanding, and scheduled to be heard early next year.



## 6.3 NZ Herald article

Home / New Zealand / Crime

# Corrections 'failing' prisoners and public as lengthy delays for rehabilitation programmes continue



By **Tara Shaskey**

Open Justice multimedia journalist, Taranaki · NZ Herald ·  
21 Oct, 2023 01:00 AM · 10 mins to read

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Blake Hollins-Apiata, who is currently imprisoned at Rimutaka Prison, has experienced a long wait getting into prison treatment programmes.

A teenage offender with alcohol and violence issues sat behind bars, in a cell neighbouring his father's, for more than a year without receiving any rehabilitative treatment.

Blake Hollins-Apiata has been jailed twice in the past 15 months - first for breaking the jaw of a police officer and then for stabbing a boy.

It has been identified that the 19-year-old needs help with serious violence and substance abuse issues but any steps towards his rehabilitation have been thwarted by the lengthy delays inmates are experiencing in accessing the Department of Correction's treatment programmes.

Hollins-Apiata's setback has led to fresh criticisms of a system "failing" both prisoners and the public.

His lawyer Julian Hannam said the teen's case was not uncommon as many young inmates were not getting assistance at an early stage of their sentences, which risked a loss of hope and motivation among them.

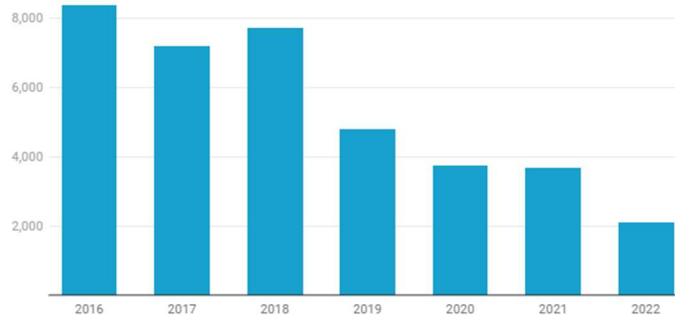
The Parole Board said it was "fundamentally wrong" that Hollins-Apiata has been stalled within the prison system, and a judge has lambasted the Department of Corrections for prisoners' lack of access to rehabilitation programmes.

Former Corrections Minister Kelvin Davis acknowledged, prior to the General Election, that there have been delays and said it was due to the impacts of Covid and subsequent Corrections staffing issues.

He said the programmes were "ramping back up now".

But figures show the number of prisoners in programmes were waning long before Covid hit, and have in fact steadily declined by more than two-thirds since 2016.

## Prisoners in rehabilitation programmes



Data is for the year ending June.

Chart: NZ Herald - Source: Department of Corrections - [Get the data](#) - Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Hollins-Apiata was jailed in July last year for two years and six months for [breaking the jaw of an off-duty police officer](#).

In August, he returned to court from prison for sentencing on a separate matter. He received another jail term, this time of three years and six months, for [stabbing a 15-year-old, and assaulting two other teens, at a party in Taranaki](#).

At the recent sentencing, Hannam told Judge Gregory Hikaka that despite Hollins-Apiata's already lengthy period of incarceration, his youth and identified rehabilitative needs, he had not been able to access any treatment programmes behind the wire.

"None. He has a drug treatment programme coming up, but that has not started and that has of course completely stymied any effort he had to apply for parole," Hannam said.

"Of course, these proceedings played their part as well, but what it shows is the poor resourcing available for our young people in the prison system."

The delay was not unfamiliar to Hannam. Outside of court, he said "100 per cent of the time" he represented a prisoner making their first bid for parole, after having served one-third of their sentence, the offender was still on a waitlist for treatment.

In Hannam's experience, a wait period of at least one year for treatment was standard.

"The issue is months more in custody waiting for later parole board hearings. This is often six to nine months, even for those on three-year or less sentences. This is a massive extra length for a young offender."



Defence lawyer Julian Hannam said, in his experience, there was a standard wait period of at least one year for prisoners to enter programmes.

Hollins-Apiata began somewhat on the back foot. He was monitored for methadone withdrawal at birth and it was still unknown what impact, if any, that has had on his development.

Court documents state his first three years of life were dysfunctional, marred by parental drug and alcohol abuse. He has minimal knowledge of or connection with te ao Māori, and has had little engagement in education, resulting in him leaving school in year 10.

The teen's recidivist and absent father was in and out of prison for much of his childhood, with several of his jail terms being for violence, and earlier this year, in a situation described by Hannam as "peculiar and disturbing", the father and son shared side-by-side cells in the same prison.

The teen has grown to abuse alcohol and while under the influence, his behaviour often turns violent. A cultural report also linked his offending to immaturity and bravado.

But Hollins-Apiata has shown insight into his actions and regret for the "pain and hardship" he has caused.

In a letter he wrote to Judge Hikaka, he spoke of having time to reflect while being locked up and he now had a better understanding of his triggers, with the main one being his drinking.

Through "good, properly directed interventions" in the prison system, and release conditions, Hannam said Hollins-Apiata had an opportunity to modify his behaviour and turn his life around.

At the sentencing, Judge Hikaka expressed concern for the delay the teen had experienced getting into a treatment programme.

"That is hard to understand. Why those rehabilitative options could not be initiated as soon as you got to that environment, particularly given your young age," Judge Hikaka said, adding it was not the first time he had made such a comment on the issue.

"It points to Corrections being in a position to do more than they currently make available, particularly for young people who they detain on behalf of the community at large, and in some respects deals with [the] protection of the public."



Judge Gregory Hikaka expressed concern for the delay Blake Hollins-Apiata has experienced getting into rehabilitation programmes.

The judge said delaying programmes did not help optimise rehabilitation processes, which, in his view, should be a clear focus for anyone incarcerated.

Programmes provided in prison focus on motivation to change, cognitive-behavioural interventions and general skills to help a prisoner return to the community.

Offence-focused programmes include one-on-one psychological treatment with high-risk sexual and violent offenders, for example, and there are intensive programmes and treatment units to assist prisoners with drug and alcohol issues.

On May 4, Hollins-Apiata went before the Parole Board in relation to the jail term he is serving for attacking the police officer.

He was declined parole "given that he has done nothing within the prison environment to address the serious violence or the substance use that contributed to that violence".

But the board knew that wasn't a failing on the teen's behalf.

In its decision, the board said it was “frustrating” Hollins-Apiata had not been able to start on an alcohol and drug treatment programme or the youth programme, which would help him with his violence and substance issues and was stipulated in his sentence plan, while he was awaiting sentence for the latter offending.

“The board agrees that it is fundamentally wrong for a young man who is only 19 years of age to be stalled within the prison system,” the decision stated.

“There is no reason in our view why he cannot get started on a substance abuse programme.”

While Parole Board chairman Sir Ron Young declined NZME’s request for comment on the issue, two years ago he penned a [letter](#) to Davis, raising concerns about prisoners’ lack of access to rehabilitation programmes.



The Parole Board’s Sir Ron Young has previously raised concerns about prisoners’ lack of access to rehabilitation programmes.

In the letter, Young criticised the department and explained the need for significant improvement.

He said in order to be eligible for parole, prisoners have to prove they have undertaken work to reduce the risk they pose to society, which was usually achieved through a treatment programme.

But often this wasn’t happening until late into an inmate’s sentence.

Young blamed inadequate resourcing for the delays which at the time Davis denied.

When approached, before the General Election, about Hollins-Apiata’s case, Davis told NZME that years of managing Covid in prison and the subsequent [staffing challenges](#) faced by Corrections have had an impact on some prison programmes.

“That is ramping back up now, with over 2000 rehabilitation placements in the past financial year, but are yet to recover fully,” he said.

“I expect Corrections to keep working on restoring access to timely rehabilitation as quickly as possible.”

He said rehabilitation was an “incredibly important” part of the prison system and essential to giving people the best shot at reintegrating back into society.

But Corrections’ annual reports show the number of prisoners in treatment programmes has steadily decreased over the past six years.

From July 2015 to June 2016 there were 8372 placements before it decreased by almost half to 4806 over July 2018 to June 2019 and then dropped further to 2086 over July 2021 to June 2022. The prison population recorded at the end of those periods were 9532, 9969, and 7728, respectively.



Former Corrections Minister Kelvin Davis said rehabilitation programmes had been impacted by Covid and Corrections staffing issues. Photo / Mark Mitchell

Before the General Election, National Corrections spokesperson Mark Mitchell said Corrections was under immense staffing pressure and struggling to cope.

He believed the department had suffered a "total failure" of leadership and as a result, both prisoners and the public were being failed.

"It's all very well to set a target to reduce the prison population but we've seen several instances of people leaving prison without proper and adequate rehabilitation and that has had fatal consequences."

Mitchell rejected there was an issue with resourcing, saying he believed it was a priorities problem.

Any Government that was serious about public safety would prioritise rehabilitation, he said.

"Prisons are not just 'universities for crime' as the Government has said, they are a place where we can and should provide effective rehabilitation to make sure the public is kept safe when a sentence ends and a prisoner is released."

While Mitchell said it was unacceptable inmates were waiting a year to enter a programme, Dennis Goodin, Rimutaka Prison direction, told NZME treatment wasn't far off for Hollins-Apiata.

His security classification has been reviewed and decreased since his recent sentencing, opening him up to a greater range of rehabilitation programmes, education and employment activities.



National Corrections spokesperson Mark Mitchell said the Department of Corrections had suffered a total failure of leadership. Photo / Mark Mitchell

"Case Management staff have met with him this week [ending September 3] to talk about a suitable pathway, and we are completing referrals."

Goodin acknowledged Corrections has a duty of care to people in prison – not only to keep them safe and well but also to give them every opportunity to turn their lives around.

He said every effort was made to provide rehabilitation treatment to inmates before their release date, or first parole hearing.

This, however, was a complex exercise, he said.

“Participants need to be suitable for the intervention, motivated to participate, and located in the right place, and we need to balance parole eligibility dates with the capacity of the units where services are provided as well as the staff that are available to provide that service.”

Goodin said a number of factors determine when people in prison attend a programme.

Individuals were assessed with respect to their risk of reoffending and their treatment needs. If they meet the eligibility criteria for a particular programme, they were placed on the National Service List, which operates like a queue, to await a space.

Those eligible, who have an identified treatment need, were prioritised in the first instance by their parole eligibility date.

But not everyone eligible for treatment was considered ready to begin, Goodin said.

“A person’s low level of motivation may also need to be addressed prior to them being considered suitable for engagement in treatment.”

Other considerations can include security classification, and whether the prisoner is segregated or in the mainstream prison population.

“Provided people in prison are eligible and have expressed motivation to complete the programme, they are routinely provided with an opportunity to take part in a programme prior to their parole eligibility date.”

**Tara Shaskey joined NZME in 2022 as a news director and Open Justice reporter. She has been a reporter since 2014 and previously worked at Stuff where she covered crime and justice, arts and entertainment, and Māori issues.**

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