

Changes in the Criminal Justice Sector- what do they mean to us?

(all data is based on Ministry of Justice 2011 Justice Sector Forecast)

It is the duty of those who wish to respond with services such as those that PFNZ offer to the criminal justice and social services sector, to study the intermediate and long term trends within the sector and consider how these may impact the future direction we may take to fulfil our Vision and Mission.

This year has seen a stark change in the data presented in the Justice Sector forecast and it is this degree of change to the information that challenges all of us.

Does being “tough on crime” work ?

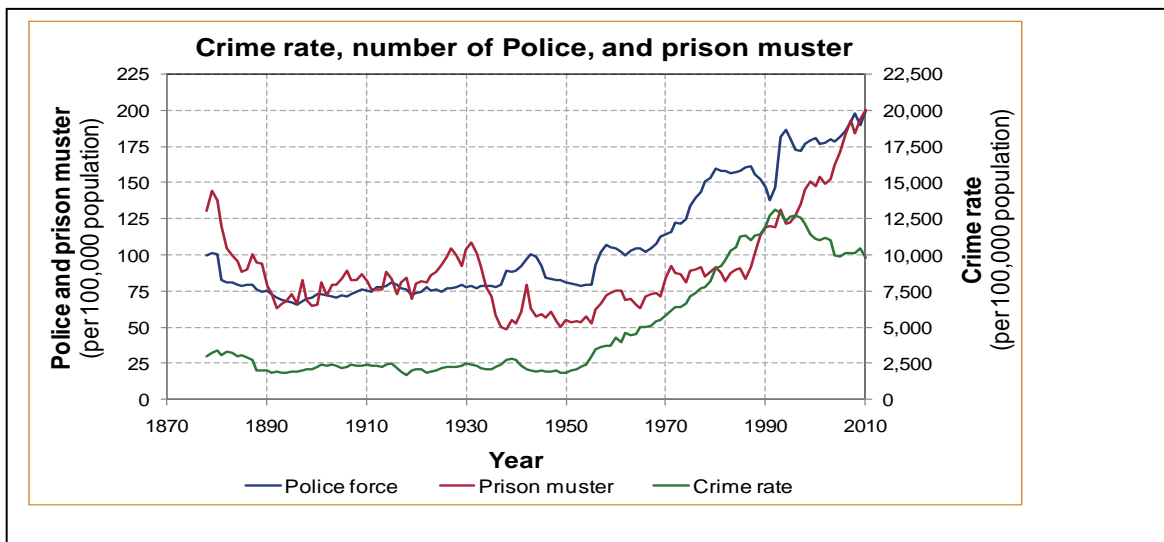
Throughout the Western world there have been a common set of criminal justice policies in place for the last 25-30 years which in New Zealand have resulted in the following trends:

The recorded crime rate leapt from the 1950s to peak in 1992; but noticeably has been declining since then;

Since the 1950s the per capita number of sworn Police has more than doubled, and now has started to level off

Our imprisonment rate has more than doubled since the 1980s due to pressure to remove offenders from society due to penal attitudes in the population.

What we have known for a long time is that there is no direct or indirect correlation between the crime rate and the prison muster, so being tough on crime has not reduced the crime rate, but it is likely that better and more intensive policing has.



What does this mean for the future- to reduce the prison muster as per our long term goal we need to

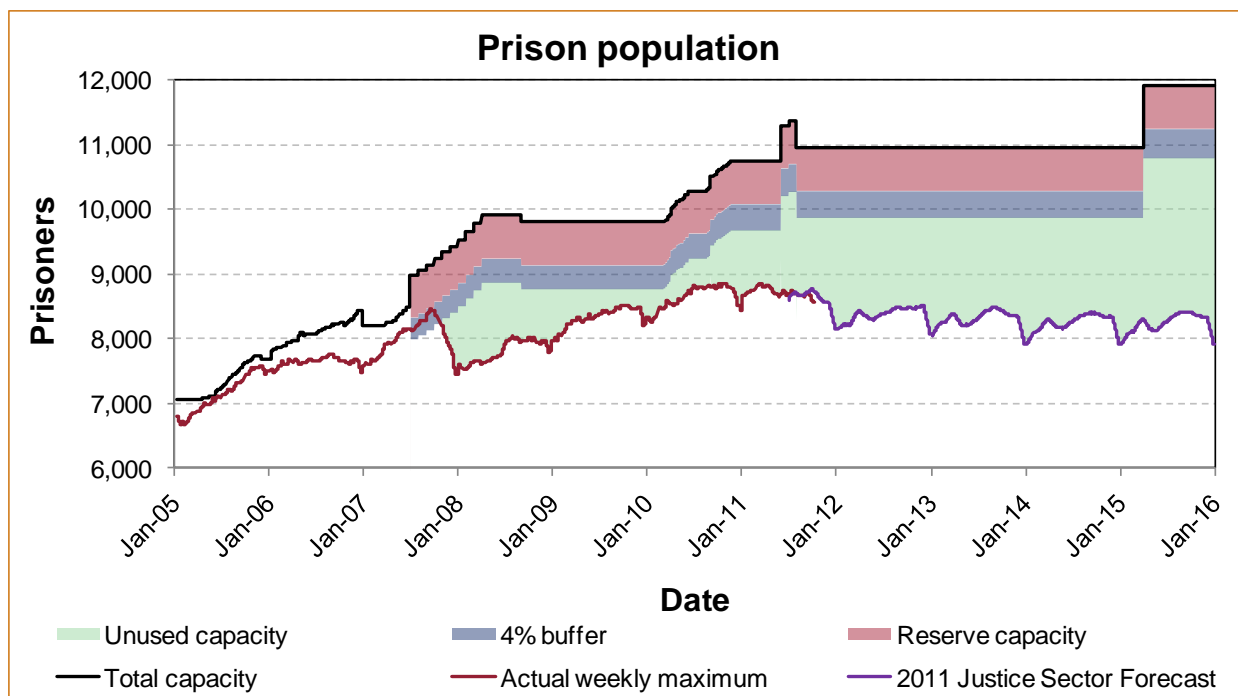
- Change sentencing policies, in particular to show that short term sentences are a complete waste of time and resource
- Reduce recidivism by innovative means and active community involvement
- Work on those long term social policies that address the root cause of offending

What is the latest prison muster forecast ?

The latest forecasts shows for the first time since the new model was used in 1995 a fall in both remand and sentenced prisoners for the next ten years.

Fiscal year	Remand population		Sentenced population	
	Numbers	Annual change	Numbers	Annual change
2010-2011 (actual)	1,867	-2.8%	6,841	0.1%
2011-2012	1,824	-2.3%	6,559	-4.1%
2012-2013	1,814	-0.5%	6,497	-1.0%
2013-2014	1,827	0.7%	6,435	-1.0%
2014-2015	1,819	-0.4%	6,447	0.2%
2015-2016	1,807	-0.7%	6,466	0.3%
2016-2017	1,787	-1.1%	6,452	-0.2%
2017-2018	1,778	-0.5%	6,443	-0.1%
2018-2019	1,762	-0.9%	6,443	0.0%
2019-2020	1,749	-0.7%	6,437	-0.1%
2020-2021	1,729	-1.1%	6,436	0.0%

The impact of this can be seen immediately on prison capacity projections in the following graph. If the proposed Wiri Prison was built Corrections would have capacity for over 11,900 prisoners at a time when it is projected that the total muster would be some 8273! Even existing capacity shows a substantial operating reserve margin which could probably be trimmed somewhat with no adverse risks.



What could be the impact of this fall on our service requirements ?

- We may have to plan for some prisons closing entirely or certain wings being closed- this could put local pressure on families of prisoners visiting plans and costs
- There could be reorganisation of capacity types in prisons or more movement of prisoners, again putting pressure on families and increasing the complexity of keeping track of inmates receiving our services.

If prison numbers fall what other sentences are people receiving ?

There has been less imposition of fines by courts over the last few years so this is being translated into other sentence types which are forecast as:

Fiscal year	Community Work*	Supervision	Intensive Supervision	Community Detention	Home Detention	Total
2010-2011 (actual)	41,483	11,143	2,675	5,492	3,631	64,424
2011-2012	41,463	11,738	2,504	4,996	2,919	63,620
2012-2013	41,939	12,143	2,456	5,023	2,825	64,386
2013-2014	42,319	12,294	2,406	5,255	2,725	64,999
2014-2015	42,841	12,379	2,347	5,401	2,587	65,555

Nb most of these sentences are for less than a year

Where offenders do not complete these sentences they may end up in prison instead on a short term sentence. As these have no proven value it is important that society knows that these types of sentence will work and deter people from active involvement in crime.

So what should we consider doing in this important area for the future:

- Persuade Churches and Christian social service agencies to consider providing support services such as appropriate rehabilitation and integration courses to offenders on community orders?
- Provide Restorative Justice services in community settings such as Sycamore Tree programmes?
- Communicating effectively that prison is not a desirable place to end up in?

What are some of the more challenging trends ?

There are 2 key trends that require us to think about for the future management of services:

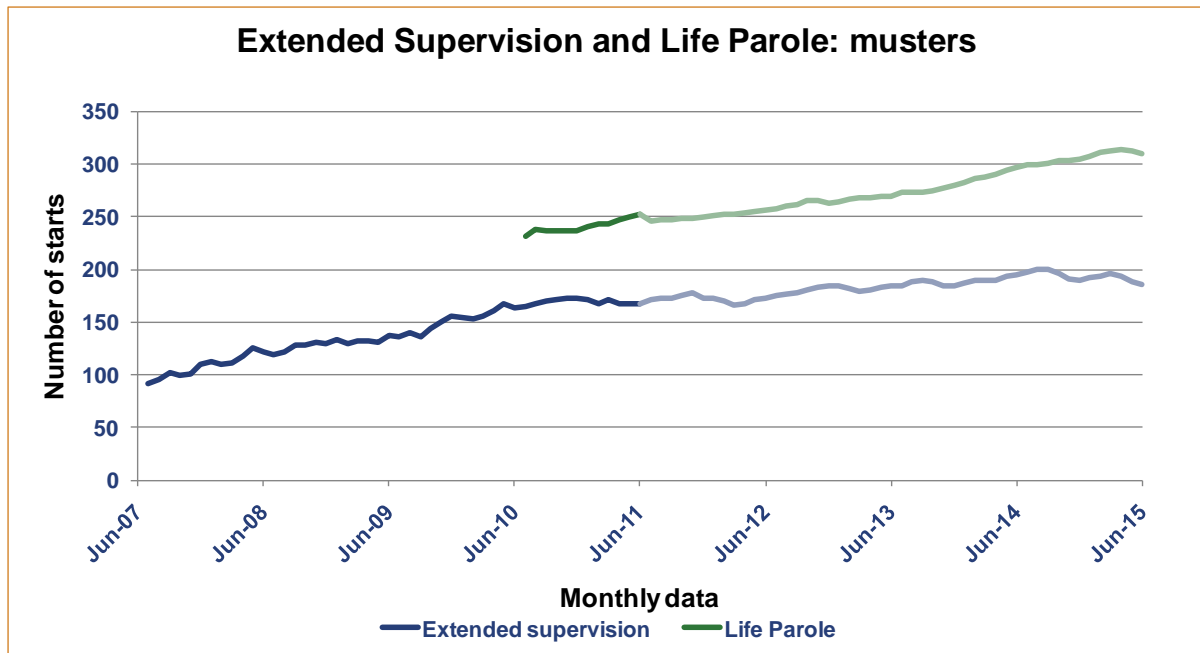
A: The growing muster of those on life parole and extended supervision

This is a long term management issue which has implications for the Probation Service, the individuals concerned and the communities in which they are permitted to live and work.

Such individuals often have severe limitations on their area of residence, the type of people they associate with, reporting requirements etc that make it very difficult for them to live any kind of normal life.

The sort of initiatives that might need to be examined may be:

- Long term semi -secure accommodation for a number of these people
- A range of work opportunities that can be performed at such accommodation
- Social integration opportunities by churches and other community groups



B. The age of the offending population

We know that over time the average age of the NZ population will increase and the corresponding effect is that we will get an ageing prison population. Ostensibly this could mean:

- More offenders ending their days in prison
- More break ups of familial relationships or a delay in their formation
- The number of children under 18 of prisoners decreasing
- More aged care requirements in prisons
- Ex prisoners even less likely to adopt new skills and find jobs on release

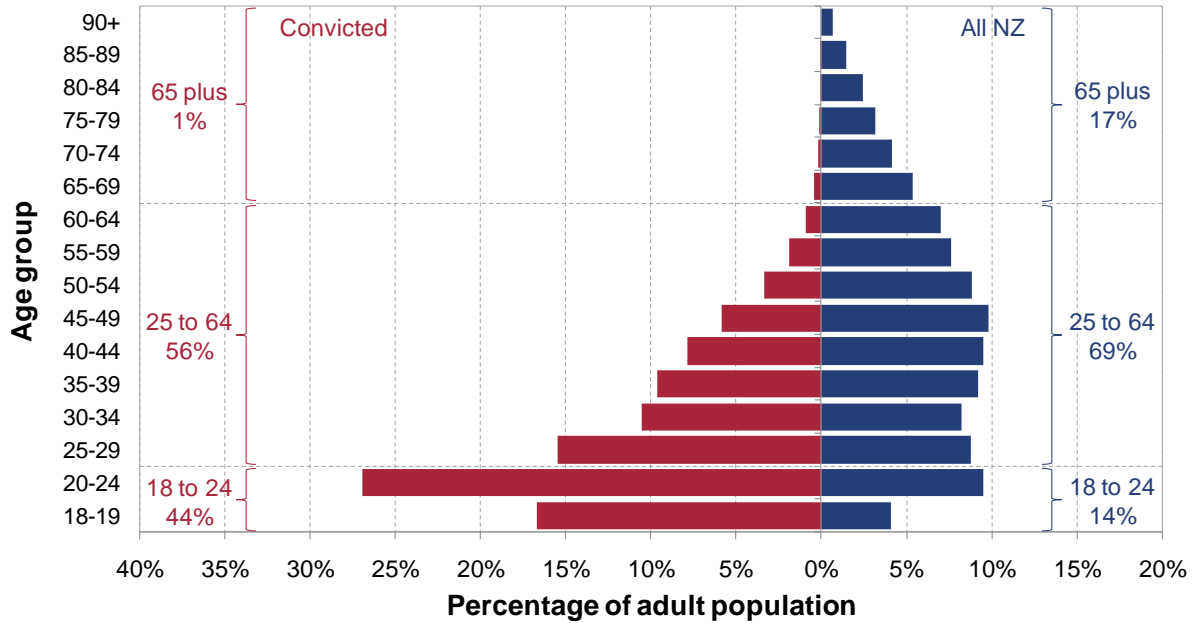
This begs some major questions over the suitability of our current prisons to house people with age related infirmities in dignity, and the correct societal response to this issue as there must come a time when such people are no longer a threat to society at large, thus prison is a very expensive option to adopt.

As a service provider should we be:

- Advocating for an upper age limit on people going to prison?
- Insisting on more appropriate age related alternatives to existing prisons?
- Teaching more about relationship issues to prisoners?

Demographic structure: Age comparison

Year: 2010



What do you think?

What changes do you think PFNZ and its supporters in churches and community groups should make to its services for the future to meet these changing needs of our criminal justice system?

Let us know at director@pfnz.org.nz