

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASHLEY YOUTH DETENTION CENTRE MET AT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 45-47 PIPTEA ST, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND ON MONDAY 21 MAY 2007.

DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:
Mr LEO TROMPETTER, SENIOR ADVISER.

(We are only guessing what is happening here. According to the tape numbering and following on in sequence, this should be either the Youth Court or Mission for Youth, but it sounds, from the sense of it, as if we have moved straight into Education. There is no indication, either on the tape or on the cassette box, who is speaking and what they represent. I am assuming, if it is education, the main witness is Mr Leo Trompetter. The female witness is identified only as "Megan").

Mr TROMPETTER - I guess probably where we should start is to get a sense of what your brief is, why it is that you are coming here and what you would like to know from an educational perspective.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Basically this is a select committee, which has been raised in the upper House of our Parliament. We are looking at youth justice and detention. We only have one youth detention centre in our State and there have been some issues there. We have four terms of reference and we are looking at the adequacy of the Youth Justice Act and education and training for residents, so I suppose that is where the focus is. We have taken a lot of evidence and we have been to Melbourne and Adelaide and looked at what they do in those areas. Quite clearly, what is happening in our detention centre is quite inadequate at this stage. No doubt that is why we have slotted in to speak to your good selves.

Mr WILKINSON - With our education, there is a school within Ashley and it hands out about 10-15 hours of education a week to most inmates. Others have about 30 hours. They are saying they make up the other hours by things such as playing football and engaging in other areas of expertise. I don't think it does; I don't think any of us think it does. They did have divisions within the education system which had people learning woodwork and other skills that they wanted to achieve for when they got out of custody. A lot of that was voluntary. There were some problems in relation to one person especially in the woodwork area - someone was hit and fell and cracked his face on a vice and broke his jaw - and now that has been closed down completely. There are other areas around different States - metalwork, woodwork and other trades - to assist them when they get out. I think there is a big scope for us to completely revamp our education system. New Zealand was mentioned as an ideal place to look at because New Zealand and Canada were said to be the best in the world.

Mr TROMPETTER - There has certainly been significant work done in the area in terms of providing education, care and protection and Youth Justice sentences in New Zealand. We can talk about that a little bit as we go along. I also brought Megan along because when I heard of your visit, only the other day, I took a broader look at it in terms of our at-risk population. Hence, I have asked Megan to be a part of this meeting as well because she is the queen of alternative education. She looks after it all around the

country. Megan may like to talk briefly about what alternative education in New Zealand looks like. I would imagine that a lot of kids who are currently in alternative programs are those ones who are not managing in our schools and probably have quite a high likelihood of offending or have already been involved with the law in one way or another.

I also looked at another at-risk area, which is an area that I look after and that is our team-parent units. These are our young mums and dads who have a child or the mother is pregnant and has dropped out of the education system and therefore they go down this slippery path and don't stay engaged. Then we have our care and protection - Child, Youth and Family - and for all sorts of various reasons where it is not safe for them to live in their homes or with their care-givers. They are taken out for a period of time until some stable plan is able to be put in place for them.

Then we have our Youth Justice centres around the country - we have seven or eight of those. They are of course for those young people who have gone to court and are on remand. It is compulsory for anyone under the age of 16 in New Zealand to receive free state education and that is where we come in. We have to ensure that they are getting good quality education, equal to that that anyone in the mainstream would receive. That has been problematic and it is nice to hear where you are at. You are saying that education is about 10 hours a week and maybe some of the programs are a wee bit shoddy or maybe not really meeting their needs to integrate them back into society and to re-engage them, or just to keep those level of motivation again or see that there is value and lifelong learning for them. It became problematic - and it may do in your situation, too - because on one level we have Child, Youth and Family and they have a mandate and rules and regulations and then we have the Ministry of Education and we have all our rules and regulations about how we work and what information we can share.

I had a workshop the other day with all the principals of the schools and the Child, Youth and Family practice managers looking at what an ideal model looked like. We were looking at things like access, engagement, implementation, planning, interventions, follow up, monitoring, transitions - such as coming back out the other side and into something that is worthwhile, not just back onto the pathway to decline. We were looking at what that would look like.

I am really confident and quite glad to say that now I think in our country we have a much better working relationship where there are regular meetings going on. We are trying to marry the two plans where Child, Youth and Family will have an individual care plan and we would have an individual education plan. In actual fact, both of them are very similar and they have similar information. What we are trying to do is join these up so that we have, for want of a better word because we haven't come up with a name yet, an integrated plan for that young person. We are working on that and there is a lot of sharing and people saying, 'That's a really good idea'. There are all these other little protocols like grievance and complaint processes. I still have stuff going through legal here. We are following the same pathway. I guess the other bit too is that because we are long, skinny little country, programs vary from top to bottom and they are all different. Relationships are often different, too. If you have managers at a level like Child, Youth and Family and in a school, that relationship is not going to work for all the staff because it is a hard job. It is not easy coping with these young people.

Mrs JAMIESON - Was this just an interagency decision to be more holistic in your inter-government approach?

Mr TROMPETTER - Yes. The program has been ongoing for a good four or five years. We are now getting some good traction with it and I think we are seeing the results. As I said, five years ago there was nothing happening. It was a bit like, 'We do our little bit of the job over here from 9 until 3. Those people in Education do that in that room over there and we really don't care as long as they are not over here in residence'. But now we have joined-up programs where the residential workers are in the classroom. The supervisors are in classrooms with these young people and we even have some of our educational staff sharing after-school programs. A lot of work has gone on there, but it has probably come from a national level.

MEGAN - Do you want to talk about some of the different models that we use, such as the creative learning scheme and how that is set up, as opposed to down in the south island where we have one school which is different.

Mr TROMPETTER -Yes, it differs. Up in Auckland we contract a provider - Megan mentioned it was called a creative learning scheme - and they run a whole lot of different programs for at-risk young people, and also ordinary training programs. We contract them so it's not an actual school, whereas down south we have what we call Kingsley School and it manages a Youth Justice centre, a care-and protection centre and also a care-and protection, which we call Buka Tai (??), down in Dunedin. We also have a contracted provider out here at Te Puni. They have a care-and-protection unit and a severe conduct disorder unit.

MEGAN - It would be fair to say that we struggle with differences between having registered schools versus using community providers. We have an education act that says really clearly that if you are under the age of 16 you have to be in a registered school. There is also another little bit in the act that says in certain circumstances children can be exempted, for example if they are in the Child, Youth and Family and that type of thing. One of the issues that we grapple with is what that means if you are a registered school - for example, staff have to be registered teachers, you have to have met certain competencies, you are covered by a collective employment agreement. What that means when we use outside providers is that we have to go through everything from police checks through to what kind of competencies they have in teaching students -

Mr TROMPETTER - I think you also have to consider some of the programs they bring in as well. Having travelled to one in our south island, I can tell you that when you walk in you get a very real sense of it being a school. Whereas, if you go to another program where there is possibly a provider, they are a little bit looser; they might be more vocational. That is not to say that they are not doing as well, it is just that some of the programming is different because of some of the skills that the staff bring in.

MEGAN - We have a national qualifications framework and one of the things that the ministry really pushes for senior students - regardless of whether they are in our Youth Justice setting, the Child, Youth and Family setting or a registered school - is that we expect them to be getting credits towards different qualifications. There is some debacle around NCA, which is our main school qualification, but the whole thing about the framework is that you can be doing, say, Shakespeare for literacy but there are also lots

of other ways of getting into literacy. So one of the things that all providers have to do is make sure that what they are teaching means that students can be hooking onto the framework so that there is some kind of continuity and that when they leave they are not leaving saying, 'Oh, I did a bit of this and a bit of that'. They will have some kind of recognised competencies for what they have been doing while they were in there.

Mr TROMPETTER - So there is a recorded learning, which all those students will go away with. Particularly with our contracted providers, there is a requirement that each student gains so many credits. Each week they must at least obtain one credit.

MEGAN - One of the things that is helpful for us in this setting is that we have a national correspondence school called, surprisingly, the Correspondence School. They have a notional roll of around 13 000 - some of those will be full-time, some part-time. For example, for some of our students who are in the Justice setting, they can access papers from Correspondence School which front-line teachers in these settings do not have the skills to do - year 14 Calculus or something like that. They can still hook in to getting the resources they need and that is one thing that has been quite useful.

CHAIR - What sort of percentage do that?

Mr TROMPETTER - Not a huge percentage. It would be fair to say that a lot of our young people who are in there are not at that level. For example, in order to engage and motivate a young person - and this is where it is really good - early assessment is done to what we are working on now and there is this joined-up plan right at the point of entry of that young person. That hasn't always been the case. Quite often the teaching staff say, 'We've gone in the next day and suddenly there's a young person here and they have arrived with very little information'.

Mr MARTIN - For a school-age young person in detention, typically, how much schooling do they have in a week?

Mr TROMPETTER - The minimum requirement is four hours per day, so that is 20 hours per week. That is contact with a teacher, so it is four hours of actual instruction. That is not including their breaks and lunch break. In New Zealand in our settings the residential staff take over during their lunch breaks and other breaks. I am not quite sure why that happens but it is just one of those things that does. I might add that has caused a little bit of angst.

Moving on to a related matter, supervision - and I know that that is coming up as a mission for us and I guess it is something that maybe the ministry will have to work on or I am going to have to start pushing or finding out about. During our school holiday breaks there is a bone of contention for our residential staff or Child, Youth and Family staff because of the six weeks over our Christmas break - and there are another three two-week periods. I can see what the issue is because young people don't stop coming in to these centres. If they arrived at the beginning of Christmas, the holiday break, they are going to have six weeks in which there is no education structure.

CHAIR - Who provides the funding? Is the Ministry of Justice or Education?

Mr TROMPETTER - At the moment, in any of those holidays programs, it will be coming out of the Ministry of Justice or Child, Youth and Family.

CHAIR - But for the normal teachers it comes out of Education?

Mr TROMPETTER - It comes out of the Education department, yes.

Mr WILKINSON - With that 20 hours, is that just literacy, numeracy and history or, alternatively, can it be woodwork or metalwork?

Mr TROMPETTER - It could include any of those and electrical, mechanics as well.

Mr MARTIN - Recreation?

Mr TROMPETTER - And recreation. It would include all of that.

Mrs JAMIESON - How much would they do with computers?

Mr TROMPETTER - Again, it would depend on the various settings. I know that in all of our settings a lot of it is computer-assisted. They are very well decked out. I believe you are going to visit some of these centres. You are visiting Lower North Palmerston - that is not your best example. It is very sad, awful-looking. When I walked in I thought, 'How you can motivate young people in this environment, I don't know'. I have worked with at-risk people in the past and I thought, 'I wouldn't like to work in here'.

Mr MARTIN - I think it has been explained to us that we are seeing the worst and the best.

CHAIR - We are going to Christchurch on Wednesday.

Mr TROMPETTER - Christchurch - if you get to meet the principal you will find that she manages a centre in the middle of Christchurch. Then we have Rolleston and also at Dunedin. It is a beautiful setting, a brand-new residence, very well designed - it is totally different. You go into the classroom and it has absolutely beautiful furniture, it is all carpeted. You can get a cup of coffee because they have a coffee bar, barista, that they have accessed out of their STAR funding money, which is another sort of administrative funding. It is decked out with a leather lounge suite, little stools and a beautiful coffee-making machine.

Mr WILKINSON - How do the detainees accept that? Obviously they think it is okay. Do they damage it at all?

Mr TROMPETTER - No, they absolutely respect it. When I went in there the young people were engaged. Their classrooms are bright and airy and the teachers are very professional. There is good interaction going on - good structure, good routines. It is really spot-on. That is not to say that Lower North is not; it just has a facility for people - to work in these settings you have to be passionate.

Mr MARTIN - So the inconsistency is purely because of the buildings?

Mr TROMPETTER - Buildings - and it would be fair to say some relationship stuff as well.

Mr WILKINSON - Have you done any recidivism stats as to the people who come out of Palmerston North - an area that you say is drab and with no motivation, as soon as you go in you wonder when you are going to get out - as opposed to Christchurch?

Mr TROMPETTER - I have been asking exactly the same question. I am fairly new to this position and I have been asking that question. I have asked it of the principals, a couple of whom I have known over the years. I said, 'So tell me, what happened to all those kids?' I know that down in Christchurch we have had about 300 young people cycle through those centres. I said, 'Where do they all go?', because they are about 14 or 15. The thing is we don't have as yet a good tracking system. This is again why we are really working hard at this level now on transitions. If those young people, once they leave that school, move back into the community and no school has been set up for them, there is four or five weeks that that young person is gone again and you have undone all the good work.

Mr WILKINSON - Is it a fair recommendation, just listening to what people have been saying, the time in custody is one and then, as you say, there is that transition period after you leave, there should be some care and control taken by the authorities after that, shouldn't there? Should there then be another stage after that transition, say you have the custodial period, the transition period - let us say six months here, six months transition and six months something else - just to not have the same concentrated transition?

Mr TROMPETTER - If you get that model going over in Tasmania, I will be over there to say, 'Well done'.

Mr WILKINSON - So how do you do it?

Mr TROMPETTER - I think you spent some time with Rob Handyside today.

Mr WILKINSON - I was talking to him about that same system.

Mr TROMPETTER - That is part of the program. Rob and I and a few others have been doing some work on that model. Basically, if it went absolutely perfectly, there would be three months 24/7 supervision in a residence and then three months of partial supervision and some community school contact, but still very closely monitored, and then another three months totally immersed in the community and with your family. It could be longer; it could be six months at the first stage if they don't progress through. It is on a proving self-basis. You would have to manage that first though, which makes sense rather than saying, 'You have just had three months'. It is all monitored, but even that last stage is monitored with support in the community, not only for the young person but also for the school, the family or caregiver or other mentors who might be out there. That will have all been thought about at the very beginning. This is a three-year pilot program. We have no young people in there yet. I think our first one might be coming in about two or three weeks. We are just waiting for a judge to find one who will go there. The young person does have to consent as well.

Mrs JAMIESON - Within that scheme would you have the capacity to also flag other children in the family who may be at risk?

Mr TROMPETTER - That would be very possible.

CHAIR - Has this model been tried anywhere else in the world?

Mr TROMPETTER - I am not sure. It is a multi-systemic therapy kind of program. They have a severe conduct disorder one out at Te Puni. That has a similar transition program. An evaluation of that program is occurring at the moment. There certainly has been a lot of discussion. Some people are saying it is doing them well and other people are saying it isn't. The thing is they only have four young people in this program and it is hugely expensive. Again, and this is probably my own opinion, there is a lot of relationship stuff going on there because you have so many people involved. There will be this agency here, a Health agency there, Child, Youth and Family. We are not just working with two groups; we are working with multi-agencies. To get them all integrated and working at the same speed and agreeing to the same philosophy is really difficult.

Mr WILKINSON - Can I work through that with you? Say, I am 14 and I go into custody for motor vehicle stealing. I go through the detainee period of three months, let us say, and then I have a three-month period where I remain in that detention centre. Do I go out to the school in my area? What happens with that transition period?

Mr TROMPETTER - With this new pilot, that would be where you are going to have that system where they can go out to a school but then maybe in the evening they come back to the residence. That will work in Te Puni - there is not a lock-up. They do have 24-hour supervision but there are no lock-ups; they could abscond if they really wanted to. We don't know how that is going to work. The neighbours, as you can imagine, have been protesting for some years. The best that they could do on the opening day, about a fortnight ago, was to start their lawn mowers and get out their chainsaws.

Mrs JAMIESON - So this is right in town then, is it?

Mr TROMPETTER - Just on the outskirts of Hamilton. It is a very nice area with lovely grounds. The residents are way back away from it.

Mr WILKINSON - Are the people that you put there going to be motivated enough -

Mr TROMPETTER - The assessment will be very thorough. Those young people will have consented to be there.

Mr WILKINSON - Getting back to that detention place, whatever it might be, which is probably a half-way house, for that three-month period, they will have a curfew and indoors between 7 p.m. through to 7 a.m. the following morning until they then go out to the school. They finish that three months and then what happens to them?

Mr TROMPETTER - Right from the point of entry the family - or caregivers or mentors - are a part of the program also right from the beginning, which is why any young person who is on the program must live within 100 kilometres of it, so there will be easy access. There is therapy around that, parent training - all of that will be going on right from the very early stage.

Mr WILKINSON - Will that involve the detainee as well?

Mr TROMPETTER - Yes.

Mr WILKINSON - At which stage?

Mr TROMPETTER - Right at the very beginning.

Mr WILKINSON - So they will have to go to the detainee centre to get that training as well?

Mr TROMPETTER - That is right. Those people must agree to that.

Mr WILKINSON - I suppose it is like a personal program. If you are doing a gym program, it has to be personal to the individual. So each one has to agree with that individual program?

Mr TROMPETTER - That's right.

Mr WILKINSON - And that program can vary from individual to individual.

Mr TROMPETTER - Which is why, I guess, they are starting with only five young people initially. Once those five move on then other young people can take their place at the beginning.

Mr WILKINSON - That is the second three-month period. What about the final three-month period?

Mr TROMPETTER - We are right out in the community full time.

Mr WILKINSON - But the kid is only 14 still, nearly his 15th birthday, and he would be back in school. It may be a different school to the one he has done his three-month transition in, so he is out into his own school

Mr TROMPETTER - Yes.

(End of tape)

(Mr Trompetter continuing on new tape)

The Ministry of Justice has funded a psychologist to do all of the assessments and the transition plans. So we have that as well as a full-time teacher, as well as young youth workers. They will all be working around that young person and will actually support that person back at school on that third section.

CHAIR - In relation to that have you gone into the sporting arena and the arts arena, for example? Do you pick up, let's say, the New Zealand cricket team? Let's get Greg Hall to see whether he can be involved in mentoring this young rugby team. Have you done that; have you talked with those sorts of people?

Mr TROMPETTER - We have had lots of experimental programs in New Zealand where we took them out into the wilderness with army-like programs. We researched those very thoroughly and clearly and they do not work. They can sometimes have a very

short-term impact for something like three months, but there is no long-term impact at all - the research has been clear about that. But we still have proponents of that type of course who say, 'No, we need this hard boot camp approach.'

Mrs JAMIESON - Do you think it isn't working because there is no follow-up?

MEGAN - It's an artificial environment. We should talk about this notion of resilience: how do we build up the resilience of students who have had all kinds of things happen to them. How do we build that resilience so that when they come up to some issue again, they have it within themselves to know what choices to make? What often happens is with short-term courses is that they rely on the people on the course, instead of actually saying themselves, 'This is the way forward.' That is why all these things should have a good, strong educational focus. If kids can't read and can't do basic maths, it doesn't matter how excited they are about something, there will be huge challenges down the track

Mr MARTIN - This Moriarty Program, can you tell me what it is and why it has worked?

Mr TROMPETTER - The program is reasonably new but Jim Moriarty has been around for a long time. He now has a kind of dance-drama program and it is based on elements of self-discipline, hard work and self-esteem and at the end of it there is an amazing production from these young people who are talking about the stories of their lives.

CHAIR - It seems to me that these things are good as long as there is follow-up. Do you endeavour to link those kids with a group leader or a group of individuals whom they are able to go back to because they are not suddenly going to throw away the book and know everything? It has only been six months or nine months and they will still need assistance. It is probably going to take them a couple of years to get that resilience that you are after. Can you link them with an arts group or a sporting team or whatever they are interested in?

Mr TROMPETTER - I believe that there needs to be, right at the beginning of any program of residential placement, a very clear plan with the very best assistance. That is actually beginning to take place. We are not only looking at what the educational needs are, but also at the social needs and the extra-curricular after-school activities. That is why the drama is fantastic. If that lights the fire and motivates them to go on, we have achieved something and will reduce their offending, which is what we want to do. We are not talking about huge numbers of young people, but it is actually about getting it right. I did have one of the principals ring me and ask me what I knew about the Moriarty Program because a young girl who was being moved from one of the residences was being put on this program and she was extremely bright - she had won some Australasian maths award. The principal was really concerned that she was being taken away totally from academic sort of stuff, and felt that this program probably wouldn't benefit her.

Mrs JAMIESON - Going on to assessments, how many of your young people are actually assessed for, say, intellectual disability, mental health problems, acquired brain damage, before they are sifted off.

Mr TROMPETTER - Not all of them would be.

Mrs JAMIESON - Have you any idea how many may have a problem other than just being naughty kids?

Mr TROMPETTER - Well, figures are bandied around.

Mr MARTIN - I want to ask you about the Young People at Risk programs.

MEGAN - I have brought some documentation which includes websites, which might be a help. We have a program called Alternative Education, which has 1 800 places around the country for 13- to 15-year-olds, so it is in the compulsory education sector.

Mr MARTIN - Is this coming out of the Young Offender Strategy?

MEGAN - No, it has been around for a lot longer than that. Basically this is for kids who, for a variety of reasons, are what we would call alienated. They have been out of school for more than 20 weeks or they have had multiple suspensions. Schools go through a very prescribed process to rid themselves of a student. Because they are under 16, they have to be enrolled in a school, but they are enrolled for the purposes of alternative education. The majority of the time schools will use outside providers and one of the outside providers used in Auckland also runs the Youth Justice Resource Team. The ministry allocates to schools a certain number of places which have a certain figure - \$11 000 - attached. The schools in that area will work with the main school to decide which kids are going into the program, for how long and which providers they will use. For example, in the Hawkes Bay area, which has two big towns but is mostly rural with lots of unemployment and the problems associated with that, they have one school that has 100 places, so students from all over the area will come to the school, which has five different providers with different skills. One particular provider does agricultural stuff, which tries to direct the kids into a vocational line; another has a particular Maori framework, so they do a lot of cultural things, such as language. There is also a straight academic provider. I can't remember what the other two are. The whole purpose is to have students stay there for a while then ship back into school. If the school won't take them back, it is up to the ministry to have discussions with the schools.

Mr TROMPETTER - We have education assessments for those young people who are going up to conferences (?). Then there is the response fund. This is very new. It just came in at the beginning of this year. Quite a few of our schools are saying, 'We can't cope with these young people. They are too bad; they are causing chaos in our classrooms hitting kids and brandishing knives.' So we have this fund which principals can now say, 'These are the services I need; I need some dollars and some time to get a really good plan around a young person.'

MEGAN - It is not long-term funding; it is only initial funding up to a month or so. It is an interim measure to keep things away from crisis time, so that some good planning can take place.

CHAIR - Just getting back to that pilot program, that three-dimensional program: what if the home situation was really very difficult, have you thought that if that kid went back into his family, he would immediately be at risk again?

Mr TROMPETTER - I guess that is where evaluation and monitoring has got to be taken all the way along. If Mum and Dad or the caregivers still have drug issues and what have you, we judge that that young person is not going to be safe. So there has to be some ongoing assessment; it might be someone within the wider family that might take on the role.

CHAIR - Are the indigenous population treated any differently? Are there special programs available for these children?

Mr TROMPETTER - We don't seem to segregate, in fact we have more a joined up program to cater for all cultures. Although, as we well know, we have a far higher percentage of Pacific Islander and Maori youngsters in the youth justice system, and I guess sometimes, in terms of the programs we are running that would be a big factor - for example, most of the programs would be culturally appropriate. With the pilot program, there is a cultural adviser attached to the whole program, so this is something that has been identified. That is something we don't have in a lot of our other centres.

Mr WILKINSON - Would it be fair to say that there is no fix that can fix everybody?

Mr TROMPETTER - Yes. I still believe there needs to be a variety, just as we have a wonderful variety of different kinds of schools in New Zealand so that people have choices. As long as we can afford the luxury of that, that is a great trend. In the past programs depended on those who ran the programs and when they left, the program fell over because the passion had disappeared.

(Break in tape then the MEGAN witness is in the middle of a sentence)

MEGAN - That effectively means that I manage some 1 500 staff throughout the country. We have 76 sites, eight residences and all the youth justice services. As far as the residences are concerned, I have a very effective manager in this area. His title is Manager in Chief of Services, and he actually manages the support to front line workers, which includes the national programs for kids with high and complex needs - so all those services which cannot effectively be run out on the front line because they are a national program or there is another agency that is interfacing with them, Ken manages that.

A framework for our residential services is defined in our legislation, the Children and Young Persons and their Families Act and the residential care regulations, and it requires the provision of services and programs for a range of young people's needs. We have a national admission system in place and all admissions are sourced through the Youth Court. These are young people being remanded and awaiting disposition or sentenced to a supervision with residence order. The order requires three month's detention (mobile phone interrupted and break in tape)

They could get sentenced to a supervision with residence order and that requires detention for three months with a provision for one month's remission so they can get out in two months, and then a community supervision order of six months. Currently there is a bill before the Parliament which proposes extending the supervision with residence order to six months, followed by community supervision for 12 months.

Education is provided on site through the Ministry of Education and the curriculum has literacy and numeracy as core subjects, together with additional subjects. Kids can go through the national qualifications framework while they are in there. Some of those kids do well and are incredibly proud of their achievements while they are in there. We have core school hours of 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There are after-hours programs that we run, which are a little bit different; they are programs rather than courses. It is all about keeping the kids motivated.

We have three youth justice residences in the country, one in Auckland, one in Palmerston North and one in Christchurch, two of which you will visit. We were really lucky with those facilities. They were all gifts during the development of our services strategy in 1966, which we have since updated in 2003. The Palmerston North one was the first of the new developments and the one in Christchurch was the last of them, so you are going to see the first and last off the blocks.

CHAIR - I thought we were told earlier that there were eight in the country.

MEGAN - There are, but they are not all youth justice residences. I have these three youth justice residences and I have a further one in Christchurch, which is a residential facility for youths who have been sexually abused. The others are care and protection residences, not youth justice. They are for young people whose behaviour is such that they cannot live at home - they may be self-harming; there may be a whole lot of reasons why they need to be in residential care.

Mrs JAMIESON - And is there an age limit for the care and protection units?

MEGAN - We take kids through to 17. We have teenaged girls of 16 and 17 and we have others as young as seven or eight. Palmerston North is a wing-based design based on a central courtyard, quite different from Tapoonawai, which is separate units. Each unit can be closed off and be a campus in its own right. Palmerston North has an area to cater for those who have nightmares or keep awake at night. We have made some adjustments to the residence, but we have had a considerable amount of trouble and unrest up there with the youth, and part of that resulted from the original design. There two wings could see each other and if you were in the hub and trying to manage that from a social perspective, you could have one wing playing up and because the other wing could see through, there were problems there as well. It was a design fault. So we have tweaked it and done some stuff. We are looking to put some extra beds in there.

CHAIR - Is there any potential for escape from that? Have there been any escapes? Do they have secure fences around them?

MEGAN - Yes, they all have fences and yes, we have had the odd escape. With the new residences there are far fewer than there were. In the last year there have been two. Previous to that, when I first came here three-and-a-half years ago, we were reporting monthly to the minister on the number of absconders we had had!

Mrs JAMIESON - So what sort of security fence do you have?

MEGAN - We have security on the perimeter and also internally within the courtyard.

Mrs JAMIESON - So the overall perimeter, if you like, is over what acreage?

MEGAN - They are all different. I can't tell you the average. Tapoonawai would be about the size of half a dozen rugby fields; the youth justice residence in Auckland would probably be four rugby fields; and Palmerston North is quite a different model altogether. The beauty of these new ones is that they have a big centre courtyard area and you will notice when you are there that the kids come in and out unit by unit, so we don't end up with all the kids in the central area on their own. The planning is very good. They are confined within their own unit. They can come outside and play ball and everything else in an area with high fences all around. They can see the view but they cannot mix it with the kids in the next unit. The design is such that the playing areas are not one on one. You are not playing on a tennis court in one unit, looking to the tennis court in another. We have huge gang issues. We have different gang members that we have to keep separated in different units, otherwise they will just deal with each other. So the tennis court for one will be out the back; while the tennis court for the other will be at the front. They can come out but they cannot actually harm each other.

CHAIR - The staff who work in these three centres are classed as youth workers and are all government employees? You do not have any external contractors?

MEGAN - At the moment they are all government employees with a mix between youth workers and social workers. But we are set on developing a new strategy for managing residences and part of that will be having a small number of social workers to deal with the case work and arrange the integration issues when they come out, and then the program deliverers who will be youth workers.

CHAIR - The youth workers see themselves in a custodial role as well as a -

MEGAN - Both.

The units that you will see are self-contained. They contain bedroom wings, a staff hub, a classroom, a small kitchen, and common room, a dining room area, a TV-time out room and an external courtyard. The kids will host you to a cup of tea or coffee.

We are currently planning a fourth residence in the middle of the North Island because we have a huge need in the Taupo-Tokoroa area and at the moment we are giving consideration to the best design.

We have challenges in the residences in the provision of health services, particularly mental health services. That is very difficult for us.

Mr WILKINSON - On mental health services: it appears that a number of children who go into care have some mental health problems. What would the percentage of those children be? Secondly, when do you start to see whether those problems are an issue or not?

MEGAN - Some 69 per cent of the youth in our facilities have two or more diagnosed mental health disorders.

Mr WILKINSON - Sixty-nine per cent! In Australia, New Zealand is classed as doing it very well, so I would imagine that that percentage would be higher because it is diagnosed, whereas in other areas it hasn't been diagnosed. Do they go through testing as soon as they go in?

MEGAN - Yes. We do have a huge demand for remand placements in these residences. That is a huge political issue in this country. When I was in Victoria and they talked to me about the spare bed capacity in youth justice facilities, I was just green with envy because I am lucky if I have one bed spare. We are constantly reclassifying kids and trying to get them back out into the community so we can free up beds. It is a full-time job just managing the throughput.

The average length of stay in a police cell at the moment is about 2.6 days, and that is an item a day. Twelve months ago that was up around seven days, so that is a huge improvement.

(TAPE 3 SIDE B is TOTALLY GARBLED AND INAUDIBLE)