

Rethinking Crime and Punishment is a strategic initiative designed to increase the level of public debate about the use of prison and alternative forms of punishment in New Zealand



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Drivers of Crime - Family Violence



TV Panel Discussion on Child Abuse

Following publication of Newsletter #59, 'Drivers of Crime – Child Abuse' Kim Workman was invited to take part in a panel discussion on child abuse, on TV One's 'Marae' programme. He participated with Dr Hone Kaa, Chairperson of Te Kahui Mana Ririki', a Maori child abuse prevention organisation, and Metiria Turei, Co-Leader of the Green Party. Interviewer was Shane Taurima.

[You can view the discussion here](#)

Scotland Calls for End to Short Prison Sentences

Prison Managers in Scotland are calling for an end to short sentences. Mike Ewart, Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service said that locking criminals up for six months or

Reducing Family Violence - How Well are we Doing?

In this week's leading article, Kim Workman takes a close look at the crime statistics, and asks the following questions,

"Why is reported crime reducing overall, including murder, and reported violence has increased. Is the claim by the Police that the increase in violence is due almost entirely to an increase in reported family violence, and a lowering public tolerance toward family violence."

"Is the criminal justice system, the best way of dealing with family violence?"

"How can the community get more closely engaged in dealing with issues of family violence?"

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Collaboration between Government and the Community

Many of the strategies that were recommended by the 'Drivers of Crime' Ministerial Meeting require close coordination and collaboration, both across government agencies, and between government agencies and the community. Given the nature of the public sector, and the tendency to preserve and protect departmental resources, it is often easier said than done. In a recent address on this subject, Principal Youth Court Judge Andrew Becroft had this to say;

"Beginning in the mid 1990s and at least until the advent of the 2002 Youth Offending Strategy, collaboration between key government agencies involved in youth justice was inadequate. Pleasingly, this decline has been arrested. "Intra-government" collaboration has significantly improved and there are a number of impressive collaborative efforts between government agencies.

However, collaboration between government agencies and the community/volunteer sector (much harder to achieve) has been disappointing. Yet both these forms of collaboration are nonnegotiable components of the effective delivery of youth justice. They are vital if we are to reduce re-offending and to give centrality to strengthening families."

Judge Becroft identifies research which proposes that a collaborative relationship includes a commitment to:

- Mutual relationships and goals
- A jointly developed structure and shared responsibility;
- Mutual authority and accountability for success; and
- Sharing of resources and rewards.

He then considers some cases, (including that of Bailey Junior Kuariki) where his offending pre the Michael Choy murder could have been dealt with more effectively, if the various agencies had collaborated effectively.

less made the community a more dangerous place. They did nothing to rehabilitate offenders, and just exposed them to a 'University of Crime'. [Read more](#)

TV One's Sunday Programme took a look at the government's 'Fresh Start' programme – the proposal to introduce bootcamps for young offenders with 'add-ons' - mentoring, after care. You can hear the views of Professor David Fergusson and the Minister of Social Development, the Hon Paul Bennett. [Link here](#)

He concludes that:

Any successful approach to youth offending must be inclusive, collaborative, realistic and optimistic;

Government agencies and community sector groups must be partners in the youth justice "mission", and seek to collaborate at the highest level, i.e. a state of 'interdependence';

Interdependence means each collaborating organisation, or sector, or individual, recognises and respects the others' strengths and weaknesses. Each understands that it must depend on the others in order to make sense of the common project and to give it the best chance of being successful;

The complexity of the youth justice mission mirrors the complex nature of the individuals and families that are its subject. Youth workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, educationalists, health workers, social workers, mentors, researchers, policymakers, funders, youth aid police;

Corrections staff, judges, youth advocates, teachers, cultural leaders, youth role models, and the young people themselves must all strive to imagine themselves "inside the tent" of youth justice.

The concept of interdependent collaboration has implications well beyond the youth justice system. Judge Becroft's paper describes an approach which if followed across the criminal justice and social services sectors, would reduce offending and wider social harm.

[Read Judge Becroft's paper](#)

The Worm Turns - USA Reviews its Penal Policy

The efforts of Republican Senator Jim Webb to reform the US Prison System is creating international interest. A recent article in 'Newsweek', not known for its radical views, featured an article by Dahlia Lithwick, entitled ' Our Real Prison Problem - Why are We So Worried about Gitmo'.

The government is currently pursuing policies which are heading in this direction. From a low of 7,500 prisoners a year ago, there are currently 8,200 prisoners in the system. New Zealand has yet to introduce triple bunking, or put bunks in the hallways and gymnasiums of prisons. It has not, like California, put 160,000 prisoners into prisons designed for 120,000. But the points made about the futility of policies which incarcerate people unnecessarily, equally apply to New Zealand. The article is reproduced in full, and we invite you to consider its applicability to New Zealand.

[You can download a copy here](#)

The public-opinion two-step on the wisdom of closing the prison camp at Guantánamo is fascinating, and not just because, as recent polling shows, Americans are inclined to keep it open forever. The current legal meltdown over what to do with the 240 prisoners shows that Americans actually care a lot about prisons, prisoners and prison reform, but only when the inmates threaten to tumble out into their backyards.

That's what Sen. James Webb (D-Va.) may be counting on as he launches an ambitious effort to reform U.S. prisons. In addition to proposing a massive 18-month review of the prison system, Webb wants to work toward reducing the overall incarceration rate while refocusing efforts toward locking up truly dangerous criminals and gang leaders, decreasing prison violence, establishing meaningful reentry programs for ex-offenders, reforming the nation's drug policies and improving treatment of the mentally ill. It's not quite as dramatic as the prospect of Abu Zubaydah bedding down at the Supermax prison in Colorado, but Webb wants to reignite the subject of prison reform, because he's convinced that when it comes to their prison problem, Americans need only know how to count.

Here are the facts about America's prisons, according to Webb:

The United States, with 5 percent of the world's population, houses nearly 25 percent of the world's prisoners. As Webb has explained it, "Either we're the most evil people on earth or we're doing something wrong." We incarcerate 756 inmates per 100,000 residents—nearly five times the world average. Approximately one in every 31 adults in the United States is in prison, in jail or on supervised release. Local, state and federal spending on corrections amounts to about \$70 billion per year and has increased 40 percent over the past 20 years.

Webb has no problem locking up the real baddies. He just wants us to recognize that

warehousing the nation's mentally ill and drug addicts in crowded correctional facilities tends mostly to create a mass of meaner, more violent, less employable people at the exit. The Justice Department estimates that 16 percent of the adult inmates in American prisons—more than 350,000 of those incarcerated—suffer from mental illness; the percentage in juvenile custody is even higher. Justice statistics for 2007 showed that nearly 60 percent of the state prisoners serving time for a drug offense had no history of violence, and four out of five drug arrests were for drug possession, not sales.

Webb also reminds us that while drug use varies little by ethnic group, African-Americans—estimated at 14 percent of regular drug users—make up 56 percent of those in state prison for drug crimes. So why does the senator from one of the country's most rabid "lock 'em up" states believe that with two wars raging, an economy collapsing and America's Next Top Model beckoning seductively, Americans are ready to grapple with his new legislation—the National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2009—which establishes a blue-ribbon panel to review the nation's entire prison system?

Perhaps public opinion is finally shifting away from fear-based appeals to personal safety. If Americans actually have the conversation about our disastrous prison policies, we'll understand the trends all move in very dangerous directions: we lock up more people, for less violent crime, at ever greater expense, breeding more dangerous criminals who often come out unemployable, violent and isolated.

The Guantánamo problem we've finally started to grapple with—it's a dangerous place with some dangerous people—is a mere speck in the eye of America's larger prison program.