

Communications Plan

Reviews of Corrections Management of Graeme Burton Release of Review Findings

Timeline

Date	Action	Responsibility
2/03/2007	Round table to discuss possible release strategy	Mike Martelli
	Provision to Chairman of the Parole Bd of Corrections report into the level of information supplied to Prisoner Burton's Parole Bd and the report into Burton's parole management as well	Barry Matthews/Katrina Casey
5/03/2007	Minister briefed by CE and provided with a copy of each of the reports	Barry Matthews
5/03/2007	Final adjustments to Comms strategy, Q&As completed, draft media statement prepared for release with findings	Julie McBurney/Sandra Ford
	Parole Bd releases report under embargo	Parole Bd
	First report released to media under embargo to match release of Parole Bd report	Communications
6/03/2007	Release of second Corrections report under embargo until Corrections press conference at 11am	Parole Bd
	CE & GM POS to front press conference	
6/03/2007	Media Interviews arranged with CE & GM POS as required	Communications

Background

Graeme Burton was released from prison on parole on 10 July 2006. Early this year he was convicted of murder and other offences. At the time he carried out these offences Burton was still on life parole.

Public interest has focussed on two aspects of the management of Burton:

- The decision of the Parole Board to release Burton
- Management of his parole and, in particular, whether there was sufficient grounds for recalling him prior to the murder.

As a consequence, the Chief Executive instigated two enquiries:

- The first into the adequacy of the information provided to the Parole Board at Burton's pre-release hearing and the range of reintegration measures available to Burton on release
- The second into the management of his parole.

The Chief Executive has been reported in the media (eg NZ Herald of 17 February 2007) as saying 'reports into the handling of the (Burton's case) will clear the department of wrongdoing'

These two reports are now complete and have been received by the Chief Executive. At the same time the investigation undertaken by the Parole Board into the soundness of its decision to release Burton is now complete and the Chairman intends to release this report on Tuesday next.

Objectives of the communications plan

To reassure the public that it can have confidence in the professionalism of the Department by:

- ensuring the public clearly understands Corrections role in Parole Board hearings and subsequent management of an offender's parole;
- publicly explaining the findings of the reports in a transparent and credible way;
- reassuring the public that all legal and procedural requirements were met both in the provision of information to the Parole Board and in the management of Burton's subsequent parole; and
- Confirming that Corrections supports continuous business improvement and that, where appropriate, changes will be made to the way things are done to mitigate against a similar event occurring again.

Suggested key messages

- The two investigations clear Corrections of allegations of wrong doing and or incompetency
- The safety of the public remains Corrections primary concern
- While rare, these tragic events do occur. With the best management in the world it is never possible to provide a 100% guarantee they will not
- In the course of both investigations possible improvements to administrative and management procedures have been identified although they would not have had an impact on events in this case
- The family of the person killed by Graeme Burton have our sincere condolences

Report 1

- The primary purpose of the Parole Board's hearing was to consider the psychologist's report and Corrections' investigation has concluded that all the information necessary for the Parole Board to make an informed decision on the possible parole of Graeme Burton was provided in this report
- It was not possible to arrange temporary release for Graeme Burton, as requested by the Parole Board, as he did not meet the specific conditions set out in the Corrections Act 2004 and accompanying regulations. With hindsight perhaps these conditions should have been drawn to the attention to the Board.
- The investigation has revealed that there is no formal agreement with the Parole Board as to the type of information and level of detail that must be provided in each report provided by Corrections to the Parole Board.

Report 2

- All key procedures relating to Graeme Burton's release on parole were managed according to the Community Probation Service Operations Manual and Policies.
- Graeme Burton's standard and special conditions of parole were managed according to the Community Probation Service Operations Manual and Policies.
- The supervising Probation Officer complied with the Sentence Management and Enforcement guidelines for offenders on the Offender

Warning Register in that she applied the policy of zero tolerance to all incidences of non-compliance.

- While they had no impact on the outcome of Burton case the report does contain some recommendations regarding possible changes to administrative and management practices, in particular;
 - Consideration as to whether procedures relating to the discretion and nature of enforcement action for high risk offenders on Parole need to be revised and tightened.
 - Area Manager Wellington to ensure staff in the Area are undertaking home visits as required and that service managers are undertaking the appropriate management checks in a timely manner.
 - Area Manager, Wellington, to ensure Probation Officer cover for managing high risk offenders is instigated in the Wellington Service Centre when the supervising Probation Officer is absent from the office and in other Service Centres in the Area if such arrangements are not in place

Key audiences

Public via the media
POS & PPS staff directly involved
The Minister and the Government
The family of the murdered man

Spokesperson

At least initially the primary spokesperson should be the Chief Executive and any media release should be in his name – Corrections takes this matter as seriously as the Parole Board, where the Chair is handling all initial interviews.

The Minister may also want to speak on the findings of the investigations from a Government perspective.

Strategy

The intention is to work in parallel with the Parole Board which is releasing its report under embargo on Monday night and providing interviews with the Chairman as required. It is suggested we adopt the same approach.

There is one issue which needs to be considered carefully. Whether both Corrections reports are released Monday night/Tuesday morning, or whether only the report covering the provision of information to the Board should be released in tandem with the Parole Board report with the second report on the management of Burton's parole released a little later. This makes sense given the Parole Bd report focusses on the process which led to Burton's release.

Internal Communications

It is important that staff feel as informed as the media. A note will be prepared for the Chief Executive to send out to staff either Monday night in a form which is suitable for external consumption if required, or first thing Tuesday morning. The report(s) and the Chief Executive's note to staff will be posted on the intranet and the reports and media release placed on the website later that day.

Issues affecting communication

Potential Risks

Risk	Likelihood of occurring	Mitigation strategy
The media may only focus on the negative elements of both reports and ignore the fundamental findings which absolve the department of wrong doing	High	Give only live interviews Ensure media statements are very clear <u>Find a sympathetic reporter and give them a scoop</u>
The media may focus on why Burton was not granted temporary release as requested by the Department	Medium	Have a prepared piece which out sets the relevant part of the Regs and Act for reporters Make sure the reasons for this are made clear in the relevant report
The media may focus on Simon Power's claim that both the Police and CPS already have the power to recall a parolee	High	Have a prepared piece which out sets the relevant part of the Regs and Act for reporters <u>Provide the Minister with all the information necessary to refute Mr Power</u> Give live interviews which provide the opportunity to carefully set out the truth