

- continue to get those projections wrong. Are you confident, leading into the financial year ahead, that you are going to get those numbers right?
- O'Connor It is something I have asked of the department and of the Ministry of Justice, who do the projections. But time and time again, the most recent assessment of that, which would have been last week, was that we have more than we projected in prison rather than out on electronic bail—that is, electronic bail is not being used as we had assumed. There are equivalent numbers on remand that we thought we would have. There has been a rise in the population – long-term prisoners, as I say, non-violent – but we seem to have less prisoners moving on to home detention or through the parole system. We think that the reaction, and it is understandable, to the Graham Burton incident has resulted in the parole board and every part of the justice system being a little more cautious, and less people are being let out on parole.
- Power So are you confident that a sentence of home detention in its own right, if Parliament sends this bill through its second, Committee, and third stage reading—I think it is due for a second reading maybe later this week, I think from memory—has that been factored into your or the Ministry of Justice's projections, for your own ability to cope with the prison population, given the nature of sentencing as it's currently operating? Is it going to mean a chunk of people, a chunk of spaces, in our prison system?
- O'Connor The assessment is that 98 percent of people on home detention abide by all the terms and conditions. So it's a highly successful sentence.
- Power Depending on the level that it's applied, I think you'll agree?
- O'Connor Absolutely. We hope, given the proper scrutiny by judges and the proper management by Corrections, that we can see more people put out on home detention, which will, we hope, reduce the pressure on the prison system. It's not going to reduce the numbers overall, but if more go into home detention as a sentence in its own right, then that should reduce the pressure on the growth.
- Power One final question. Between now and the general election, are you planning on building a further prison, other than finishing the one at Spring Hill?
- O'Connor No.
- Gallagher Just coming back to the issue of drug use in prison, could you give us a bit of feel and update of strategies in that area? Obviously, that's an ongoing issue in our prison system.
- Matthews Over the recent years we've tightened up much more on the detection of drugs coming through the perimeters of our prison. We've put a whole lot more equipment in there, we've put 17 kilometres of perimeter fencing around in some of the prisons that we didn't either have some or only had one line of defence, we've now got two. We are detecting more and more contraband coming through on visitors. All staff entering the prison are required to be searched as well as visitors and, obviously, prisoners. So inevitably we have been picking up with extra scanning equipment and so forth, more and more contraband, including drugs. Now, no doubt, the

Question 1

What plans, if any, have been made for the construction of further prisons, apart from the rebuild of Mt Eden?

Answer 1

There are no plans to construct further prisons apart from the replacement of Mt Eden Prison.