**Dr Pita Sharples, Minister of Māori Affairs, Associate Minister of Corrections**

**Speech notes – Pre-Budget announcement for Corrections**

**Rimutaka Prison, Monday 21 May 2010**

**Taking responsibility for Reducing Reoffending**

**EMBARGOED TO 1.30PM: CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Minister Tolley, tena koe.

Ray (Smith), your managers and Corrections staff, tena koutou.

To the representatives of the community service providers, tena hoki koutou.

Kei te mihi atu ki nga mauhere kei konei, tena koutou katoa.

And I also want to acknowledge the media here, because of the role they might play in the kaupapa we are talking about today.

And finally, the other key players who are not specifically represented here, but who are vital to the success of what we are announcing. I refer to the families of prisoners, and to ordinary people in communities throughout New Zealand.

Without your support, none of us will achieve the success we are looking for.

Minister Tolley has identified $65 million that the government is directing into huge increases in therapeutic programmes, rehabilitation services, and projects to restore prisoners to their proper role as contributing members of their communities.

I stand here with real pride, as a member of this executive, to support the Government's commitment to this approach to Corrections.

As a Maori Party Minister, these announcements represent a significant achievement in our policy programme. We have consistently advocated for more emphasis on healing the hurt caused by offending, the rehabilitation of offenders, and the restoration of relationships with communities.

As Mrs Tolley has said, the government is determined to make a difference to reduce offending and make our communities safer. One effective way to do that, is to reduce future offending by people who are already in prison. Reduce future crime, and we protect future victims of crime.

In other words, take the chance that we all have here, inside prison, to address the underlying causes of so much offending – with more and better alcohol and drug treatment programmes, literacy education, anger management, treatment for mental health problems and so on. And also, to equip offenders with social, practical and vocational skills they need to make a contribution to their communities.

This is not going soft on crime – it is doing what makes a difference. It is acting on the evidence of research and experience, not simply giving in to fear, anxiety and moral outrage.

Having said that, I want to emphasise that this Budget funding is not a panacea. By itself, the money, and the programmes it pays for, will not stop reoffending.

In the end, it is offenders who stop reoffending. Offenders have to want to make the change. **And we in the community need to have the courage and commitment to support them in that decision.**

For if they do want to change, we all have a duty to give them the opportunity and the skills, and to support them through the change. And when prisoners are ready to return to their families and communities, we must support the transition, to help them find work, to help rebuild their social networks, to help them make a go of it.

The focus on restoration and rehabilitation is vital.  We know enough now to understand critical success factors in the reintegration of released prisoners include the involvement of whanau, suitable employment and adequate accommodation.

The Maori Party **believes** that you take control of your situation by taking responsibility. Prisoners, Corrections staff, programme providers, the families of prisoners, and ordinary people, all have a role to play, in taking control of offending by taking responsibility.

This budget funding, and these therapeutic and restorative programmes, represent an opportunity. They will only make a difference if all the groups represented here, and the others I mentioned, seize the opportunity, and take responsibility to make the change.

I mentioned the media, because I believe the media have a role in supporting this change. Sensational reporting of violent crime, and an unhealthy obsession with offending in general, helps to create a climate of fear, in which a culture of blame, punishment and retribution becomes entrenched.

In Finland, the media developed a voluntary code on the reporting of crime, similar perhaps to the code that we have for reporting on suicide. It is not censorship – it is about being aware, and taking responsibility for the implications of sensational reporting of crime. The media are seen to have played an important role in turning around Finland's crime stats, and emptying out their jails.

The other group represented here is, of course, politicians. We also have responsibility to lead the effort to make the change.

I believe politicians must question demands for tougher laws and harsher sentences, when it is clear that they do not reduce offending, but they dramatically increase costs.

I believe these announcements today represent a significant shift in emphasis, one that I welcome, and one that I am proud to support. So I congratulate Mrs Tolley, and our Ministerial colleagues, and I look forward to working together with all the key groups represented here, to take up the opportunities we have created today.

Kia ora tatou katoa.