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# **Policy, Planning, Outputs and Outcomes: A Community Corrections Division Study**

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## Abstract

In the restructured New Zealand State sector departmental heads now contract with their ministers to provide outputs, and the performance of chief executives and their departments is assessed on the outputs rather than on the outcomes for society which the outputs contribute to. Planning to achieve the outputs is largely carried out in State sector departments using the technique known as strategic planning.

This thesis examines the topic of policy, planning, outputs and outcomes by reference to a key Community Corrections Division objective which seeks (under conditions of fiscal restraint) a reduction in the number of resource intensive remand reports provided to courts and a commensurate increase in the number of briefer same-day reports. The research method involved: (a) interviews with Departmental managers to gain their views on the issues which are currently shaping Community Corrections Division management planning; (b) a comparative quantitative study of compliance and conviction seriousness among 230 offenders who were sentenced, following either a remand or a same-day report, to periodic detention, community service or supervision in the Lower Hutt and Upper Hutt District Courts between May and October 1992; and (c) interviews with sub-groups of offenders and the people who supervised their sentences to provide a qualitative assessment of process and sentence outcomes.

Five notable findings emerged from this study. First, the managers accept the prominence of fiscal restraint among the environmental matters affecting strategic planning, but preferred to see this as an exercise in providing value for money. Second, the offender and supervisor interviews show that same-day reports were not an inferior method of providing information to courts where the punitive sentence of periodic detention was clearly indicated, but that same-day reports were less suitable than remand reports where the sentences of community service and supervision were recommended and ordered. With community service the offender's knowledge of the sentence and therefore their ability to give informed consent to the sentence was of concern, while the quality of the caseplans and the limited number of positive

qualitative changes which followed were noteworthy with the same-day supervision sentences. Third, just under half (46.1 percent) of all of the offenders in the study were convicted of at least one imprisonable offence during the twelve month follow-up period, with the percentages being greater for the same-day members of each sentence type group. The percentages ranged from a high of 63.6 percent reconvictions for the periodic detention same-day group to a low of 20.1 percent for the community service remand group. Fourth, among the community service groups, more of those who had been sentenced following a same-day report went on to commit offences of the same or more seriousness during the follow-up period than was the case with the remand report group. This finding is the more surprising because the characteristics of these recidivist same-day offenders might be expected to put them in a lower risk of reoffending category than their counterparts in the remand group. Fifth, compliance with community-based orders appears to have no predictive value as far as subsequent reconvictions are concerned. This finding must be of concern to the Government as purchaser of services, because certain levels of compliance are among the outputs that they are currently purchasing from the Community Corrections Division. That particular output, it appears, may be ineffective in producing the outcomes which are held to be the blueprint for a better society.

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# Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview of Thesis	2
The Role and Organisation of the Community Corrections Division	5
<b>2 Theoretical Perspectives and Research Methods</b>	<b>15</b>
Literature Review	15
<i>Social Policy</i>	16
<i>Previous Research</i>	19
Theoretical Perspective	24
Hypothesis and Study Objectives	27
Research Design	29
<i>Genesis of the Research</i>	31
<i>Management Planning in the Community Corrections Division</i>	34
<i>Offenders on Strength</i>	35
<i>Social Research Ethics</i>	40
<i>Problems Encountered</i>	40
Summary	43
<b>3 New Zealand Since 1984</b>	<b>46</b>
Ideological Underpinnings	46
Emergent Policies	49
Unemployment	51
Unemployment and Crime	53

## *Table of Contents*

---

Restructuring of the State	58
<i>Fiscal Restraint</i>	58
<i>Public Sector Management</i>	60
Implications for Service Delivery	63
Summary	68
<b>4 Strategic Planning</b>	<b>71</b>
Strategic Planning in the Private Sector	71
Strategic Planning in Public Organisations	74
Successful Strategic Planning	80
Summary	87
<b>5 Management Planning in the Community Corrections Division</b>	<b>90</b>
A Departmental Overview	90
The Planning Cycle	92
The Driving Forces	95
The Managers' Interviews	97
Discussion	107
Summary	110
<b>6 Sentence Outcomes: A Qualitative Perspective and Measure</b>	<b>111</b>
The Interviews	112
<i>Periodic Detention Groups</i>	113
<i>Community Service Groups</i>	119
<i>Supervision Groups</i>	125
Summary and Discussion	132
<i>Periodic Detention Groups</i>	133
<i>Community Service Groups</i>	135
<i>Supervision Groups</i>	138



<b>7</b>	<b>Sentence Outcomes: A Quantitative Perspective and Measure</b>	<b>141</b>
	Measurement of Compliance and Conviction Seriousness	141
	All Groups' Data	146
	Periodic Detention Groups	153
	Community Service Groups	160
	Supervision Groups	168
	Summary and Discussion	174
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusions and Implications</b>	<b>180</b>
	Research Findings: A Summary	182
	Implications for Policy and Practice	190
	Management Planning: A Critique	193
	Implications for Future Research	196
	Concluding Comments	197
	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>199</b>
	Appendix 1 Glossary of Terms	199
	Appendix 2 Managers' Questionnaire	203
	Appendix 3 Interview Questions, Detainee	204
	Appendix 4 Interview Questions, Community Servant	205
	Appendix 5 Interview Questions, Supervisee	206
	Appendix 6 Interview Questions, Periodic Detention Warden	207
	Appendix 7 Interview Questions, Community Service Sponsor	208
	Appendix 8 Interview Questions, Supervising Probation Officer	209
	Appendix 9 Corrections Group Thesis Research Agreement	210
	Appendix 10 Research Outline	212
	Appendix 11 Consent Form	213
	Appendix 12 Unit Managers' Questionnaire	214
	<b>References</b>	<b>217</b>

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# List of Figures and Tables

## Figures

Figure 1.1	Community Corrections Division Involvement in the Criminal Justice System	7
Figure 1.2	Department of Justice Management Structure	11
Figure 1.3	Community Corrections Division Management Structure	12
Figure 3.1	Unemployed Compared to Reported Offences (1968 to 1992)	54
Figure 3.2	Community Corrections Division Receptions (1985 to 1993)	64
Figure 3.3	Community Corrections Division Budgets and Costs (1985 to 1993)	65
Figure 4.1	The Strategic Management Process	72
Figure 7.1	Compliance and Offence Seriousness After Sentence Date, Periodic Detention Remand Group	154
Figure 7.2	Compliance and Offence Seriousness After Sentence Date, Periodic Detention Same-day Group	154
Figure 7.3	Compliance and Offence Seriousness After Sentence Date, Community Service Remand Group	162
Figure 7.4	Compliance and Offence Seriousness After Sentence Date, Community Service Same-day Group	162
Figure 7.5	Caseplan Compliance and Offence Seriousness After Sentence Date, Supervision Remand Group	169
Figure 7.6	Caseplan Compliance and Offence Seriousness After Sentence Date, Supervision Same-day Group	170

**Tables**

Table 1.1	Community Corrections Division Titles	13
Table 3.1	Unemployment By Ethnicity, 1991	52
Table 6.1	Reported Positive Qualitative Changes By Report Type	131
Table 7.1	Seriousness Scores for a Selection of Offences	143
Table 7.2	Sentence Length, Compliance, Caseplan Achievement, Convictions and Conviction Seriousness by Report and Sentence Type	147
Table 7.3	Age, Ethnicity and Gender of Offenders by Report and Sentence Type	150
Table 7.4	Compliance With Periodic Detention Orders by Report Type	153
Table 7.5	Grouped Compliance by Seriousness of Reconvictions After Sentence Date, Periodic Detention Remand Group	156
Table 7.6	Grouped Compliance by Seriousness of Reconvictions After Sentence Date, Periodic Detention Same-day Group	157
Table 7.7	Grouped Conviction Seriousness Up To and After Sentence Date, Periodic Detention Remand Group	158
Table 7.8	Grouped Conviction Seriousness Up To and After Sentence Date, Periodic Detention Same-day Group	159
Table 7.9	Compliance With Community Service Orders by Report Type	161
Table 7.10	Grouped Compliance by Seriousness of Reconvictions After Sentence Date, Community Service Remand Group	163
Table 7.11	Grouped Compliance by Seriousness of Reconvictions After Sentence Date, Community Service Same-day Group	164
Table 7.12	Grouped Conviction Seriousness Up To and After Sentence Date, Community Service Remand Group	165

*List of Figures and Tables*

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Table 7.13	Grouped Conviction Seriousness Up To and After Sentence Date, Community Service Same-day Group	166
Table 7.14	Characteristics of Community Servants Who Were Convicted of Offences of the Same or More Seriousness by Report Type	167
Table 7.15	Achievement of Supervision Caseplans by Report Type	168
Table 7.16	Grouped Caseplan Achievement by Seriousness of Reconvictions After Sentence Date, Supervision Remand Group	171
Table 7.17	Grouped Caseplan Achievement by Seriousness of Reconvictions After Sentence Date, Supervision Same-day Group	171
Table 7.18	Grouped Conviction Seriousness Up To and After Sentence Date, Supervision Remand Group	172
Table 7.19	Grouped Conviction Seriousness Up To and After Sentence Date, Supervision Same-day Group	173