

**PROBLEM PROFILE**  
**Misuse of Global 0800/0508 Numbers**



DEPARTMENT OF  
**CORRECTIONS**  
ARA POUTAMA AOTEAROA

## **Misuse of Global 0800/0508 Numbers.**

**Originator:**

*Rachel Williams, Collator/Analyst  
National Intelligence Unit, Head Office  
Mayfair House  
44 -52 The Terrace  
Private Bag 1206  
Wellington, New Zealand  
DDI: 04 474 8815  
Email: [rachel.williams@corrections.govt.nz](mailto:rachel.williams@corrections.govt.nz)*

***The following Problem Profile has been prepared for submission to the 2010 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.***

*For more information about the New Zealand Department of Corrections visit: [www.corrections.govt.nz](http://www.corrections.govt.nz)*

## 1. SUMMARY: MISUSE OF GLOBAL 0800/0508 NUMBERS

It has been identified that prisoners, throughout New Zealand's twenty prisons, are misusing access to toll free 0800/0508<sup>1</sup> global phone numbers in three primary ways:

- Prisoners are convincing external call centre operators to transfer them to an outside line<sup>2</sup>.
- Prisoners are being transferred to relatives/associates who work within the organisation they are calling<sup>3</sup>.
- Prisoners are bypassing and manipulating automated messaging services/machines at these numbers to call external phone numbers.

Prisoners have access to a range of sanctioned communication methods allowing them to communicate with persons outside the prison through mail, visits and by using the prisoner payphone system. However, prisoners are known to bypass methods in place to screen legitimate communication, namely telephone monitoring and mail searching, through the illegitimate use of cell phones<sup>4</sup> and, as identified, by misusing access to global numbers<sup>1</sup>. The identification of these, and other, methods which provide an opportunity for unrestricted communication is vital to detect potential and actual criminal offending, particularly that of a serious nature such as witness tampering and the introduction of contraband. The ability to communicate external to the prison environment is an essential tool utilised by prisoners in their offending carried out within the prison environment. The ability for prisoners to use the prisoner payphones to engage in prohibited and illegal activities presents a significant financial, safety and reputational risk to the Department of Corrections and the external service providers targeted. The development of a number of responses to address this problem is therefore required.

A response plan has been developed and the initial implementation of recommended responses has resulted in an increased awareness of the problem and a subsequent reduction in identified incidents. This reduction has been supported, foremost, by liaison with the providers of global numbers in addition to the identification of indicators of global number misuse and the targeting of identified hot offenders.

Addressing this problem is an ongoing process with the next stage requiring an assessment of the feasibility of implementing changes to the processes, procedures and hardware used by the Department to achieve a significant reduction in, and prevention of, the misuse of global numbers.

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<sup>1</sup> 0800/0508 numbers are the New Zealand equivalent of toll free 1-800 numbers. These numbers will subsequently be referred to as 'global numbers'.

<sup>2</sup> Prisoners are only permitted to call a limited number of phone numbers which have been pre-approved for calling.

<sup>3</sup> These relatives/associates are also then transferring prisoner calls to an outside line if requested. Prisoners are only permitted to speak to family members/associates whose phone numbers have been approved for calling.

<sup>4</sup> The Department of Corrections has implemented cell phone blocking technology across its 20 prison sites.

## 2. SCANNING

### 2.1. BACKGROUND

Prisoners currently have access to the prison phone system as follows:

- Every prisoner is entitled to a *minimum* entitlement of at least one outgoing telephone call of up to five minutes duration per week, in addition to any calls to global numbers or their legal adviser. Phone call duration is limited to 15 minutes per call after which time the call will disconnect (*with the exception of calls to global numbers*).
- All prisoners are issued with a Personal Identification Number (PIN) for the phone system as soon as possible after reception which is required to make a phone call, including those to global numbers (see Appendix A).
- Phone calls are paid for with phone cards which are purchased by prisoners or provided to them by their family.

All prisoners have access to a range of global numbers provided by Government departments. These numbers are used by prisoners for a number of purposes, including enquiries regarding taxation, child support, extramural study and career advice. Global numbers are also provided for a range of advocacy services including the Human Rights Commission and Health and Disability Commission in addition to the Inspector of Corrections and the Office of the Ombudsman<sup>5</sup>. All calls to global numbers are toll-free and are not subject to the 15 minute time limit imposed on other prisoner phone calls.

The Operational Intelligence (Op Intel) Unit of the New Zealand Department of Corrections has the ability to record and monitor prisoner phone calls under Sections 112 – 117 of the Corrections Act 2004<sup>6</sup>. Prior to a call connecting a recorded message is played informing prisoners and the call recipient that the call will be recorded and may be monitored and used as evidence.

A number of global numbers are exempt from recording and monitoring rendering an understanding of the full extent and nature of the misuse of these numbers problematic.

### 2.2. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

As a number of global numbers are exempt from recording and monitoring, by the Department, the nature and extent of this problem can only be examined by monitoring and analysing those calls which *are* subject to monitoring. For this reason, it is assessed that the problem is more extensive than has currently been identified. Further, the exemption of some global numbers from monitoring may facilitate additional opportunities for illegal activities.

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<sup>5</sup> A full list global numbers are included in Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.legislation.govt.nz>

It must be noted that the volume of prisoner telephone calls total approximately 1.3 million per year and Op Intel employs approximately 30 staff for which telephone monitoring constitutes only one aspect of their role. For this reason it was not feasible to comprehensively assess the extent of this problem as only a small portion of prisoner phone calls are able to be monitored. Aggregation of information collected on this issue, however, provides a snapshot of the nature of this problem. It should also be noted that a large portion of calls to global numbers are exempt from calling.

The ability of prisoners to manipulate this system presents a significant financial, safety and reputational risk to the Department of Corrections and other Government departments providing these numbers. The prioritisation of this problem is therefore warranted. For example, monitoring indicates that prisoners have been able to contact prisoners at other prisons and, whilst posing as lawyers, have extracted confidential prisoner information from staff. A previous incident in which a prisoner contacted a local police station and impersonated a police officer to extract confidential information regarding a member of the public<sup>7</sup> also indicates the significant threat posed by this problem and the potential for exploitation by motivated individuals and organised criminal groups.

Furthermore, as calls to global numbers are less likely to be subject to targeted monitoring, and those which are exempt can not be monitored, the potential for prisoners to use this method as a means to engage in illegal activity is likely, therefore warranting the development of this project to further examine this issue.

### **3. ANALYSIS**

Aggregation of prior incidents and individual behaviour where prisoners have successfully misused global numbers has contributed to the development of an understanding of this problem and allowed for the identification of a number of incidents of note. Doing so has resulted in the development, and ongoing implementation, of a number of responses.

#### ***Bypassing messaging services***

In 2009 and early 2010 prisoners in two different sites bypassed the automated messaging services of two global number providers including 0800Jailsafe<sup>8</sup>, which is operated by the Department of Corrections. The methods employed to bypass messaging services, whilst seemingly sophisticated in nature, appear to have resulted due to persistence on the part of the prisoner and a basic knowledge of automated messaging services.

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<sup>7</sup> An offense for which he was subsequently charged.

<sup>8</sup> 0800Jailsafe is the Department of Corrections' anonymous crime information reporting line.

The methods involved prisoners calling a number which was unattended and entering numbers on the keypad, including extensions and voicemail PIN numbers, allowed for the system to be accessed.

### ***Impersonating organisation employees***

This method continues to be successfully undertaken by prisoners who are falsely representing themselves as a staff member, resulting in their calls being transferred to a given external line. The following methods have been employed to do so:

- Impersonating telecommunication technicians performing line checks/repairs and requesting their call is transferred to another phone number.
- Impersonating employees of the organisation they are calling and stating that their phone is not working properly. Often they will use the pretence of an emergency so few questions are asked and their call is promptly transferred.
- Being transferred to another prison and subsequently, under the pretence of being a lawyer, having the call transferred to another prisoner to speak to their 'client' privately.

The ability to call any external number given, including calling pre-paid calling cards which allows the prisoner to call internationally, presents a significant safety and reputational risk to the Department of Corrections and could be used as a tool to facilitate potentially serious offending, both domestically and transnationally.

## **3.1. NATURE AND EXTENT**

Assessing the nature and extent of this problem can be assessed by grouping and aggregating the information collected on this problem under the following subheadings: Offenders, Targets and Motives. Doing so has facilitated the identification and development of a range of responses.

### **Hot Offenders**

Aggregation of hot offenders does not lead to the identification of a distinct typology. However, distinctions have been identified in regards to the method employed. For example, those bypassing messaging services require some technical knowledge of phone systems and those impersonating employees of the organisation they are calling require a degree of organisational knowledge. This was evidenced in a note found in the cell of a prisoner engaging in this behaviour which included the name and ID of an employee of the organisation the prisoner was calling, their managers name and a script of what to say.

The following attributes can be attributed to hot offenders:

- They possess a basic specialist or technical knowledge of phone systems or the processes and practices of the organisation whose employees they are impersonating.

- They have the confidence to engage in this method, are often well-spoken, polite and able to quickly respond to unanticipated questioning.
- They engaged in this method of calling (often known as platform calling) prior to imprisonment as a means to make free phone calls.

## **Targets**

Monitoring of numbers which are *not* exempt from monitoring indicates that not all global numbers have been misused. Those that have been targeted share a number of characteristics:

- They receive a large number of calls from the general public per day.
- They employ a large number of New Zealand based operators.
- They have a large number of staff members located throughout the country.

These factors indicate that it is the anonymity afforded to the prisoners by these numbers which presents an opportunity for exploitation and aids the successful exploitation by prisoners. Therefore, methods to remove anonymity have supported a reduction in identified behaviours and have been incorporated into the response plan.

## **Motives**

It has been identified that prisoners are engaging in this behaviour for a number of reasons. Prisoners are only allowed to call numbers which have been approved for calling and the duration of the calls can not exceed 15 minutes. Prisoners are also charged for their calling which is paid for using phone cards. Bypassing global numbers, therefore, provides the opportunity to circumvent these restrictions as calls to these numbers are free of charge, the duration is not restricted and the prisoner call any number they choose. Monitoring of calls made by identified hot offenders indicates that the use of this method to avoid call charges is not restricted to the prison environment and may also be employed by people in the community to make free phone calls<sup>9</sup>. It should also be noted that the skill required to use this method, and the satisfaction received from successfully manipulating these systems, may also be of benefit to the prisoner.

An additional possible motivation is that this method is employed by calling numbers which are exempt from monitoring as these calls can not be monitored and used as evidence and, therefore, allow for the concealment of criminal offending. The prisoner could, therefore, use a legitimate and easily accessible tool for communication, the prisoner payphone, to engage in further offending without this offending being easily detected. This cannot, however, currently be evidenced.

## **3.2. RISK ANALYSIS**

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<sup>9</sup> Known as platform calling.

This problem presents significant financial, reputational and safety risks to the Department of Corrections and the providers of global numbers for the following reasons.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Financial</b>		
Global number providers pay for all calls made to external numbers following misuse of global numbers.	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>Reputational</b>		
A prisoner makes a call using a bypassed global number which involves serious criminal offending.	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
Global number providers restrict services provided to prisoners via these numbers.	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>
<b>Safety</b>		
Conflict occurring over the time some prisoners are spending on the phone due to the unrestricted length of calls to global numbers.	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>
Prisoners with this skill being exploited to engage in criminal offending.	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HIGH</b>

#### **4. RESPONSE PLAN**

The development of an understanding of the nature and extent of this problem has necessitated the development of a response plan to target the problem. Responses have been ranked in relation to cost, ease of implementation, potential impact on the problem and success rate. It should also be noted that the identification of the most effective responses are linked to the characteristics of the global number providers or targets. A number of responses have been implemented however the implementation of further recommendations to address this problem are ongoing.

##### **4.1. OBJECTIVES**

The achievement of the outcomes outlined below will be achieved by undertaking the following objectives:

- Identifying situational crime prevention methods aimed at disrupting the ability of prisoners to bypass global numbers.
- Targeting identified hot offenders.
- Liaising with the providers of global numbers to collaboratively address this problem.

##### **4.2. OUTCOMES**

The response plan will have been successfully implemented when:

- There is a measurable reduction in the identification of prisoners bypassing global numbers.
- Through targeting and the enforcement of disciplinary measures prisoners are deterred from bypassing global numbers.
- A reduction in the problem has resulted from a partnership approach with global number providers.



CONDITION		RESPONSE	OUTCOMES
1	<b>Increase the efforts:</b> Prior to a call being received from a prisoner a recorded message is played to the call recipient indicating that they are about to receive a call from a prisoner. As global number providers also have a recorded message at the beginning of a call the operator does not hear this. Prisoners are taking advantage of the anonymity provided to them to impersonate employees/Telco technicians and get their call transferred externally.	A delay in the prisoner payphone recorded message and a requirement that calls from prisoners are accepted prior to connection (calls to non-global numbers require callers to press '1' on their keypad to accept a call from a prisoner) would counteract the anonymity afforded to prisoners.	This method could present a cost effective way to reduce the misuse of global numbers. It would also remove anonymity which is the key contributing factor to the success of this method. However, this method would not be effective in counteracting the bypassing of messaging services.
2	<b>Increase the efforts:</b> Prisoners spend between 2 – 5 minutes on the phone with an operator to convince them to transfer them to an external line. As indicated above, the anonymity afforded to the prisoner by the lack of a recorded message means they are able to operate under the pretence that they are not a prisoner./calling from a prison.	To remove anonymity a distinct sound (such as a warning beep or click decreasing in frequency with call duration) could be played once the call is connected with an operator. Global number provider phone operators could then be educated as to the meaning and presence of this sound in the background of a call and the methods to cease the call.	This method could present a cost effective way to reduce the misuse of global numbers. It would also remove anonymity which is the key contributing factor to the success of this method. However, this method would not be effective in counteracting the bypassing of messaging services.
3	<b>Reduce the rewards and remove excuses:</b> Prisoners are entitled to a minimum of one five minute phone call per week. At present, however, prisoners are entitled to use the phone unrestricted during the hours of unlock. The Department does, however, have the ability place restrictions on calls.	Where prisoners have been identified as engaging in the misuse of global numbers phone restrictions are imposed.  <i>and</i> Notices are posted warning prisoners that this measure will be implemented.	This method presents a high likelihood of displacement to other calling methods and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prisoners using the pin number of other prisoners to make calls.</li> <li>- Increased use of global numbers as access to these numbers can not legally be restricted.</li> </ul> Offending could displace to stand over tactics and cell phone use as a means to continue to make free/cheap calls. Offending could also displace to exempt calls as these calls can not be restricted and misuse can not be detected.
4	<b>Increase the effort:</b> Prisoners are able to get calls transferred to external numbers by impersonating employees of the organisation they are calling.	To counteract the ability of prisoners to impersonate employees of the organisation they are calling under the pretence of getting calls transferred to an external number the ability of operators to do so could be removed or the	This method could present a cost effective way to reduce the misuse of global numbers. However, this method would not be effective in counteracting the bypassing of

		option for operators to take the callers number and call them back could be promoted. This links in with educating number providers (targets) as to the ways in which the service they provide is misused.	messaging services.  The implementation of these processes are problematic, however, and it could be anticipated that this would complicate the legitimate practices of the number providers and leave operators open to abuse by callers.
5	<b>Increase the efforts:</b> Prior to a call being received from a prisoner a recorded message is played to the call recipient indicating that they are about to receive a call from a prisoner. As global number providers also have a recorded message at the beginning of a call the operator does not hear the message indicating the call is from a prisoner.	All calls from are diverted to a limited number of operators specifically tasked with dealing with prisoner calls.  Or  A separate/alternative number is provided just for calls from prisoners.	One global number provider whose number was misused in 2008 has employed this method. It has been successful in stopping prisoners misusing this number. Prisoners who know people working within this organisation, however, continue to use this number to contact family and friends. These people would then have the ability to transfer calls externally if they chose to. Given the relatively small number of prisoners with family members working within these organisations, however, it would prove a successful deterrent to the majority of calls and those which facilitate criminal activity.
6	<b>Increase the risk:</b> Prisoners are able to succeed in this method as their behaviour is not detected.	In addition to educating external number providers, the education of Corrections floor staff could assist in the identification and deterrence of hot offenders. Prisoners engaging in this behaviour, for example, spend a large amount of time on the phone and can be overheard impersonating employees of the organisation they are calling. Prisoners attempting to bypass automated messaging services spend a large amount of time pressing various numbers of the key pad. Educating staff as to the behaviours of these prisoners and encouraging them to pass this information onto Op Intel can lead to the identification of hot offenders.	Educating guardians as to the behaviours of hot offenders is an important component of any response.
7	<b>Increase the effort:</b> Prisoners are able to succeed in this method due to the compliance of operators.	Educating operators about the indicators that a call is from a prisoner could prompt their use of further questions to determine the credibility of the caller. These indicators include the methods employed by prisoners, common aliases they use and background noises.	Educating targets as to the potential risk of victimisation is an important component of any response.
8	<b>Increase the risk:</b> Prisoners are able to get calls transferred to external numbers by impersonating employees of the organisation they are calling.	To counteract the ability of prisoners to impersonate employees of the organisation they are calling a set of questions could be developed for use by operators to confirm the identity of the person they are calling including	This method could present a cost effective way to reduce the misuse of global numbers. However, this method would not be effective in counteracting the bypassing of messaging services.

		employee ID numbers, purpose of the call, client name etc.	The implementation of these processes are problematic, however, and it could be anticipated that this would complicate the legitimate practices of the number providers and leave operators open to abuse by callers. This method of questioning may also act as a deterrent.
9	<b>Remove excuses:</b> Prisoners are being transferred to relatives/associates who work within the organisation they are calling. This allows them to make calls for free and calls which exceed the 15 minute time limit.	People receiving calls from prisoners via their work phone number are often unaware that the prisoner who is calling them is not permitted to do so. When identified that employees working for global number providers are speaking with prisoners via this method a warning should be provided to them, via their managers, informing them that what they are doing is not permitted.	Deterring call recipients who are aiding prisoners in continuing to use this method is important as there is the potential for prisoners to use this method to engage in further offending. Whilst a number of call recipients are aware that what they are doing is wrong, as the cost of the call is being passed on to their employer it is almost certain that these calls would not be permitted by their employees. Employing this method is likely to deter the majority of people receiving calls from prisoners through the use of this method.
10	<b>Increase the risk and remove excuses:</b> Under section 128 of the Corrections Act (2004) a prisoner who “ <i>without authority</i> , communicates with any person inside or outside the prison by using a telephone or other electronic communication device” is committing an offence.	When prisoners are identified as engaging in the misuse of global numbers options are explored to charge them with an offence against discipline under the Corrections Act.  <i>and</i>  Notices are posted warning prisoners that this measure will be implemented.	While this response achieves specific deterrence and to a lesser extent general deterrence it is the identification of <i>preventive</i> measures which are more desirable given the serious offending the method could facilitate.
11	<b>Reduce the rewards and remove excuses:</b> Prisoners are bypassing global numbers as it is a free method of calling.	Where prisoners have been identified as engaging in the misuse of global numbers the cost of these calls are passed onto the prisoner and providers of global numbers are reimbursed. Post a notice warning prisoners of this measure.	Prisoners are engaging in this behaviour as they perceive it as a free method of calling. If they are charged for these calls it is anticipated that this will act as a deterrent. However, as they are using this method because they can not afford phone cards they may not have the money to pay if the cost of calls are passed on.  Offending could displace to stand over tactics and cell phone use as a means to continue to make free/cheap calls. Offending could also displace to exempt calls as these calls can not be monitored and misuse can not be detected.
12	<b>Increase the risk:</b> As this problem has now been identified, as have the indicators of its occurrence (including call length, hot targets and hot offenders), hot offenders can be identified and targeted.	Identifying hot offenders not only facilitates the targeted monitoring of their calls but also assists in the application of other preventive measures including passing on the costs to the prisoner and charging them with an offence against	While this response achieves specific deterrence and to a lesser extent general deterrence it is the identification of <i>preventive</i> measures which are more desirable given the serious offending the method could facilitate.

		discipline under the Corrections Act.	
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## 5. ASSESSMENT

The initial identification of this problem has led to the identification and implementation of a number of responses. Addressing this problem is an ongoing endeavour which is strongly supported by liaison with external agencies, the development of the foundations for which formed a key part of the initial response process.

The following responses have been implemented and can be assessed as follows:

CONDITION	OUTPUT	OUTCOME
<p><b>1. Raise awareness and educate providers:</b> Due to the methods used to bypass global numbers, many global number providers remain unaware of the nature and extent of this problem.</p>	<p>Liaison with external agencies supported by the disclosure of call content and discussion of methods. The implementation of a number of responses are dependent on the buy-in from, and collaboration with, global number providers.</p>	<p>Initial liaison with global number providers resulted in the development of an awareness of the issue which supported the implementation of a number of successful secondary measures (see below).</p>
<p><b>2. Remove anonymity:</b> Prisoners are successful in bypassing global numbers due to the anonymity provided to them.</p>	<p>A global number provider identified as a target for misuse developed a separate number for calls from prison payphones.</p>	<p>Prisoners calling this number are automatically identified as prisoners and are unable to impersonate employees to get calls transferred. There is a measurable reduction in the misuse of this specific number.</p>
<p><b>3. Increase the risk:</b> A lack of understanding of the nature and extent of this problem was supported the undetected misuse of global numbers.</p>	<p>Following the identification of 'hot' offenders and common indicators of the misuse global numbers a number of 'hot' offenders have been targeted and measures to address their behaviour (including charging the prisoner with a misconduct) were used.</p>	<p>Targeting individually identified 'hot' offenders has resulted in specific deterrence and a reduction in misuse by these individuals. It is anticipated that by promoting this measure general deterrence will also be achieved.</p>
<p><b>4. Reduce the rewards and remove excuses:</b> Prisoners have been engaging in this behaviour with no consequences.</p>	<p>Where prisoners have been identified as engaging in the misuse of global numbers phone restrictions have been imposed (see Appendix B).</p>	<p>This practice has been implemented as business as usual at a number of sites. This has made monitoring of all calls made by these prisoners easier, due the reduced call duration. Staff have also been educated to identify when 'hot' offenders have spent more than 5 minutes on the phone (as this indicates that they are using the PIN of another prisoner, which can then be responded to).</p>

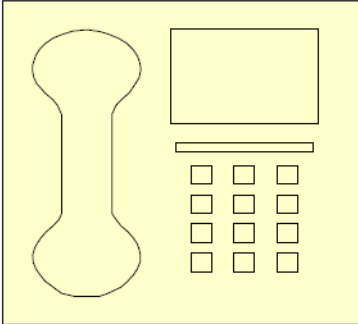
## APPENDIX A:

Organisation	Telephone number	Outcome
0800 JAIL SAFE	0800 524 572	Yes, successfully bypassed.
Australian Child Support Agency	0800 440 953	No evidence of misuse
Career Services	0800 222 733	Yes, successfully bypassed.
CIE Mobile Timber Training Platform	0800 243 754	No evidence of misuse
Child, Youth & Family Services (CYFS)	0800 400 611	Exempt from monitoring
Confidential Listening & Assistance Services	0800 356 567	Exempt from monitoring
Elections New Zealand	0800 36 76 56	No evidence of misuse
Health and Disability Commission	0800 11 22 33	Exempt from monitoring
Health and Disability Commission Advocacy Service	0800 555 050	Exempt from monitoring
Human Rights Commission	0800 496 877	Exempt from monitoring
Inland Revenue Child Support	0800 221 221	Yes, successfully bypassed.
Inland Revenue General Business	0800 377 774	Yes, successfully bypassed.
Inland Revenue Return & Debt Collection	0800 377 771	Yes, successfully bypassed.
Inspector of Corrections	0800 225 697	Exempt from monitoring
Ministry of Social Development (Work and Income)	0800 559 009	Yes, successfully bypassed.
MSD Data Matching	0800 909 333	Yes, successfully bypassed.
Office of the Ombudsmen (0800 OMBUDS)	0800 662 837	Exempt from monitoring
Office of the Privacy Commissioner	0800 803 909	Yes, successfully bypassed Also, exempt from monitoring
Open Polytechnic Free-phone	0508 650 200	Yes, successfully bypassed.
Quitline	0800 778 778	No evidence of misuse
StudyLink	0800 88 99 00	Yes, successfully bypassed.
The Commissioner for Children	0800 224 453	Exempt from monitoring
The Police Complaints Authority	0800 503 728	Exempt from monitoring
WINZ Debt Inquiries	0800 558 008	Yes, successfully bypassed.

**APPENDIX B:**

Poster for display near prison pay phones.

# **Abuse of PTCCS System**

A yellow rectangular icon containing a black outline of a telephone handset on the left and a keypad with a screen above it on the right.

**Prisoners are hereby notified that abuse of the phone system eg organizing illegal activity, may result in a reduction of the privilege eg 15 minute calls will be limited to 5 minutes per call per number.**

***- Prison Manager***