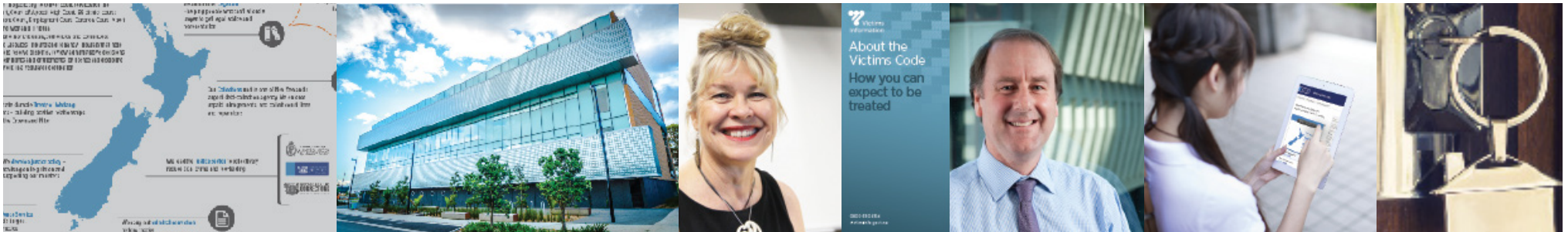


Justice matters

PARTNERSHIP IS CRITICAL

Welcome to the first issue of Justice Matters, the Ministry of Justice's newsletter for everyone with an interest in a safe and just New Zealand. Every 3 months we will update you on our activities and share some of our successes on our way to delivering modern, accessible and people-centred justice services to New Zealanders. We can only achieve this goal with the support of our partners and stakeholders. The breadth of what we do may surprise some. In this issue we cover everything from a Treaty of Waitangi settlement to the reform of trusts, from court scheduling to money laundering.



justice.govt.nz • 0800 268 787
info@justice.govt.nz

Justice Matters is produced by the Ministry of Justice's Communication Services team. For more information about any item in Justice Matters, contact commservices@justice.govt.nz

Introduction



The Ministry of Justice is unified by a single purpose – to provide justice services for the people of New Zealand.

A few years ago, we developed a mission to deliver modern accessible people-centred justice services. At the core of that mission is ‘people’. This is because it reflects the fact that in all we do we are here for one reason – the people of New Zealand that access our services.

We have a range of business groups that deliver an array of justice services.

- We negotiate the Treaty of Waitangi claims through the Office of Treaty settlements. This settles historic claims by Maori against the Crown.
- We administer the courts and support our judges.
- We represent people charged with criminal offences through the Public Defence Service.
- We administer the Legal Aid system.
- We provide policy advice to ministers and Cabinet on an array of justice issues.
- We collect court-ordered fines.
- We support specialist courts, for example the Coroners and Employment courts.
- We support 29 tribunals, authorities and committee ranging from the Disputes Tribunal through to the Waitangi Tribunal.

Many people access our services at a vulnerable time in their lives and at a time when often they are seeking for their grievances to be heard and settled. This is why we want to ensure that what we do will improve the journey that people take through our systems. The test of our success is making sure their journey is as efficient and fair as possible.

We aim to continue to improve the experiences of the customer. A substantial amount of change has already occurred in the last few years, but the importance of this change is that it is focused on improving the customer experience.

To do this we must work closely with our stakeholders: the legal profession; our sector partners – Police, Corrections, Crown Law, the Serious Fraud Office – a host of community providers of a range of justice services; and our customers and the public.

We do not work in isolation and this issue of *Justice matters* highlights some of the excellent work being done with the support of the judiciary, the legal fraternity and our sector partners. Your support and ideas are both welcomed and encouraged.

If you have an idea you think will improve the justice system or that will improve the way the ministry operates then please let me know at commservices@justice.govt.nz



Andrew Bridgman
Secretary for Justice and Chief Executive

What we do



We work with the judiciary to deliver court services for the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, 58 district courts, the Environment Court, Employment Court, Coroners Court, Māori Land Court and Waitangi Tribunal

We support 28 other tribunals, authorities and committees (including the Disputes Tribunal and Tenancy Tribunal) that help New Zealanders resolve disputes, review administrative decisions that affect their rights and entitlements, or licence and discipline people who work in a regulated occupation



We negotiate durable **Treaty of Waitangi** settlements – building positive relationships between the Crown and Māori



We **develop justice policy** – advising on legislation and supporting our ministers



Our **Public Defence Service** is New Zealand's largest criminal law practice



We administer **Legal Aid** – helping people who can't afford a lawyer to get legal advice and representation



New service!

A new 0800 number will improve the accessibility, coverage and consistency of Legal Aid services. The toll-free number can be used as a 1st port of call for any type of legal aid query. Calls will be answered by legal aid staff in the Wellington office, 8am–5pm, Mon–Friday.

0800 2 LEGAL AID
 0800 253 425



Our **Collections** unit is one of New Zealand's largest debt-collection agency. We enforce unpaid infringements, and collect court fines and reparations

We lead the **justice sector** to collectively reduce total crime and reoffending



We carry out **criminal conviction** history checks

Manukau court pilot for time-saving initiatives

Tens of thousands of people use the Manukau District Court's services each year. It is one of New Zealand's busiest courts, handling 11% of the country's criminal cases and 8% of family cases.

The new Manukau courtroom is the 'pilot court' for a number of new initiatives to reduce delays by increasing inter-agency liaison in the justice sector.

'The lessons we're learning in Manukau can be transferred to other sites around New Zealand, including the Christchurch Justice Precinct, a major project in itself and one which marks a new level of justice sector partnership,' says Ministry of Justice Chief Executive Andrew Bridgman.

The redeveloped courtroom better serves the people of Manukau. The improved facilities will cope with Manukau's anticipated population growth over the next 20 years.

The official opening ceremony of the refurbished courthouse was held in late August and attended by over 200 people, including Justice Minister Amy Adams and local government politicians, members of the judiciary, representatives from Tainui, members of the local Pacifica community, city and court staff, and the media.

Customer service centre

4 new courtrooms

Audio-visual capability

Secure witness technology

Extra hearing rooms

Extra holding cells

Improved facilities for judges

Witness technology

Witnesses can give evidence from another room via state-of-the-art video link to the courtroom. The witness is protected from direct contact with the defendant.

Customer service centre

A 'one-stop shop' for the majority of court users who visit to pay fines or use support services. The centre's team are trained to provide services for all jurisdictions, making service quicker and easier. This approach is already proving effective, with the Manukau Customer Service Centre assessed as the best in the country in a customer survey.



Triple boost for victim support

Victims' information services • Victims Code • Chief Victims Advisor

A number of recent initiatives highlight the Ministry of Justice's focus on improving services for victims and in particular improving victims' experiences with the justice system.

Improving the support and services available to victims of crime can help reduce the cost and impact of crime on individuals. The effectiveness and efficiency of the justice system are also improved, resulting in cases being resolved more quickly.

Last month the ministry launched a new Victims' Information Service, including a comprehensive website – victimsinfo.govt.nz – and an expanded 24/7 helpline (0800 650 654).

The information service gives people affected by crime quick and easy access to information about support services and the criminal justice system. It also connects victims to services and ensures crisis calls are directed to the correct agency.

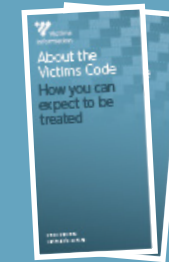
In September, Justice Minister Amy Adams also launched a Victims Code, which sets out how victims of crime can expect to be treated by government agencies and organisations.

A further initiative in the area of victim support was the appointment of Auckland therapist and researcher Dr Kim McGregor, QSO, as Chief Victims Advisor to government.



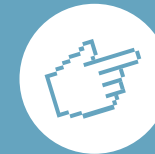
Chief Victims Advisor Dr Kim McGregor, QSO

The Chief Victims Advisor will be responsible for providing the government and the minister with independent advice on legislative, policy and other issues relating to victims of crime.



Victims Code

The Code helps victims to be aware of their rights, improves accessibility to information for victims and makes government agencies more accountable when providing services to victims.



victimsinfo.govt.nz

Since the redeveloped website was launched, the number of users, time spent on the site and the number of page views have all increased.



0800 650 654

Last year the helpline received more than 22,000 calls. In October the 0800 helpline's operating hours were expanded from business hours to 24/7 365 days a year. In the first month of the new service, the helpline received more than 2000 calls and operators answered 89 percent within 30 seconds.

The helpline is the best way for victims to connect with their court victim advisor and other service providers, such as Victim Support. Helpline operators can also ensure that crisis calls from victims are directed to the correct agency.

Time and justice



Timeliness is the Achilles' heel of the justice system – too many people are in the system for too long. It's a challenge for all of us in the justice sector.

We are dependent on each other to make the system work and we need to understand how we can help each other improve the system.

On the timeliness issue, and others, we must continually think about the needs of the users of the system – the public – and question whether we are meeting those needs.

The reality is that for many of the people that come into the court system, it is foreign, antiquated, inaccessible and slow.

It's important to note that many good things are happening. Around 97% of criminal district court cases are dealt with within 12 months.

We have recently entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Corrections to reduce the amount of time taken to provide probation reports, which will help reduce the number of adjournments while waiting for these reports.

Another example of good work is covered later in this newsletter.

Smarter scheduling of court cases is giving a better experience for the hundreds of thousands of people who go through our criminal courts each year.

However, 4000 district court cases are not dealt with within one year. The average participant in a High Court jury trial will wait over 14 months for the trial to conclude.

Reducing that situation to a personal level, would you be happy if your son, daughter, parent or sibling had to wait 18 months for their case to be resolved – whether they were a defendant, witness or victim?

Sometimes when you are working hard within the system you can get used to its slow pace. Trials are complicated. There are cases to develop, evidence to collect, arguments to perfect, people to get together.

But the court system's legitimacy depends on the public's continued acceptance and support of it. And timeliness is an important component of that.

The solution is for all of us to recognise where we contribute to delays, and then look to see how we can fix them on our own and together.

This can be done. In my own time, I've seen that we've got more than enough skill, experience and passion to win this challenge.

*Andrew Bridgman
Secretary for Justice
and Chief Executive*

Addressing family violence

The Ministry of Justice is heavily involved in new efforts to ensure that family violence and sexual violence services make the biggest possible difference to people's lives.



IN 2014
POLICE
responded to
>100,000
family violence
incidents



IN 2013
children
WERE PRESENT AT
over 63%
OF ALL family
violence incidents
ATTENDED BY
POLICE



ON AVERAGE, EVERY YEAR

14 women, 7 men and 8 children
are killed by a family member

New Zealand has some of the highest reported rates of domestic violence and child abuse in the developed world. Nearly half of all homicides and reported violent crimes are family-violence related.

A cross-government work programme led by Justice and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) announced by Justice Minister Amy Adams and Social Development Minister Anne Tolley in July, aims to ensure victims are safer, improve services and change long-standing behaviours and attitudes and to develop a plan of action.

Ruth Fairhall, General Manager Courts and Justice Services Policy, says the new programme will look at how government agencies work together and how services could be improved and better coordinated.

'A recent analysis estimated the government currently spends about \$1.4 billion per year addressing family violence and sexual violence. Most of that money is being spent on core services – such as Police callouts, injury treatment and holding

offenders to account – that deal with the aftermath of incidents. Only a small proportion is spent on specialist services, prevention and early intervention.'

The analysis also shows that while good work is being done, there may be gaps and inconsistencies in the type and quality of help people are getting.

The work programme will:

- focus on reducing the long-term harm of family violence
- gain a better understanding of the current gaps and duplication in services, as well as look at what initiatives are delivering results, so that better investment decisions can be made
- determine how services are linked together across government, with a view to appointing lead agencies to focus on particular areas of work
- ensure services are focused on clients' needs.

For more information see the *Reducing family violence* page on the ministry's website.



Minister of Justice
Hon Amy Adams



Submissions in for review of family violence law

Nearly 500 submissions have been received after a comprehensive review of family violence was announced by Justice Minister Amy Adams.

A discussion document released by the ministry in August took a hard look at the way the law prevents and responds to family violence. It proposed strengthening legislation, including changes to the Domestic Violence Act 1995, the Care of Children Act 2004, the Crimes Act 1961, the Bail Act 2000 and the Sentencing Act 2002.

The ministry is currently analysing submissions and plans to have new legislation in the House before the end of next year.

Help make our website better

We would love your feedback on how we can make our website better. Please take a look at our test website at www.beta.justice.govt.nz and complete the survey.

We're working to make it easier for people to find the information they need at a time and in a way that works for them. We had over 3.5 million visitors to our website last year. 30% of these people used a smart phone or tablet to view the site, but our site is currently very hard to view on these.

This is just one of the projects we're working on to provide modern, accessible, people-centred justice services.



Family violence summary report being trialled

A 3-month trial currently underway in the Christchurch and Porirua district courts will provide judges at bail hearings with a report outlining defendants' family violence history. The Ministry of Justice and Police have worked with the judiciary to develop the *Family violence summary report*.

The report includes information on whether Police have been called to family violence incidents involving the defendants, and whether they have been served with or breached a policy safety order or protection order.



Home Safety Service rolled out nationwide

Up to 1000 victims of family violence will be better protected with the rollout of the National Home Safety Service.

In July the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges was awarded a 3-year contract to provide nationwide service. The national service builds on a pilot programme that has been running in Auckland since 2008 and more recently in Christchurch and Tauranga.

The Ministry of Justice-funded service will assist up to 400 victims of family violence a year, and up to 600 children, to remain in their homes with a significantly reduced risk of serious physical harm or violence.

The service provides practical help, such as replacing a glass panelled door with a solid one, installing security lights, cutting back vegetation or replacing locks and repairing broken windows, as well as providing security advice.

Prior to the pilot programme, many family violence victims had to move house and either they or their children suffered injuries from offenders. After the security upgrades, no victims reported any injuries by offenders, and they also reported improvements in well being without the fear and threat of further violence and intimidation.

Smarter scheduling in district courts opens way for further gains

Improved scheduling of court cases has led to a better experience for the hundreds of thousands of people who go through our criminal courts each year.

Real-time scheduling also paves the way for future developments, such as providing Police and Corrections better access to up-to-date court schedules and first-appearance availability.

The improvements are an important part of the ministry's plans to modernise our courts and tribunals system, making it faster and more efficient for court users.

Previously district court users were required to come to court in the morning and wait for their case to be called – sometimes for up to seven hours. This caused additional stress and delay for victims of crime and their family members, as well as their friends who came to support them. It was also not a good use of the time for Corrections, Police and lawyers.

With time blocking, court users, rather than being asked to come to court for a full day, are instead asked to come in for a block of time. For example, a district court might schedule a day's sentencing events into three 75-minute blocks. People are asked to arrive at court by the start of the time block which their event is assigned to. Crown sentencing, case reviews and jury trial call-over events are now scheduled into time blocks in district courts across the country.

Time blocking has been made easier by a substantial upgrade to the system used to schedule cases. Now a time and date for the next hearing can be set before people leave the courtroom.

Text reminders for court appearances

In November, the Ministry of Justice started sending text message reminders for court appearances.

Ministry research shows that more than 90% of customers believe automated text reminders will be useful.

Defendants can sign up for text message reminders at the court counter, as part of the bail bond process, by calling 0800 COURTS (0800 268 787) or online at justice.govt.nz/courts/district-court/text-message-reminders

Text reminders of the date, time and location are sent the afternoon before court hearings. People can opt out of the service at any time and their information won't be shared.

The ministry plans to extend the service to family and civil court users and disputes court users in the near future.



Motunui panels home after a long struggle

The return to Taranaki of the Motunui panels earlier this year represented the successful conclusion to a 40-year campaign to have the taonga brought home.

The Ministry of Justice provides a range of support and operational activity relating to Treaty of Waitangi settlement processes, including negotiations for the settlement of historical claims.

The 5 carved panels from a pataka, or storehouse, were carved by Te Ātiawa carvers 200 years ago and hidden in a swamp in Motunui, Taranaki, during a period of intertribal warfare. Discovered in 1972, they were smuggled out of New Zealand soon afterward by an art dealer and later sold to international antiquities collector George Ortiz.

For the next 40 years, the Crown and Te Ātiawa tried to have the panels returned to their rightful home. The Attorney-General took a case to the UK to the House of Lords, a case that helped spur the development of the 1996 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, which allows a person to sue in a foreign court for the return of stolen cultural objects.

New Zealand became a signatory to the UNIDROIT Convention in 2006 with the passing of the Protected Objects Amendment Act.

The return of the Motunui panels to Taranaki was the result of careful relationship building and reconciliation between the Crown, Te Ātiawa iwi and the family of George Ortiz. Members of the Ortiz family travelled from Switzerland to the Te Ātiawa deed of settlement signing ceremony in August 2014 and witnessed the signatories to the deed.

The Motunui panels are now being held for display at Taranaki's Puke Ariki Museum. The precious taonga are cared for by a trust with members from Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Rahiri, the museum and the Government.

Through the Waitangi Tribunal, the Office of Treaty Settlements and the Māori Land Court, the ministry manages Māori land, delivers registry services, manages hearings, provides research services and judicial support and maintains records of title and ownership information of Māori land.





Harmful digital communications

Information to help people understand the 'safe harbour' option in the Harmful Digital Communications Act is available on the ministry's website and YouTube channel.

Online content hosts, which includes people who run websites and apps that others can post to, may be held legally responsible if their platforms are used to bully, harass or defame others.

Under the Act's safe harbour provision, online content hosts can't be prosecuted if they use a specific process to follow up on complaints about harmful or illegal content posted by others.

The ministry's guidance - available at justice.govt.nz/safeharbour - includes an animated video that explains safe harbour clearly and simply in a format online audiences can easily digest and share.



Court AVL network completed

The Dunedin courthouse has become the 18th and final court to connect to the audio-visual link (AVL) network.

The \$27.8 million upgrade and expansion of AVL throughout New Zealand was a joint initiative between the Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Justice. There are also 13 prisons online.

The technology allows prisoners and defendants remanded in custody to appear in the court without leaving jail, increasing safety and security for the public and court users.

About 40,000 remand court appearances are made each year and in the 12 months to April 2015, more than 6500 such appearances were made using AVL.



Crime continues to fall

The 3rd New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (NZCASS) was released last month, showing personal and household crime has gone down since the previous 2009 survey.

The NZCASS, managed by the Ministry of Justice with the help of a range of contracted providers, is the country's most comprehensive victimisation survey, gathering information on personal and household offences.

More information about the NZCASS survey and its findings can be found at justice.govt.nz/crime-and-safety-survey



New anti-money laundering policy

The Ministry of Justice will start formulating new anti-money laundering (AML) policy early next year.

During this phase two of the AML reforms, the ministry will solicit feedback from the public and private sectors.

The reforms, along with the passing of the Organised Crime and Anti-corruption Legislation Bill, will further strengthen the ability of authorities to respond to money laundering, organised crime and other illicit activities.



Defibrillators soon for all courts

The Ministry of Justice has bought 70 defibrillators to distribute to district and high courts, high courts and special jurisdictions throughout the country.

'The rollout is an important part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to ensure the health and safety of people working in or visiting our buildings,' says Fraser Gibbs, General Manager Commercial and Property.



Legislation update

Bill to better support child witnesses and sexual violence victims underway

Legislation to reduce unnecessary trauma and improve the experience of victims in the courtroom is underway as the Evidence Amendment Bill goes through Parliament. The Bill includes three core changes: improving the court process for child witnesses, enhancing court process for complainants in sexual offence cases and introducing safeguards for video record evidence of vulnerable witnesses. The Bill passed its first reading in July and the select committee report is due by early January.

Supervision regime for deported offenders introduced

A new law establishing a new supervision regime for offenders who return to New Zealand after serving a prison sentence overseas was recently passed by Parliament with widespread support. Under the Returning Offenders (Management and Information) Act, such offenders will be subject to the same sort of oversight as offenders who served a similar sentence here. The new supervision regime is a key measure in a trio of initiatives, which includes a register to track and monitor deported offenders, and a trans-Tasman information sharing arrangement that provides New Zealand authorities with details about offenders who are returning from Australia. A select committee will review the regime within 18 months.

Organised crime, corruption laws strengthened

New Zealand's organised crime and corruption laws are now stronger thanks to new legislation that tackles illicit activities such as money laundering, bribery and drug-related crime. The Organised Crime and Anti-corruption Legislation Bill, which amends 15 Acts, was passed by Parliament and most of its measures enacted in early November. The measures keep New Zealand in step with international best practice in efforts to crack down on these growing problems, both here and abroad.

Expert group advising on trust reforms

Some of New Zealand's top experts on trusts are contributing their knowledge and experience to assist the government's reform of trust law.

The 7-strong Trusts Reference Group will build on the Law Commission's 2013 Review of the law of trusts: A Trusts Act for New Zealand. The government accepted the Law Commission's recommendation for a new Trusts Act, but said further analysis of the other recommendations was required. The reference group has been considering those remaining recommendations and any other matters that will determine the content of a new Trusts Act.

There are an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 trusts operating in New Zealand.