



# Justice Matters

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## DELIVERING QUALITY SERVICES

Welcome to the first issue of Justice Matters for 2017. Chief Executive Andrew Bridgman discusses priorities for the Ministry which are ultimately aimed at delivering better outcomes for New Zealanders. Our new Associate Minister Mark Mitchell talks about what's being done to address youth crime, and we feature changes that will make a real difference for New Zealanders now and in the future.



# Modern, accessible justice services for New Zealanders

ANDREW BRIDGMAN • SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE



*The Ministry continues to deliver on its strategic goal to provide better outcomes for New Zealanders by having modern, accessible, people-centred justice services. As we continue to drive improvement and change across the Ministry, I want to highlight the areas we are focusing on this year.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Bridgman".

## MODERNISING COURTS

Modernising the court system is a priority. New Zealanders expect timeliness, accessibility, transparency and consistency in their justice system so we're transforming it from one that focuses on legal processes to one focused on people and their needs.

Our approach to modernisation centres around 4 goals, which are all linked and driven by our aim to deliver modern, high-quality services to New Zealanders. Specifically, we want to:

- reduce the time it takes to hear and resolve matters
- improve the customer's experience
- simplify and standardise procedures to improve productivity and efficiency
- reduce dependence on physical location.

Our process of continuous improvement requires changes to legislation, infrastructure, systems and processes while, at the same time, respecting New Zealand's legal and constitutional heritage.

On the legislation front, on 1 March new judicature modernisation measures came into force. These make it easier for people to understand the law and help our courts to function more smoothly, paving the way for greater use of online services (see page 7).

## PAPERLESS COURTS

By making better use of technology we can offer our services in ways that customers expect, such as allowing them to transact with us online.

The journey to paperless courts is no easy feat but we are making some inroads. Last year, for instance, we introduced wifi in higher courts enabling people like the judiciary, counsel, self-representing litigants and our justice sector agency colleagues to use mobile devices in courts.

This year we're working on an enterprise content management system which is a critical tool to enable us to have a modern digital workplace. Among other things, it would mean faster processes, stronger security, better version control and be readily searchable. In the coming months we will trial the new system in parts of the business.

## DATA INSIGHT

Another priority is to unleash the potential of data to help us better understand how our business is working and inform what we do. Data gives us a greater ability to not only evaluate our programmes, but also to decide when and where to intervene and who to direct those programmes toward.

Whether it's about justice sector interventions and investment to reduce crime and help victims or ways to improve the timeliness and quality of court administrative processes, we need to better harness data.

## TELLING OUR STORY

Most people know about our role in running New Zealand's courts, but they know less about our work on policy, Treaty Settlements, supporting major legislation and overseeing 29 tribunals.

Our work is vitally important, but often it flies beneath the radar. We're now more invested than ever in telling our story because it helps New Zealanders understand what we do and how we can help them.

Last year we launched our redesigned website and ventured into social media via Twitter and LinkedIn which together have nearly 9000 followers. We're currently looking at ways to enhance our internal communications.

## A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Good communication within a workplace builds trust among employees, leading to increased productivity and morale, and that's got to be good for business.

I want the Ministry to continue to be a great place to work – a place where our people feel valued, connected, part of a strong, positive culture and motivated to play their part in the Ministry's success.

But to continue to deliver better results for New Zealanders, we also need to work closely and collaborate with others – and that's where the judiciary, the legal profession, our justice sector partners and others play such an important role.

I look forward to continuing to work with you all throughout the year as we work towards improving the quality of our services for our customers. ■



Read about the people and initiatives that are making a difference for our customers.

This collection of stories from our courts and other justice services highlights ways our people and the judiciary are working together to achieve better outcomes for our customers. Our courts and the way we deliver justice is important to communities. People need to see and believe that the system is fair.

The book showcases innovative responses to local issues as well as initiatives rolling out across the country as part of our modernisation strategy. The common theme is people.

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To read the book, go to [About the Ministry > News & Media](#) at [JUSTICE.GOV.TZ](http://JUSTICE.GOV.TZ)

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# Message from our Associate Minister

**MARK MITCHELL**  
**ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF JUSTICE**



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*At the end of last year, I was honoured to be appointed by the Prime Minister as Associate Minister of Justice. It's an area of government that I am passionate about, and I am thoroughly enjoying working with our professional and dedicated team at the Ministry of Justice.*

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Before entering politics, I enjoyed a career in the New Zealand Police as a member of the Police Dog Section and Armed Offenders Squad. This meant I was able to experience first-hand how our justice system works and some of the challenges that we face.

I was also lucky enough to be part of a small team responsible for re-establishing the court and justice systems in Iraq in 2002. I worked with justice officials from Denmark, the United Kingdom and the United States in what was both a challenging but very rewarding programme.

This work reinforced for me that we can be justly proud of the fact that we are world leaders in terms of our high standards across our entire justice system. One of the reasons for this is we constantly challenge ourselves on how to be even better.

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As the Associate Minister, one of my top priorities is addressing youth crime. As part of that process, I am working closely with our Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) team to refresh, identify and capture the real opportunities that exist inside this programme. Seven government agencies are involved in delivering YCAP, and are working together to provide better outcomes for young people and contribute towards keeping our communities safe.

Keeping young people out of our justice system has long term benefits for all Kiwis.

I look forward to working with and supporting our Justice Minister Amy Adams, and working with all of you on our shared goal of continuing to strengthen our justice sector. ■



## BILL TO STRENGTHEN FAMILY VIOLENCE LAWS INTRODUCED

The Family and Whānau Violence Legislation Bill has been introduced to Parliament. The Bill amends the Domestic Violence Act 1995 and other legislation. The proposed changes will strengthen civil and criminal laws, and support agencies to work together better and intervene earlier to stop abuse and get people the help they need.

Announcing the Bill's introduction, Justice Minister Amy Adams said it is an important part of building a new way of dealing with family violence. The proposed reforms include:

- ensuring all family violence is clearly identified and risk information is properly shared
- making it easier to apply for a Protection Order (for example, by allowing others to apply on a victim's behalf)
- making offending while on a Protection Order a specific aggravating factor in sentencing
- enabling the setting of codes of practice across the sector.

The Bill is a key element of the Ministerial Work Programme on Family and Sexual Violence, which is focused on building an integrated and effective family violence response system. The Ministry led the development of the measures in the Bill, which were informed by nearly 500 submissions received during public consultation in 2015.

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For more information go to [Justice sector & policy > Key initiatives > Reducing family and sexual violence > Safer sooner](#) at [JUSTICE.GOV.TZ](https://www.justice.govt.nz)

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## PILOT SERVICE DESIGNED TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

The Ministry of Justice is piloting a service to help keep children and adults safe after separation in the wake of family violence.

The supervised handover service provides a safe, neutral venue for transferring children between parents.

General Manager Provider and Community Services Warren Fraser says children can be deeply affected by conflict between their parents or caregivers.

'By removing the need for parents or caregivers to meet when children are handed over, this service aims to reduce the risk of potential conflict,' says Warren.

Family Focus Rotorua and Barnardos have been contracted to deliver the service in Rotorua and Whanganui, respectively, until the end of February 2018.

It is a free service that is initially available in cases where the Family Court has imposed protective conditions on a Parenting Order under section 51 or section 48 of the Care of Children Act 2004. The parties may be referred to the service at the discretion of the court.

The pilot is part of the Ministerial Work Programme on Family and Sexual Violence.

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For more information go to [Justice sector & policy > Key initiatives > Reducing family & sexual violence > Work programme](#) at [JUSTICE.GOV.TZ](https://www.justice.govt.nz)

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## VICTIMS SATISFIED WITH RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

A new survey shows the vast majority of victims of crime who take part in restorative justice conferences are satisfied with the process.

Restorative justice conferences are face-to-face meetings where victims can tell offenders how the crime affected them and where offenders can take personal responsibility for their actions.

General Manager Provider and Community Services Warren Fraser says the 2016 Victim Satisfaction Survey showed 84% of victims surveyed were satisfied with the restorative justice conference they took part in, up from 82% in 2011. He says the survey also found that 81% would likely recommend restorative justice to others in similar circumstances.

‘When coupled with the results from last year’s reoffending study, the survey shows restorative justice is working for both victims and offenders by reducing reoffending and the effect on victims,’ says Warren.

‘It’s also encouraging that 86% of family violence victims were satisfied with restorative justice. This compares with 77% for victims of other crime.’

The survey involved interviews with 329 victims who took part in restorative justice processes during 2015.

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To read the survey report go to [About the Ministry > Lawyers & service providers > Service providers > Restorative justice providers](#) at [JUSTICE.GOV.T.NZ](http://JUSTICE.GOV.T.NZ)

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## LEGAL AID LAWYERS DELIVER HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

People who receive legal aid are getting high quality service from their lawyers. Every year, quality and value audits are carried out on legal aid lawyers. Findings from the latest audit of 76 lawyers are published in the report *High quality legal aid service: Practice themes from 2015-16 audits*. It rated 86% of lawyers audited as providing service that was acceptable or above, a score that has steadily improved from 77% four years ago.

Ministry of Justice National Service Delivery Group Manager Bryre Patchell says it is great to see the high levels of commitment and service from legal aid lawyers to getting the best outcomes for their clients.

‘Legal aid is an important part of New Zealand’s justice system,’ says Bryre.

‘It helps people resolve legal problems that may go to court and makes sure they get excellent legal representation despite not being able to afford a lawyer.’

‘The results show lawyers are delivering great service to their legal aid clients, and are taking the time to understand their issues and legal situation. The quality and clarity of file documentation and clear, full communication really keeps clients informed every step of the way. This high quality service from lawyers means the legal aid service can really deliver for New Zealanders.’

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For the full report go to [About the Ministry > News & media > News](#) at [JUSTICE.GOV.T.NZ](http://JUSTICE.GOV.T.NZ)

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## EXTRA MINISTRY FUNDING TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Ministry of Justice will receive a funding boost of \$51 million over the next 4 years as part of a \$503 million Safer Communities package announced by the Government in February.

General Manager Sector Insights Dean Rutherford says the funding will enable the Ministry to meet any future demands that will arise from an increase in police numbers included in the package.

‘The additional funding means that we’ll be able to continue to provide top quality services to our customers,’ says Dean.

The funding for the Ministry comprises:

- \$21 million to support the District Court to handle more cases
- a \$16 million increase in legal aid
- \$9 million for more judges
- \$5 million for the collection and enforcement of fines and civil debt services.

As well as the Ministry, the Department of Corrections will receive an additional \$64 million for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and more staff. ■

*PHOTO Dean Rutherford*



## NEW LEGISLATION TO HELP COURTS MODERNISE

Legislation to modernise New Zealand’s courts came into effect on 1 March 2017.

The legislation updates many laws that underpin the court system, some of which were 100 years old.

General Manager Service Development Sheridan Smith says the new legislation provides a platform for further modernising the courts, for example, by paving the way for greater use of electronic technology.

‘The results will make the justice system more people-centred and accessible by improving the transparency, flexibility and relevance of court processes for court users,’ says Sheridan.

The main changes from 1 March 2017 include:

- creating a single District Court of New Zealand from 58 individual courts. This doesn’t immediately change how the courts operate in practice but will support greater consistency in the future
- allowing the District Court to hear higher value civil disputes by increasing the monetary threshold from \$200,000 to \$350,000
- increasing the new minimum threshold to transfer civil proceedings to the High Court from \$50,000 to \$90,000
- paving the way for court processes to be digitised. ■





## MINISTRY FINALIST FOR GREATER USE OF TE REO

The Ministry of Justice was a finalist in the ‘Te Reo Māori Central Government Champion of the Year’ award at Ngā Tohu Reo Māori (National Māori Language Awards), held late last year.

The finalist nomination recognises the Ministry’s work to support more te reo Māori in all District Court sessions across the country.

This includes court sessions with Justices of the Peace and Community Magistrates – over 220,000 sessions a year.

Director Māori Strategy Tony Fisher says it was a real honour for the Ministry to have been selected as a finalist for the awards.

‘A lot of effort has been put in across our courts and tribunals to increase the use of te reo Māori as part of how we work,’ says Tony.

‘Special thanks to the working group and te reo Māori champions who led this initiative and to our people for embracing it.’

Our greater use of te reo builds on the greetings that were already in place in the High Court and the earlier successful use of te reo in the District Court.

The Ministry acknowledges the support of Chief Judge Jan-Marie Doogue and the guidance of Judge Heemi Taumaunu, who were instrumental in leading the implementation within different courts. ■

*PHOTO Tony Fisher*



## INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SUCCESS

Canadian experts have tapped New Zealand’s know-how in restorative justice as they explore ways to improve their country’s criminal justice system.

Hayley MacKenzie, Team Leader Provider and Community Services, was invited to present at the Ninth National Symposium on Reinventing Criminal Justice in Vancouver, Canada in January.

‘The organisers and the audience were keen to learn from our experiences as they design and develop their own system,’ says Hayley.

Restorative justice meetings provide an opportunity for victims to tell offenders how the crime affected them, and for offenders to take responsibility for their actions.

In her presentation, Hayley talked about the legislation, research and service delivery standards that support the system and that have helped deliver good results.

For example, data shows restorative justice lowers reoffending rates and a large majority of victims are satisfied.

‘The delegates were impressed with the positive outcomes we’d achieved and really saw New Zealand as a world leader in restorative justice,’ says Hayley.

The symposium was organised by the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, an independent international institute based in Vancouver, Canada. ■