



NEW ZEALAND
PAROLE BOARD

Annual Report 2021 – 2022

Te whanaketanga o te whakaaro:
Change the mindset, the person will follow.



This design reflects on changing of pathways, individual growth, thus encouraging whānau growth. This talks to the many pathways one can walk in life; helping one to change their mindset is a major way to help an individual walk a new path.

Chairperson's foreword

On behalf of the New Zealand Parole Board, it is my pleasure to present this annual report.

This year marked 20 years since the establishment of the New Zealand Parole Board in June 2002. It's a time to both reflect and look to our future, as we continue our commitment to the safety of our communities and the successful reintegration of prisoners back into society.

It has been another busy year for the New Zealand Parole Board. During 2021/22, the Board conducted more than 8,816 hearings and saw 4,344 offenders.

Each week there are at least four Boards, and sometimes five or six, running across the country, seeing between 10 – 12 offenders each day. At each hearing the Board considers a range of reports, information, and submissions and in every instance, the safety of the community is most important.

You'll also read about the complexities of Extended Board and some of the different types of hearings the Board conducts – such as Extended Supervision Order and Recall hearings.

A report on what has happened with the work of the Board in 2021/22 would not be complete without mentioning COVID-19. COVID-19 has created significant stress within the Corrections prison system. This is understandable. Staff have been ill with COVID-19 and prisoners have been ill with COVID-19. The Board has also had its own stresses created by COVID-19. Administrators working for the Board have also had COVID-19 as have a number of those responsible for providing information to the Board. The Board, however, has continued to have hearings using audio visual links and, since August last year, Microsoft Teams to connect with prisons.

We are proud to say that we have not missed a hearing because of COVID-19 although at times we have had to reduce the number of Board members hearing a case to two and sometimes, in extreme circumstances, only one member authorised by appropriate legislation.

We know from feedback that offenders have been grateful that they have been able to be further considered for parole and talk to the Board about their progress in prison. Progress for offenders in prison has been restricted because of COVID-19. A number of the rehabilitative and reintegrative courses ordinarily available, have not been able to be provided to offenders. So, it has been a stressful time for all. However, the prisons around New Zealand are slowly allowing people to return and the rehabilitative and reintegrative programmes are slowly resuming. The work of the Board will be enhanced by the completion of these programmes by offenders.

I'd like to thank the administrative support team who work hard behind the scenes to help the Board do what we do. Thank you.

Finally, this year we farewelled Neil Maclean QSO, Phil Gittos QSO, Judge Jan Walker, Roku Mihinui, and Sir Kim Workman QSO as Board Members. I want to sincerely thank each of them for the significant contribution they have made during their time on the Board.



Sir Ron Young
Chairperson

Hearings through Microsoft Teams

As the Omicron variant became present in the community, the Parole Board had to adapt and ensure the health and wellbeing of everyone involved in the parole process remained a priority.

Using AVL connections and Microsoft Teams meant the Board could continue to see all offenders who were due their hearing and minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19-19 for all those involved - Board members, prisoners, supporters, victims, and support staff.

With Microsoft Teams the Hearing Managers are able to create breakout rooms to enable the Board members to deliberate in private before rejoining the main meeting to announce their decision.

Since introducing the platform for hearings from 18 August 2021, 7,635 hearings have been conducted using Microsoft Teams.



Photo: Members of the Extended Board use Teams’ breakout rooms function to discuss a decision.

New Zealand Parole Board Membership

Chairperson		
Sir Ron Young		
Panel convenors		
Serena Bailey	Judge Louis Bidois	Judge Charles Blackie
Tania Williams-Blyth	Martha Coleman	Judge Michael Crosbie
Judge Geoffrey Ellis	Judge Jane Lovell-Smith	Annabel Markham
Judge David Mather	Mary More	Judge Eddie Paul
Alan Ritchie	Kathryn Snook	Judge Arthur Tompkins
Neville Trendle	Sir Ron Young – Chairperson	
Forensic psychiatrists		
Associate Professor Philip Brinded	Dr Jeremy Skipworth	
Community members		
Chester Borrows	Karen Coutts	Greg Coyle
Dr Sally Davis	Materoa Dodd	Paul Elenio
Alan Hackney	Chris King	Marian Kleist
Bryan McMurray	Michael Quigg	Associate Professor Khylee Quince
Sam Perry	Fiona Pimm	Campbell Roberts
Paula Rose QSO	Tania Sharkey	Alistair Spierling
Waimarama Taumaunu	Lawrence Tawera	Carolina Tiumalu

Year in review

1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022

This year has seen a reduction in Parole Board hearings (9,157 in 2020/21 and 8,816 in 2021/22). A likely reflection of the reduction in overall prison numbers. This has been most welcome for the Board. It has enabled the Board to ensure that further time is given to consideration of each offender, their needs and society's safety.

Hearings in total

8,816

Offenders seen

4,344



Photo: Panel members Chester Borrows, Tania Williams-Blyth (Convenor) and Karen Coutts arrive at Te Au Rere a te Tonga in Palmerston North. This visit, in July 2021, was the first time the Board had conducted a hearing at a youth justice residence.



Parole hearings

Total parole hearings	5,716
Hearings for offenders on determinate sentences	5,152
Hearings for offenders on indeterminate sentences	564
Parole approved	1,578
Parole granted for offenders on determinate sentences	1,485
Parole granted for offenders on indeterminate sentences	93
Offenders released on conditions on completion of their sentence.	506
<i>Their sentence has expired therefore these offenders cannot be recalled to prison for breaches.</i>	



Recalls

While the vast majority of the Board's work is considering whether to grant parole, it also has significant other work. The Board heard 533 applications to recall offenders from parole to prison and granted 377 of those applications.

Recall applications made by the Department of Corrections	533
Recall applications for offenders on determinate sentences	467
Number granted	338
Recall applications for offenders on indeterminate sentences	66
Number granted	39

Applications for recalls are triggered by Community Corrections. Typically, an offender is either not coping on parole, not complying with their special conditions or in some cases they have committed further crime. The Board considers, within hours, any application for a recall from Community Corrections and may grant an interim recall application. If it does so, then a warrant is issued for the offender's arrest and they are taken back to prison. A full hearing is held within a month to decide whether or not the recall should be made final.



Monitoring hearings

The Board likes to understand how offenders are coping in the community after release. The Parole Act 2002 allows the Board to monitor an offender's progress on parole for up to one year after parole is granted.

Monitoring hearings enable the Board to assess the offenders' progress on parole	588
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Last year, we saw 588 offenders who had been granted parole, on monitoring hearings, to see how they had managed their parole. It is also an opportunity, if the Board is concerned, to recall an offender, although a rare event. Monitoring hearings give the Board an opportunity to talk to an offender and their probation officer to understand what is working and what might need further support in the community.

Note: It is possible that in one day some offenders may be seen for multiple events, for example a post release progress report, followed by an application to vary conditions and then an application to discharge conditions. For reporting purposes the Board treats each of these decisions as a discrete hearing.





Varying conditions

Applications to vary parole conditions	193
Successful applications	150



Discharging conditions

Applications to discharge parole conditions	141 applications
Successful applications	129 approved



Varying and discharging conditions combined

In total, in 2021/22 we varied or discharged 279 special conditions of parole. We did so to ensure that the parole conditions better reflected the offender's risk and public safety.

Applications to discharge and vary parole conditions	334 applications
Successful applications	279 approved



Extended Supervision Orders

Applications by Corrections for the Board to impose special conditions	49
Biennial reviews of ESO conditions	60



Compassionate release

Offenders who are seriously ill and unlikely to recover can apply to the Board for an early compassionate release. These are always difficult decisions. If risk can be managed in the community and then the Board's preference is always to safely release an offender who has such a serious illness and where recovery is unlikely. Often offenders are close to death when released. We received 11 such applications last year and granted six.

Offenders who have given birth to a child in prison can also apply for compassionate release. The Board received no applications on these grounds in 2021/22.

Applications received	11
Applications approved	6



Requests for an earlier hearing

Where an offender appears before the Board for consideration of parole, the Board would typically set an offender a series of tasks. For example, psychological counselling, and alcohol and drug programme counselling, to be undertaken in prison to reduce their risk and to develop a release plan for a safe release into the community. Sometimes, the offender completes these tasks earlier than anticipated. In such cases, the Board can see offenders earlier than anticipated to consider parole. In the last year we considered 208 such applications and granted early hearings in 95 such cases.

Applications for an earlier hearing under Section 26 of the Parole Act	208
Cases heard earlier than scheduled	95



Reviews

Offenders can request to have their parole decision reviewed under 67 of the Act.

Applications to the review Board decisions during the year	62
Decisions that were then amended, quashed or referred to the Board for reconsideration	6



Revocation orders

The Board may revoke or amend a direction to release an offender at any time before parole commences. If a decision is revoked another hearing must be held as practical. Revocations remain higher than previous years because of COVID-19 and the cancellation of deportations due to flight availability and other operational matters.

Decisions revoked this year	53
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Parole postponement

The Board can postpone a hearing for a maximum of five years where it is satisfied that, in the absence of any significant change in their circumstances, an offender will not be suitable for release when they are next due to be considered for parole.

Parole postponements this year	0
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Victim submissions

Verbal submissions made to the Board by registered victims.

Verbal submissions made this year	216
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Extended Board

Every two months, the Board convenes an Extended Board to consider parole for offenders serving life sentences or preventive detention.

The panel for an Extended Board has four Board members, instead of the usual three, and includes a forensic psychiatrist.

As Chairperson, Sir Ron Young generally leads the Extended Board hearings.

“Our Extended Board allows for greater oversight over the more complex prisoners that come before the New Zealand Parole Board,” Sir Ron says.

“The prisoners who come before the Extended Board have often been in custody a lot longer than those that appear before the other boards. This means more careful and considerate reintegration is required for these prisoners when we are thinking about release back into the community.

Because of these complexities, Extended Board hearings are scheduled for 45 minutes, rather than the standard 30 minutes. This allows the Board to have a more in-depth conversation and get a greater understanding of the prisoner’s risk and reintegration needs.”

Prisoners that come before the Extended Board are located across Aotearoa. Therefore, the panel on Extended Board is required to see prisoners in all prisons so coordination of hearings is key.

During 2021/22, the Extended Board convened 815 times and saw 491 offenders.

“Our extended board allows for greater oversight over the more complex prisoners that come before the New Zealand Parole Board.”

Sir Ron Young, Chairperson, New Zealand Parole Board

Extended Supervision Order hearings

The Board has a statutory obligation to set and review special conditions of those people subject to Extended Supervision Orders.

Extended Supervision Orders are imposed by the Court where an offender has committed a serious sexual or violent offence (and has finished or is about to finish their sentence of imprisonment) and where the person has a “pervasive pattern of serious sexual or violent offending” and is at high risk of sexual offending or very high risk of violent offending.

The Board has a wide variety of special conditions it can impose on such people. The person can be subject to intensive monitoring, which can require 24-hour supervision in the community. Other special conditions are intended to reduce risk of reoffending to help an offender reintegrate into the community.

Extended Supervision Orders can last for up to 10 years and the orders can be renewed for up to a further 10 years. The offenders subject to Extended Supervision Orders often have complex needs. The Board is, therefore, required to make careful assessments of risk, together with ensuring proper rehabilitation and reintegration is provided to support a safe return to the community. After the special conditions are imposed, the Board reviews the most intrusive conditions every two years to assess their continuing need.

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www.paroleboard.govt.nz
info@paroleboard.govt.nz