



NEW ZEALAND
PAROLE BOARD

Annual Report 2022–2023

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. Thank you for your interest in our work.

During the 2022/23 year the Parole Board conducted a total 8,045 hearings. These hearings involved 4,062 offenders serving long-term sentences – this is a sentence in excess of two years imprisonment. The Parole Board does not have any involvement with offenders who are sentenced to two years or less or community-based sentences.

In comparison, in the 2021-22 year the Board conducted 8,816 hearing and saw 4,344 offenders. The slight drop in hearings held and offenders seen in the last 12 months – down 8.75% and 6.49% respectively – is consistent with the decline in the prison population seen in recent years.

Each week there are at least four Boards, and sometimes more, 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.

In last year's report I spoke about the Board's response to COVID-19 and the pride we took in being able to say that we had not missed a single hearing because of COVID. We have maintained that record in the last 12 months, with hearings continuing to be conducted via Microsoft Teams. Indeed, since we introduced the platform in August 2021, a total of 15,680 hearings have been conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Having said that, I know Parole Board members are looking forward to the time we can returned to face-to-face hearings in prisons again. Such a move needs to be carefully managed in collaboration with the Department and other key stakeholders, but we hope will be achieved in the next reporting year.

As always, I'd like to acknowledge the Parole Board administrative team who work so hard behind the scenes to help the Board do what we do. Their work is appreciated.

The standard of support the Parole Board receives takes on even greater significance when you appreciate that the structure, processes, systems, and tools the team have to use have remained largely static for several years and are increasingly outdated.

I am therefore delighted to report that work is now well underway to develop a new operating model that will enable the administrative team to move away from a range of manual, time-consuming processes to focus on high-value, high impact interactions and activities.

The key programme workstreams are:

1. Victims Improvement - focuses on improving the victim experience when engaging with the NZPB team and providing training and support for the team who engage regularly with victims.
2. Digital workstream - involves the procurement and implementation of fit-for-purpose technology.
3. Member technology - includes the rollout of safe and secure devices to improve the user experience of Parole Board members.

The indicative implementation timeframe for the new operating model is mid-2024 and I look forward to providing an update on progress in next year's Annual Report.

Indeed, significant progress has already been achieved in the victim improvement workstream, with the updating of a suite of information material for those affected by crime. This work has been welcomed by advocates and victims and is profiled later in this report.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank my fellow Board members for their work and the dedication and care they bring to their decision-making every day. During the year we welcomed new appointments Dr Julia Ioane, Richard Marchant and Judge Gus Andrée Wiltens. In turn we farewelled Board members Khylee Quince (2020 -23) and Paula Rose (2014 - 23). My sincere thanks to them for the significant and important contributions they have made during their time on the Board.

Sadly, we also farewelled Board member Chester Borrows, who passed away in February this year. An unapologetic champion for the under-dog, he is greatly missed.

Sir Ron Young
Chairperson



A stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RWY'.

Supporting victims of crime

The Victims improvement workstream in the Parole Board's Future Operating Model programme focuses on improving the experience for a victim/survivor of crime when engaging with the NZPB team.

In the year under review significant progress was made in improving the notification information provided to victims/survivors.

This suite of information includes:

- A notification letter alerting a registered victim/survivor that their offender has an upcoming parole hearing.
- A guidebook explaining the parole process and how to make an oral or written submission to the Board.
- A submission form for making written applications.

The Board engaged with members of the Victim Support Homicide Service team and the Homicide Advisory group, on the rewrite of the letter, submission form and victims booklet.

The insights gained from those workshops proved invaluable in reworking the material to make it more fit for purpose by putting the reader at the centre.

Each of the documents was comprehensively reworked to make the language more accessible, the order the information was presented in less confronting and the look and feel warmer and easier to follow.

Feedback from stakeholders and users has been overwhelmingly positive.

"With these documents it feels that the Parole Board has very much given the victim a voice and considered the victim's role as integral in this part of the justice process. Well done."

"Thank you to the Parole Board whānau. I know change can be challenging and sometimes frustrating. Perhaps you are asking is it worth it? From a whānau member directly impacted by these changes, a huge thank you. I was so moved by the effort and dedication of the team I cried. You have given me hope and made me feel seen and valued. It is the first time a government organisation has made me feel that it knows it is working with human beings not just numbers or statistics. Please know that you are making a difference, small changes mean a lot. We are grateful and acknowledge your hard work."

"On comparing the letter, we received previously, this is well written with the right amount of information. It gives clear information about the Board's role, and it gives the victim a range of resource to make a submission and also a range of support and contact numbers. Well done and yes greatly improved from the earlier letter that victims received."

The Parole Process

a guide for victims/
survivors

How to make a submission
and have your say



New Zealand Parole Board Membership

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

Board membership as at 30 June 2023

Year in review

1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

This year has seen a further reduction in Parole Board hearings (from 8,816 in 2021/22 to 8,045 in 2022/23). The decline parallels the overall reduction in prison numbers in recent years. It enables the Board to ensure that further time is given to consideration of each offender, their needs and society's safety.

Hearings in total

8,045*

Offenders seen

4,062



Parole hearings

Total parole hearings **4,995**

Hearings for offenders on determinate sentences **4,455**

Hearings for offenders on indeterminate sentences **540**

Parole approved **1,048**

Parole granted for offenders on determinate sentences **959**

Parole granted for offenders on indeterminate sentences **89**

Offenders released on conditions on completion of their sentence. **471**

Their sentence has expired therefore these offenders cannot be recalled to prison for breaches.

Note: * This figure includes cases where a person in prison may have two or three hearings recorded against their name even if they only appeared before the Board once. For example, one person may have had a parole hearing (which was declined) and a Sentence Release Date conditions hearing at the same time. This is recorded as two hearings. With those duplicates removed, this figure drops to the "Final unique hearing count" number, 7,577.





Recalls

While the vast majority of the Parole Board's work is considering whether to grant parole, it also has significant other work.

In 2022/23 the Board heard 428 applications to recall offenders from parole to prison, resulting in 525 hearings, with 374 applications granted.

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| Recall applications made by the Department of Corrections | 428 |
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|--------------------------------|-----|
| Number of hearings as a result | 525 |
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| Applications granted | 374 |
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| Recall applications for offenders on determinate sentences | 373 |
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| Number of hearings as a result | 449 |
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| Applications granted | 326 |
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| Recall applications for offenders on indeterminate sentences | 55 |
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| Number of hearings as a result | 76 |
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| Applications granted | 48 |
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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 Parole Board likes to understand how offenders are coping in the community after release. The Parole Act 2002 allows the Parole Board to monitor an offender's progress for up to one year after parole is granted.

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. It is also an opportunity, if the Board is concerned, to recall an offender, although this is a rare event.

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| Monitoring hearings enable the Board to assess the offender's progress on parole | 540 |
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In 2022/23, the Board saw 540 offenders who had been granted parole, on monitoring hearings, to see how they had managed their parole. This compares with 588 hearings in 2021/22.





Varying conditions (excluding Compassionate Release)

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| Applications to vary parole conditions | 242 |
| Number of hearings as a result | 283 |
| Applications granted | 220 |



Discharging conditions

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| Applications to discharge parole conditions | 463 |
| Number of hearings as a result | 471 |
| Applications granted | 443 |



Varying and discharging conditions combined

In the year under review the Parole Board varied or discharged 663 special conditions. It did so to ensure that the conditions better reflected the offender's risk and public safety.

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| Applications to discharge and vary parole conditions | 705 |
| Number of hearings as a result | 754 |
| Applications granted | 663 |



Extended Supervision Orders

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| Applications by the Department of Corrections for the Board to impose special conditions | 28 |
| Number of hearings as a result | 36 |
| Applications granted | 24 |
| Biennial reviews of ESO conditions | 81 |



Compassionate release

Offenders who are seriously ill and unlikely to recover can apply to the Parole 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 19 such applications last year and granted nine.

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 2022/23.

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| Applications received | 11 |
| Number of hearings as a result | 19 |
| Applications granted | 9 |



Requests for an earlier hearing

Where an offender appears before the Parole 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 151 such applications and granted early hearings in 68 such cases.

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| Applications for an earlier hearing under section 26 of the Parole Act | 150 |
| Number of hearings as a result | 151 |
| Cases heard earlier than scheduled | 68 |



Reviews

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

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| Applications to the review board decisions during the year | 57 |
| Applications declined | 4 |
| Decisions that were confirmed | 46 |
| Decisions that were then amended, quashed or referred to the Board for reconsideration | 7* |

* 1 Amended, 2 Quashed, 4 Referred back to the Board



Revocation orders

The Parole 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 soon as practical.

Decisions revoked this year 21



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 1



Victim submissions

Verbal submissions made to the Board by registered victims.

Verbal submissions made this year 219

Media coverage of the Parole Board

It is natural that the news media is interested in the activities and decisions of the Parole Board.

The Parole Board is committed to openness and transparency.

It welcomes interest from the media in what we do and our decisions.

On average the Board releases 20 or more hearing decisions each month. Most of these requests relate to recent hearings but some enquiries go back a number of years.

The Parole Board also responds to a similar number of other enquiries each month regarding such things as:

- Parole eligibility dates.
- Upcoming hearing dates.
- Whether an offender has been seen and released.

The Parole Board maintains a register of requests for future hearing decisions. Typically, there are around 30 requests on the register at any one time.

Journalists can request a hearing decision by emailing: media@paroleboard.govt.nz.

Hearing decisions are usually available for release around ten working days after a hearing. This allows time for:

- The decision to be transcribed, reviewed, and approved.
- A copy of the decision to be provided to the offender.
- A copy of the decision to be provided to any registered victims of the offender.

Journalists can also apply to attend a Board hearing. The Board panel convenor has discretion over who attends hearings, and media applications are considered as part of this.

The journalist must agree to abide by the guidelines set by the Parole Board and attendance at a hearing must be deemed to be in the public interest.

The presence of reporters will not be allowed if the Board considers it may:

- Inhibit participants from speaking “as freely and frankly as possible”.
- Have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of the offender.

For more information visit the Parole Board website: www.paroleboard.govt.nz/media.

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