



NEW ZEALAND
PAROLE BOARD

Annual Report 2019 – 2020

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Chairperson's foreword

Against a backdrop of a global pandemic, the last 12 months have both been interesting and at times challenging. Like many other essential services, the New Zealand Parole Board was challenged by COVID-19 to consider different operating methods.

Through teleconferencing, the expansion of video conferencing and the use of other forms of remote participation the Board was able to maintain services while keeping COVID-19 out of prisons. It was with the use of this technology and streamlined processes that I am proud to say no hearings were missed during lockdown and we spoke to or saw all offenders due to have their hearings.

We are now considering how we can continue to build on what we learnt from lockdown to ensure the Board can continue with its essential services should there be another outbreak of COVID-19 or any other potential disaster.

Over the last 12 months there has been a slight increase in the Board's caseload with over 9,000 hearings taking place. Significantly, we heard 194 oral submissions from victims and read many more. The Board acknowledges that making a submission can be traumatic with victims having to revisit what happened to them. But it's an important part of the parole process as you will read in the following pages.

High-level work continues to be undertaken with the Department of Corrections as we collectively work to improve the quality and timeliness of the information provided to the Parole Board.

Making the most of technology, I took part in a webinar to over 300 registered lawyers. It was a great opportunity to speak in detail about a lawyer's role in parole hearings. This is an area that needs further attention and I'm working with the Legal Services Agency to help ensure vulnerable people can access the representation they're entitled to. I acknowledge the important work of lawyers who represent the offenders before the Board.

I wish to acknowledge the work of Leith Comer, Grant Crowley, Robert Gray, Glenda Hughes and Shannon Pakura who have retired from the Board.

I also wish to welcome Russell Underwood as the new Board Manager. Under his leadership a review of the Board's support function is underway. The review is focused on developing an operational model that is collaborative and best for the future. In the meantime, I thank the administration team for their work which supports the Board in its duties.



Sir Ron Young
Chairperson



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Responding to COVID-19

As New Zealand entered lockdown the Board made a commitment to keep cases on track and maintain fairness despite the disruption of COVID-19.

The Board moved swiftly to adapt to new operating procedures which allowed it to keep functioning as required by the Parole Act.

Four experienced panel convenors together with another Board member were responsible for all decisions of the Board. Led by the NZPB chairperson, Sir Ron Young, the convenors were Alan Ritchie, Neville Trendle, and Kathryn Snook.

Board members usually travel to prisons for hearings but during lockdown limited travel and restrictions at prisons meant they had to find other ways to carry out their statutory functions.

Convenors used a combination of video and teleconferencing. This allowed the NZPB to complete all its scheduled hearings during the lockdown period.

“Significantly, no hearings were lost, all prisoners were spoken to and lawyers had the opportunity to make submissions on behalf of their clients in one form or another in every case,” said Sir Ron.

Prisoners were provided a form titled ‘Have your say to the NZ Parole Board’ to help summarise their situation. The form, given to them to fill in before their hearing, asked key questions including whether they were seeking parole and if they had accommodation arranged.

Lawyers were able to join by AVL while participants in the parole process including support people and registered victims were encouraged to make submissions by email direct to the Board.

“It was a challenging few months, but with everyone’s cooperation and willingness to adjust quickly to new procedures it was also very successful,” said Sir Ron.

25 March – 8 June 2020



Video Conferencing: 850



Teleconferencing: 661

Year in review

1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020

Hearings in total

9,216

Offenders seen

5,131



Parole hearings

Total parole hearings	6,479
Hearings for offenders on determinate sentences	5,967
Hearings for offenders on indeterminate sentences	439
Parole approved	1,669
Parole granted for offenders on determinate sentences	1,612
Parole granted for offenders on indeterminate sentences	57
Offenders released on conditions on completion of their sentence.	
Their sentence has expired therefore these offenders cannot be recalled to prison for breaches.	588



Recalls

Recall applications made by the Department of Corrections.	542
Recall applications for offenders on determinate sentences	489
Number granted	367
Recall applications for offenders on indeterminate sentences	52
Number granted	34



Monitoring hearings

Monitoring hearings enable the Board to assess an offender's progress on parole	494
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Varying conditions

Applications to vary parole conditions	213
Successful applications	190



Extended Supervision Orders

Applications by Corrections for the Board to impose special conditions.	35
Biennial reviews of ESO conditions	43



Compassionate release

Offenders who are terminally ill or who have given birth can apply to be released on compassionate grounds.	
Applications received	7
Applications approved	3



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	4



Requests for an earlier hearing

Applications for an earlier hearing under section 26 of the Parole Act.	233
Cases heard earlier than scheduled	98



Reviews

Offenders can request to have their parole decision reviewed under 67 of the Act.	
Applications to review board decisions during the year	57
Decisions that were then amended, quashed or referred to the Board for reconsideration	7



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 soon as practical. Revocations were higher this year due to the effects of COVID-19.	
Decisions revoked this year	67



Meeting victims

194 Oral submissions made to the Board by registered victims

New Zealand is unique in the opportunity it offers victims to participate in the parole process. The Board values the insights and opinions shared by victims and they are an important part of the decision-making process.

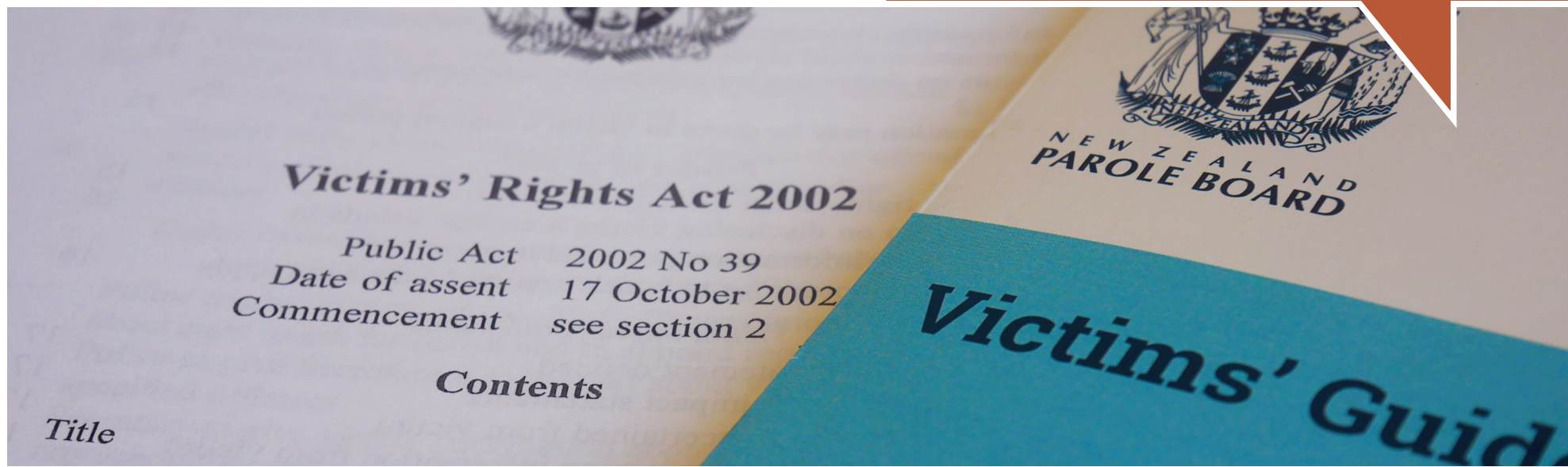
Victim meetings and submissions can help the Board to decide whether to release an offender. They can also help guide specific conditions such as where an offender can live and work once released.

By law the Board is required to give due weight to victims' submissions and the outcome of any restorative justice initiative.

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Victim input is a vital factor in how decisions get made. Every Board member tries their hardest to ensure the victim is comfortable in what can be a very stressful situation; we want to hear their views. It's important.

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Case Study

In 2005 my daughter was murdered.

Making an oral submission to the Parole Board was my way of being there for my daughter, both my daughters' children and my grandchildren. I was initially quite scared that the offender would also be at the hearing, but I was relieved to hear he wouldn't be.

As the hearing drew closer, I was a nervous wreck and unsure of what I was going into. But when I attended the hearing in Christchurch, I was put at ease by the Parole Board panel.

They were friendly, warm and engaging and could understand what I was trying to express. They listened to me and asked me a range of questions about what I wanted to get out of the hearing. Also being given the chance to answer their questions was important, because they wouldn't have been able to ask me if I had sent a letter.

I wrote in my letter which I read to them describing the background of my daughter and her life. I shared with them the trauma that I have endured, not just with the brutal murder of my daughter but also the death of my husband and other daughter.

I expressed my reasons for why I believed the offender would not be rehabilitated. I wanted him to be locked up forever. Parole was declined and we will start this process again next year.

Now that I know how important it is to be kept informed about any upcoming hearings, court dates etc., I want to make sure that all my family members and myself are listed and informed. It's been an important thing to do in memory of my daughter.

Noela



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New Zealand Parole Board Membership

Chairperson

Sir Ron Young

Panel convenors

Judge Louis Bidois	Judge Charles Blackie	Tania Williams Blyth
Martha Coleman	Judge Michael Crosbie	Geoffrey Ellis
Phil Gittos QSO	Judge Jane Lovell-Smith	Judge David Mather
Neil MacLean QSO	Mary More	Judge Eddie Paul
Alan Ritchie	Kathryn Snook	Judge Arthur Tompkins
Neville Trendle		

Forensic psychiatrists

Associate Professor Philip Brinded Dr Jeremy Skipworth

Community members

Chester Borrows	Karen Coutts	Greg Coyle
Materoa Dodd	Paul Elenio	Dr Sally Davis
Sue Driver	Alan Hackney	Douglas Hauraki
Chris King	Marian Kleist	Bryan McMurray
Sam Perry	Fiona Pimm	Michael Quigg
Campbell Roberts	Paula Rose QSO	Alistair Spierling
Waimarama Taumaunu	Lawrence Tawera	Jim Thomson



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Pacific Parole Partnership

Sharing best practices is an important element to the Pacific Parole Partnership driven by NZPB chairperson, Sir Ron Young.

It was through this initiative that members of the Kiribati Parole Board visited New Zealand in February. The study tour focused on interacting with offenders, how the NZPB includes victims in the parole process and parole hearings.

In Kiribati the Parole Board is administered by the Office of the President; last year it dealt with only 21 cases compared to over 9,000 in New Zealand.

The delegation of five was welcomed with a mihi whakatau before joining Sir Ron for a full day session on parole processes. The group visited Otago Corrections Facility to learn about different rehabilitation programmes, while at Rimutaka Prison they observed parole hearings in person.

For Sir Ron, visits like these are incredibly productive.

“The Kiribati Board was keen to learn about our best practices and how they might adapt them for use at home,” said Sir Ron.

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 www.paroleboard.govt.nz

New Zealand Government