

**IN THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO
HISTORIAL ABUSE IN STATE CARE**

UNDER

The Inquiries Act 2013

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

To inquire into and report upon responses by institutions to instances and allegations of Historical Abuse in State Care between 1950 and 2000.

AFFIDAVIT OF PATRICK STEVENS

Dated: February 2020

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AFFIDAVIT OF PATRICK STEVENS

I, **Patrick Stevens**, solemnly and sincerely affirm:

1. I was born in 1961.
2. I cannot read or write very well. This affidavit has been read out to me and I confirm its contents are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
3. In this affidavit I will describe my experiences in psychiatric care, and also my involvement with Child Welfare and Social Welfare. While my memories of the psychiatric hospitals have always been strong, I do not have any memories of Social Welfare being involved with me. Even so, I know that my records show that social workers were sometimes around.
4. In this affidavit I will also describe my experiences of getting compensation and apologies for the things that happened to me.

Background

5. Home for me has always been in the Manawatū. I come from a big whānau with lots of brothers and sisters. Things were tough for my whānau when I was growing up. We did not have a lot of money and it was hard for my parents to look after us.

Child Welfare and Social Welfare involvement

6. I now know that Child Welfare was first involved with me in 1967, when I was six years old. Some people in the community were worried that me and my siblings were being neglected by our parents. A Welfare Officer visited my whānau a couple of times and thought that me and my siblings looked neglected and dirty. In the end, the Welfare Officer thought that my parents had everything under control and decided not to come see us again. As I have said, things were pretty hard for us, so I don't know why Child Welfare ended up making that call.
7. My father died in 1971. Things became even harder for us and my older siblings started working to help my mother out. My mother was really stressed out. She gave me hidings when I played up, although this kind of thing seemed normal at the time.
8. There was a man, TG, who used to help my whānau out, who lived in a bach near our home. He sexually abused me. I now know that someone told Social Welfare about this in May 1973. There were also concerns that my mother was not caring for me and my siblings properly.

9. Social Welfare did not do anything about this for two weeks, when Social Welfare staff referred the allegations about TG to the police. A few months later the police told Social Welfare that TG had been sent to prison for offences against me and some other people. Social Welfare did not do anything else to help me or my whānau at this time, even though it was clear we needed some support.
10. Problems continued at home and I started getting into trouble. I was not going to school and started sniffing petrol. I was pretty addicted. My mother would still give me hidings when I played up. I know that my records say that one of my brothers was put under legal supervision of Social Welfare, in about 1975.
11. I got in trouble with the police a couple of times in early 1975. The police were worried that me and my siblings were not being looked after properly by my mother.
12. I know that at first, Social Welfare did not do very much to look into these problems, to make sure I was safe at home.
13. Later, in August 1975, I had to go to the Children's Board and then the Children and Young Persons Court. I know that I was placed under legal supervision of Social Welfare, for a year. As I have said, I don't have memories of social workers meeting with me during that year although I know there are some records about that happening.
14. I remember that my behaviour was not getting any better at this time. I was playing up at school and sometimes was not going at all. My records say that a social worker spoke with me on 12 December 1975. I told them that I was sniffing petrol and had been for 18 months. I said I could not stop, even if I wanted to.
15. I know that the social worker contacted Dr Mason Durie at Manawaroa Unit, Palmerston North Hospital. The doctor recommended that I be taken to the casualty department.

Manawaroa Unit, Palmerston North Hospital

16. On 15 December 1975, I was admitted to Manawaroa Unit, for an assessment. I was just under 14 years old. I stayed at Manawaroa Unit until 22 December 1975.
17. I know that on 16 December 1975, a social worker called staff at Manawaroa. The Manawaroa staff told the social worker that I was heavily sedated, was showing withdrawal symptoms and could be in care for some time. I know that this was the only contact Social Welfare had with Manawaroa while I was there.

18. Manawaroa was not a good place and I was mistreated by the staff there. Some of the staff were really rough and more than once, the staff pushed and shoved me around. There was another time where I had an argument with a male nurse and pushed him. The nurse held me down and restrained me. It hurt a lot when he did that.
19. There were other times when I had fights with the other patients at Manawaroa Unit, because staff were not watching over us properly.
20. One time, the staff locked me in a seclusion cell alone, overnight. There was another time where the staff locked me and some of the other patients together in a room for a few hours.
21. The staff were verbally abusive. They told me off and threatened to restrain me. The staff told me that I would be sent to Lake Alice Hospital, where I would be "sorted out". I had heard stories about Lake Alice from other patients at Manawaroa and was scared of Lake Alice.
22. I often snuck out of Manawaroa Unit at night. I would meet up with other day patients and go into town. Those other patients gave me alcohol, marijuana and petrol. I would turn back up at Manawaroa in the morning. Usually, the staff didn't even know I'd left Manawaroa. The one time I was caught, all the staff did was give me a warning.
23. I remember being given a lot of medication at Manawaroa. I would sleep a lot, because of the medication.
24. I didn't see my whānau at all while I was at Manawaroa.

Lake Alice Hospital Child and Adolescent Unit

25. On 22 December 1975, I left Manawaroa Unit and was admitted to Lake Alice Hospital Child and Adolescent Unit. I was there informally.
26. I stayed at Lake Alice until 15 April 1976, when I went back home on trial leave. I was formally discharged from Lake Alice on 10 July 1976. The staff at Lake Alice had diagnosed me with behavioural disorder of childhood. I did not have any psychiatric illness.¹
27. I know that I was referred to Lake Alice by a man called Dr Leeks. I remember other staff called Dr Pugmire and two male nurses, one Māori and one Pākehā, who were both violent to me.
28. I remember that a lot of the other patients were older than me, about 18 or 19 years old. They seemed like men to me. We also mixed with older patients from other wards, for group therapy.

¹ Lake Alice Hospital Fact Sheet (July 1976).

29. My aunty worked at Lake Alice and I sometimes went home with her for weekends. My whānau visited me about two times while I was at Lake Alice and I got to go home for a holiday one time, too.
30. Lake Alice was freaky. It was a strange place with strange people, like a looney city. There were a lot of bad things that happened to me at Lake Alice. Some of these things were similar to what had happened at Manawaroa Unit, although Lake Alice was another level. I believe I have suppressed a lot of my memories about Lake Alice.
31. I was seriously sexually assaulted by other patients, who were about 18 or 19 years old, about a dozen times. Sometimes groups of patients were involved in the assaults. I know that there are records about some sexual things going on between me and other boys at Lake Alice.² I know some of these records talk about staff punishing me for those sexual things, but not doing much else.
32. Some of the adult patients from the other wards were also inappropriate with me. They exposed themselves to me when we were getting changed in the pool.
33. I was physically assaulted by nurses at Lake Alice, including the Māori and Pākehā nurses I described before. The nurses pushed me, kicked me and slapped me. Sometimes, the nurses held me down and injected me in the bum. That was a punishment for running away. The nurses then dragged me to a seclusion cell.
34. I was also physically assaulted by other patients, on a weekly basis. These patients strangled me, threw me on the ground and turned freezing cold water on me.
35. It wasn't just me who was being treated like this. I saw other patients being sexually and physically assaulted by other patients at Lake Alice. It was pretty hard having to see that kind of thing.
36. The staff were psychologically abusive at Lake Alice. They threatened to hit me and spoke down to me. There were a lot of times where the staff made me stand naked while lining up for the shower, in front of female nurses. That always made me really uncomfortable.
37. There were times at Lake Alice when the staff threatened me with ECT for playing up, although from my memory they never followed through with the threats. I knew that other patients, including friends of mine, were being given ECT and other medication, as punishment. I heard other patients screaming while they received ECT. I remember the lights flickering on the walls when the staff gave the shocks.

² Lake Alice Nursing Notes for Patrick Stevens (22 December 1975-10 July 1976).

38. I was given a lot of medication at Lake Alice, including drugs called Paraldehyde and Largactil. Often this was because I had been playing up. I know that there are some records about this.³
39. Those drugs had terrible side-effects. Sometimes I'd go numb from the waist down. I remember getting sleepy from the drugs and having a bad taste in my mouth – I couldn't even taste my kai because of it. If I ever got caught not taking the drugs, the staff just punished me with more drugs or by putting me in seclusion.
40. There were a lot of times where I was placed in seclusion. The seclusion cell was a padded room made from steel. The staff left me alone in there for hours, with nothing but a mattress and a chamber pot. There are records about me being put in seclusion, too.⁴
41. I ran away from Lake Alice a few times and was punished for it. I was also punished when I got caught smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol.

Social Welfare involvement at Lake Alice

42. I know that Social Welfare was in contact with Lake Alice while I was there. I know that a social worker wrote to Dr Leeks and said that my mother had said she had tried to give me hidings because of my petrol sniffing. Social Welfare never did anything about that report, to see how I was being treated at home by my mum.
43. Dr Leeks also told the social worker that Lake Alice thought I had a serious sexual problem, besides the petrol sniffing.

Social Welfare involvement after Lake Alice

44. I went back home on 15 April 1976. A lot of the same problems started up again for me. Even so, Social Welfare did not have much to do with me. I know that my Social Welfare records stop on 14 July 1976.
45. I know that there is a letter in my medical records from 23 July 1976, from Dr Leeks to Dr Durie. The Assistant Director of Social Welfare, Palmerston North, was also sent a copy of the letter. Dr Leeks wrote that a man, who was using a different name but who was TG, had come to Lake Alice two times to try take me away. Dr Leeks thought that my mother might be colluding with TG about what TG was doing with me.
46. Social Welfare never did anything to follow-up about the report that TG had been visiting me, or the worries about my mother. I also know that there is no copy of the letter from Dr Leeks in my Social Welfare file, which means that Social Welfare didn't file the letter properly.

³ Lake Alice Nursing Notes for Patrick Stevens (22 December 1975-10 July 1976).

⁴ Lake Alice Nursing Notes for Patrick Stevens (22 December 1975-10 July 1976).

47. I know that Social Welfare messed up in other ways, too. Social Welfare did not do a proper assessment of me before legal supervision ended in August 1976. Social Welfare had no further involvement with me after that, even though there were signs I needed oversight and support from Social Welfare.

Effects

48. There have been a lot of ways that my experiences have affected me. I've never had too many friends. I find it hard to trust males and never wanted to be sociable and get too close. The only friends I had were my brothers.
49. It took me a while to have relationships with women, because of the abuse. I didn't want to have too many feelings and I closed myself off. When I have opened myself up to relationships, I've never stuck around for long.
50. I get flashbacks about my time in care. Apart from the weather, I don't listen to the news or watch TV, because I know something might turn up that brings my past back. I had nightmares for a long time, too.
51. I've had problems with drugs and alcohol. These were the only things I could use to stop the memories. When I got drunk, I'd go to sleep and forget about it. I can see now that I was running away from the memories, through alcohol.
52. I've never liked working inside because I feel claustrophobic and I don't like having too many people around. Most of my jobs have been outdoors doing farm work. That way I can be out there on my own and be my own boss.

Instructing Cooper Legal

53. I first contacted Cooper Legal in March 2017, through my health worker. By that time, I had been working with my health worker for about 18 months. Apart from some of my old friends who I had been at Lake Alice with, my health worker was the first person I had told about my experiences in psychiatric care.
54. My health worker helped me fill out my Cooper Legal application. She wrote a letter to Cooper Legal saying that my inability to read and write had prevented me from taking the matter further in the past.⁵ She wrote that completing the application had been both traumatic and therapeutic for me. It had allowed me to at last discuss my experiences with my whānau, telling them about my life in psychiatric care.

⁵ Letter from Valmaye Dawson to Cooper Legal (8 March 2017).

55. My application was only about my experiences at Lake Alice and Manawaroa. I did not know at the time that I could also bring a claim about Social Welfare's involvement with me. As I have said, I did not even remember social workers being around in my childhood.
56. I know that Cooper Legal requested my mental health records on 20 March 2017.⁶ On 23 March 2017, MidCentral Health emailed Cooper Legal and advised that it had no records of me being admitted to Manawaroa.⁷
57. I know that there were also problems getting records from Whanganui District Health Board, because my name had been spelt wrong and my birth date had been recorded incorrectly by the medical staff when I was a child. This was cleared up and Cooper Legal received my mental health records from Whanganui DHB on 10 April 2017.⁸ These records included notes from my time at Lake Alice Hospital and also Manawaroa.
58. Cooper Legal arranged to have an interview with me, which took place in July 2017. Although I attended the interview alone, my sister helped with me with sorting the interview out with Cooper Legal. My sister ended up supporting me a lot through the claims process.
59. My interview with Cooper Legal was pretty hard. It was tough to bring up old memories. Even so, I wanted to go ahead with the interview to get it done with. I told the lawyer about what had happened to me at Lake Alice and Manawaroa.
60. We also spoke about what life had been like for me growing up. I told the lawyer about the struggles my whānau had faced and the trouble I was getting into as a teenager. I didn't talk about what had happened with TG because, at the time, I didn't realise there was anything that could be done about that. Based on what I told them, my lawyers suspected that Social Welfare may have been involved when I was younger. I know that, because of this, Cooper Legal requested my Social Welfare records from the Ministry of Social Development ("MSD"), on 26 July 2017.⁹
61. MSD released those records to Cooper Legal in August 2017.¹⁰ I did not get a copy of those records. I know that MSD released two files to Cooper Legal, but one of them was not actually about me but about somebody with a similar name. Cooper Legal advised MSD about this later on, after the Cooper Legal lawyers had reviewed the records.

⁶ Letter from Cooper Legal to MidCentral Health (20 March 2017); letter from Cooper Legal to Whanganui District Health Board (20 March 2017).

⁷ Email from MidCentral Health (23 March 2017).

⁸ Letter from Whanganui District Health Board to Cooper Legal (10 April 2017).

⁹ Letter from Cooper Legal to MSD (26 July 2017).

¹⁰ Letter from MSD to Cooper Legal (18 August 2017).

MSD had no clue that the wrong file had been released. In the end, Cooper Legal destroyed the file on MSD's request.¹¹

62. I did not hear from Cooper Legal for a while. I know that Cooper Legal had a lot of other clients who had approached the firm before me, whose claims Cooper Legal had to work through, first.
63. On 25 May 2018, I called Cooper Legal because I had received some bad news about my health. I was having tests for prostate cancer and I was worried that I might not have long to live.
64. Cooper Legal fast-tracked work for me, because of my poor health. On 28 May 2018, Cooper Legal wrote to the Ministry of Health ("MOH") advising that I had claims about both Manawaroa and Lake Alice and requesting information about the Lake Alice process.¹² Philip Knipe, who was the Chief Legal Advisor at MOH, responded to Cooper Legal the same day, saying that he would have a letter sent to Cooper Legal about the Lake Alice process by the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, which was also a part of MOH.¹³
65. That same day, Cooper Legal sent to MOH claim documents for my Manawaroa claim.¹⁴
66. Cooper Legal then wrote to me about opening a Lake Alice file. Cooper Legal also wanted to open a Social Welfare file. The lawyers at Cooper Legal had read all of my records by this time and knew about all the bad social work that had happened with me, as well as the sexual abuse by TG, which was also in my records.
67. Everything happened quite quickly for my Manawaroa claim. On 14 June 2018, Philip Knipe wrote to me through my lawyers, with a settlement offer.¹⁵
68. The settlement offer was for: an *ex gratia* lump sum payment of \$6,000, which could be applied to meet any wellness-related costs, or for other purposes which I considered appropriate; a letter of apology on behalf of the former Area Health Board; and payment of my legal aid debt.
69. The settlement offer said that the claim related to both Manawaroa and Lake Alice, so Cooper Legal followed-up with Philip Knipe on 18 June

¹¹ Letter from Cooper Legal to MSD, without prejudice (9 November 2018); email communications between Cooper Legal and MSD, without prejudice (9 November 2018).

¹² Email communications between Cooper Legal and the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH (28 May 2018).

¹³ Email communications between Cooper Legal and the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH (28 May 2018).

¹⁴ Letter from Cooper Legal to the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH enclosing summary of allegations (28 May 2018).

¹⁵ Letter from the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH to Patrick Stevens, signed version (14-29 June 2018).

2018, to make sure that accepting the offer would not stop me taking a claim about Lake Alice. Cooper Legal also asked for an update about the letter from the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services.¹⁶

70. That same day, Philip Knipe confirmed that I could still take my Lake Alice claim and said that he would follow-up with the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services.¹⁷
71. I know that, following that email exchange, Cooper Legal received a letter for me from the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services about the Lake Alice process, on 18 June 2018.¹⁸ The letter enclosed an information sheet that needed to be filled out with details about my claim.
72. I spoke with a lawyer from Cooper Legal on 22 June 2018. I told the lawyer that I did not have my health worker anymore and could not fill out the forms to open my Lake Alice or Social Welfare claims. The lawyer went through this with me on the phone to make the application on my behalf. I told the lawyer that the doctors had finished their tests and had not made a cancer diagnosis. The lawyer told me that Cooper Legal would still do my Lake Alice and Social Welfare claims soon, but that there was a long wait with MSD if the claimant was not terminally ill and that it could take years to resolve.
73. On 29 June 2018, I accepted the settlement offer for my Manawaroa claim.¹⁹ A letter of apology was sent to me on 2 July 2018 from Philip Knipe, on behalf of MOH.²⁰ The settlement money was sent to me just over a week later.
74. On 30 October 2018, my sister sent to Cooper Legal a medical certificate for me, showing that there were serious concerns for my health, and I had been referred to oncology for an opinion on palliative chemotherapy.
75. On 8 November 2018, I spoke with a lawyer from Cooper Legal and told them more things about my time at Lake Alice and my life at home, including the abuse by TG.
76. On 9 November 2018, Cooper Legal sent claim documents to the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services about my Lake

¹⁶ Email communications between Cooper Legal and the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH (18 June 2018).

¹⁷ Email communications between Cooper Legal and the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH (18 June 2018).

¹⁸ Letter from the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH to Patrick Stevens (18 June 2018).

¹⁹ Letter from the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH to Patrick Stevens, signed version (14-29 June 2018).

²⁰ Letter from the Chief Legal Advisor, MOH to Patrick Stevens (2 July 2018).

Alice claim,²¹ and also to MSD about my Social Welfare claim.²² Cooper Legal also sent copies of my medical certificate and asked that my claims be prioritised.

77. I know that my lawyers were worried that things might take a while with my MSD claim, because of experiences they had previously had with MSD about other clients who were sick. Even so, things went quite fast with MSD. On 30 November 2018, MSD made a settlement offer for my Social Welfare claim.²³
78. The settlement offer was for: \$10,000, in recognition of the poor social work in my case; contribution to my legal costs; and a letter of apology from the Chief Executive of MSD. MSD had accepted all but one of the allegations I had made.
79. In December 2018, I accepted the offer from MSD.²⁴ I signed a settlement document with MSD,²⁵ and received a letter of apology from the Chief Executive of MSD,²⁶ and the settlement payment.
80. It took a long time for the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services to get back about my Lake Alice claim, compared to my Manawaroa and Social Welfare claims. On 20 March 2019, Cooper Legal wrote to the Office, highlighting the poor state of my health and seeking an update about my claim.²⁷ Cooper Legal did not receive a response and followed up again on 11 April 2019.²⁸
81. Philip Knipe emailed Cooper Legal that day, saying that the assessment had been completed and the Ministry was working out the amount of the settlement payment. It was expected that this would be finalised in a few days.²⁹
82. Cooper Legal did not receive a response in that timeframe and on 14 May 2019, emailed Philip Knipe again asking for an update.³⁰ Philip

²¹ Letter from Cooper Legal to the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH, without prejudice (9 November 2018); email from Cooper Legal to the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH, without prejudice (9 November 2018).

²² Letter from Cooper Legal to MSD, without prejudice (9 November 2018); email communications between Cooper Legal and MSD, without prejudice (9 November 2018).

²³ Letter from MSD to Cooper Legal, without prejudice (30 November 2018).

²⁴ Email communications between Cooper Legal and MSD (30 November-5 December 2018).

²⁵ Memorandum of settlement and release between Patrick Stevens and MSD (17 December 2018).

²⁶ Letter from the Chief Executive of MSD to Patrick Stevens (18 December 2018).

²⁷ Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019).

²⁸ Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019).

²⁹ Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019).

³⁰ Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019).

Knipe confirmed that same day that everything had been finalised and that MOH was aiming to send the settlement deed to Cooper Legal by the end of the week.³¹

83. I know that the settlement deed still did not come and that Cooper Legal followed-up with Philip Knipe on 29 May 2019 and 12 June 2019.³²
84. On 14 June 2019, Cooper Legal was emailed a settlement deed for my Lake Alice claim, with a covering letter dated 13 June 2019.³³ The amount MOH had decided to award me was \$81,578.94.
85. The settlement document did not talk about my legal costs or an apology. It was later confirmed that MOH would contribute to my legal costs separately and that my legal costs would not come out of my settlement award.³⁴
86. Cooper Legal called me about the settlement award, that same day. The amount of the award took me completely by surprise as it was so much more than what I had received for my Manawaroa and Social Welfare claims. Cooper Legal told me it was only really Lake Alice claims that got this kind of settlement, and that they were pleased for me too.
87. I received the settlement deed in the post and signed it on 25 June 2019.³⁵
88. On 18 July 2019, I received an apology for my Lake Alice claim. This apology came directly from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health.³⁶ I received the settlement payment later that month.

Conclusion

89. It took me a long time to confront what happened to me when I was in care. I was pretty well mentally disturbed from what happened, and I had a lot of pride about it all, too. When I was finally able to speak to my whānau about it all, it felt like a weight had been lifted off me that I had been carrying for so long.

³¹ Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019).

³² Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019).

³³ Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019); letter from the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH to Peter Simonds enclosing settlement deed between the Crown and Patrick Stevens (13 June 2019).

³⁴ Email communications between Cooper Legal, Chief Legal Advisor, MOH and the Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, MOH (20 March-14 June 2019).

³⁵ Settlement deed between the Crown and Patrick Stevens (25 June 2019).

³⁶ Letter from Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern and Hon Dr David Clark to Patrick Stevens (18 July 2019).

90. In the end, my claims were all resolved quite quickly although I know that things may not have moved so fast if it wasn't for my health. In a way, the compensation came at a good time. I was able to buy an RV so I could be closer to the hospital for my treatment. I am still doing my chemotherapy now although my health is still getting worse. Even so, I am doing okay at the moment and I am spending time with my whānau, who have been a big support to me during all this.
91. The things that happened to me as a child were really bad. My experiences were so hard to deal with that I shut myself off from a lot of things as an adult.
92. The reason I am sharing my story now is because I want to support the work being done to shed light on what happened to us all in care. Hopefully, this will also help others in getting a fast and meaningful outcome for their claims, too.

Affirmed at)
 by **Patrick Stevens**)
 this day of February 2020)
 before me:)

**A Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand/
 A Registrar of the High Court of New Zealand/
 Justice of the Peace**