"Court in the Act"

The Youth Court; The Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989; And topical issues arising for NZ Youth Justice practitioners

A newsletter co-ordinated by the Principal Youth Court Judge to those involved in the Youth Justice community. Contributions, feedback, letters to the Editor, are not only acceptable, but encouraged

No. 7, September 2003

"Ko te kai rapu
Ko ia te kite"

(He who seeks, will find)

On the wall in the reception area, Weymouth Youth Justice Residence

Australia / New Zealand / Pacific Council for Youth Courts

In early July I attended the annual meeting of the Heads of the Youth Courts for all the States and Territories of Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. There are plans to extend membership to include representatives from all South Pacific countries.

These meetings are invaluable to get a feel for youth offending trends, up to date research, and new initiatives.

My overwhelming impressions are that our alternative action/diversion rate (between 76-84% of young offenders do not come to the Youth Court) is a stunning statistic. It is, perhaps, the most unknown and underrated aspect of our system. If the Police commitment to alternative action was to diminish, our system would struggle to cope.

Incidentally, I had the opportunity to address the senior Northern Territory Police officers about the contribution of our Police Youth Aid officers to the New Zealand youth justice system. The Northern Territory has introduced a comprehensive diversionary programme using Family Group Conferences (FGC's), but only for those cases that do not come to Court.

I was also struck by how successful our FGC system has been in holding young offenders to account and in "repairing" the damage caused. However, I was equally struck by the improvement that needs to take place in addressing the causes of their offending: (see s.4(f)(i and ii) of the Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989). This is something that I emphasised at the six, three-day Police/CYFS Youth Justice training days held throughout New Zealand.

Fundamental to addressing the causes of offending is a risk/needs assessment, which should be carried out before a FGC. The Police are currently refining ARNI (Adolescent Risk and Needs Inventory). This will be a valuable tool. I hope the finished product will be widely used.

"History of Youth Justice in New Zealand": Debate provoked – "Court in the Act" No.6 – May 2003

"Court in the Act" No. 6, May 2003 contained a detailed article on the history of youth justice in New Zealand, compiled by Emily Watt. It is to be found on the Youth Court website: www.courts.govt.nz/youth. That article provoked a very thoughtful response from Milan Sumich, a senior Child Youth and Family Service (CYFS) practitioner from Auckland, who is presently the CYFS Senior Court Officer for Auckland, Waitakere and North Shore. That letter prompted an equally interesting response from Mike Doolan. Both the letters are set out, following.

17 June 2003

Judge Andrew Becroft
Principal Youth Court Judge

Dear Judge Becroft,

I have now read "A History of Youth Justice in NZ" by Emily Watt, and consider it is a valuable record of the changes in legislation and factors which influenced those changes. However as a practitioner who was involved in working with the legislation over the last 38yrs, I wish to make comments about some factors and persons, who I consider were particularly significant. The following are my personal views, not necessarily those of the Department of Child, Youth and Family.

I believe the contrast between the Welfare & Justice approaches is over emphasised. In my opinion the operation of the Children's Court, (1925 Act), the Children & Young Persons Court, (1974 Act) and the Youth Court (1989 Act), have more similarities than differences. It is not correct to say, that the earlier Courts were focused mainly on the welfare of the child or young person who committed offences. The Magistrates and Judges were very concerned to hold the offenders accountable for their actions, and spoke to offenders in much the same way as Youth Court Judges do now. Whether the offender understood the Judges decisions were subject to the same factors as apply to Youth Court Judges today, (i.e. some were better at explaining their decisions than others). Although the outcomes available to the earlier Courts were more limited, than those available under the 1989 Act, adjournments were used in flexible and creative ways, to make youth offenders accountable, in a similar way to FGC plans on adjournment at present.

I believe CYF has now realised that the strict separation between Care & Protection and Youth Justice has been a mistake. In my experience all serious, repeat youth offenders have significant care and protection issues. Hence, the development of Youth Services Teams. However the lack of appropriate secure placements causes real problems in the management of young offenders.

Although the centrality of Family Group Conferences in the 1989 Act was a new feature, it arose out of three factors which strongly influenced the operation of Child, Youth and Family from the early 1980's.
The most important factor was, "Planning for children in care". This was the requirement to hold a family meeting, with the child/young person, his family, significant persons in the child/young persons life, and relevant professionals. This meeting had to be held at least once every 12 months and was to develop plans for the child/young person.

The 2nd factor was the development of "Maatua Whangai"; this was not just a Maori foster care program, but involved Maori/CYF community committees in each CYF area. This involved CYF social workers with the Maori community. Maatua Whangai lead to much more effort to involve extended family, and in some areas established Whanau Homes, (i.e. CYF owned & funded houses which were managed by a local Maatua Whangai/Maori Committee).

The third factor was the recruitment of Maori staff; this transformed the composition of the Department within a few years. Some of those Maori staff were very important in the development of Puao Te Ata Tu (John Rangihou) and the 1989 Act (Ossie Peri was on the 2nd working party).

The above mentioned three factors emptied CYF institutions before the 1989 Act came into force, and made possible the closure of most of them (unwisely in my opinion).

Mike Doolan, was a significant factor, but not just because of his overseas study. His career was first as a social worker for a few years, but then he worked for Maori Affairs managing a Maori Affairs Hostel, and later moved to managing a CYF institution in Whanganui, later he moved to National Office as a residential specialist and eventually chief social worker. He was instrumental in closing most of the CYF institutions, because of his experience in them and his belief they did more harm than good. His close involvement with the Maori community was an important factor.

Judge Mick Brown was also a significant factor. However he was always in charge, and he used his own contacts in the West Auckland community and even his own friends to place young persons in positive environments. He also used his own charismatic personality to great effect and established a link with the young persons who appeared before him.

The 1986/87 earlier drafts of the proposed new Act were generally opposed by CYF staff. In part, because they envisaged statutory supervision of children/young persons in the care/custody of CYF, by panels composed of professionals (doctors, solicitors, medical social workers etc). This professional panel supervision was opposed, not just because of its high estimated cost, but because of staff experience with "Child protection teams". These advisory panels of professionals, were meant to advise and assist social workers, but in my experience, they frequently amplified the pressure social workers were under, by stressing the risk to the child, and were not in tune with the way Maatua Whangai operated.

The placement of young offenders was, never mainly dependant on institutions, even though in the past we had a variety of institutions for different offenders. (e.g. Two boys homes in Auckland, one for younger boys and one for older boys) similarly two girls homes in Auckland, and National training institutions of Kohitere and Hokio Beach School for boys and Kingslea and Weymouth for girls.
Most offenders were placed in family and foster homes, particularly foster homes in rural areas (for Auckland young persons these were often with rural families living in the far North or Hauraki/Paeroa areas)

Emily Watts is correct in that diversion programs have never had the full support of uniformed front line police. The 1989 Act recognised this, and included legislative restrictions on Police powers of arrest. These reduced Court appearances for a time, but even now some Police don't abide by these restrictions. More training of frontline police is needed to change their attitude. The contrast between Youth Aid Police and Uniformed front line Police, shows what a difference training and experience can make.
Youth Aid Police are in tune with the 1989 Act, provide good information and generally work closely with CYF social workers and Co-ordinators. Uniformed front line Police, when they arrest young persons, often provide CYF staff with minimal/inadequate information.

Consultation between Police/Youth Aid and Co-ordinators, is often seen as a formality, because the Police have already decided what they think should happen, and Co-ordinators often don't have the necessary information or time to contact family/community etc.
I have given some thought to this issue and consider one way of making the consultation more meaningful, would be for Police Youth Aid, to discuss all cases with YJ Co-ordinators, not just those they consider should be referred for an FGC. This would mean YJ Co-ordinators, would gain a better picture of all the offenders in their community, and could make suggestions to Police about appropriate diversion actions. It should also result in more genuinely consensus decision making and closer working together. However it would require more co-ordinator time, which in some areas is under great pressure and finding it difficult to cope with their current workloads.

I hope my comments have added a practitioners dimension to Emily Watts history.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Milan Sumich

Dear Milan

Emily Watt's Article on the history of Youth Justice

Thank you for sending your draft letter and the other correspondence on this article to me. Just for the record, Judge Becroft sent me Emily Watt's article in its draft form, and I was able to make some observations, but had no part in formulating the article itself. This was an article written "on the documents" which is why she probably makes such a point about my influence resulting from the Nuffield study tour I did in 1987. My report on that tour (From Welfare to Justice – referred to in Emily Watt's article) proposed legislating for a family centred meeting process as an alternative to the Community Resolution Panels proposed by the Renouf review of the 1986 Bill, released in December 1987. The FGC is clearly based on the indigenous (Maori) decision-making method. What I advanced was a proposal that we legislate for such a process, and that this process would be adaptable according to the cultural mores, values and beliefs of the families engaged with the law. The points you make about Planning for Children in Care, Maatua Whangai and increases in Maori staff numbers are valid in respect of emerging practice around work with families - but they were not the precursors of a legislative model of decision-making known as the Family Group Conference. That is the key point about the FGC - it is decision-making construct. Prior to this law we had had decision-making constructs that were physically and conceptually dominated by professionals and to which families, if they were involved at all, had to adjust and fit in. So I have a difference with you in this respect, although emerging practice related to the things you mention enabled this legislative proposal to be readily understood and enthusiastically embraced by social workers.

The drivers for a new way were, in my view, the considerable international body of literature that had amassed about the need to reform justice processes for young people; the influence of the Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination and the Auckland Youth Law Project; the WARAG report on institutional racism in the then Department of Social Welfare; the undoubted influence of Puao te Ata Tu about how such processes should relate to Maori (and by implication any other cultural minority in NZ); and the widespread consultation with Maori, Pacific Island communities and the wider community conducted by the Select Committee studying the Bill during 1988 and early 1989. We should not colonize this reform by claiming that it was the result of internal departmental processes. Putting family groups at the centre of the decision-making process was risky in the view of many but was legitimised by Maori as being strongly related to (but not the same as) whanau hui, and of course as we have learned since, it is a process remarkably adaptable to different cultural communities, including the dominant culture.

I do not agree with you that the '89 Act has more similarities than differences with its predecessors (although you may be right that practice has not changed much). The '89 Act abandoned the paramountcy principle with respect to children and young persons who offend, and their interests now

have to be weighed against the interests of others, including the community and their victims. This is significant. The split of jurisdictions (civil matters to the Family Court and criminal to a new Youth Court) was also significant. In the Youth Court, due process rules apply (as opposed to the informality of the Children and Young Persons Court) and standards of guilt and proof are the same as for adults, with age being a mitigating factor only in respect of sanction. Sanctions are more limited under this Act, not more extensive as you claim. The Youth Court cannot make a care order. Its maximum incarceration power is 3 months where it has, or elects to exercise, jurisdiction. Other sanctions have shorter time limits and with the exception of Supervision with Residence require the consent of the YP. These make for a very different court environment than the former Children and Young Persons Court where civil and criminal proceedings were regularly fudged. The most significant difference, however, is the role given to pre-court diversion through the construct of the FGC.

The '89 Act never proposed a strict separation between Care and Protection practice and Youth Justice practice - the Department did that in the way it set up its delivery structure and the Youth Services Strategy of the late 1990's was an attempt to return to the Act's provisions. Note the Objects of the Act, and in particular s.4(f) which says:

Ensuring that when children and young persons commit offences
*(i) They are held accountable, and encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour; **and***
(ii) They are dealt with in a way that acknowledges their needs and that will give them the opportunity to develop in responsible, beneficial, and socially acceptable ways.

The ***"and"*** is important - it creates the obligation to do both justice and welfare things. The '89 Act sought a middle way between the extremes of Welfare and Justice and I think Emily Watts has captured this well.

The Child Protection Teams proposed by the 1986 Bill were not advisory in function as you claim, but were proposed to have executive function - i.e. they were being set up to direct the activity of social workers. I think that this is one of the big favours Jackie Renouf did social work in NZ, by demolishing this proposal in her review of the Bill for Michael Cullen. The alternative Care and Protection Resource Panel has no executive powers, thank goodness. Instead, Social Workers and Coordinators have statutory powers that they must exercise (within guidance, but not departmental prescription) as independent statutory officials. They also exercise powers delegated to them by the Chief Executive who is able to prescribe how these powers are to be exercised,

While the placement of young people involved with the Department was not confined to the institutions as you say, practice was dominated by their existence. These were yet another example of the fusion between civil and criminal maters in NZ child welfare law. Children from both the civil and criminal jurisdictions ended up in places like Hokio and Kohitere, with scant

regard, I would suggest, to their civil rights as we understand them now, particularly in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I am disappointed to see that you want more secure institutions for young offender management - the research on outcomes would indicate this is not the best way to spend scarce resources or produce the best outcomes for clients or communities.

In relation to Police, the Act did much more than place limitations on the powers of arrest. It legislated for how children and young persons were to be managed under questioning and before and following arrest - in effect we put into the law, a set of statutory rights, which, if breached by the Police can affect their prosecutions, but more importantly promoted safety for the young people who come to the attention of Police, recognising their vulnerability because of their age. The Act gives legislative legitimacy to police diversions by the Youth Aid Branch simply because they were so good at this work. Your idea about widening the consultation between Police and Coordinators needs to be approached with caution. The intention is that where Police can divert, they should get on and do so without involving the Department of Child Youth and Family Services (in the manner of the pre 1989 Youth Aid Conferences). Where Police want to prosecute (i.e. they decline to divert and they have a public interest concern - see first principle in s.208) then they must refer for an FGC and a 245 consultation is required. The intention here is that this can lead to a second level diversion - that is, the Police decide to deal with the matter themselves, or a FGC occurs with all ***its*** potential for diverting the children and young persons from formal court process. To mix these two processes would be to invite a return to the sorts of collusion that occurred between police and social workers at the Youth Aid Conferences of the past where neither the child, nor their family, had a right to attendance. I hope you do not hanker after those days!!

These are my views and recall, Milan, for what they are worth. Kind regards,
Mike Doolan

Specialist Youth Services Corps Programme for Moderate Risk Offenders

One proposal which originated from the Youth Offending Strategy, in connection with dealing with serious young offenders, was that the Ministry of Youth Affairs develop a specialist Youth Service Corps based on the approach used in the existing Conservation and Youth Services Corps: (Key focus area 7: Proposal 7). What follows is a brief description of the specialist programme that has now been developed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs. The programme has been designed for young offenders who are at moderate risk of re-offending. If there is a programme in your area, I urge you to make contact. Names and phone numbers are set out.

11 JUNE 2003

MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS – YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME SPECIALIST YOUTH SERVICE CORPS FOR MODERATE RISK OFFENDERS 15 – 17 YEARS

The Specialist Youth Service Corps has been designed for youth justice clients aged 15 -17 years who are at a moderate risk of re-offending. Funding was secured to deliver programmes in eight sites. They commenced in February 2003 in:

- **West Auckland** at The Princes Trust
  Contact: Clive Beeching, Case Worker on (09) 296 6539.
- **Hamilton** at the Hamilton Skills Centre
  Contact: Tapi Caldwell, Case Worker, on (07) 839 5917.
- **Gisborne** at Turanga Ararau
  Contact: Trish Richardson, Case Worker on (06) 868 1081.
- **Rotorua** at Te Waiariki Purea Trust
  Contact: Te Riina Wells Case Worker on (07) 348 5051.
- **New Plymouth** at YMCA New Plymouth
  Contact: Ata Nui, Case Manager on (06) 758 5347.
- **Palmerston North** at YMCA Palmerston North
  Contact: Peter Hill Case Worker on (06) 358 8921.
- **Christchurch** at Youth & Cultural Development Society
  Contact: Kim Boyce Case Worker on (03) 3660866.
- **Invercargill** at Southland YMCA
  Contact: Wendy Fraser Case Worker on (03) 218 9622.

Each site operates a 20-week day programme for a group of 10 members. The programme activities fall into three areas: community service work, education and life skills and challenging recreation. A key component of this programme is to address issues that have contributed to offending behaviour through personal development that includes addressing, use of alcohol and drugs, improving communication skills, developing relationship management skills, and increasing personal confidence. There is also an emphasis on Te Ao Maori, and family involvement. Where young people have no specific family support mentors will be used to provide support to the young person. Currently there are currently 61 members on the programmes.

Success will be measured by a reduction in re-offending, improved social skills, increased management of the contributing factors to offending and goal setting to move onto further education, training or employment.

Youth Affairs is closely monitoring the programmes. Regular site visits are being made and supervisors are involved in training opportunities. Providers send regular information about the progress of the young people and what elements of the programme have been delivered in monthly timeframes. In addition young people are completing Self-assessment forms (SAF) with support from the Case Worker on a regular basis (each ten week period). The SAF is designed to assist identify key social needs of the young person from their perspective and help them set achievable goals. Each SAF is accompanied by a report from the Case Worker. The Case Worker will have contact with the young people up to one year after completion of the programme. A formal external evaluation process is also in place, although there are still some parts to be formalised.

If any further information is required please feel free to contact Sandra Meredith at the Ministry of Youth Affairs (04) 9144 867.

What has become of Supervision with Activity?

An article in a recent Newsletter from the Office of the Commissioner for Children caught my interest. It was by Bobby Bryan an Advocate at the Commissioner's Office. It asked "What ever happened to Supervision with Activity Orders?" (s.283(m) of the Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989). With his permission I set it out in full. It will get you thinking, or at least, it ought to!

What ever happened to 283(m)?

by Bobby Bryan, Advocate

For four years I worked in a Child, Youth and Family Residence. I worked with six murderers, more sexual offenders then I can remember and an assortment of other violent offenders. I also worked with the odd young person who had engaged in non-violent offending, such as theft and burglary (but these guys were rare and they tended to have long lists of offences). I want to point out here, that I never met a young person I did not like. I know this sounds "touchy feely social worky", but it's true.

During this time I got to know the Youth Justice system quite well and I also got to know the residential system well. The experience of working there shaped my passion for the Youth Justice system, and restorative justice. This experience also left me firmly with the belief that incarceration, whether it be in a residence or in a prison, is often the worst thing we can do, as we try to help offenders change their behaviour.

The problem is not a simple one, but it can be explained in simple terms. If a young person is offending at the age of 16, then they have a long life of offending ahead of them, unless they are "fixed". Therefore we as a society will have to cope with the victims of this young person, and with the cost of imprisonment for them when they are eventually caught (at $54,000.00 per year).

If we want to avoid this social and monetary cost, then we have no choice but to fix the problem. In youth justice the problem sits with the offender, and their behaviour.

I believe in the youth justice provisions of the Child, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989. I also believe that with this piece of legislation we have a fantastic tool that can be used to help fix the problem.

But the question is, are we using this tool properly?

Well I want to suggest that we are not using a part of the legislation as well as we can, and therefore we are not using this great tool to it's potential.

Section 283, of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989, outlines the orders available to the Youth Court when dealing with young offenders. The orders start at 283(a), which allow the Judge to discharge the young person from the proceedings without further order or penalty. They go through to 283(o), which transfer a young person to District Court for sentencing (usually indicating a prison sentence).

Hidden away between 283(l) a community work order and 283(n) a supervision with residence order (2-3 months in a residence) you will find 283(m) a supervision with activity order.

283(m) is in my opinion under utilised, and it hides between these other two orders, which in my opinion are over utilised.

Supervision with activity is a great concept. It is a three-month sentence, where the young person exists under a strict plan, which runs for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

These plans are very detailed and are tailored to fit the individual needs of the young person. It is about constructing solutions around the problems that the young person displays. It is about providing the optimum environment for a young person to "fix" their behaviour. It is about taking some thing that society would happily discard and turning it into something society is happy to share space with. It is about healing.

In 1991 when I first started my life as a social worker in the residence, the Act was still fresh and there were many programmes available for young people. We used to ship young people away on boats, send them out into the bush, place them on courses and wrap providers around them. They would learn anger management, receive counselling and learn new skills. But most of all a successful supervision with activity would leave a young person with more self-belief and a higher self-esteem. They would challenge themselves and learn about who they truly are.

Watch a young person who knows how to rig a sail, set up a proper campsite, put down a hangi, do a haka or even saddle a horse. Watch them carefully and you will see a young person who knows what they are doing; keep watching and when they have finished you will see a puffed chest and a sense of pride, which sadly young people today very seldom feel.

By 1995 my time in the residence was coming to an end. Within four years I had witnessed the demise of supervision with activity. The resources had dried up, and supervision with activity plans was expensive. Funding of programmes was tightened, and providers who were good at doing, but not good at filling in forms, gave up. More and more young people were doing supervision with residence, spending 3 months couped up in a confined space, where programmes are attempted, but aren't as successful. Young people even came back to the residence to complete a second, third and even a fourth supervision with residence sentence. I could never understand this; logic suggests that if the first one failed to address their offending, how was a second one going to help. When you asked other people involved in the case why they were coming back, they would calmly say "there is nothing else available for them".

When I planned this article I wanted to show some hard facts, which demonstrated that supervision with activity was not utilised as much as it was. But the statistics kept by the Courts show all supervision orders together. So I rang a few friends who still work in the youth justice system and asked them about supervision with activity, "yeah, what ever happened to that?" was a common response.

Perhaps we all need to consider that question, because if we want a healthy youth justice system, them we need to rediscover 283(m).

Otago Youth Wellness Trust: A Model for Integrated Services for at risk young people?

Most in New Zealand will know of the pioneering work of the Otago Youth Wellness Trust. Its origins lay in a desire to provide assistance for young people lost to the education system, so that they could be reintegrated into mainstream education as soon as possible. It now has a much broader focus. It has recently developed an integrated single contract with a wide variety of government departments.

Pat Harrison, the original inspiration behind the Trust, which is now effectively managed by Barbara Payton, writes as follows:

"Otago Youth Wellness Trust

The Otago Youth Wellness Trust provides an integrated service for at-risk young people. They present with problems of inter-generational deprivation such as school failure, educational deficits through truancy, mental health issues, criminal offending, drug and alcohol abuse and behavioural disorders. Truancy is a key indicator for determining case priority, with provision for a wraparound service and individual case management for those identified with multiple disadvantages. A comprehensive needs assessment becomes the base for developing individual management plans. The service is community based with a philosophy of working with young people in an appropriate environment whether it be in their home, a community setting, the school or learning centre. Case management goals include education with an aim of re-integration to main stream schooling, an appropriate course, or work placement. The key lies in the holistic approach adopted and the nature of a comprehensive "wraparound" service.

A wraparound service is multi-modal with qualified experienced staff from different backgrounds blending their skills to provide effective interventions. Skills in health, mental health, education, occupational therapy, probation, social work, family therapy and outdoor education are blended together as is needed in the one spot under the same roof to provide for each young person's rehabilitation. A learning centre forms part of the service focusing on Alternative Education for students with mental health needs unable to be placed elsewhere.

To be fully effective, an integrated service must be funded in an integrated way, focussing on the achievement of outcomes with an inter-agency buy -in to improving the over-all conditions of each young person. This necessitates transcending a silo culture with an acknowledgement of the inter-dependence of each contributing factor.

The Ministry of Social Development has been working with the Trust and with Education, Mental Health, Police, Child and Family Services to develop an integrated contract with outcomes of increased Wellness, improvement of family/whanau functioning, a reduction in youth offending and an improved engagement with schooling/training, together with agreed criteria for measurement.

As part of the contractual agreement an identification of any issues or trends

seen as significantly impacting on the social, educational, health or justice outcomes must be recorded and reported. The contract has become a dynamic living document whose outcomes have risen from the community through a process of community consultation. It is a recognition of the importance of community.

A recently published paper [1] on the effectiveness of our community based research over the first two years of its seven years of existence has shown that the proportion of truanting decreased for 82% to 37% , that there was an improvement from pre- to past-intervention on the Youth Self Report delinquency sub-scale and an improvement on the Family Environment Conflict scores and that 69% were enrolled in school past the age of legal requirement.

Five years on, results on the first six months of this year show an 86% improved attendance at school. Of the 226 referred,26% were Maori and serviced by the Tangata Whenua team. Figures such as these mean little except over a much longer term period. But what is abundantly clear is that young people from third generation deprivation need intensive interventions from high quality staff with differing sector skills addressing all their identified needs. It is my belief that continued research to assess and evaluate intervention methods is paramount."

1 Effectiveness of a Community-based Truancy Intervention: A Pilot Study. NZ Journal of Educational Studies Vol 37 No 2 2002.

Youth Justice Website – A Reminder

The Youth Justice website can be found at www.courts.govt.nz/youth.
It contains a mine of information:-

- There is an overview of the Youth Court, with a series of commonly asked questions with answers.
- There is a detailed section about youth justice for those who want a more in-depth look at the system.

There are also sections for:-

- Young offenders and young people generally;
- Families, and
- Victims.

These are all written in a clear, easily understood way. I had little to do with the development of the site. Modesty will prevent the small team who developed the site (led by Judge David Harvey of Auckland) from saying so, but you need to know that our website won an award from the Netscape Magazine as website of the month for July. On a rainy night, or a late afternoon when you want an uplifting experience, why not surf the site!

Youth Justice Conference, Wellington – 18-20 February 2004

A major New Zealand youth justice conference is being planned for 18-20 February 2004. The theme is "Never Too Early Never Too Late" – How we deal with young offenders. I enclose advance notice of the conference, for those of you who are wishing to present a paper or make a contribution. Otherwise you should clear your diaries for those three days. It promises to be a significant event with some important overseas speakers attending. It is a cross-departmental, nation-wide youth justice Conference for which Child Youth and Family Service has taken a lead Agency role. I would urge you to attend. A "low-light" will undoubtedly be a conference dinner where the three Principal Youth Court Judges so far, Judge Mick Brown, Judge David Carruthers and myself, will reflect on the last 15 years of youth justice in New Zealand.

Early notice and call for papers

YOUTH JUSTICE CONFERENCE

WELLINGTON, 18-20 FEBRUARY 2004

never too early, never too late

kihai hei moata, kihai he tureiti hoki

The conference will have specific 40-minute sessions based on the Youth Offending Strategy key interventions of:

- with the family
- at school
- first contact with Police
- first Family Group Conference
- first Youth Court prosecution.

If you are interested in presenting at the conference on any of these interventions please send the conference organisers a brief note by 5 September 2003 containing:

- presentation title
- your preference for a workshop or presentation format
- a short (300 words) abstract outlining your subject
- a brief (100 words) personal profile of yourself.

Email, fax or post details to Steve Pasene:
Email steve.pasene@cyf.govt.nz
Fax: 04 918 9299
Child, Youth and Family
PO Box 2620
Wellington

child, youth and family