

**IN THE DISTRICT COURT
AT WELLINGTON**

**I TE KŌTI-Ā-ROHE
KI TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA**

[2022] NZACC 87

ACR 184/20

UNDER	THE ACCIDENT COMPENSATION ACT 2001
IN THE MATTER OF	AN APPEAL UNDER SECTION 149 OF THE ACT
BETWEEN	CORAL NEEDHAM Appellant
AND	ACCIDENT COMPENSATION CORPORATION Respondent

Judgment on the papers.

Submissions: The Appellant is self-represented
C Light for the Respondent

Date of Judgment: 11 May 2022

**JUDGMENT OF JUDGE P R SPILLER
[Late filing of an appeal to the District Court –
s 151, Accident Compensation Act 2001]**

Introduction

[1] The appeal in the above matter was lodged by Ms Needham on 4 September 2020. The appeal is from the decision of a Reviewer dated 13 July 2020. The Reviewer dismissed an application for review of the Corporation's decision declining payments towards the costs of operating and maintaining a boiler/home heating system.

[2] On 12 April 2022, Judge Henare issued an Initial Minute which directed that Ms Needham formally apply for leave to file the appeal out of time and set out the

reasons why the appeal was filed late. Judge Henare noted that, accompanying the Notice of Appeal was a signed statement from Dr D McKenzie (dated 24 August 2020) stating that, in recent months, the Needham household had been overwhelmed with health/extra requirements in the Covid-19 situation, and also Ms Needham's extreme health issues requiring travel to outside health facilities.

[3] In an undated document received on 29 April 2022, Ms Needham submitted that the appeal was filed late in light of the range of medical difficulties that she has had to encounter.

[4] On 10 May 2022, Mr Light for the Corporation submitted that it did not oppose the granting of leave, and that it had not suffered any prejudice as a result of the late filing of the appeal.

Relevant law

[5] Section 151 of the Accident Compensation Act 2001 (the Act) provides:

- (1) An appellant brings an appeal by sending a notice of appeal to, or filing a notice of appeal in, a specified registry.
- ...
- (3) The notice must be received by the specified registry—
 - (a) within 28 days after the date on which the reviewer gives a copy of the review decision to the appellant; or
 - ...
 - (c) within any longer time allowed by the District Court.

[6] In *Almond v Read*,¹ Arnold J (for the Supreme Court) outlined the following principles to guide the exercise of the discretion to grant or deny an extension of time to lodge an appeal:

[38] The ultimate question when considering the exercise of the discretion to extend time under r 29A is what the interests of justice require. That necessitates an assessment of the particular circumstances of the case. Factors which are likely to require consideration include:

- (a) *The length of the delay*. Clearly, the time period between the expiry of the appeal date and the filing of the application to extend

¹ *Almond v Read* [2017] NZSC 80, [2017] 1 NZLR 801, (2017) 23 PRNZ 533.

time is relevant. But in a case where there has been a slip-up and the appeal date has been inadvertently missed, how quickly the applicant sought to rectify the mistake after learning of it will also be relevant. Obviously, the longer the delay, the more the applicant will be seeking an “indulgence” from the court and the stronger the case for an extension will need to be.

- (b) *The reasons for the delay.* It will be particularly relevant to know whether the delay resulted from a deliberate decision not to proceed followed by a change of mind, from indecision, or from error or inadvertence. If from a change of mind or from indecision, there is less justification for an extension than where the delay results from error or inadvertence, particularly if understandable.
- (c) *The conduct of the parties, particularly of the applicant.* For example, a history of non-cooperation and/or delay by an applicant may be relevant.
- (d) *Any prejudice or hardship to the respondent or to others with a legitimate interest in the outcome.* Again, the greater the prejudice, the stronger the case will have to be to justify the grant of an extension of time. Where there is significant delay coupled with significant prejudice, then it may well be appropriate to refuse leave even though the appeal appears to be strongly arguable.
- (e) *The significance of the issues raised by the proposed appeal, both to the parties and more generally.* If there is a public interest in the issues, the case for an extension is likely to be stronger than if there is no such interest.

Discussion

[7] In terms of section 151(3)(a) of the Act, Ms Needham was required to file a Notice of Appeal against the Reviewer’s decision within 28 days after the date on which the Reviewer provided a copy of the review decision to her. The Reviewer’s decision was dated 13 July 2020, which left a date of around 11 August 2020 for the filing of the Notice of Appeal. In the event, the Notice of Appeal was filed on 4 September 2020. This Court is now being asked to exercise its discretion to allow a longer time for filing the Notice of Appeal (in terms of section 151(3)(c)). In deciding whether to exercise its discretion, this Court will follow the guidelines provided by the Supreme Court in *Almond v Read*.²

² Above, note 1.

(a) The length of the delay

[8] The Supreme Court noted that, the longer the delay, the more the applicant will be seeking an indulgence from the Court and the stronger the case for an extension would need to be; and that, in a case where there had been a slip-up and the appeal date had been inadvertently missed, how quickly the applicant sought to rectify the mistake after learning of it would also be relevant.

[9] This Court notes that the delay in this case is around 24 days, which is not an overly long period of time.

(b) The reasons for the delay

[10] The Supreme Court noted that, if the delay arose from a change of mind or from indecision, there was less justification for an extension than where the delay resulted from error or inadvertence, particularly if understandable.

[11] Ms Needham submitted that the appeal was filed late in light of the range of medical difficulties that she has had to encounter in recent years. A signed statement from Dr D McKenzie (dated 24 August 2020) stated that, in preceding months, the Needham household had been overwhelmed with health/extra requirements in the Covid-19 situation, and also with Ms Needham's extreme health issues requiring travel to outside health facilities. The period referred to by Dr McKenzie includes the 28-day period within which Ms Needham was required to lodge her appeal.

[12] This Court is satisfied that Ms Needham's delay arose out of understandable error or inadvertence.

(c) The conduct of the parties

[13] The Supreme Court observed that a history of non-cooperation and/or delay by an applicant might be relevant.

[14] This Court notes that Ms Needham complied with Judge Henare's direction that, by 29 April 2022, she provide an application for leave to appeal out of time,

with reasons. The Court is not aware of any history of non-cooperation and/or delay by Ms Needham, apart from the late filing of the appeal.

(d) Prejudice or hardship to the respondent or to others with a legitimate interest in the outcome

[15] The Supreme Court noted that, where there is significant delay coupled with significant prejudice, then it might well be appropriate to refuse leave even though the appeal appeared to be strongly arguable.

[16] This Court notes that the delay in this case is not an overly long one. The Corporation has submitted that it did not oppose the granting of leave, and that it had not suffered any prejudice as a result of the late filing of the appeal. The Court is not aware of any prejudice or hardship to other parties with a legitimate interest in the outcome.

(e) The significance of the issues raised by the proposed appeal, both to the parties and more generally

[17] The Supreme Court observed that, if there is a public interest in the issues, the case for an extension is likely to be stronger than if there is no such interest.

[18] This Court accepts that the proposed appeal is significant to Ms Needham. The Court is not in a position to assess the significance of the issues raised by the proposed appeal more generally.

The Decision

[19] In light of the above considerations, this Court finds that Ms Needham has established that the interests of justice require the exercise of the Court's discretion to sustain her application for leave to file her appeal out of time, which is accordingly granted.

[20] There are no issues as to costs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P R Spiller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

P R Spiller
District Court Judge