

[3] On 27 February 2024, Ms Arnold, for the Corporation, submitted that the material delay in lodging the appeal was likely to cause prejudice to the Corporation and leave to appeal was opposed. Ms Arnold submitted that the appropriate course was for Ms Morris to file a new claim.

Relevant law

[4] 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
 - (b) ...
 - (c) within any longer time allowed by the District Court.

[5] The above provision is in line with the purpose of the Act. Section 3 of the Act provides that its purpose is to enhance the public good by providing for a fair and sustainable scheme for managing personal injury. Section 3 further states that one of the overriding goals of this scheme is minimising the economic, social and personal costs of the impact of injury on the community. Unnecessary delay in bringing an appeal to the ACC jurisdiction of the District Court carries potential costs for the appellant and also for the justice system and those involved in it.

[6] In *Avery v No 2 Public Service Appeal Board*,¹ Richmond J (for the Court of Appeal) stated:

When once an appellant allows the time for appealing to go by then his position suffers a radical change. Whereas previously he was in a position to appeal as of right, he now becomes an applicant for a grant of an indulgence by the Court. The onus rests on him to satisfy that in all the circumstances the justice of the case requires that he be given the opportunity to attack the judgment from which he wishes to appeal.

¹ *Avery v No 2 Public Service Appeal Board* [1973] 2 NZLR 86, 91.

[7] In *Almond v Read*,² 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:

[37] Accordingly, where a litigant takes steps to exercise the right of appeal within the required timeframe (including advising the other party), but misses the specified time limit by a day or so as a result of an error or miscalculation (especially by a legal adviser) and applies for an extension of time promptly on learning of the error, we do not think it is appropriate to characterise the giving of an extension of time as the granting of an indulgence which necessarily entitles the court to look closely at the merits of the proposed appeal. In reality, there has simply been a minor slip-up in the exercise of a right. An application for an extension of time in such a case should generally be dealt with on that basis, with the result that an extension of time should generally be granted, desirably without opposition from the respondent.

[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 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

² *Almond v Read* [2017] NZSC 80, [2017] 1 NZLR 801, (2017) 23 PRNZ 533.

issues, the case for an extension is likely to be stronger than if there is no such interest.

Discussion

[8] In terms of section 151(3)(a) of the Act, Ms Morris 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 28 October 2021, which left a date of 25 November 2021 for the filing of the Notice of Appeal. In the event, the Notice of Appeal was filed on 24 January 2024. 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*.³ These authoritative principles have been repeatedly followed by the District Court and are in line with the purpose of the Act stated above.

(a) The length of the delay

[9] 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.

[10] This Court notes that the delay in this case is two years and two months, which is a significant period of time. There is no evidence as to how quickly Mr Morris sought to rectify the mistake of not filing the appeal in time after learning of the mistake.

(b) The reasons for the delay

[11] 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.

³ Above, note 7.

[12] Ms Morris stated that her previous legal representative was supposed to have lodged a new claim but did not. She believes that should have the right to open a claim and have that claim assessed.

[13] This Court is not satisfied that Ms Morris' delay in filing an appeal against the Reviewer's decision arose out of understandable error or inadvertence. The Reviewer recorded in his decision of 28 October 2021 that the parties consented to the review being dismissed, and that Ms Morris' mental injury cover might still be pursued once the Corporation issued a further decision in relation to her physical hip injury claim. The review decision advised Ms Morris of her right of appeal to the District Court and referred to further information which included the time frame for such an appeal.

(c) The conduct of the parties

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

[15] This Court is not aware of any history of non-cooperation and/or delay by Ms Morris, apart from the significant delay in filing the present appeal.

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

[16] 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.

[17] This Court notes that the delay in this case is significant. The Corporation has submitted that the material delay in lodging the appeal was likely to cause prejudice to the Corporation and leave to appeal was opposed.

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

[18] 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.

[19] This Court is not clear why the proposed appeal is significant to Ms Morris, when she consented to the dismissal of her appeal by the Reviewer and she still has the option of lodging a further claim with the Corporation. The Court is not in a position to assess the significance of the issues raised by the proposed appeal more generally.

The Decision

[20] In light of the above considerations, this Court finds that Ms Morris has not established that the interests of justice require the exercise of the Court's discretion to sustain her application for leave to file her appeal well out of time, which is accordingly dismissed. Ms Morris still retains the option of filing a further claim with the Corporation, which will, if filed, be assessed by the Corporation in due course.

[21] There are no issues as to costs.



P R Spiller
District Court Judge