

# LEGAL AID NEWS

June 2017

*Legal Aid News* is your official regular communication from Legal Aid Services on all matters related to legal aid. *Legal Aid News* is generally published in the last week of every month.

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## **Update on changes to the administration of legal aid**

In the September 2016 *Legal Aid News* we advised that the Ministry was changing the way granting and debt management functions are administered.

As advised we are transitioning granting into two offices, in Takapuna and Wellington, and have introduced optimised processes for both granting and debt management.

As of Friday 30 June 2017, the New Plymouth and Rotorua legal aid offices will be closed. Local providers have been informed of new contact information. The Ministry website and pages 8-10 of the [grants handbook](#) have been updated to reflect the distribution of applications from these offices. Legal aid customers are being directed to the 0800 2 LEGAL AID (0800 253 425) number for any queries they may have.

We thank the staff in these offices for their hard work, commitment and professionalism and wish those staff leaving Legal Aid Services, all the best for the future.

The closing of these two offices completes the transition process.

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## **Criminal fixed fee review – second set of changes**

This is a reminder that the second set of changes resulting from the Legal Services Commissioner's review of the criminal legal aid fee schedules are being introduced on **Monday 3 July 2017**, for new applications received on or after 3 July 2017.

More information about the changes is available in a [YouTube video](#) for legal aid providers.

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## Views sought on greater use of on-site audits for legal aid providers

The Ministry of Justice is consulting on proposed changes to the legal aid audit policy to allow greater use of on-site audits.

Legal Aid Services Manager Tracey Baguley says on-site audits have the potential to add value to the Ministry's audit programme.

"While on-site visits are currently restricted to special audits, the annual audit programme could be carried out more effectively and efficiently by allowing a more flexible approach that uses a mix of off- and on-site audits," says Ms Baguley. "On-site audits may be particularly useful in a range of situations such as where the provider has had a very high number of cases assigned in the previous year or where there are insufficient closed files due to the nature of the work."

The consultation document is available on the [Ministry of Justice website](#). Consultation responses are due by 3 August 2017.

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## Processing of duty lawyer and police detention legal assistance (PDLA) tax invoices

In early June we experienced some delays in invoice payment. We apologise for this delay and confirm invoice payments are now up to date. To assist us with prompt processing of invoices we would appreciate everyone noting the communication below that was included in the March Legal Aid News. In particular please ensure your writing on the invoice form is legible. Where writing is not legible it slows down the processing of invoices as we take more time trying to decipher what is on the form. Thank you for your assistance with this.

As a result of the recent changes to the administration of legal aid, all duty lawyer tax invoices (PDS and non PDS courts) and PDLA tax invoices should now be emailed to [dutylawyer@justice.govt.nz](mailto:dutylawyer@justice.govt.nz) or posted to SX10146 Wellington for processing.

### *Changes to the duty lawyer tax invoice form*

There is now more space to write your name and a reminder has been added at the bottom of the form advising information that cannot be read will not be processed.

We also again remind duty lawyers; when you are completing your *Duty Lawyer Attendance – Tax Invoice* form to ensure that:

- your writing on the invoice form is legible
  - the time format is used consistently – either using minutes or hours
  - your invoice is signed and counter signed by the court registrar or a PDS supervisor, where applicable.
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## Queries?

If you have any queries about any article in this newsletter, please contact [legalaidnews@justice.govt.nz](mailto:legalaidnews@justice.govt.nz).