

The Justice of the Peace of the Future

Activities marking the Auckland Justices of the Peace Association's centennial year culminated in May 2022 with an enhanced meeting of Support Group Coordinators, the key organisers who arrange our services in the community. The meeting was addressed by several experienced, practising Justices of the Peace who had been asked to anticipate the future role of the office of Justice of the Peace in Auckland. The following is a summary of their presentations, plus contributions from others at the meeting.

An Enduring Office

Justices will remain useful in *future communities* by continuing to offer a *business-like service* to clients in a *friendly and helpful manner*, with *confidence and competencies* whether providing Judicial or Ministerial duties or acting as a trusted person or a witness.

Future Communities

Justices face a growing diversity in their local communities, and they will adapt to assist society's widening range of clients - age, ethnicity, religion and gender - while showing inclusiveness, awareness and tolerance. Communities where there's a preponderance of immigrants or overseas students might need extended, pop-up, or roving Service Desks. These services should be well-communicated/advertised, reaching out to various communities in their own languages. This diversity will also be reflected in the choice of new Justices of the Peace.

Business-Like Service

The community will continue to expect professionalism. Clients must be able to assume all their transactions will be quickly and confidently completed by a competent Justice of the Peace in a single visit.

Service Desks will become even more popular to meet local demands. Communicating where these facilities are to be found, indeed publicising the location of all Service Desks and all Justices of the Peace, will continue to be important: requiring innovation in advertising/promotion of this information, especially for new-New Zealanders.

Friendly and Helpful Manner

This sets the tone towards professionalism. Clients can anticipate a personable approach, showing a willingness "to do business", in a friendly, helpful and "can do" manner, engaging one-on-one with the task in hand. Justices should display an attitude that encourages, without hesitation, return visits for service when the need arises. This client-centric approach will help ensure the future of the office of Justice of the Peace.

Competency

There will be even more need, and increasing pressures, on Justices to be accredited. In the future the standards may be raised to a professionalism regulated by a new body demanding individuals be fully trained, qualified and held responsible for their work. Additions to Ministerial duties will reflect the digital era with more on-line transactions (rather than in-person), such as were arranged during Covid-19 lockdowns. Paperless processes will be pursued. New electronic personal identifiers will in future guard against impersonation and fraud.

Footnote

Greater Auckland's diverse population, with an estimated 160 languages, is projected to reach two million by 2050. Justices will need to be innovative, resilient and, preferably working smarter (rather than harder) to meet future demands. Justices of the Peace will serve with unity, not uniformity: there

must be room to accommodate local needs – a “one size” approach/template will not suit everyone. But, universally, Justices must be ready to adapt to change. No matter how complex legal and technical processes become, there must be ways found in the future to retain the voluntary services of society’s “trusted persons”: the Justices of the Peace.

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