

COOK ISLANDS LAW SOCIETY

1 August 2017

Media Release

A three day mediation training programme was recently held at the USP Campus for members of the Cook Islands Law Society, the Justices of the Peace and other people interested in learning mediation skills. Altogether 21 people participated and 9 of those people took the assessment for accreditation. The programme was delivered and assessments provided by Virginia Goldblatt, immediate past Director of the Dispute Resolution Centre at Massey University and the current Director of the Massey University Mediation Service; Geoff Sharp international mediator, who was named one of the world's top ten commercial mediators in 2014, 15 and 16; and Professor Laurence Boule AM, academic and mediator who was a foundation member of the Bond University in Queensland where he established the Dispute Resolution Centre, Director of the Mandela Institute at the University of Witwatersrand from 2009-11 and Professor of Law at the Australian Catholic University in Sydney.

The programme was an initiative of the Cook Islands Law Society Council which identified the need for skilled mediators to resolve disputes instead of parties taking their disputes to Court. The first programme was held in 2014 with the assistance of Massey University, New Zealand Law Society Continuing Legal Education and Lexis Nexis. That programme introduced participants to mediation skills and the judicial settlement conference process.

Massey University and New Zealand Law Society Continuing Legal Education were instrumental in providing support to the Cook Islands Law Society for bringing the programme back to the Cook Islands in July this year and taking it a step further by including an assessment process for accreditation. The programme involved learning principles and theories of mediation, role playing scenarios, and being assessed mediating an employment dispute, a commercial dispute or a family dispute.

A comment about the standard of mediation skills shown by the nine who were assessed indicates that the Cook Islands will be well served by alternative dispute resolution processes – *Those who have presented the workshops in New Zealand thought that the standard demonstrated by the 9 who were assessed would have placed them amongst the most consistently well performing groups that we have seen in the many New Zealand workshops we have offered since 2010.* – Dick Edwards, New Zealand Law Society Continuing Legal Education.

The plan is to continue this excellent relationship with Massey University and New Zealand Law Society Continuing Legal Education so that further mediation accreditation programmes can be held in the near future. The accredited mediators are: Tingika Elikana, Catherine Evans, Katherine Fitzgerald, Martha Henry, Ben Marshall, Alison Mills, Mark Short, Nooapii Tearea and Rebecca Wood. Anyone who has a dispute which may be settled by mediation should contact the above people directly or contact the Cook Islands Law Society on email lawcouncil@cookislandslawsociety.com

Council

President: Wilkie Rasmussen
Secretary: Ben Marshall
Treasurer: Catherine Evans

Council Members: Tamatoa Jonassen
Reuben Tylor



Professor Laurence Boule takes participants through the principles of mediation

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Cook Islands Law Society,
PO Box 3267
Rarotonga
Cook Islands
Phone + 682 26155 Email: rasmussen.wilkie@gmail.com catherine.evans@cookislands.gov.ck ben@lawyers.co.ck



L-R Dick Edwards, Virginia Goldblatt, Laurance Boule, Geoff Sharp

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Mediation training participants at the Mediation Accreditation Celebration Dinner at Coastal Kitchen, Tupapa.

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