



MEDIA RELEASE

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27 years on, murder conviction of Lon Reti referred to Court of Appeal

Lon Reti's 1999 conviction and sentence for murder is to be reconsidered by the Court of Appeal.

Mr Reti was convicted of murder in the Christchurch High Court in 1998 and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mr Reti appealed his conviction in 1999, but his original appeal was dismissed 'on the papers' under the ex-parte regime that operated between 1991 and 2001. He exercised his right to a rehearing in 2003, but this was also unsuccessful.

Te Kāhui Tātari Ture | Criminal Cases Review Commission (Te Kāhui) began investigating Mr Reti's conviction in June 2022.

The investigation examined the potential impact of Mr Reti's mental health and personal history on the safety of his conviction. During the investigation Te Kāhui obtained expert evidence exploring the impact Mr Reti's mental health and personal history may have had on the offending and the proceedings. Expert evidence was not before the jury or the Court of Appeal.

This highlighted serious concerns about whether the partial defence of provocation was fully and fairly considered during Mr Reti's trial. Provocation was raised at Mr Reti's trial in 1998, and while applied at the time, it has since been repealed.

Te Kāhui concluded that this new information is relevant to the partial defence of provocation. On that basis, it has decided it is in the interests of justice to refer Mr Reti's conviction back to the Court of Appeal. This is the fifth referral Te Kāhui has made to an appellate Court.

“For Mr Reti, and for most applicants, an application to Te Kāhui comes as a result of years of perseverance to have their case looked at again,” says Kaikōmihana Matua | Chief Commissioner Hon Denis Clifford. “For many, our involvement is the first time their case has been looked at with fresh eyes.”

“Our unique role in the criminal justice system is to independently investigate and review possible miscarriages of justice. We don't decide guilt or innocence, that's the role of the courts. We have a duty to act, when we uncover information that could have made a real difference to the outcome. Our power of investigation and referral is an important safeguard in the justice system.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editor

- Te Kāhui Tātari Ture | Criminal Cases Review Commission (Te Kāhui) is an independent Crown entity established under the Criminal Cases Review Commission Act 2019.
- Te Kāhui acts as a safeguard in Aotearoa New Zealand's justice system. Our role is to independently investigate and review convictions and sentences where a miscarriage of justice may have occurred and decide whether it is in the interests of justice to refer a case to an appeal court.
- Since opening in 2020, Te Kāhui has received 581 applications and completed 322. This is our fifth referral to an appellate court.
- Te Kāhui does not decide guilt or innocence, that is the role of the courts. Our role is to provide an independent, fair and impartial review when a miscarriage of justice may have occurred.