

Workshop on family violence, youth justice underway here (/news/national/3539-workshop-on-family-violence-youth-justice-underway-here)

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A FOUR-DAY workshop on Family Violence and Youth Justice started yesterday at the Honiara Hotel conference room.

The programme, which was hosted by the Pacific Judicial Development Programme (PJDP), was funded by the New Zealand government and run by the Federal Court of Australia.

Participants of the workshop came from the judiciary, government agencies and departments, as well as non-government organisations.

The objectives of the workshop are to firstly consider family violence in both the Pacific and local contexts, to learn how to approach and deal with it within the constraints of present law, and secondly to consider the proposed Solomon Islands Family Protection Bill 2013, and learn its scope.

The third objective is to review the operation and implementation of the Juvenile Act, the Probation Act and the Evidence Act and consider the setting up of a Pasifika Court for young offenders.

Speaking at the opening of the workshop, Chief Judge of New Zealand family court Peter Boshier said this particular programme is run in 14 Pacific countries and all to do with better access to justice by victims of violence and all sorts of victims.

He said New Zealand government funded this workshop because it wants to support the local judiciary.

"The New Zealand Government wants to try and make a difference, and wanted to support the local judiciary, not to tell them what to do but to support them in a way they are doing their job," Justice Boshier said.

He said this workshop was conducted to talk about local issues and what needs to be done and try and get each local judiciary to be able to perform a little bit better.

Justice Boshier said it is a unique sort of workshop as the Chief Justice of Solomon Islands and the whole judiciary from Solomon Islands attended.

"It is very unusual to have the judiciary present with police, court officers, government agencies, non-government organisations and the churches."

He said at the end of the workshop he will know whether everyone wants to do a memoriam of understanding, that they will all work together to reduce family violence offending in Solomon Island and make sure that victims of family violence have good support and proper protection.

Justice Boshier said at the moment before the Solomon Islands Parliament is a Family Protection Bill, which he believes will be passed but is waiting for its report from the select committee.

"We're all hoping that it may be read and passed at the sitting of the Parliament.

"The bill is very much the same as the legislature of other Pacific countries.

"It is a really great piece of law. It enables the police to issue safety notice so people who are violent have to leave

their home straight away.

“It gives ability of people to apply to magistrates and judges to have protection orders made. And if it’s really urgent the bill says the court should try and deal with it the same day.”

He said the bill creates offences and it does further things like creates an awareness program for family violence and an advisory council.

“We have seen quite a revolution in the Pacific because 10 years ago we are not prepared to talk about family violence.

“We are now recognising that family violence is huge, and fact that the Pacific knows that, is probably seen by the fact so many countries had passed the legislation.”

He added that according to a survey conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) 68 percent of women in Solomon Islands suffered domestic violence.

Similar workshops have been previously conducted in Vanuatu, Tonga, Palau, and Cook Islands.

By ASSUMPTA BUCHANAN

Family violence seminar ends (/news/national/3648-family-violence-seminar-ends)

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THE four-day workshop on family violence and youth justice ended on Friday at the Honiara Hotel conference room on a high note.

Facilitator of this workshop Justice Peter Boshier, who is the Chief Judge of New Zealand family court, said this is the most active workshop he has ever been to.

Members of the judiciary, government agencies and departments, as well as non-government organisations attended the seminar.

Judge Boshier said everyone attending this workshop all wanted to talk and to have a say.

“What is beneficial in this workshop is the whole judiciary is here,” he said.

“The judges and magistrates could hear what everyone is saying and every one could hear what they are saying.”

He said there have been really good information sharing between the judiciary and the community at the workshop.

Judge Boshier said they spent two days discussing about family violence and then moved on to discussion and sharing views and ideas in relation to youth offending.

He said on Thursday they have showed everyone a new type of possible new court for the country.

“We did that on Thursday and try to think of how we could deal with young offenders to make them better citizens so we could rehabilitate them.

“Judges and magistrates themselves will talk about the way in which they run juvenile courts and will decide whether they want to try out some new exciting techniques which are now being introduced in Samoa and Cook Islands,” Judge Boshier said.

Yesterday they concentrated on outcomes of family violence.

He said he drafted a possible Accord and worked hard on getting the agreement on the outcome of family violence workshop.

Judge Boshier said both him and the chief justice will sign the Accord and then it will go to some ministers including the Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Health and Medical Services.

He stressed that everyone in Solomon Islands wants something to happen.

He said the workshop is finished with a strong agreement to address such a serious family problem.

“Everyone is happy that the Family Protection Bill is before the Parliament but on the other hand even if it is passed it will take quite a long time to be implemented.

“So they want to get something under way now.

“This is so everyone is now looking at the body that is already set up the SAFENET.”

SAFENET is comprised of Family Support Center, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, the Minister of Health and Medical Services, the Christian Care Centre, and the Public Solicitor's Office.

He said after seeing the Accord and everyone's ideas and asked them to communicate to the chief justice, ministers and commissioner for police with what action they are going to take after the workshop.

He thanked everyone and especially chief justice who attended the workshop.

“To me, a country can have a bright future if it has strong judicial leadership.”

Similar workshops have been previously conducted in Vanuatu, Tonga, Palau, and Cook Islands.

By ASSUMPTA BUCHANAN

Head of care centre hails seminar (/news/national/3647-head-of-care-centre-hails-seminar)

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COORDINATOR of the Christian Care Centre, Sister Doreen Awaiasi says she is very happy to be part of the family violence and youth justice workshop that ended on Friday.

Sister Doreen said the workshop has given her the opportunity to sit face to face with other stakeholders and especially the judges and magistrates to discuss important issues that are of relevance to her work.

"We have discussed and talked about issues of family violence and youth justice and they shared ideas and gaps in addressing the issues," Sister Doreen said.

"I am happy that this workshop includes magistrates, judges and police officers and other important stake holders, government officials and other non-government organisation.

"We are able to understand each other's work and address the gaps involving young victims in going to court rooms giving evidence."

She said they have discussed other ways in which to help young traumatised victims of violence instead of going to court as a witness.

Sister Doreen said to send a child victim to sit in the witness box and face the accused in court rooms are injustices to the child victims.

She said there should be a different approach as to how court deal with child victims of violence.

The sister added that the courts are not child friendly.

This workshop has made it possible for her to share her concerns and ideas and to hear from the very people who hear the cases involving child victims in court.

"This workshop in terms of the victims of violence will make it easier for us to do their work, for at the end of the day it comes back to us how we do the referrals of the victims."

She said in terms of her work she is happy to have attended this workshop for everyone to come up with a common understanding in relation to addressing the issues of family violence and youth justice.

Also speaking at the end of the workshop, Joana Kenilorea Hanu from the Attorney General's office, said it is an honour to attend the workshop.

She said they are honoured to have this rare privileged to attend workshop of this level, to participate shoulder to shoulder with high level officers of the judiciary and other important stake holders of other important agencies, and non government organisation.

"It has been truly a time well spent and time well invested for the interest of this country," she said.

She thanked the NZ government to support this programme.

"You have seen the importance of assisting us with these issues in the Solomon Islands."

The four day intensive workshop involved debates, discussions, sharing of ideas and looking at ways to address issues of family violence and youth justice.

It was funded by the New Zealand government and run by the Federal Court of Australia.

By ASSUMPTA BUCHANAN

Sir Albert hails frankness of seminar participants (/news/national/3650-sir-albert-hails-frankness-of-seminar-participants)

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CHIEF Justice Sir Albert Palmer says he was amazed at the wealth of knowledge and wisdom of experience, skills and expertise from participants of the family violence and Youth Justice Workshop, which ended yesterday.

He thanked participants for their frank, open and honest comments.

“Take notes of suggestions for improvements and suggestions and changes you have made,” he told participants.

“I hope this workshop gives so much ideas, thoughts or suggestions if not to challenge you to do more or do something to address domestic violence and youth justice issues in our homes, families and in our community.

“We will do our best to include them in our activities and work plans,” the chief justice said.

He added that he heard expressions, views, comments, differences and criticisms by individual members of the judiciary during the workshop.

“Judges and magistrates are very frank and open and made personal comments.

“I would encourage you to put those comments into perspective as suggestions to improve the criminal justice system in the country.”

Sir Albert said although they have made those personal comments they have spoken from their hearts in their commitment, zeal and concern for the criminal justice system to be improved.

The chief justice said it is notable during the workshop the amount of work that has been done and achieved so far.

“We all recognise that there is so much more to be done.”

He hoped everyone take something back with them of the passion and commitment that the judges, members of the judiciary have for this country that the answer lies with you, with us and with our country.

“We need to work hard and be committed.

“It always comes back to us individuals, our minds needs to be renewed.”

Sir Albert said for those who believe in the word of God our minds needs to be renewed with the word of God.

“You need to be renewed with the laws and legislations with the good things that we have.

“Our hearts need to be transformed,” he told participants.

He said there’s a lot that we have come through.

“A lot of problems and issues related to family violence issues come back to family unit.

“Family unit in Solomon Islands needs to be strengthened, to be rebuilt, and to be restored.

“Husbands need to appreciate and understand their roles and responsibility towards their wife and their home.

“The wife too needs to understand and appreciate their role to their husband.”

He noted the roles of various government agencies and government institution that this needs to be strengthened.

The Chief Justice thanked everyone who has attended the workshop and especially the New Zealand government for their support.

New Zealand High Commissioner Marion Crawshaw thanked participants for their time at the four day workshop, debating and looking at how Solomon Islands can address the two important issues of family violence and youth justice.

“Without time and effort put this week, it would be difficult to achieve something in these areas,” Mrs Crawshaw said.

She said workshops are great that you can decide what to do and talk among yourselves, provide support to each other in deterring directions you want to go, and at the end of the day the results come from implementations,.

“So what I would encourage on the next step from the workshop is for each of you just how you implement the nature of agreement that you come to in this Accord.

“For implementations to be effective it needs be in a practical level.

“I think it has been terrific process, particularly in looking at addressing violence.

“It still has a long way to and its people like you who move on and make things happen,” she said.

The programme was hosted by the Pacific Judicial Development Programme for the first time here.

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