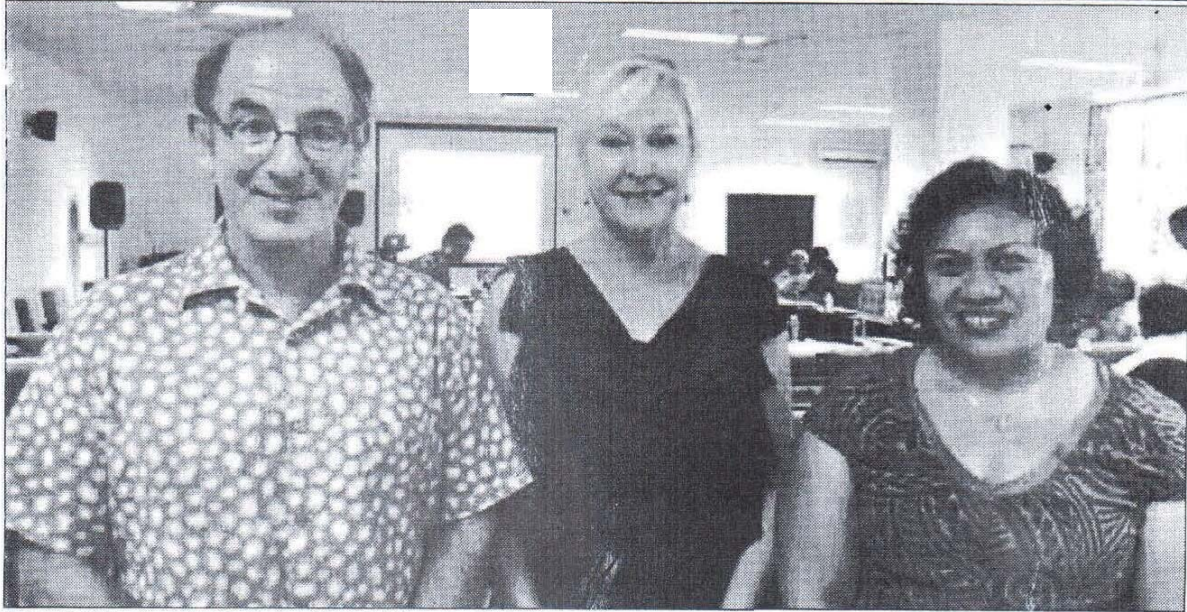




Activity supported by the Pacific Judicial Development Programme as a Responsive Fund activity, as approved 5-Nov-2013



Dr David Galler, intensive Care specialist at Middlemore, Judge Ema Aitken, specialist judge in the alcohol and drug treatment court in Auckland.

Treatment Court Option For Alcohol And Drugs

.....a 'large number' of crimes occur under the influence of alcohol.

Tauva Lima

A Treatment Court is being considered by the Judiciary to counteract the rising number of cases involving alcohol

and drugs, seen as the main contributing factor to the increase of crimes in Samoa. This is the aim of a weeklong workshop started at Mulinu'u yesterday. Judges

and representatives from various sectors are engaged in sharing opinions on how this alternative might help rehabilitate prisoners from re-offending.



The workshop is conducted by New Zealand representatives Judge Ema Aitken who is a specialist judge in the alcohol and drug treatment court in Auckland.

She is accompanied by two personnel, Ali'imuamua Sandra Alofiavae a specialist lawyer in the alcohol and drug treatment court and Dr David Galler, intensive Care specialist at Middlemore hospital South Auckland.

Judge Aitken indicated that alcohol related offenses is a huge problem that needs to be carefully considered.

Treatment programs available in New Zealand, is showing progress with criminals that redeem themselves through ongoing programs provided by the government.

Judge Aitken added their aim while in Samoa to explain the model used in their court in New Zealand to rehabilitate criminals to stop them from reoffending.

"I have been invited here by the Chief Justice to describe the model that we use in New Zealand where we have an alcohol and other drug treatment court.

"We set up our court 18 months ago but we have taken a model from America where they have been running courts based on a similar structure for 20 years now.

"So the purpose of the workshop is to talk with the Samoa judiciary through a process of how to set up the court and how it works in New Zealand.

"This Treatment Court offers people an alternative to prison that if they are prepared to do the work to get well, they get well. Drug addiction is a disease of the brain and we call it a chronic disease."

The American Alcohol and

Other Drug Treatment Court (AODT) model to help the criminals from reoffending has been adopted in Auckland by the NZ Judiciary.

Chief Justice Patu Falefatu Sapolu in his response during the workshop revealed a 'large number' of crimes occur under the influence of alcohol.

Alcohol is a 'very serious problem' in Samoa as His Honour has seen in many cases brought before him since working as a Supreme Court Judge.

"To my experience and to my knowledge of criminal offending in this country, a very very large number of criminal offenses are committed under the influence of alcohol. Particularly criminal offenses involved, is the use of violence resulting either in death or bodily harm.

"Alcohol has also been found to play a part in a number of sexual offenses that have been prosecuted before the court and this is not to mention the number of traffic offenses that are being prosecuted in the District Court because of alcohol related offenses."

His Honour bear witness as well to the influence of alcohol in broken families who are brought to court in which he has been involved with during divorce proceedings.

"Sometimes because I deal with all the divorce matters called in the Supreme Court, the cause of the breakdown in the parents is connected to alcohol abuse usually by the husband and very few times by the wife."

Judge Aitken believes the alternative treatment is cheaper than prison in New Zealand and is also not an expensive process if Samoa adopts it in the years to come.