

Public confidence in the Judiciary?

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TV NEWS

Transparency Vanuatu's press release of 7 Feb, 2014 published results of a street survey which found, that whilst lawyers had considerable trust in the impartiality of the judiciary, the general public was considerably less trusting of the judiciary.

A further street survey was conducted to find out if these results were simply the result of asking a small number of people, and to find out reasons why there was lack of trust in the judiciary.

Fifty people (28 men and 22 women ranging in age from 18 – 75) were asked whether they were confident that the judicial system is impartial. As with the results from the last judiciary survey only a small number (22%) said yes.

Other concerns about the functioning of the courts, which the judiciary can take steps to address, were also expressed. Time delays in general (which may be caused by lawyers and other parties, as well as court and judicial staff) and delays in issuing judgments were the subject of the TIV Vanuatu Judicial Monitoring System Report.

Whilst a reportedly productive meeting between lawyers and judges was held in November 2013 and some improvements to managing cases have occurred, the underlying feeling of these surveys is that Chief Justice is urged to boost public trust in the judiciary by explaining how and when the backlog in judgments will be addressed.

Concerns about bias by judges were also raised. Whilst this may be a matter of perception, the national integrity study report recommends that a Code of Conduct for Judges is created, to help ensure that judges are transparent about potential biases and to avoid being involved in cases where they may have a conflict of interest. Developing a Code of Conduct for judges is already part of the Pacific Judicial Development Program.

Are there other measures you would like to suggest to strengthen the judiciary? To find out more you can get the judiciary discussion paper (and other discussion papers_ from the NIS project page on the Transparency International Vanuatu website <http://www.transparencyvanuatu.org/index.php?page=national-integrity-sys...> Your comments and feedback are welcomed.