Victims play a vital role in the parole process. The New Zealand Parole Board keenly invites you to have a say – either in writing, in person, or both.

Your input helps the Board’s decision-making about whether to release an offender, and your contribution can be as brief or as long as you want it to be.

As a first step, you must complete paperwork with the Police to get onto the Victim Notification Register. That enables you to be told when a hearing is coming up, seek information about the offender, and be told about the Board’s decisions.

The Board is legally required to see offenders once they reach their parole eligibility date, which is usually a third of the way into the sentence, or once the minimum non-parole period has passed. Parole is a privilege, not a right, and is not automatic or guaranteed. We have parole as a proven way to reduce reoffending, by supervising an offender’s reintegration to society – rather than releasing them at the end of their sentence when oversight is no longer possible.

Three months out from a hearing, registered victims are notified of the due date for submissions and the timing of the hearing itself. If you want to have an in-person meeting with the Board, this is when you can arrange a time. Your meeting with the Board is separate to the parole hearing and not held at a prison. Support people are welcome, but we must be notified about them in advance.

Victim input is a very important factor in how decisions get made. Board members do all they can to ensure you are comfortable in what can be a very stressful situation. In the past year, the New Zealand Parole Board has held 207 face-to-face meetings with registered victims and received hundreds more written submissions.

It can be very challenging for victims to re-live their experience by making a submission to the Board. Often there is a great deal of anger and sadness. This is completely understandable – you’ve had something truly horrible happen to you. However, it’s important to have a say, because your input can help guide specific conditions that prevent the offender living or working near you, for example.

One of the major difficulties we find is when registered victims move house, or change their phone number or email address, and don’t update those details. Please always remember to keep your contact information current so we can reach you.

New Zealand is unique in the opportunity it offers victims to participate in the parole process. We all value the balance and insight it brings to our work. It goes without saying that we best help victims by reducing reoffending and of course preventing offending in the first place. We will continue to play our part in that.

We will always remain open to suggestions about how we can assist victims to give us their views in the most comfortable and appropriate way. We look forward to continuing to work with Victim Support to achieve our common aims to keep our country, and our people, safe.

Sir Ron Young
NZ Parole Board chairperson

“We will always remain open to suggestions about how we can assist victims to give us their views in the most comfortable and appropriate way.”
In 2005 my daughter was murdered. It was a truly devastating time.

When I contacted Victim Support, they were there for me. My support worker Nicky - can only be described as a “diamond” with all her support and guidance.

I found out through social media about the upcoming Parole Board hearing for the offender and wanted to make a submission, so I went to the Invercargill Victim Support office to see if they could help me.

Making an oral submission to the Parole board was my way of being there for my daughter, my daughters’ children and my grandchildren. I was initially quite scared that the offender would also be at the hearing, but I was relieved to hear he wouldn’t be.

As the hearing drew closer, I was a nervous wreck and unsure of what I was going into. But when I attended the hearing in Christchurch, I was put at ease by the Parole Board panel. They were friendly, warm and engaging and could understand what I was trying to express.

They listened to me and asked me a range of questions about what I wanted to get out of the hearing. Also being given the chance to answer their questions was important, because they wouldn’t have been able to ask me if I had sent a letter.

I wrote in my letter which I read to them describing the background of my daughter and her life. I shared with them the trauma that I have endured, not just with the brutal murder of my daughter but also the death of my husband and other daughter.

I expressed my reasons for why I believed the offender would not be rehabilitated. I wanted him to be locked up forever.

Parole was declined and we will start this process again next year.

I’m keen to keep being supported by Victim Support as I feel well cared for and safe and will call on them again when the next Parole hearing comes around.

Now that I know how important it is to be kept informed about any upcoming hearings, court dates etc., I want to make sure that all my family members and myself that are listed and informed. It’s been an important thing to do in memory of my daughter.
For friends and families affected by homicide

**Supporting Noela**

When I was given the opportunity to support and assist Noela to complete her Parole Board Victim Impact Statement and support her at the Parole Hearing I felt a certain amount of trepidation, mainly because of the responsibility I felt toward her during this process.

Noela was extremely generous with the sharing of her story of multiple loss. However, the lasting impression I have of her is her strength. She’s endured severe adversity and very deep loss, still felt 16 years after the crime.

The three members on the Parole Board panel impressed me with their genuine empathy and attentiveness they showed to Noela about any concerns or questions she raised.

As a support worker I found the process to be very Victim focused which is quite a significant difference to the Criminal Court system.

Very soon after the Hearing Noela was informed of the Parole Board decision, which in this case was positive.

After reflecting on the experience, there are some things to consider when speaking with the Parole Board at your oral submission:

Victims have rights: Though you may feel nervous always remember the Parole Hearing is first and foremost for you to ask the questions you want and to tell your story.

Self-Care is important: If possible, try to have a quiet, relaxing night before the hearing. Choose a support person who you feel most comfortable with and will be a good listener before and after the hearing.

Follow the process: Don’t be daunted by the process because from those I have attended as well as those I have had feedback from, every victim has been put at ease very quickly and all have come away feeling more calm, relieved and far more in control than before the hearing.

**Some possible questions to ask:**

1. Has the offender shown remorse?
2. What, if any programmes have they completed while in prison?
3. Can you request an apology sent to you by the offender.
4. Say where you don’t want them to live when they are released.
5. What you want the offender to know, how their choices have impacted your life.

Above all – ask whatever is important to you to help in your healing.

Nicky – Support Worker

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**Joining the victims notification register**

If you are a victim of crime, and want to be told when the offender is going to appear before the New Zealand Parole Board, you need to join the victim notification register (VNR). The Police are responsible for registering victims on the VNR. Registration is not automatic, and you must fill out the **POL 1065** form to apply. This form can be completed at any Police station in the country. You don’t have to wait until after a trial to register; you can register at any time.

Once you are on the register, you can update your contact details anytime by emailing victim.notification@corrections.govt.nz

Anyone can make a submission to the Board about an offender, but only registered victims are sent information about the offender on request, automatically advised of an upcoming hearing, and advised of the outcome.

To find out more about the victim notification register please contact Police, the court victim adviser or your local Victim Support office.

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**Wherever we are needed we’ll be there**
Meet Demelza

Demelza Faimalo
Homicide Service Specialist, South Island

Talofa my name is Demelza. I was born and bred in Christchurch. My husband and I have five children between us, which keep us very busy. Prior to joining Victim Support I was a teacher for 17 years and the last 6 were in a Youth justice facility. I felt that my teaching career was coming to an end and I was looking for a career path that continued to allow me to work with people in need.

An opportunity arose with Victim Support and I applied for the Service Coordinator position in Christchurch. I was the Coordinator for 2.5 years where I learnt a lot about the rights of the Victims and the start of my passion for ensuring that what we do within Victim Support is of the best quality service to those in need. My teaching background came in handy with both recruiting and training volunteers but also closely looking at the work that we were doing within Christchurch.

While my time within Victim Support has been a short time, my drive and passion to ensure that we are advocating for the rights of Victims and to ensure that all victims of homicide are well supported and advocated for.

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Outside of Victim Support I am the President of a small League club which is growing rapidly. While these are two different roles, supporting people and dealing with volunteers is what they have in common. I am looking forward to learning and growing within this space and I hope to continue the amazing work that the Homicide team do.

Parole Board website:
https://www.paroleboard.govt.nz/victims

Get Help: 0800 VICTIM (0800 842 846)
enquiries@victimsupport.org.nz
victimsupport.org.nz
facebook.com/victimsupportnz

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in the newsletter is for general information purposes only. The information provided by Victim Support and in some cases includes the personal opinion and experiences of victims themselves. While we endeavour to keep the information up to date and correct, the opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Victim Support.