

RSW10/SWDT/2020 – Ms Bessie Mihiroa Hanley

Charge

On 7 November 2020 the Social Workers Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal heard a conviction charge laid by a Professional Conduct Committee, against Ms Bessie Mihiroa Hanley, registered social worker of Hastings (the social worker).

The charge alleged that the social worker:

Was convicted on 22 March 2019 in the Hastings District Court of a charge of indecent assault contrary to s 135 of the Crimes Act 1961, which carries a maximum penalty of 7 years' imprisonment.

The nature and extent of the social worker's conduct reflects adversely on her fitness to practise as a social worker and/or breached Principles 1 and/or 9 of the Code of Conduct issued by the Social Workers Registration Board pursuant to section 105 of the Social Workers Registration Act.

The social worker admitted the charge and accepted responsibility for her actions and that her behaviour was unacceptable as a social worker. The social worker resigned her position and at the time of hearing had not worked as a social worker for approximately 19 months. The social worker has taken positive rehabilitative steps since being convicted and shown insight into her behaviour, and remorse.

Finding

The Tribunal found that the social worker's conduct does reflect adversely on her fitness to practise and that the conduct is in breach of principles 1 and 9 of the Code. The Tribunal also agreed that the social worker's actions constituted a breach of principle 8 of the Code.

The offending was serious. The social worker had an important role within the youth justice system and held a supervisory role. The offending was likely to cause a loss of credibility in these roles.

Penalty

The social worker was censured and conditions were imposed for a period of two years commencing when she returns to a social work role. The Tribunal ordered the social worker to pay \$2,500 towards the costs and expenses of and incidental to the investigation, prosecution and hearing of the charge.

The Tribunal directed that the decision and a summary of the decision be published.

The full and reasoned decision of the Tribunal can be found at <https://swrb.govt.nz/tribunal-decisions/>