

THE HUMAN COST BEHIND SVA PROSECUTIONS | A CANDID LOOK AT PARENTHOOD AND PRACTICE | THE RAPID RISE OF GLP-1 WEIGHT-LOSS DRUGS | KŌRERO BAR NEWS | BILL WILSON KC 1946–2025 | PETROL HEADS' CORNER: DRIVING IN EUROPE | PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE | EVENT PHOTOS | PLUS SO MUCH MORE INSIDE.



At The Bar

DECEMBER 2025



New Zealand Bar Association
Ngā Ahorangi Motuhake o te Ture



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President's Perspective

At this time of year, the world, which is perhaps already too busy, becomes much busier, leaving us with no time to reflect. Like most of us, I am looking forward to the break when there will be a little more time.

In recent weeks, I have had the pleasure of attending the swearing-in of one of our members, Bernadette Roka Arapere, as a District Court Judge on her marae at Poupatatē. I have also enjoyed the dinners to celebrate the appointment of King's Counsel. The camaraderie of our profession has been evident at these occasions.

Our training programmes for members are central to what we do. The recent Mastering Cross-Examination Masterclass was again very well received. I also attended an online seminar on the new High Court Rules. This was an

Top: Paul David speaking at the Formal Conference Dinner.

excellent and entertaining guide to the new rules, which will change how civil proceedings are run. As the rules come into force very soon, members may want to view this (free to members) webinar, which, together with some guide cards, will shortly be available on the NZBA's website. Thank you to all who put so much work into this important work for the Association and its members.

It has been great to see and hear the enthusiasm and commitment of all our members to their work in the legal system; in particular, our younger barristers who are keen to develop their careers at the Bar. The Association will continue to do all it can to support and assist our members to provide excellent legal services.

> the World Bar
Conference, which will
be held in New Zealand
on 4-5 September 2026
in Queenstown

In recent weeks, we have started the considerable work of organising the World Bar Conference, which will be held in New Zealand on 4-5 September 2026 in Queenstown. The conference will be combined with our annual conference. We accepted the invitation from the International Council of Barristers and Advocates, which is a forum for the independent common law bars around the world, to host this conference.

The Australian Bar Association has joined with us in the organising role. There will be a good deal of work involved, but I am sure it will be a great conference. I hope that many of you will attend.



Top: Paul David KC speaking at the Auckland End-of-Year Drinks. Below: Hon Justice Blanchard, Kishen Kommu, Hon Chief Justice Winkelmann at Auckland End-of-Year Drinks.



Thanks to all the team in our Secretariat for their support and hard work throughout the year.

In a couple of weeks, we will all have some more time to reflect on the past year, but most importantly, time to pause and enjoy life away from the job. Enjoy the break with family and friends.

– Paul David KC

New Members

Racheal Allison	Canterbury
Catherine Andrew	Bay of Plenty
Matt Beattie	Auckland
Anna Carbon	Auckland
Lauren Chand	Gisborne
Sen-Mou Cheng	Auckland
Reagan Darby	Auckland
Amanda Godwin	Nelson
Ashley Gruebner	Auckland
Johanna Guest	Auckland
Mary Hill	Bay of Plenty
Jennifer Holden	Auckland
Craig Horsley	Bay of Plenty
Jane Hunter	Auckland
Adele Isaacs	Otago
Louisa Jackson	Wellington
Nikita Lal	Auckland
Zara Jamieson	Auckland
Hannah Johnson	Auckland
Shane Kilian	Auckland
Jesse Lang	Waikato
Clinton Light	Canterbury
Luda Lin	Auckland
Kim Lovegrove	Auckland
Elizabeth Macpherson	Canterbury
Lesieli Mafi	Auckland
Julia McCook-Weir	Wellington
Andra Mobberley	Wellington
William Mohammed	Auckland
Rachel Opie	Wellington
Shivani Prakash	Northland
Annie Rakena	Auckland
Anna Ryan	Canterbury
Diana Shaul	Auckland
Petrina Siliva	Auckland
Liana Sykes	Auckland
Steve Symon	Auckland
Vernon Tava	Auckland
Daniel Vincent	Wellington
James Watson	Wellington
Helena Wiseman	Auckland
Alexander Young	Auckland

Kōrero Bar News

Justice Cull Awarded Fellowship

Justice Helen Cull has been awarded a Robert S. Campbell Visiting Fellowship in Law at Magdalen College, Oxford for 2026. She will take up the Fellowship from April to July next year. She will compare the New Zealand Evidence Act 2006 with the bad character provisions of the UK Criminal Justice Act 2002.

The focus will be on whether the codification of the common law evidence rules, with the introduction of propensity evidence in NZ, has eroded the right of a person charged with an offence to the presumption of innocence. She will consider the current application of the admissibility of this evidence against the requirements of NZBORA, the Crimes Act 1961, and the criminal burden of proof.



Top: New silks Kevin Glover KC, Tiana Epati KC, Brian Dickey KC, Sarah Jerebine KC. Below: Roxanne Pope



Bankside Chambers

Bankside is delighted to congratulate Brian Dickey KC, Tiana Epati KC, and Sarah Jerebine KC on their King's Counsel appointments. They were sworn in at Auckland's High Court on Thursday 30 October 2025, alongside Shortland Chambers barrister Kevin Glover KC. Over 300 people attended their function at the Northern Club, including members of the judiciary and previous Bankside members Justice O'Gorman, Justice Johnstone, and Justice Mount.

Dr Simon Foote KC was elected President of the New Zealand Bar Association for the period October 2026 to October 2028. Simon will be on Council as President-Elect until October 2026, when his two-year term as President begins. He follows Judge Kate Davenport KC (President, 2018–2020) as the second Bankside Chambers member to hold the presidency, and joins Sarah Jerebine KC on Council.

Bankside Singapore member [Hon Paul Heath KC](#) was appointed as a member of the Singapore International Arbitration Centre's (SIAC) inaugural specialist panel of arbitrators for restructuring and insolvency disputes. SIAC is ranked second among the world's leading arbitral institutions and is the top choice in the Asia-Pacific region.

We are delighted to welcome back [Roxanne Pope](#), who is now employed by Lady Deborah Chambers KC. Roxanne began her legal career at Bankside working, for Kelly Quinn KC, after which she completed postgraduate study in Business Analytics and joined the general litigation team at a leading firm.

Dr John Land completed the oral defence of his PhD thesis on ["The Validity of New Zealand Corporate Transactions Undertaken Contrary to the Interests of the Company"](#), which examines aspects of company law, agency law, equity, and contract law. John addresses the complexity and frequent misunderstanding of New Zealand law relating to the impact on corporate transactions of a breach of the duty to act in the best interests of the company.

Britomart Chambers

At the International Bar Association annual conference in Toronto, Gary Hughes represented Britomart Chambers and, to an extent, the NZ bar as a whole as a speaker in several sessions. Notably, he was invited to speak alongside the Presidents of the Law Council of Australia and Japan Federation of Bar Associations, on the impact that AML/CFT is having on the profession.

Gary was also involved in different cartel topics, where he is well-known as an



Top: Gary Hughes and IBA Law Council Australia and Japan speaker group.

expert: use of Sanctions laws against organised crime drug cartels, as co-chair of the IBA's AML & Sanctions sub-committee; and, quite distinct, anti-competitive bid-rigging cartels (of the Commerce Act kind) where he had acted in NZ's first criminal cartel case (Maxbuild) in the High Court in December 2024.

Meanwhile, another Britomart Chambers member, Shelley Kopu, has also been sharing insights and experience abroad, speaking in Brisbane at the Workplace Investigators conference on how to run culturally responsive investigations, a topic where Shelley's Te Ao Māori perspective was well-received.

Britomart Chambers has also announced it has 'Flexi Chambers' space available on an easy month-by-month leasing basis, in its adjunct chambers building along Quay St. Ideal for those new to the Bar, returning from leave, or perhaps only in Auckland on an irregular basis. Contact michael@mhkc.co.nz to discuss.

Mark Colthart transitions to full-time Arbitrator & Construction Adjudicator

After more than 30 years as counsel in civil and commercial disputes, Mark has transitioned to full-time practice as an independent arbitrator and construction adjudicator. His arbitration and adjudication practice has flourished

to the point where he is now focusing solely on serving the market. This means maintaining impartiality and integrity in decision-making, while continuing to collaborate, where appropriate, with respected organisations such as the BDT, NZDRC, NZIAC and AMINZ. For more information, [click here](#).

Adele Isaacs Joins Barristers NZ

Barristers New Zealand is delighted to welcome Adele Isaacs to chambers. Adele brings established expertise in family and civil law, supported by broad experience in commercial matters, intellectual property disputes, and complex family proceedings. She is available to junior for other members of the Bar. Serving clients throughout Dunedin and Auckland, Barristers New Zealand is pleased to have Adele join its expanding team.



Left: Adele Isaacs. Right: Steve Symon.

Steve Symon joins Mills Lane Chambers

Steve Symon, one of New Zealand's leading regulatory and criminal lawyers, has joined Mills Lane Chambers. Steve joins the Bar after 20 years at Meredith Connell, where he was a Partner leading complex prosecutions for government departments and agencies. His expertise and experience were reflected by the Cabinet selecting him to chair the Ministerial Advisory Group targeting Transnational, Serious, Organised Crime. Steve is available to take instructions.

Anna Ryan Awarded Fellowship

Anna Ryan has been awarded a 2026

Churchill Fellowship to undertake research in Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Anna's project will explore whether NZ's approach to regulating competition in labour markets remains fit for purpose in light of recent developments overseas. Anna recently joined Canterbury Chambers as a commercial barrister specialising in competition and consumer law. She brings nearly 20 years' experience in private practice as a corporate lawyer, including a decade leading Lane Neave's national Competition and Consumer Law team.

Kate Sheppard Chambers

As 2025 draws to a close, it's a good time to reflect on how Kate Sheppard Chambers (KSC) has fared this year. And what a year it has been.

Established in December 2020 by Charlotte Griffin and Isabella Clarke, KSC was founded with a clear kaupapa: to support women at the independent Bar. Five years on, that vision has flourished. Closing 2025 with 40 members, the Chambers has grown steadily. In 2025, KSC welcomed new barristers Charlotte Brook, Deb Davies, Erica Burke, Rachel Opie, Louisa Jackson, Vicki Scott, and Mary Hill.

KSC members are active across all courts and tribunals in Aotearoa, appearing in cases that span diverse legal disciplines. This year alone, members have contributed to significant litigation and law reform. Highlights include:

- *NZ-Canada CPTPP Dispute* – Elana Geddis was part of the New Zealand legal team in the trade dispute under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- *Grinder v Attorney-General* [2025]

NZSC 165 – Supreme Court decision establishing a new test for special conditions of parole; Charlotte Griffin led for the Attorney-General.

- *Whakatōhea Kotahitanga Waka (Edwards)* [2025] NZSC 104 – Case under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 relating to applications for customary marine title and protected customary rights in the Eastern Bay of Plenty; Mary Hill acted for Crown Regional Holdings Limited and Ōpōtiki District Council.
- *Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa v Bay of Plenty Regional Council* [2025] NZSC 158 – Significant environmental law case on “end use” effects of plastic bottle disposal; Mary Hill acted for the Bay of Plenty Regional Council.
- *Bradshaw v Barry* [2025] NZCA 335 – Court of Appeal overturned a High Court judgment under the Family Protection Act; Genevieve Haszard and Dr Rhonda Powell appeared for the successful appellant.
- *R v Langley* [2025] NZCA 182 – Crown appeal on pre-recording sexual violence complainant’s evidence; Charlotte Brook acted for the Crown.
- *Jaz & Jaz v R* – Conviction appeals in the Christchurch High Court (Mama Hooch case); Charlotte Brook involved.

Beyond advocacy, KSC has lived up to its commitment to give back to the profession. Members have chaired panels, delivered presentations, and taught at leading universities. Dr Petra Butler hosted a national conference marking 35 years of the Bill of Rights Act, while Kellie Arthur and Erica Burke facilitated sessions for Māori and women lawyers’ associations. Dhilum Nightingale’s community impact work

included launching VERI-Mi, a digital platform to combat migrant exploitation, and publishing research funded by the Borrin Foundation.

KSC has, since its inception, also been a strong supporter of the NZBA. Two members, Kellie Arthur and Genevieve Haszard, sit on the Bar Council. Chambers members Nikki Pender and Pauline Courtney delivered education events for the Association – Nikki is co-chair of the Education Committee and a Course Director for NZBA’s Mastering Advocacy Workshops, while Pauline sits on the Technology Committee and presented an excellent webinar on using AI earlier this year. Professor Petra Butler serves on the Law Reform and Justice Committee; Ella Tait is a member of the Employment Committee; and Jennifer Wademan contributes to the Family, Trusts and Estates Committee, as well as having been a faculty member for the NZBA’s Mastering Cross-Examination Workshop in November.

On the 132nd anniversary of women’s suffrage, KSC proudly announced Helena Palmer as the recipient of its 2025 Scholarship for Research Relating to Women and the Law – another example of its dedication to advancing women in the profession.

From high-profile cases to community initiatives, Kate Sheppard Chambers continues to grow while staying true to its founding purpose: supporting women at the Bar and strengthening the legal profession.

For more information about KSC’s members and their activities in 2025, visit their website at: katesheppardchambers.co.nz



The Human Cost Behind SVA Prosecutions

Female Crown Prosecutors and the Realities of Sexual Violence Work.

This summary of the research report: It's a Love-Hate Relationship: Female Crown Prosecutors' Experiences of Prosecuting Sexual Violence and Abuse Cases, was written with the assistance of AI. The article was checked for accuracy by the authors.

The report *It's a Love-Hate Relationship: Female Crown Prosecutors' Experiences of Prosecuting Sexual Violence and Abuse Cases* was published as part of a research project by the Schools of Psychology and Law at Victoria University of Wellington, examining how female Crown prosecutors experience the unique demands of sexual violence and abuse (SVA) prosecutions. The purpose of the study is to understand the emotional labour, wellbeing pressures, and structural conditions shaping sexual violence trial work, and to document these experiences in the prosecutors' own words.

The researchers selected six in-depth interviews that focused on female Crown prosecutors with significant SVA experience from a wider corpus of 90 criminal law interviews. Their report sets out a candid account of what the work gives, and what it takes away. It is a study grounded in lived experience rather than statistical analysis, designed to record themes that the participants repeatedly raised as central to their day-to-day reality.

The pull of the work

One of the strongest themes is the unusual mix of fulfillment and strain. Across interviews, prosecutors described

SVA work as some of the most meaningful advocacy they undertake. They spoke about the gravity of the subject matter, the importance of giving complainants a fair process, and the sense of purpose that comes with work they believe matters deeply.

But this commitment exists alongside long-term exposure to trauma and the emotional cost of carrying complainants' stories. Several participants described forming a "love-hate relationship" with the work: they feel anchored by its purpose, yet drained by its impact.

Emotional labour and its consequences

Across the findings, the report details the emotional labour expected of SVA prosecutors. Participants noted that in sexual violence cases, they meet with complainants and feel a responsibility to protect them from further trauma. Prosecutors spoke of the difficulty in maintaining professional boundaries whilst simultaneously showing care, compassion and support.

The cases are "emotionally complex" and require prosecutors to manage their own emotions when exposed to complainants' often distressing histories. Many prosecutors described absorbing this material in a way that lingers after hours, making it difficult to disengage, which, as one prosecutor said, "on a personal level can be really tough".

The report records consistent references to:

- ongoing emotional exhaustion;
- disrupted sleep;
- difficulty switching off;
- impact on relationships;

- cumulative fatigue from managing repeated trauma exposure.

Prosecutors reported developing personal coping strategies, but emphasised that these were individual solutions to wider organisational issues rather than complete answers.

Gendered expectations

A central theme in the findings is gendered allocation of emotional labour. Several women said they were given SVA files because women were considered "able to have a better rapport with the complainants", but this drift toward gendered specialisation was not always framed as a genuine choice, and it contributed, in some cases, to uneven caseloads.

The courtroom environment

The participants described the courtroom itself as a source of strain. Prosecutors sit through cross-examination that complainants often find distressing, while also managing their own reactions to graphic evidence and aggressive defence tactics. The report notes that they must maintain composure in circumstances they find personally confronting.

Some also described the isolating nature of the work. Because SVA files involve highly sensitive material, debriefing with anyone outside of the role is strictly limited. Several spoke of the challenge of carrying the emotional weight of trials without consistent opportunities to offload it afterwards.

Structural pressures

Beyond personal experience, the report identifies wider organisational pressures:

heavy file loads, limited preparation time, and a culture that prizes resilience. Participants described a sense that needing support could be interpreted as a professional weakness, discouraging them from seeking help.

Many saw the absence of rotation out of SVA work as a critical issue. High-volume, unbroken exposure to sexual violence cases was viewed as a major contributor to long-term wellbeing risks.

Why they stay

Despite the pressures, the prosecutors in the study remain committed. They described the work as intellectually demanding, professionally significant, and centred on giving complainants a voice in a difficult process. One participant summarised this tension by noting that the same cases that “are uniquely unpleasant” also are some of the most rewarding due to the input into supporting complainant empowerment.

What they want to see change

From participants’ accounts and the authors’ analysis, the paper identifies practical implications for more sustainable practice.

These include:

- structured opportunities to rotate out of SVA files;
- regular debriefing/clinical supervision;
- clearer prosecutor–complainant boundaries;
- organisational recognition of emotional labour;
- preventative rather than reactive wellbeing measures.

None of the recommendations involves reducing the quality of complainant

care. Instead, the participants emphasise that sustainable practice depends on supporting prosecutors as well as victims.

Where to now

The study offers a clear-eyed look at the emotional and structural pressures inside sexual violence prosecution. Although the report focuses on Crown prosecutors, many of the themes—vicarious trauma, courtroom exposure to graphic material, the strain of managing distressed witnesses, and the culture of stoicism—will be familiar to defence counsel and prosecutors alike.

The research does not propose new doctrinal arguments or policy reforms. Instead, it documents the human side of repeated exposure to sexual violence and abuse cases and highlights the need for better systems of support. It is a reminder that the work is both vital and demanding, and that wellbeing in this area is not simply an individual responsibility but an institutional one.

[View the full report here.](#)

Te Miha, T., Dent, H. J., Tinsley, Y. M., & Tyler, N. (2025). ‘It’s a love–hate relationship’: female crown prosecutors’ experiences of prosecuting sexual violence and abuse cases. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 0(0), 1–24. Published online on 6 October 2025.

Affiliations: School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington | Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Victoria University of Wellington & Swinburne University | Faculty of Law, Victoria University of Wellington

FESTIVE BENEFITS



Take advantage of your NZBA membership this festive season with our range of **discounts** and benefits. These are available year-round, but could help out this holiday season. You will need to log in to our member portal to see the specific benefit codes. Click [here](#) for further details and to access all our benefits.

CELEBRATION BOX[®]

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Paddock to Pantry



Rapley heads to Keble College

Witnessing skilful advocacy is rare. Most lawyers appearing in court never perform as well as they should or could. Trial advocacy is a skill. It is a skill that can be taught. It is a skill that can be acquired. I believe the only way to effectively learn and improve one's advocacy techniques is by using the workshop method – that is, by coaching. This was recognised 32 years ago by English barrister, Mr Tim Dutton CBE KC, who established for the English Bar the Advanced International Advocacy Course to be held at Keble College, Oxford. It is also why the NZBA has established its own Mastering Advocacy Programme.

I had the privilege of being part of the teaching faculty at the Keble Dutton Advanced Advocacy Course in August 2025. It was a highlight of my career. As soon as I walked through the Porter's Lodge at Keble, I knew this experience was going to be different. One can see it, and one can feel it. Keble College is grand. It is impressive and steeped in history.

Coaches and participants from around the world are immersed in an intensive environment where they are challenged daily to hone their advocacy skills. There is a civil and criminal stream. The course is demanding with a mix of techniques and workshops designed to address specific aspects of advocacy: Opening and closing addresses, case analysis and witness examination.

The days were interspersed with communal breakfasts, lunches and dinners in Keble's Hogwarts-styled dining hall, as well as end of day drinks at nearby pub, The Lamb and Flag; a local inn which has been serving pints of beer to faculty and students since 1566.



Top: The faculty. Below: JRR KC, Barbara Mills KC, Chair of the Bar Council, Minka Braun, barrister.





Top: Keble College, Dining Hall

The teaching method is based on that developed by Australian silk, Mr George Hample AM KC. It has recently been modified by the South African and English Bar and is the method used by NZBA in its Mastering Advocacy workshops.

Participants were divided into small groups of six with three faculty members. Each participant performed a specific advocacy exercise. A faculty member then critiqued their performance, identifying a particular point that needed to be improved or modified. The faculty member then demonstrated how that should be done. The participant then moved to review their performance with another faculty member, receiving feedback from each.

On Day 4, genuine medical and/or financial specialists joined us so participants could perform using those specific questioning techniques that have been designed for use with experts. On the final day, the participants undertook a 3-hour mock trial before a judge and several coaches to consolidate their learning. The trial was made slightly more challenging by the compulsory end-of-

course dinner and subsequent partying held the night before.

I am grateful to the NZBA for sending me to the Keble Dutton Advanced International Advocacy Course. My own teaching and advocacy skills improved in the collegial learning environment. The aim of the course is to build confidence and camaraderie within the specialised advocacy community of which we all belong. I met people from all over the world working in different jurisdictions, and I enjoyed a unique opportunity to study the similarities and differences we have in our respective fields. I concluded that no matter where we practice as advocates, we have more in common with each other than we have differences.

I thoroughly enjoyed the experience at Keble and highly recommend it to anyone who wants to improve their advocacy. If you are ever offered a spot, whether as faculty or as a participant, drop everything, book a flight and do it.

– James Rapley KC



A Candid Look at Parenthood and Practice

The pressure to maintain a busy practice while navigating the demands of family life presents unique challenges, often amplified by the unpredictability of litigation. This article draws directly from the experiences of our members, who share their candid insights on managing court work and family systems.

Which parts of being a barrister cause the most friction with family life?

The central theme of friction revolves around the relentless, unpredictable demands of serious litigation.

The O'Neill's, a couple who both practised at the Bar, noted that the greatest source of stress was when one of them went into a trial. "We all know that trials absorb a lot of spare time with moments of very high stress, and the focus is inevitably on the trial and the clients' witnesses," they explained. For them, having two barristers in the household was an advantage, as "we both understand what is needed, what happens and all those other things that Barristers have to do."

For other parents, the issue is less about friction and more about the immense internal pressure. Charlotte Griffin described the strain as trying "to be everything to everyone all at the same moment." She identifies a key structural issue unique to the self-employed Bar: the lack of a timekeeper. This flexibility, while prized, carries a risk that "working hours can become very fluid and time gets away on you." Her strategy to combat this creep into family life is to build "more structure into my traditional workday when I am most likely to be alone and can remove all distractions." Keeping on top of administrative tasks as a barrister, like invoicing, in a planned way during busy periods, is critical to a sole practice.

Kishen Kommu says it boils down to communication with your partner. “My wife and I make sure that we at least have dinner together without any distractions, so that we can talk in a relatively stress-free setting.”

How do you structure care for your children on court days?

For the O'Neill's the division of labour was clear: the wife primarily covered drop-offs and pickups, but the husband stepped in if she was in court and he was not. The most essential element, particularly when both parents were in court, was having “people to call on who could pick up the children at a moment's notice.” They both agree that having an emergency pickup person in reserve is “essential.”

› Sometimes kids just have to come to court, and our courts need to be more welcoming spaces for this to occur

Charlotte formalised the strategy through an understanding with her partner from the start: “When I am in court, the other partner has to step in for the children's needs on those days.” She found that this removes the stress of the moment. She is careful to note the importance of letting the partner manage the ensuing logistics: “as a mother, I have to resist the temptation to involve myself and just let him do it and not interfere.” For practitioners without a partner's or other family help, she stresses the necessity of working out a reliable, repeatable “system that meets your family's needs, so you are not reinventing the wheel each time court rolls around.”

This leads to a structural observation about the profession: “Sometimes kids just have to come to court, and our courts need to be more welcoming spaces for this to occur if women, especially, are to thrive in the profession as litigators. The same goes for offices and chambers.” She believes children cannot always be tucked away neatly, so women can work.

Isabella Clarke's ability to maintain a flexible practice is underpinned by family: “We are really lucky we have two sets of grandparents close by who are willing to step in to cover us when timing is awkward.” In addition, her husband's earlier work finish allows him to handle school pickup and afternoon activities, an arrangement that she recognises as “invaluable to my ability to be where I need to be and to maintain flexibility in my practice.”

Are there any systems or routines that make the biggest difference for you?

The integration of work and life schedules is key. Arla Kerr maintains a streamlined approach by having her “work and personal calendar completely merged, so that I have one place where everything is.” More critically, she proactively “designed my practice so that I have limited long days,” choosing to limit court work and schedule other long workdays (interviews and mediations) well in advance to ensure availability for school pickups and drop-offs.

However, the most significant practical difference cited by a number of barristers is not related to personal tools, but to the conduct of the legal system itself. Charlotte highlighted the need for courts

to stick to sitting times (a 10 am start and 4 pm or 5 pm finish) or to give adequate notice when sitting late is a risk. She notes that “a working parent who is also the parent responsible for drop off and pick up... is wholly reliant on court starting at 10 am and finishing on time.” She stresses counsel cannot always stay late as a matter of course, no matter how much they might wish to oblige, because “we don’t all have the luxury of help.”

One tip you’d give to a barrister who’s about to become a parent?

The O’Neill’s advice is a relaxed mindset: “The best thing I can give advice on is to relax and roll with it.” They emphasise the need to be flexible and pragmatic: “Have a backup plan. Plan A will always go south somewhere along the way.”

> I’m going to fail at this many times, and even when I don’t feel that’s ok, I can’t always control it.

Charlotte encourages new parents to define their own path. Her tip is to do “what is right for your family situation,” and to resume working life in a way that suits the new you – the person changed by parenthood. This involves accepting that the old ways of working will change, accepting the new balance of work vs. family, and accepting help that genuinely improves the situation.

Isabella offers a perspective on career longevity and skill development: “The one thing I always say to new parents is that your career in law will be long and you do have time to be there with your child in the early days.” While a feeling of

being left behind may set in, she argues that a parent is actually “gaining skills (patience, multi-tasking, negotiating, problem-solving) that will really help you when you return to work.”

Anything you wish someone had told you before you returned to practice?

Charlotte says it would’ve helped knowing “I’m going to fail at this many times, and even when I don’t feel that’s ok, I can’t always control it.” She promotes a long-term view: “Having insight into the reality that we are a long time in the law, with many forks in the road and changes along the way.” Crucially, she argues that taking time out is not a “vice,” and failing to do so when needed is worse. She advises practitioners not to be so hard on themselves, concluding that children often remember that the parent was “there, even if working at home instead of playing with your kids at times.” Being present is the key.

Isabella echoed this, urging self-kindness: “Be kind and compassionate with yourself... You might feel like a sleep-deprived zombie now, but that will pass.” She counsels to “Be open to reassessing what’s working and what’s not.”

Arla highlighted the advantage of the Bar’s structure for a working parent. Moving to the Bar and having “more control over the amount of hours and flexibility of when those hours were worked (and being paid for those hours) was a very welcome change.”

Kishen says it is ok to ask your seniors for help when necessary. “I have found the senior counsel who I have worked with to be very understanding of family being a priority, and that having collaborative

instructing solicitors to be invaluable in managing the workflow pressures.”

Does a Chambers help this lifestyle?

There is universal agreement that being in chambers is an immense help, provided it is the right kind of chambers. As the O’Neill’s put it, “There’s always somebody you can ask for help on should anything pop up unexpectedly.”

Charlotte stated that it “immeasurably helps,” but cautioned that a barrister “can’t join a Chambers based on status or success alone and think you will automatically fit in and be happy.” She described the deliberate design of Kate Sheppard Chambers (KSC) to signal that “there is no one right way to be a barrister,” eschewing rigid structures and barriers. KSC has no hierarchy, makes decisions together, and supports colleagues in all facets of life. She views this collegiality as “life changing.”

Isabella confirmed the value of this structure: “Being in Chambers is enormously helpful. I know I have a group of people who are always there for me – both workwise and in respect of what’s going on in the background. We see each other as fully human and support each other to juggle all our responsibilities.”

Being a solo parent at the bar?

One Anonymous member says ‘I wish I’d gone to the bar sooner, for the flexibility and time at home it has given me, but part of why it works is that these days I’m hardly ever in court. There is still a variety of rewarding work out there. Hats off to anyone who combines solo parenthood with a heavy trial schedule, just thinking about it makes me want to lie down. I could never have done it.

There are still sacrifices: I’ve had to turn down great work because it involves travel, periods of illness without sick leave are a financial stress, and it can be tough to be always available to clients.”

What does success look like now?

Parenthood causes a profound and permanent shift in how barristers measure their success, moving the benchmark away from pure career achievement towards family wellbeing.

The O’Neill’s say having children “modifies your view of the world.” For them, success is now measured as “bringing up well-balanced children and having a happy household.” Melanie O’Neill added that her goals and career aspirations “completely changed” when the children arrived, choices she has “never regretted.”



Top: Stock Image

Charlotte's perspective shifted profoundly following personal upheaval, leading her to prioritise alignment over competition between work and family. She candidly shared that this refocus was driven partly by experiencing the loss of a 20-year marriage to her children's father and observing the impact on her children. This event highlighted the need to "refocus work and family in ways so they align, not compete, when life itself intervenes".

The ultimate measure of success for her is knowing that when she eventually "hangs up her gown," her family is around her and she has been enriched, not worn down, by her working life. She contends that a lawyer is not successful for working all hours, but for "Working more effectively, in any way one can find, to maintain a well-centred family life and support structure around you," arguing that this will pay back in "dividends with meaningful success at the bar."

What assumptions about barrister-parents that you'd love to correct?

For Kishen Kommu, it's the assumption where the pressure to perform is high, that your family life needs to be sacrificed in order to meet that pressure. "While it is not easy, I feel that being a barrister gives me the freedom to achieve a better balance, so that your family life is not sacrificed, but you are also professionally satisfied."

What keeps you at the Bar?

Charlotte Griffin's primary motivator is autonomy: "Being a barrister has allowed me to look after myself fully, my own way, not be reliant on an employer to give me work." It has also "taught me to be confident in my own skills and knowledge without looking for validation through some kind of performance review." Most

importantly, it has allowed her children to "watch me work and raise them in close proximity, which is something that remains elusive in full-time employment."

Isabella Clarke simply calls it "the best job in the world." She loves the autonomy, the opportunity to "solve tricky problems, make a real difference," and to create effective outcomes for clients. The ultimate draw is the ability to "do it all in the way that works for me. Life is not one size fits all, and I am so grateful I have a job I can tailor to fit me perfectly."

The experiences shared offer reassurance to parents or those contemplating parenthood at the Bar. While the path is complex, the self-employed model ultimately offers the flexibility and autonomy necessary to redefine success and tailor a long, rewarding career that works with family life, not against it.

Thank you to our contributors to this article. Your genuine, candid view of life as a barrister-parent is invaluable.

Contributors:

- *Melanie and David O'Neill | Riverbank Chambers | Blended family of 4, all left home | Both Barristers.*
- *Charlotte Griffin | Kate Sheppard Chambers | Blended family of 5, ages 7 – 21 | Partner in finance.*
- *Isabella Clarke | Kate Sheppard Chambers | 2 kids, aged 9 – 11 | Partner is a GP*
- *Arla Kerr | Kate Sheppard Chambers | 2 kids, aged 7 – 9 | Partner studies and works part-time.*
- *Kishen Kommu | Forty Eight Shortland Barristers | 2 kids, aged 2 – 8 | Partner is a teacher.*
- *Anonymous | Kate Sheppard Chambers | 1 kid, aged 16 | Solo parent.*

Bill Wilson KC 1946-2025



Former Court of Appeal and Supreme Court Judge Bill Wilson KC has recently died (12 September 2025), a sad event to those who knew him. Surprisingly, this has gone virtually unheralded (The Press being the only report). This note, written by Jim Farmer KC, is intended to redress that omission.

Bill's career as a practicing lawyer was a distinguished one. Following his graduation (LL.B and LL.M (Hons)) from Victoria University, he practised for many years at Bell Gully, becoming a partner in 1971. While there, he served as a member of the Waitangi Tribunal for 9 years.

In 1996, he left the firm to go to the Independent Bar and immediately took Silk. As such, he had an extensive and busy practice, including appearing in the Privy Council before the New Zealand Supreme Court was established in 2004. Two significant cases in which he appeared for parties on the same side and having the same interest as my clients were, first, a case brought by the Commerce Commission against Fletcher Challenge, Brierley Investments and other parties arising from the sale of Winstone.

Secondly, he appeared in the Privy Council to support my client, Raylee Harley, who (successfully) appealed decisions of the New Zealand courts ordering her to pay costs for alleged incompetence in acting for a difficult client, a finding rejected by the Privy Council. Bill's manner in Court can best be described as quietly persuasive, a feature respected by the Judges who he appeared before.

Working with him was much appreciated by younger lawyers who Bill encouraged and set an example to.

He was appointed to the Bench in 2007, directly to the Court of Appeal, skipping the normal route through the High Court. However, he voluntarily sat as a High Court Judge on a major criminal trial for the experience. In less than a year, he was promoted from the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court when Sir Kenneth Keith retired.

Bill's manner in Court can best be described as quietly persuasive, a feature respected by the Judges who he appeared before.

His tenure on the Supreme Court was marked with controversy arising from a case (Saxmere and the NZ Wool Board) that he had sat on in the Court of Appeal. One of the counsel in that case was a QC with whom Bill jointly owned a property which was leased to a horse breeding business in which the QC was a partner (but Bill was not).

Bill disclosed that fact to the opposing counsel, however, he did so by telephone rather than formal disclosure by way of a Court Minute. Although Saxmere were advised of the connection between Bill and counsel for the Wool Board, when Judgment was given against it by the Court of Appeal, it applied to the Supreme Court for a rehearing, which was granted.

An unsatisfactory feature of the Supreme Court's decision was a finding that, because of a temporary imbalance in the land ownership accounts against Bill, he was "beholden" to his lawyer partner, a finding which did not square with the

history of their dealings with each other.

Complaints were also made to the Judicial Conduct Commissioner, who recommended that a Judicial Conduct Panel be established to investigate the allegations. Bill challenged that decision in the High Court by way of judicial review.

The matter was heard by a Full Court, which ruled against him. Bill then took the step of resigning, taking the honourable view that no matter what the outcome of a Judicial Conduct Panel, his position on the Supreme Court would become untenable and damaging to the Court.

Many, if not most, lawyers felt that the whole saga had been badly handled and that he should have been exonerated.

Returning to the Bar, Bill acted as an arbitrator and also participated in a litigation funder which assisted in the conduct of class actions. He also chaired an inquiry into domestic violence, which proposed a Domestic Violence Court, a new agency to implement a long-term national family violence strategy and a centralised database to manage high-risk cases.

Regrettably, his health deteriorated, leading ultimately to his premature passing.

While the Saxmere case has coloured his career, his ability, the warmth of his personality, and the help that he willingly extended to those in need will constitute the memories that those who knew him will retain.

Rest in peace, Bill.

– Jim Farmer KC.

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The rapid rise of GLP-1 weight-loss drugs

With GLP-1 weight-loss drugs now available in New Zealand, Kiwis across the country have, unsurprisingly, become increasingly curious about them. Health journalist Niki Bezzant delves into the pros and cons of these so-called miracle drugs, and how they could be used to help alleviate our obesity epidemic.

Melanie Dale lists all the ways she has tried to lose weight. “I did the keto diets. I did intermittent fasting. I did meal replacement shakes. I basically tried every diet,” she says. “And then I went to a dietitian and did the normal, healthy, well-balanced diets as well. I did all of those things, and nothing moved my weight in any significant way at all.”

The 49-year-old recalls the weight gain she experienced in her early 40s; the result, she says, of PTSD combined with perimenopause. “It didn’t matter what I did, the weight didn’t move more than a fluctuation of 5 kilos up or down.”

The weight made exercise difficult. “I had plantar fasciitis and all those body aches; it just made my life debilitating,” says the Auckland partnerships manager. “I remember thinking, ‘I don’t want to live like this. I can’t live like this. This is awful.’ I felt so ridiculously old before my time.”

As someone with a thyroid condition, Melanie was advised she wasn’t a candidate for bariatric surgery. But she was a good candidate for Saxenda, one of the new generation of drugs known as GLP-1 agonists that are changing the game for doctors and patients alike.

What are GLP-1s and how do they work?

GLP-1 agonists are a class of drugs, including semaglutide, liraglutide,



Top: Melanie Dale

dulaglutide and exenatide, more commonly known by brand names such as Ozempic, Wegovy and Saxenda. They're the blockbusters of the drug world, sitting among the top-10 selling drugs globally. Their reputation has been boosted by celebrities like Oprah Winfrey, and they're suspected to be behind the dramatically slimmed bodies of many a Hollywood star. Around 13% of American adults have used one at some stage in their lives.

But the drugs are more than just a celebrity trend. First released in 2005 for the control of type 2 diabetes, these medications are considered by some experts to be the most significant addition to diabetes and obesity management in decades – or maybe ever.

As well as the original diabetes medications, there are now versions of the same drugs formulated specifically for weight loss. Wegovy, for example, is the weight-loss version of Ozempic, the most famous of the GLP-1s. The difference is in the dosage, with a higher

dose needed for weight loss. Up until recently, the only weight-loss GLP-1 available in Aotearoa New Zealand was Saxenda, a first-generation GLP-1 taken as a daily injection, however, Wegovy was approved in April and is now available on prescription. GLP-1 agonists for type 2 diabetes, Trulicity and Victoza, are funded for diabetes patients who qualify, though supplies have been vulnerable to global shortages.

GLP-1 agonists work in several ways. They boost the action of a gut hormone called glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1). The peptide is produced in the lower small intestine after eating, stimulating insulin release. It also reduces the counter hormone to insulin, glucagon, which positively impacts glucose metabolism. The drugs also work on the brain, specifically the hypothalamus, the appetite and satiety centre. This signals the stomach to slow down emptying, making users feel full. The impact of this is one of the things users of the medications notice most: the quieting of what's known as 'food noise'.

The psychological benefits of GLP-1s

Melanie describes this particular change for her as amazing. “I’ve never experienced more joy with food in my life,” she enthuses. “My desire to overeat and my craving for food has gone, so the enjoyment is just so much higher. In the past, I would’ve craved potato chips and I would’ve sat down and eaten a whole bag, just because there was no ‘off’ switch. Now, I’ll have a handful of potato chips and really enjoy them, but there is no desire to carry on and there’s no real ability. I get to choose food that I really enjoy, enjoy a little bit of it and move on.”

That change, alongside a nutrition plan from a dietitian and an exercise regimen from a trainer, has resulted in a 23-kilogram weight loss in the space of 10 months. That’s in line with emerging evidence which shows typical weight loss of up to 15% of body weight for people using GLP-1s, similar to what happens with bariatric surgery.

GP and bariatric physician Lara Courtenay, a MAS Member who works with the Weightless specialist team at Auckland’s MacMurray Centre, says the dialling down of food noise gives people the space to explore the underlying issues of their obesity. She often recommends her patients also work with a psychologist.

“Some people have used eating as a habit to help with their mood for so many years that it just helps you psychologically when you are on these medicines. You can break those patterns.”

She describes a patient who was visiting fast food drive-thrus so habitually, he

did it on autopilot. “He would go to McDonald’s without even realising he’d done it. And [once on the GLP-1] he could actually stop and say, ‘I don’t need this. I need to redirect myself.’ It’s quite interesting, and it’s very complicated.”

Understanding obesity

Obesity is a problem researchers describe as wicked, meaning it’s complex, multifactorial and difficult to solve. In New Zealand, 1 in 3 adults has obesity, a rate which has been increasing for decades. Māori and Pacific people have even higher rates, and poverty is also a factor. Nearly half of the adults living in the most deprived neighbourhoods have obesity, compared to a quarter in the least deprived areas.

The causes of obesity are being refined by ongoing research. In January, The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology published a report proposing new ways of thinking about and caring for those with the condition, and for the first time classifying obesity as a disease in its own right. This reinforces the thinking that people with obesity do not simply have poor self-control; rather they are fighting their own biology and environments designed to make them unhealthy. “Obesity is a disease. Your body is trying to hold onto weight,” Lara explains. “You know, we were developed over hundreds of thousands of years where we didn’t live in an obesogenic environment. And we do now.”

Kylie Russell is a dietitian at rfynd Weight Loss who works with patients on GLP-1 agonists. She’s noticed that the people she sees in her clinic have something in common. “Every person who presents has tried a multitude of diets. They are

experts at diets, they could tell me the calories of everything as well as any dietitian could. They have really tried everything under the sun. People are exhausted from all the dieting.”

Kylie says people often interpret the failure of their diets as a personal failure. “I think there’s a real lack of understanding in terms of the complexity of obesity and how it works, and of our bodies and our biology. We are actually designed to resist weight loss from a biological perspective, and that’s where these medications are a real paradigm shift. It’s opening up that discussion; there’s a lot more going on than just diet and exercise here. Obesity is not a failure of willpower at all.”

What are the risks of using GLP-1s?

GLP-1 agonists are not without side effects, and gastrointestinal issues are the most common. Users can experience nausea, vomiting, constipation and diarrhoea, especially as they work their way up to the recommended dosages. More serious, though rare, is the risk of gastroparesis (the stomach emptying too slowly or even stopping), vision issues and pancreatitis.

Another issue which can occur with any rapid weight loss is the loss of muscle mass. And because the appetite is so reduced, it’s important for people to focus on quality nutrition, or there’s a risk of undernutrition.

Kylie counsels clients starting on Saxenda that a quality diet is a key foundation. “I would have people on a higher protein diet than otherwise because we know protein requirements are higher. Muscle loss can be a problem if you’re not

getting enough protein. A high-protein diet in this context needs to be combined with resistance training, so that you maintain that strength and function at the same time. Fibre is another really important one as well.”

So far, the evidence is that because these medications are designed for long-term use, people have to stay on them to see lasting effects. Studies on people who stop taking GLP-1 agonists show most of the weight they have lost is regained within a year.

Lara says she is upfront with her patients about this fact, but she does see people who are able to keep the weight off after stopping GLP-1 agonists.

“I tell people that when you lose weight, no matter how you lose weight, your body will try to regain it,” she says. “You actually have to eat 500 calories less a day, and exercise 30 minutes every day and control everything else. Only then will your body let the weight stay off. Maybe you will have to have a weight-loss shake for breakfast forever. And we have people doing it. I have people calling me 2 years after stopping, saying, ‘Lara, the weight’s still off!’ It’s amazing.”

Lara believes the benefits of the medications far outweigh the risks. As well as weight loss, GLP-1 agonists have been shown to improve blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved Wegovy as a treatment for heart disease and Ozempic as a treatment to reduce risks of chronic kidney disease.

And there’s a potential wider benefit to the health system, societies and



Top: GP and bariatric physician Lara Courtenay

economies in lowering the burden of obesity and associated conditions. According to Health Coalition Aotearoa, diet and excess body weight is responsible for 18% of premature death and disability in New Zealand.

The ethics of the new weight-loss landscape

Because GLP-1 agonists are not funded in New Zealand for weight loss, there's an obvious equity issue. The medications are expensive, with Saxenda costing about \$500 a month. Only those with the means are able to access it; those in the most deprived communities, who are also at higher risk of obesity, are missing out.

"I feel terrible that people who really need it are not getting access," says Lara. "It's a huge ethical issue. It is only going to drive the inequalities further."

Associate Health Minister David Seymour has indicated that he's hopeful Pharmac might consider funding GLP-1s for

obesity, considering the burden the disease places on the health system and economy.

In the meantime, users of the medications, like Melanie, will do whatever they can to self-fund and keep the benefits going. She is loving her new life.

"For me, the game changer is the fact that my body stopped aching, I could exercise freely and enjoy exercising, and I really started feeling good about myself. Not just because of the weight loss, but because I was able to move my body in a way that aligned with how I saw myself."

This article was first published by MAS in the August 2025 edition of their Member magazine [onMAS](#) and is reproduced with permission. © Medical Assurance Society New Zealand Limited 2025. For more insights, visit [mas.co.nz](#).



Petrol Heads' Corner: Driving in Europe

Apologies to those who already know what to expect when driving in Europe. You can move on to the next article or wait until the next publication.

Your editor asked me to write about my experiences of driving in Europe (southern France, really) on a recent long trip.

We spent seven weeks in Provence and based ourselves in a small town in the Luberon. Driving in Europe is daunting at the best of times. For starters, the steering wheel is on the wrong side (as we would have it), and secondly, they all drive on the wrong side of the road. This combination tends to shift one's focus away from driving and onto mundane things like making sure you don't look like a plonker and hop into the incorrect side of the car when out in public.

There are other factors to take into account. Firstly, the French, by and large, drive their cars like they have nicked them (especially when they get onto the expressways). On secondary roads, they still go fast but not quite as fast as when they are on the expressways. However, the biggest factor to take into account, particularly on the secondary roads, is the width of the road.

The condition of the roads is very good, but what is, to the French, a 2-lane road is to us a strand of spaghetti. It gets worse when you get into towns and villages. This is particularly so round the parts of Provence where the villages and towns are usually several hundred years old. The roads were built for horse and cart (really skinny ones), had no footpaths and trying to get down the streets in modern cars is problematic at the best of times. I have included a



couple of photos of streets in 2 towns we visited. Believe it or not, both are for vehicular traffic. The really skinny one (above) has a car down at the end (you have to use a magnifying glass).

The house that we had rented was in a small town of about 15,000 people. The town was called L'isle sur la Sorgue. Our house was in the old part of the town and was located on one of these old "horse and cart" streets. The first time I navigated (actually my wife did the navigation) to our new abode, I decided there was no chance that I was going to manoeuvre our car into the garage. It was raining and cold so we dropped off

all the luggage and I drove off looking for a public car park. I knew there was one nearby but didn't know where. I found it eventually, managed to navigate my way through the parking meter instructions (they're appalling to deal with and even the locals complain) and then discovered that in my haste I had also left my phone behind at our new abode.

Guess what; I didn't know the address, had no way of contacting my wife and it was raining, I was dressed in jandals, shorts and a T-shirt. So, being the ever intrepid Kiwi traveler, I set off in, what I thought was, the right direction. After an hour of wandering around town, in

despair, I went to the local garage to see if someone spoke English.

I found somebody (most of the young people in France are taught English at school) who spoke English. I felt like a real chump when she asked me the address, and I couldn't tell her. All I could tell her was that we found the property on Airbnb. I knew the number of the house in the street but that was all. My saviour was very resourceful and started trawling through Airbnb and I spotted an address which looked familiar. I suggested that she give me directions, and I would take it from there. She told me there was no way she was letting me loose unaccompanied by an adult. She reckoned I would get lost again. She was probably right.

Anyway, she got me home (it was about a five minute walk) and my wife was pleased to see me thinking that I was going to be lost forever or alternatively

had devised a wicked scheme to abandon her in a foreign country. The next day it turned out that the car was parked about three minutes from our place if one was walking at a gentle pace; we are talking about 200 metres away.

> I felt like a real chump when she asked me the address, and I couldn't tell her.

The next day, I retrieved the vehicle and attempted to manoeuvre it into the garage. It required about 6-7 goes, moving the car backwards and forwards about three or 4 inches a time to get in. To say that manoeuvring the car into the garage was a tight fit was a bit like saying it was easy to squeeze yourself into your clothes from when you were 20 years old and about 20 kg lighter. It was so tight that on one occasion, having held up the traffic and pedestrians, a



French painter walked past, looked at my manoeuvring and exclaimed “Ooh la la, Bravo”. You know that it was becoming an extraordinary driving feat when the locals think you’ve done well. The garage was regarded as generous in size. See here for the reality of the situation. To put it another way – the car was longer than the width of the street.

The point in this lengthy diatribe is that, when you travel to Europe and get a car to drive around in, get the smallest one you can. I remember a couple of years ago we arrived in Mallorca and, having booked a car months before, were told that they didn’t have any more small cars, but they had upgraded us to a bigger car at no cost to us. Being from the Antipodes with wide roads, I thought this was great. Silly me. The stupid car was too big for most of the places we drove to. I’m talking about the Toyota CHR, which is a seriously small SUV. Therefore, do not accept the rental car agency upgrading you into a bigger wagon because it will only end in tears.

> He, straight off the bat, said don’t rent a car, get it through Euro lease.

Speaking of rental car agencies, it was my intention initially to get a cheap rental, until I spoke to a friend of mine who is a retired travel agent. He, straight off the bat, said don’t rent a car, get it through Euro lease. Euro lease is a buy/lease car agency for Kiwis wanting to drive a vehicle in Europe. They have an office in Auckland and it is a piece of cake organising a car and what’s more you do it all before you leave NZ, you speak to a person who speaks English (not Mumbalese or French or worse) and pay for it before you



leave. You can only lease French vehicles; Renault, Citroen or Peugeot. We opted for the Peugeot 2008 SUV.

The Peugeot is pretty small but we were able to fit everything in and still carry passengers. However, for reasons which will become clear, the next time we go to Europe, I will opt for the smallest car I can get, which is probably the Peugeot 208.

The benefits of a Euro lease car, in my opinion, far outweigh any benefits you might obtain through any of the recognised rental agencies. The Euro lease car is brand-new and fully insured with no excess. Anybody in your immediate family can drive it, you can pick it up anywhere in Europe (there are about 20 locations) and drop it off at one of the 20 locations. There is no extra cost for all of this. You are officially buying the car and selling it back to the manufacturer at agreed prices. For example, we picked our car up in Nice and dropped it off at Marseille–no extra cost. The drop off locations are usually airports. It doesn’t matter if you bring the car back looking like it has been in a stockcar race, there is no excess to pay.

We scratched the wing mirror on this car and I told the bloke at the drop off location about this. He looked at it and said, "don't worry about it, that's nothing". He told me that at least 50% of cars come back seriously damaged. I suspect this is because Kiwis find it difficult to drive in Europe and get confused about which side of the road they should be on and inevitably drive into something.

If you pick up the car (you can only get French cars) outside France, there is no extra cost. If you drop it off outside France, there is extra to pay because they have to ship it back to France. However, the cost of this car was such that it still would have been cheaper to pay that extra cost compared to renting a car from a rental agency. If interested, Google "Euro-Lease".

> The speed limit in Provence was 130 km/h on the toll road.

I imagine some of you have been in the situation where you may have scratched your rental car and the rental car people want a small fortune to repair the scratch usually involving repainting the entire vehicle. If you opt for no excess and an extra driver with the rental agency any savings that you have gained through taking the cheapest thing you can find are usually gobbled up by the extra driver and the no excess option.

With Euro lease you simply don't have these problems. We had the car for just under seven weeks, had absolutely no problems with it, and I worked out that it cost us around NZ\$67/day. You must have the car for a minimum of three weeks

and the longer you have it the cheaper it becomes. Apparently, there is some massive tax advantage to the French car manufacturers through this scheme. On top of this they offer to sell you the car part way through the "lease" period. Ours was offered with a 25% discount. If you're thinking of picking up a cheap French vehicle then this is one way of doing it. For me, there is only one way that I'm going to get a vehicle in Europe and that's through this Euro lease organisation.

Anyway, back to driving;

The other thing to be aware of is how to navigate toll roads. In Provence the expressways have tolls every 40 or 50 kms. Once you are on a toll road, you have to pay to get off. It can be quite expensive, but it is a quick way of getting around. You might think it's a good idea to avoid paying tolls and take secondary roads, but you will find that it will take you at least three times as long, drag you through every village along the way (and they are about every 5 or 6 km apart) and ultimately save you nothing. There's not an awful lot to look at anyway when you are on these secondary roads, plus you get scared rigid because of the width of the road. The toll road gets you to your destination quickly and efficiently.

The speed limit in Provence was 130 km/h on the toll road. I accelerated up to this speed and was passed by everything except for the trucks. I didn't see one traffic cop ever on the toll roads. I didn't see many accidents either. In fact, for the entire time we were there, I think I only saw one accident and that didn't appear to be serious.

Some of the toll gates operate by pay wave and sometimes they spit out a

ticket which you have to present at the next toll gate and end up paying the previous toll as well. In other words, you grab your ticket (and don't lose it) and when you get the next toll gate you insert the ticket and then present your credit card (or whatever you are using). As an aside, I wouldn't use cash, it's too easy to drop. Whatever you do, don't get into the lane which takes vehicles that have an electronic toll pay system, so they don't have to stop, you'll never get past the barrier and some irate Polish truck driver will probably drive over the top of you.

My suggestion is that when you come into the toll gate, on the first few occasions, get behind someone else and see what they do. That's what we did and once you got used to how the toll gate operates it's pretty easy to navigate, i.e. whether you take a ticket or wave your credit card at the machine.

> you'll never get past the barrier and some irate Polish truck driver will probably drive over the top of you.

The secondary roads, as I have said, are very narrow. There is no shoulder, just a ditch, and no margin for error. It makes for some fairly hair raising moments at times as the oncoming traffic approaches you at light speed.

Using Google maps is all very well but it does take you to some weird places. You just need to make sure that the settings on your maps reflect how you want to travel. For a while, I had ticked the box which is said "avoid tolls" and this meant that we ended up being dragged

through every village and byway adding a huge amount of time to our journey.

> My wife said something unprintable and we popped out into a line of traffic waiting to get onto the expressway.

On one occasion our Google map took us into a small village and up to some lookout point. That was fine as it went, but then it took us down this narrow street. When I say narrow, I mean really really narrow. It was so narrow that at one point my wife tried to climb into my seat and we didn't quite fit through the gap. This was how we managed to scratch the mirror.

Another time we were driving into Nimes using the car GPS system, which had a slight lag to it. We were on a four lane expressway and the GPS system said "turn right" as we sailed past the exit. Being a good Kiwi bloke, I instinctively took the next right to get back to where we were supposed to be. This happened to be the entry lane onto said expressway. My wife said something unprintable and we popped out into a line of traffic waiting to get onto the expressway. I think it was a divine moment because nobody came down the entry lane onto the expressway and when we poked our nose out into the traffic the drivers looked very resigned and waved us through.

We laugh about it now, but it could have been a bad moment. I'm sure that a lot of you have had similar moments in your travels around Europe.

Another thing to look out for is parking.

We would plan our parking before we left home, tap it into Google maps and go there. Don't go into the old cities if you can help it. Traffic is busy and it's bedlam. We used to park just outside the city walls and walk in. It was a lot easier.

Before I left New Zealand my travel agent friend said to me that whatever I do when I pick up the car from the Nice airport, don't go into Nice itself. Well, guess what! The GPS was telling me to take the second exit or something simple like that, I managed to take another exit and we ended up driving into Nice itself.

> Annoying the French drivers is a byproduct of Kiwi driving in France.

These words "Don't go into Nice whatever you do" echoed through my head. Cold trickles of sweat ran down my spine recollecting this and my wife was close to hyperventilating. I didn't blame her. We had just picked up this car, I had hopped into the passenger seat with the steering wheel in it and we drove down the wrong side of the road. It was hardly what you would describe as a relaxed occasion. I managed to get off the four-lane road, find a driveway and turnaround, much to the disgust of the French drivers (they honk their horns a lot), and headed out of town.

Annoying the French drivers is a byproduct of Kiwi driving in France. Most of them (French drivers) are pretty good and patient, particularly in town. It's not the same out on the open road where they display little patience and have significant bouts of road rage which is usually demonstrated by mouthing of French expletives, waving fists and going puce in the face. I don't think I did New

Zealand/French relations any favours, but I am sure the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can sort that out later.

Another thing that I noticed is that, notwithstanding the width of the roads, French youngsters who were driving still text I am sure they think they have some divine right to text whilst driving but when it goes south the results are the same.

All in all, I enjoyed the prolonged experience of actually living in one place in France and becoming part of the place. Driving around the area was also enjoyable. You just have to give yourself time to settle into driving. Don't try and become Michael Schumacher overnight.

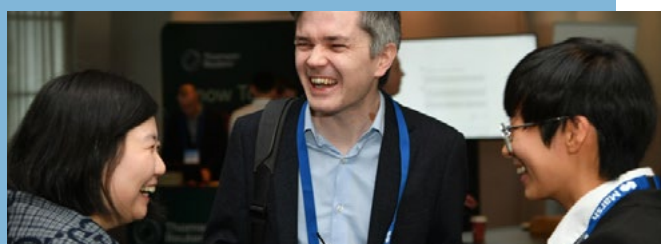
Lastly, I had to photograph this Fiat 500 with towbar. It would have to be one of the most optimistic extras on a car that I have ever seen. I doubt the Fiat could tow an empty icecream container, let alone a trailer. Anyway, as they say, God loves a tryer.



Happy travels!

- David O'Neill.

Recently retired from practice as a Barrister, David continues to accept instructions as an Arbitrator and Mediator, when he's not swanning around the world.



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