

Legislative Statement: Coroners (Coronial Cap) Amendment Bill – All House Stages

Introduction

- 1 The Bill increases the maximum number of coroners that can be appointed at any time from 20 to 22 full-time equivalents (FTEs). This gives effect to Budget 2022 decisions relating to the initiative *Coronial Services – Improving the System for Bereaved Families and Whānau*.

Background

- 2 The Coroners Act 2006 (the Act) provides that the maximum number of coroners who can be appointed at any time is 20 FTEs. However, there are typically 18 full-time permanent coroners. There are also usually 7 FTE relief coroners, who are not counted as part of the statutory cap.
- 3 The current workload in the coronial system has coroners struggling to keep pace. The active caseload and average time to conclude coronial inquiries is steadily increasing. This increasing length of time that grieving families and whānau are waiting to receive coronial findings is causing significant distress to them.
- 4 Budget 2022 decisions to fund four additional permanent coroners (on top of the current 18) will help manage the workload in the coronial system. An increase to the statutory cap is necessary to enable the appointment of all four new coroners.

Provisions of the Coroners (Coronial Cap) Amendment Bill

- 5 There is only one substantive amendment to the Coroners Act contained in the Bill. Clause 4(1) increases the maximum number of coroners that can be appointed at any time from 20 full time equivalent coroners to 22 full time equivalent coroners.
- 6 Clause 4(2) makes a consequential amendment that changes the example that illustrates how full-time equivalents are calculated.
- 7 The commencement clause states that the Amendment Act will come into force on the day after the date of Royal assent, enabling the recruitment of the additional coroners to commence as soon as possible.