

Fire and Emergency New Zealand Dispute Resolution Scheme

Here When It Matters

ANNUAL REPORT IPŪRONGO Ā-TAU
Year ended 30 June 2026 | Hune 2026



INDEPENDENT
COMPLAINT AND
REVIEW AUTHORITY

Te Umanga Arotake Amuamu Motuhake

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Foreword | He tīmitanga kōrero



This report reflects on the operation of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Dispute Resolution Scheme for the year ended 30 June 2026. Administered by the Independent Complaint and Review Authority | Te Umanga Arotake Amuamu Motuhake (ICRA), the Scheme provides an external and independent forum for resolving eligible disputes under Subpart 5 of Part 4 of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017. As part of The ADR Centre, ICRA draws on extensive experience in dispute resolution and conflict management while remaining independent of Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

The Scheme continued to provide an accessible and independent pathway for eligible disputes during the reporting period. Although application volumes were lower

than in the previous year, the matters received covered a range of issues and demonstrated the continuing importance of offering flexible resolution options for Fire and Emergency volunteers and members of the public.

Speak Safe continued to operate throughout the reporting period as Fire and Emergency New Zealand's external and independent complaints pathway for personnel, following its launch on 29 April 2024, when it replaced the Behaviour and Conduct Office. During the year, matters were escalated from Speak Safe to the Scheme. This demonstrates the important role of the Scheme as an independent avenue for review when concerns remain unresolved or complainants believe a matter is not progressing appropriately.

A particular highlight of the year was our participation in the United Fire Brigades' Association Annual Conference Hui in Christchurch in November 2025. The event provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly with volunteers from across New Zealand, answer questions about the Scheme and explain the range of resolution

options available. These conversations provided valuable insights into volunteer perspectives and reinforced the importance of ensuring that those who may need the Scheme understand how it can assist them.

Further awareness was raised through Fire and Emergency's communication channels, including coverage in Ignite magazine. Improving awareness remains an important objective, and we appreciate Fire and Emergency's continued commitment to ensuring that volunteers and members of the public are informed of their rights and the support available through the Scheme.

While Scheme volumes remain low, the Scheme continues to provide an accessible and responsive dispute resolution framework for those it serves. ICRA remains committed to working with Fire and Emergency New Zealand to strengthen awareness of the Scheme and ensure eligible applicants can access fair and independent dispute resolution.

Ngā mihi,
Willem van Gent | Head of Commercial, Compliance and Complaints

ABOUT US

We provide independent complaint management and review services to individuals, businesses and Government across a wide variety of sectors.

The Independent Complaint and Review Authority (ICRA) is part of [The ADR Centre](#) and was established as a specialist service providing:

- Independent and impartial reviews of, and appeals against, decisions and determinations made by public- and private-sector organisations and government bodies in the exercise of their statutory powers and duties;
- Resolution of workplace conflict through early intervention, mediation and investigation; and
- Independent and impartial review and auditing of internal and external business-to-business and business-to-consumer complaint processes, procedures and outcomes.

Year in Review

Applications to access the Scheme

A potential applicant is generally required to first access Fire and Emergency New Zealand’s internal complaint management process before applying to the Scheme. However, the Scheme Administrator may accept an application where that internal process is taking an unreasonable amount of time.

Between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026, the Scheme received nine applications for dispute resolution. Of these, seven were submitted by Fire and Emergency volunteers, one by a member of the public and one by a Fire and Emergency employee. For the purposes of the applicant categories used in this report, the employee application is included under “member of the public”.

Three applications were accepted by the Scheme Administrator and progressed through the dispute resolution process. The remaining six applications were refused.

Four applications were refused because the disputes fell outside the scope of the Scheme and may have been more appropriately addressed under the Employment Relations Act 2000 or by a court, tribunal or other authority. One application was refused because Fire and Emergency’s internal process was still ongoing. The remaining application was refused because the applicant had not yet initiated Fire and Emergency’s internal dispute resolution process.

APPLICATIONS TO ACCESS THE SCHEME

Year	Initiated by volunteer	Initiated by member of the public	Total
Applications received	7	2	9
Applications accepted	3	0	3
Applications refused	4	2	6

Year in Review

Process Selection

Under rule 20 of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Dispute Resolution Scheme Rules 2021 (Scheme Rules), applicants may select their preferred dispute resolution process. They may choose facilitation, mediation or adjudication, including fast-track adjudication where a matter is time-critical.

Mediation and facilitation are less formal processes. Our mediators and facilitators are skilled, experienced, impartial and independent professionals. They do not act as advisers or advocates for anyone involved in the dispute. Their role is to manage the negotiation process and guide and assist the parties without giving advice, expressing opinions or making decisions. They help the parties identify and explore the issues to be resolved and possible options for resolution. Ultimately, the parties decide whether to settle the dispute and on what terms.

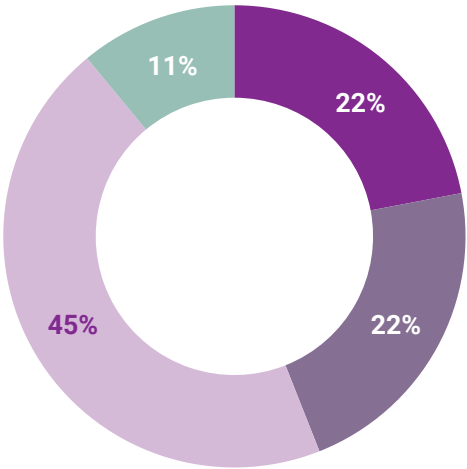
Adjudication is a more formal, determinative process. It allows the parties to present their cases to an independent third party (the adjudicator), who will make the decision on the dispute. The adjudicator’s decision is binding, which means the parties must comply with it, subject to limited review and appeal rights. A party may also apply for fast-track adjudication if the dispute is time-critical and requires urgent resolution.

Of the nine applications received during the reporting period, two applicants initially selected mediation, two selected adjudication, one selected fast-track adjudication, and four did not specify a dispute resolution process.

The applicant who initially selected fast-track adjudication later changed their preferred process to mediation.

PROCESS SELECTED BY APPLICANT

- Mediation 22%
- Adjudication 22%
- No process selected 45%
- Fast-track adjudication 11%



Year in Review

Case Status

Of the nine applications received during the reporting period, four were refused because the disputes fell outside the scope of the Scheme.

One application was refused because Fire and Emergency’s internal dispute resolution process was still ongoing.

One application was refused because the applicant had not yet initiated Fire and Emergency’s internal dispute resolution process.

Of the three applications accepted during the reporting period, two were successfully resolved through mediation. The third application remained open under rule 34 of the Scheme Rules at 30 June 2026.

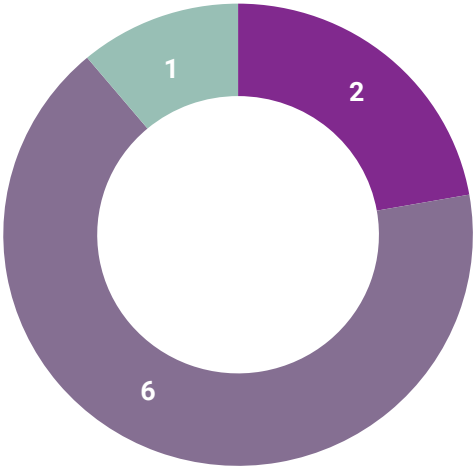
Time taken to resolve cases

On aggregate, matters took an average of 60 working days to resolve during the reporting period. Three matters from the previous year remained open at year end due to a combination of external court proceedings, jurisdictional questions raised during the adjudication process that required determination, and adjudication capacity constraints.

The mediation case that resulted in full agreement was resolved in 90 business days.

CASE STATUS

- Mediation completed 2
- Application refused 6
- Case open 1

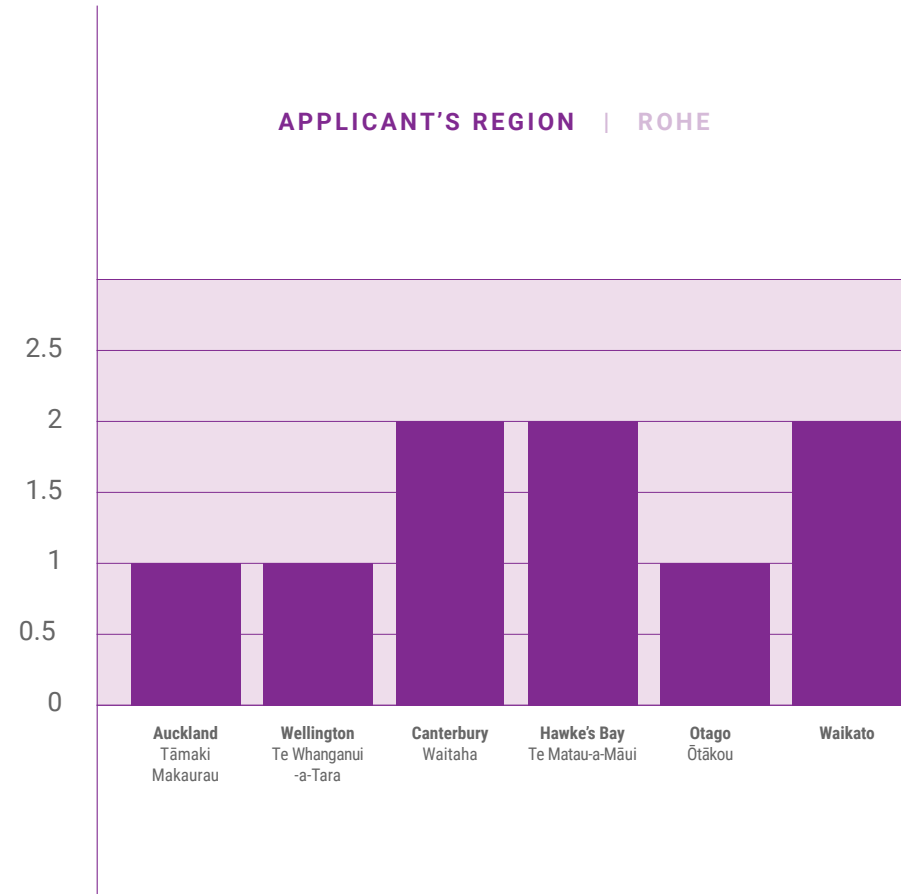


Year in Review

Who is accessing the Scheme?

The Scheme is available to Fire and Emergency volunteers and members of the public. Of the nine applications received between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026, seven were submitted by volunteers, one by a member of the public and one by a Fire and Emergency employee. For reporting purposes, the employee application is included in the “member of the public” category.

Applicants came from across Aotearoa New Zealand: Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau (one), Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara (one), Canterbury | Waitaha (two), Hawke’s Bay | Te Matau-a-Māui (two), Otago | Ōtākou (one) and Waikato (two).



Year in Review

The nature of disputes

Of the nine applications, two involved allegations of bullying, three sought reviews of processes considered unfair, two related to employment issues, one related to an alleged breach of enforcement requirements, and one related to a matter better dealt with by a court, tribunal or other authority.

Systemic issues, breach reporting and recommendations

There were no breaches of the Scheme Rules by Fire and Emergency New Zealand or Fire and Emergency New Zealand personnel.

Adjudicators made no recommendations to Fire and Emergency New Zealand under rule 37 of the Scheme Rules about actions it should take to prevent similar problems from occurring in the future.



Case Studies

No case studies are included for the reporting period. Given the volume of applications received by the Scheme, providing sufficient detail to make a case study meaningful could increase the risk that the individuals or matters involved may be identifiable, even where personal information is removed.

Findings of independent review

No independent review of the Scheme was completed during the reporting period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

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