

## **NIGHT COURTS**

### **WHAT ARE NIGHT COURTS?**

Night Courts were established in April 1992 to deal with the high volume of regulatory and traffic offences. These Courts function for the convenience of the working public who would otherwise have to take time off from work in order to attend Court. Operating hours are from 6 pm onwards from Mondays to Fridays.

There are two Night Courts, each with its own profile of cases.

**Court 26N** deals with summonses and notices issued by the various government departments such as the Housing and Development Board, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, the Central Provident Fund Board, and the Accounting & Corporate Regulatory Authority.

**Court 25N** deals with road traffic offences brought by the Traffic Police and regulatory offences brought by the Land Transport Authority.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AT THE COURT SESSION?**

The Night Courts are criminal mentions Courts. If you are charged for a criminal offence, you may be served with a summons to attend Night Court. When you are in Court, the Charge will be read and explained to you.

### **HOW SHOULD I BEHAVE IN COURT?**

You should dress appropriately and avoid shabby or scanty dressing. You should address the judge as “Your Honour” and bow when entering or leaving the Courtroom.

### **THE CHARGE**

The charge will set out the offence alleged to have been committed by you. Each offence will be listed as a separate Charge. You can be charged with more than one offence. One or more persons can also be charged for the same offence.

### **WHO IS PRESENT IN COURT?**

The Court is presided by a Judge and is assisted by Court Officers, Court Interpreters and Police Officers. The Prosecuting officers from the relevant organizations will also be present.

### **CAN I ENGAGE A LAWYER?**

You may be represented by a Lawyer. However, you should be present in Court even if a Lawyer is representing you. If you have no Lawyer, you must attend in person. If you are representing a company, a letter of authorization from the company should be prepared and handed to the Court.

### **WHAT DO I DO IF I CAN'T SPEAK ENGLISH?**

Court Interpreters for Mandarin (and the common Chinese dialects like Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese); Malay and Tamil languages will be provided. Interpreters for other foreign languages may be provided upon prior request, made in writing to the Crime Registry, Subordinate Courts.

### **WHAT CAN I DO AFTER THE CHARGE IS READ TO ME?**

You can either:

**Plead Guilty** ie you admit unconditionally to the Charge and would like the Court to impose a sentence.

**Claim Trial** is you dispute the Charge and would like a Court hearing to defend yourself.

**Adjourn** the mentions to another date.

### **WHAT IF I CANNOT PAY THE FINE?**

You will then be brought to Queenstown Remand Prison to serve the default imprisonment sentence. Therefore, before pleading guilty you should ensure that you have sufficient funds with you to pay the fine.

### **CAN I ASK FOR INSTALMENT PAYMENT OF THE FINE?**

You may apply to the Court to grant instalment payment of the fine. If the Court turns down your request, you will have to serve the default imprisonment sentence if you are unable to pay the fine in full.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF I CLAIM TRIAL?**

The Court will fix the case for a pre-trial conference in a “Day Court”. The purpose of the pre-trial conference is to ascertain if a case is ready for trial. For more information on pre-trial conferences and trial proceedings, please refer to the brochure entitled “How to Conduct a Criminal Case Yourself”.

### **WHAT REASONS CAN I GIVE FOR AN ADJOURNMENT?**

The usual reasons for adjournment are to engage a lawyer, to make representations to the Prosecuting Department, to raise funds to pay the Court fine. If the Court grants the adjournment, you may be asked to furnish Bail. If Bail is furnished you will be remanded in Queenstown Remand Prison until Bail is furnished. You will be brought to Court on the date of your next Court hearing.

**WHAT IS BAIL?**

Bail is a security, either cash or personal property, to ensure that you attend court on all subsequent Court dates. The person furnishing the security is called a Bailor or Surety. Please refer to the brochure on “Information on Bail” for more information.

**CAN I BE ABSENT FROM COURT ON THE APPOINTED DATE**

If you fail to attend a Court hearing, a Warrant of Arrest will be issued by the Court. If you are on Bail, your Surety may have his Bail money or property forfeited by the Court. When you are arrested and brought before the Court, you will be asked to explain your absence in Court on the previous hearing date. The Court may impose a fine if no satisfactory reasons are given for your absence. A Medical Certificate will not be accepted unless it has been endorsed that it is valid for absence from court proceedings.

**CAN I COMPOUND THE OFFENCE AFTER I HAE BEEN SERVED WITH A SUMMONS OR NOTICE TO ATTEND COURTS?**

You may not usually compound an offence if a Court Summons or Notice has been issued. However, you should check with the Prosecuting Agency on your case. For some traffic offences (Traffic Police and Land Transport Authority cases) you may plead guilty at an AXS Kiosk through the Automated Traffic Offence Management System (ATOMS). A court fine, which is lower than the fine imposed by the Court if you had attended Court, would be imposed.