

**BUILDING A RESILIENT JUDICIARY: PAPUA
NEW GUINEA'S PATH TO JUDICIAL WELL-
BEING**

By

**Honourable Justice John Carey
Justice of the National and Supreme Courts of
Papua New Guinea
Judge Administrator, PNGCJE**

at

**COSP 11 SPECIAL EVENT
15 December 2025**

Introduction

Good afternoon distinguished colleagues, members of the judiciary, and guests. Judicial well-being is no longer a peripheral issue, it is central to the integrity, independence, and effectiveness of our courts. In Papua New Guinea, we recognize that the health of our judiciary determines the health of our justice system. Today, I will outline the initiatives we have undertaken and the plans we envision for the future to strengthen judicial well-being.

Following on from the signing of the Nauru Declaration, the Judiciary was committed to celebrating Judges Wellness Day every 25th July, to increasing physical and mental health awareness through regular programs and activities, and to ensuring better access to medical services for Judges and Staff in Waigani and in the provinces. Judicial wellness is proposed as part of the core foundation of the judicial reforms and the efficient functioning of the Judiciary under the reforms. This is because healthy Judges and staff of the NJSS will enable the achievement of the reform objectives.

Why Judicial Well-Being Matters?

Judges face unique pressures: heavy caseloads, exposure to traumatic material, professional isolation, and public scrutiny. Studies show that over 90% of judges globally experience stress, and 80% believe their institutions do not adequately address well-being. For PNG, these challenges are compounded by resource constraints and cultural expectations. Judicial well-being is not a luxury—it is a necessity for impartiality, resilience, and public trust.

Current and Recent Initiatives in Papua New Guinea

- **Judicial Wellness Program:** Since 2023, the Papua New Guinea Centre for Judicial Excellence (PNGCJE) has hosted annual wellness retreats for judges and their spouses, focusing on mindfulness, stress management, and holistic health.
- **Work-Life Balance Training:** Programs like ‘Achieving Work-Life Balance: Challenges, Impacts, Solutions’ have addressed burnout and promoted resilience among judicial officers.
- **Regional Leadership:** PNG played a key role in the Nauru Declaration on Judicial Well-Being (2024), which calls for systemic support for mental, physical, and emotional health within judiciaries.
- **International Engagement:** We hosted the International Judicial Conference on Integrity and Judicial Well-Being in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in August 2025, under the theme ‘From Principles to Action: Advancing Judicial Well-Being as the Foundation for Integrity, Resilience, and Public Trust’.

Judge and Staff Well-being Resolve

Resolution 3.1 – Free access to a medical clinic will be made available for all Judges and Staff, irrespective of position or location.

Resolution 3.2 – Health insurance will be available to all staff at a subsidized cost for serious medical conditions and will be delivered so that no up-front cost is required to obtain medical assistance.

Resolution 3.3 – Judges and Staff will be incentivized to pursue sports and other activities to improve health and fitness.

Future Plans and Strategic Vision

- **Institutionalizing Well-Being:** Embedding wellness into court policies, Human Resources frameworks, and judicial education. This means annual well-being surveys, reporting, and dedicated resources for counseling and peer support networks.
- **Technology and Efficiency:** Launching electronic court systems to reduce delays and administrative burdens, improving work conditions and reducing stress for judges.
- **Leadership and Culture Change:** Encouraging senior judges to model healthy boundaries and normalize help-seeking as a strength, not a weakness.
- **Capacity Building:** Expanding PNGCJE programs to include modules on vicarious trauma, emotional regulation, and resilience.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Strengthening partnerships through the Pacific Platform on Anti-Corruption (Teieniwa Vision) and the Global Judicial Integrity Network, ensuring PNG remains a leader in judicial integrity and well-being.
- **To develop a Commentary for Judicial Well Being** which will assist Judiciaries around the globe in achieving Judicial Wellness.

Conclusion

Judicial well-being is the foundation of judicial integrity. By prioritizing the mental, physical, and emotional health of our judges, we safeguard the independence of our courts and the trust of our people. Papua New Guinea is committed to leading this transformation—not just for our judiciary, but as

an example for the Pacific and beyond. Thank you, and we in PNG look forward to working together with judiciaries around the world to make judicial well-being a reality.