

Call for review of **Cave Creek** decision

A CHRISTCHURCH lawyer has called for a judicial review of the actions of police investigating the **Cave Creek** disaster after the Government ruled out an independent inquiry yesterday.

Grant Cameron said a dozen Conservation Department staff should face manslaughter charges for the collapse of a West Coast viewing platform in 1995, which killed 14 people.

He wrote to Prime Minister Helen Clark on behalf of families, asking for an independent inquiry into the decision by police not to prosecute.

But Miss Clark said she would not get involved in matters that were "properly the province of statutory officers".

Mr Cameron said he was disappointed by Miss Clark's decision, which perpetuated the injustice for victims' families.

"The families are less concerned with people facing prosecution at this very late date than they are with simply finding out there's been a cover-up," he said.

A police investigation by Christchurch Detective Inspector Kevin Burrowes recommended that department staff who built and maintained the platform should face prosecution. A subsequent commission of inquiry overruled the finding. Mr Burrowes's report has since gone missing.

Mr Cameron said the next step was a judicial review, which could be instigated by anyone. But families could not afford it. "If somebody's prepared to put up the cost, we would happily (go ahead)."

Police spokesman Jon Nielson said police were still searching for Mr Burrowes's file, but even if it was found it was unlikely police would review their decision, which was based on advice from the solicitor-general and senior legal advisers in Christchurch.

But the Crown Law Office said the solicitor-general had never issued a formal opinion on the case. He had, however, reviewed both the initial legal advice and the commission of inquiry finding and had agreed with the findings.

A spokeswoman said the issue had been dealt with.

The mother of one of the victims, Marjorie Shaw, said not laying charges was the biggest case of injustice in New Zealand history. -- NZPA

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