

Some **Renshaw Edwards** claims still in dispute

UP TO 20 claims remained unsettled from the 1992 collapse of Upper Hutt law firm **Renshaw Edwards**, which folded after fraud by its two principals, the New Zealand Law Society said yesterday.

Society executive director Alan Ritchie said most of approximately 400 claims had been settled and about \$29 million repaid two years ago. Further claims had been settled in the past two years. The additional settlements involved the society contributing to the interest and costs of some of the claimants.

The settlements, which had been reached after the \$29 million in principal had been paid, and after the claimants had threatened to take the society to court, were confidential, the society said.

Mr Ritchie said it was possible the remaining claims would not be settled.

It would be difficult for the claimants to prove theft by **Renshaw Edwards** above and beyond the \$29 million the society had agreed had occurred, he said. "There are still some cases in which there is still some dispute as to whether they have a valid claim against the fund. There's still some argument there but not necessarily a great argument," Mr Ritchie said.

However, the society had not written the claims off. It had told the claimants that if they could find further evidence it would "have another look at it", he said.

Grant Cameron, who represented about 200 of the claimants, said yesterday that fewer than five of his clients still had matters unresolved.

Patrick Renshaw was jailed for seven years in July 1992 after admitting 42 fraud offences involving \$6.4 million of clients' money. He was freed in March 1995. His former partner, Keith Edwards, admitted 51 fraud charges and was jailed for six years for stealing \$3.5 million. He was freed in August 1994.

The men were prosecuted for less than \$10 million by the Serious Fraud Office but the society accepted the men had caused clients losses of \$29 million.

The \$29 million was paid solely to the claimants or their legal advisers. None of it went on administration costs, the society said. Those were funded separately by the society.

The \$29 million was funded through a special levy on New Zealand's 2800 senior lawyers at the time of the firm's collapse. They had to pay \$10,000 each, as well as their

annual \$500 fidelity fund fee. In 1995 the society had to borrow to pay the claimants the remainder of what they were owed.

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