

ARTICLE: **Winz forces out staffer over crimes committed 21 years ago**

An Auckland man is back on the dole after being forced to quit his Ministry of Social Development job because of criminal convictions he received more than 20 years ago.

Aaron Amor, 41, was convicted in the 1980s for theft, burglary and minor drug offences, culminating in a two-month sentence of corrective training in January 1988.

After his release, he trained in tourism and hospitality before moving into sales and retail work.

Mr Amor was employed by the ministry in December last year, working as a customer services representative at the Waitakere Contact Centre in Henderson.

He did not reveal his criminal past, believing his convictions were suppressed by the 2004 Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act.

The legislation allows convictions to be concealed under certain circumstances, though custodial sentences are not covered.

In February, Mr Amor was told his employment would be terminated because of his convictions.

But he says his 20-something years as an honest worker should have been taken into account.

"Although I am not about to make excuses for my indiscretions as a wild teenager, I feel I have proved myself to be an honest and law-abiding citizen in the last 21 years and I deserve to be treated as such."

Mr Amor wanted to raise the issue to help others in a similar situation.

"I hope the outcome from this will go a long way to opening new avenues for honest people who genuinely deserve a second chance in life."

In a prepared response to Herald questions, Work and Income deputy chief executive Patricia Reade said that while Mr Amor completed his training well, "the serious nature of his convictions meant he did not meet our high employment standards".

"The ministry demands extremely high standards of integrity and honesty from its staff and Work and Income employees have access to confidential client information and the various systems the ministry uses to pay benefits."

Not that Mr Amor would return to the department, even if asked. "If they turned around and offered me the job back, there's a very good chance I wouldn't take it."

Mr Amor approached the *Herald* after receiving no response from Social Development Minister Paula Bennett.

The minister made headlines herself this year after it was revealed she failed to tell Prime Minister John Key about a violent criminal - her daughter's boyfriend - whom she took into her home while he awaited sentencing for a brutal 2005 bashing.

Ms Bennett said last night that she sympathised with Mr Amor, but supported the ministry's policy of not employing workers with dishonesty convictions.

**\* Clean slate legislation**

Your criminal record can be concealed if you have:

No convictions in the past seven years.

Never received a custodial sentence.

Never been ordered by a court to be held for mental health reasons.

Not been convicted of a "specified offence" (eg, sexual offending).

Paid all fines, reparations and costs in full.

Never been indefinitely disqualified from driving.

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**Source: NZ Herald.**