

TAFEA MAGISTRATE COURT TOUR TO ANEITYUM

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the activities and proceedings of the Magistrate Court Tour to Aneityum Island, which commenced on 5 February 2025 and concluded with our return to Tanna Island on 23 June 2025. The court tour was initially scheduled to last one week; however, due to ongoing transportation challenges, the only viable mode of travel to Aneityum Island was through Pierre Brunet Shipping, which operates biweekly voyages to the island.

2. Court Tour Timeline

Day 1 – 5 February 2025

At approximately midday, we boarded the *Pierre Brunet* vessel (LCU2007) at Lenakel Wharf, bound for Aneityum. The ship departed as scheduled, and we arrived at Aneityum Island around 7:30 PM.

Day 5 – 9 June 2025

On this day, the prosecutor served summonses on the defendants. I remained at my accommodation, prepared to receive defendants and obtain instructions. Unfortunately, no defendants presented themselves for consultation.

Day 6 – 10 June 2025

I coordinated with the prosecutor to accompany him during the service of summonses to remaining defendants. Our aim was to secure instructions immediately after service. We travelled by boat from Analcauhat Village to Port Patrick village, where we met one defendant who agreed to accompany us back to Analcauhat village. Upon our return, I successfully obtained instructions from him. He is 16 years old. His co-offender also visited me later at around 6:30 PM, and I took his instructions as well. He is also 16 years old.

Day 7 – 11 June 2025

The court was scheduled to commence at 8:30 AM. However, due to travel distances, most defendants only arrived at around that time. I continued obtaining plea instructions until 11:00 AM, delaying the court's commencement.

Following a short conference between the prosecutor, defence counsel, and the presiding Senior Magistrate, the court proceeded with plea hearings. Defendants who pleaded guilty were sentenced immediately. Matters involving not guilty pleas were adjourned to 17 June 2025 for trial. The case involving two juvenile offenders was directed to be heard in closed court on 13 June 2025.

Day 9 – 13 June 2025

On this day, the court proceeded with two separate matters:

- **Preliminary Inquiry (PI) Hearings:** All listed cases were committed to the Supreme Court.
- **Juvenile Case (Closed Court):** The two juvenile defendants pleaded guilty and were sentenced immediately.

This picture shows how the court dealt with Juvenile offenders on Aneityum Island.



Day 13 – 17 June 2025

The trial was scheduled to commence at 8:30 AM. Due to weather-related delays, prosecution witnesses from Port Patrick village arrived at 9:30 AM. The trial commenced at approximately 10:30

AM and continued into the afternoon. The matter was adjourned for closing submissions on 18 June 2025 at 9:00 AM.

Day 14 – 18 June 2025

At 9:00 AM, both the prosecution and defence presented their closing submissions. The court was adjourned to 1:00 PM for the delivery of the verdict. At 1:00 PM, the court delivered its judgment, officially concluding the Magistrate Court session in Aneityum Island.

Day 18 – 23 June 2025

At approximately 12:30 AM, we boarded the *Pierre Brunet* vessel for our return to Tanna Island. The ship arrived at Lenakel Wharf at around 6:30 AM.

3. Conclusion

The court tour to Aneityum Island was successfully completed despite logistical and weather-related challenges. All scheduled court matters were addressed either by way of plea or trial. The coordination between the Office of the Public Solicitor, the prosecution, and the court facilitated efficient case management, particularly with juvenile matters and PI hearings.