

Fraud claimants seek help in higher places

28.03.2002

By SIMON HENDERY

A group of New Zealand investors who say they lost US\$3 million (\$6.8 million) in a Taiwan-based "boiler room" share scam plan to ask for Government support to recover the money.

The 63 investors were victims of an allegedly bogus investment company run by Briton and convicted fraudster Sheridan Leslie Cox.

Cox was convicted of fraud in Belgium, but fled the country last year and is now in custody in Taiwan.

He ran a sharebroking business, Mendes Prior, in Taiwan targeting foreign investors including New Zealanders.

Cox's staff would call potential investors offering deals to buy mainly American-listed shares, but the transactions were allegedly never completed.

Auckland lawyer Mark van Leewarden, who represents the 63 investors, travelled to Taipei a fortnight ago to file fraud claims as part of Cox's prosecution.

Van Leewarden said he would ask the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to get the Government to voice its support for the investors to the Taiwanese judiciary.

He said his clients could find it easier to win restitution if the judiciary was aware there was international interest in the case.

"The Taiwanese police and prosecution have done a good job to get Cox indicted, and we want to see that the right result is achieved, in terms of restitution for the victims.

"We know that Cox can afford to pay, and we're looking for support for that to occur."

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokeswoman Belinda Brown said it was uncommon, but not unheard of, for the Government to agree to such a request.

"You would be pretty cautious before you took anything up at that level. You don't tell another country how to run its judicial system."