

**ADDRESS BY THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL
FOR THE SWEARING IN OF JUSTICE KAREN GRAU
AS A HIGH COURT JUDGE
8 February 2024, Manukau District Court**

1. Your Honour, it is a pleasure to speak today to mark your appointment to the High Court bench and to offer you and your family the Government's warmest congratulations. I bring best wishes for the next stage of your journey of judicial service. This is a proud day for you and your family, and I wish you every success.
2. As has been indicated, this is not the start of your judicial service. You have already been serving as a District Court Judge here in Manukau these past three years. I note that Dame Sylvia Cartwright, when she trod this path though from Chief District Court Judge to the High Court in 1993, said:

District Court judges are a varied, talented but sometimes underrated group of Judicial Officers. They work under trying conditions at great pressure and with the broadest range of jurisdiction of any judiciary of which I am aware.

3. That sort of experience of the past three years on the District Court will stand you in good stead on the High Court bench.
4. My role today is to introduce your Honour; to cover your professional curriculum vitae and thereby establish in public your formal credentials and some of your characteristics that provide the strong foundation for your new judicial role.
5. You came to law later in life than many. Taking a leap into the unknown, you decided to go to law school.
6. Your Honour studied at Victoria University of Wellington, graduating in 2003 with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours). You excelled during your time at university, obtaining First Class Honours and winning a number of prizes - including an award for the best

student entering the Honours programme. You quickly demonstrated your intellectual ability and your legal aptitude.

7. After university, you began your legal career as a Judge's Clerk to the Hon Justice Glazebrook when her Honour was then at the Court of Appeal. Right from the start of your career, you were incredibly hardworking and your quick wit, sense of humour and loyalty was evident to your colleagues. I know this was said at your swearing in as a District Court Judge, but it bears repeating that Justice Glazebrook observed you had "the winning combination of life experience, common sense, people skills and academic excellence that you brought to your work".
8. Between 2005 and 2006, you worked as Legal Counsel at the Commerce Commission before commencing practice as a Barrister in Stout Street Chambers, Wellington, assisting (then) Stephen Kos KC in his commercial law and civil litigation practice.
9. In 2007, you embarked on your criminal law career at Luke Cunningham Clere. You took to criminal law straight away describing feeling "at home" "getting down and dirty in the District Court". You were lead counsel in over 60 District Court and High Court trials involving serious criminal offending. As a prosecutor, you were known for going above and beyond. Your life experience outside the law impacted on how you approached legal practice and enabled you to engage with defence counsel, defendants and victims in a sincere and fair manner. Even at this stage, you were highly regarded by both judges and defence counsel. And your approach to criminal law was ahead of its time.
10. Towards the end of your time with Luke Cunningham Clere, you took a sabbatical in 2014 to study a Master of Law at the University of Cambridge. There, you were awarded a First Class as well as a scholarship for academic distinction. This achievement, on the international stage, is a testament to your dedication and academic ability.
11. After completing your Masters, you returned to the Wellington Crown Solicitor before becoming Crown Counsel at Crown Law in 2015, where you practised until

your appointment to the District Court. During this time, you conducted appellate advocacy in the Court of Appeal on a full range of criminal issues.

12. In your last year at Crown Law, you were seconded to act as Counsel to Assist the Victims of the Christchurch Mosque attacks. This was a unique role, created to assist the many victims and their families as the criminal case progressed through the courts to sentencing. The role involved providing legal advice and navigating complex relationships, working with various actors within the justice sector. Your Honour, you fulfilled this challenging role with technical expertise, emotional intelligence, diplomacy and grace.
13. Both your former colleagues at Crown Law and Luke Cunningham Clere describe you as brutally intelligent and fiercely independent, yet down-to-earth and a natural conversationalist. You are someone who, despite professional success, remains incredibly humble; a team player who is collegial and supportive. Your sense of humour and your ability to be able to lighten the mood by seeing (or creating) the funny side of things has been emphasised by several of your former colleagues.
14. These wide-ranging experiences and qualities made you an obvious candidate for the judiciary. And in February 2021, you were sworn in as a District Court Judge. A role in which you have shown all the promise seen in you on appointment.
15. Manukau counsel, both prosecution and defence, fondly recount appearing in front of you. One counsel succinctly described your Honour as: “honestly brilliant”. Others have noted that your intellect always goes hand-in-hand with your compassionate approach to justice. You are known for being empathetic to everyone who appears before you: defendants, victims and counsel alike.
16. I am aware that many counsel and colleagues have benefitted greatly from your mentorship and the generosity with which you give your time. One junior defence lawyer recalls that after their first trial, over which you presided, you made time to stay behind to provide constructive feedback and advance their advocacy skills. I am sure you have left this longstanding impression on many other counsel who have had the opportunity to appear in front of you.

17. You have always displayed a strong sense of fairness. This is evident through your compassionate approach to the law, as a Crown prosecutor and also as a District Court Judge. Your Honour brings incisive analysis and sound judgment, of course, but also a healthy dose of realism. You embody the important qualities that have made you a great District Court Judge and which will make you an excellent High Court Judge.
18. Thank you for the public service you have already provided as a District Court Judge. It is now time for you to use your many skills and talents to serve other parts of the New Zealand community on the High Court bench.
19. Others today will highlight the breadth of your contribution to the legal profession and society of New Zealand. The Government is confident you will exercise this appointment with the same dedication and sense of justice evident throughout your career. Once again, I congratulate you on your appointment to the High Court bench and wish you the very best in this new phase of your career.
20. As the Court pleases.