



**The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann
Chief Justice of New Zealand
Te Tumu Whakawā o Aotearoa**

23 April 2020

MEDIA STATEMENT

Operation of the courts under COVID-19 alert level 3

The Prime Minister has now announced the country will move to alert level 3¹ from Tuesday 28 April. In light of this, the Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann has announced the following changes to the way New Zealand's courts will be operating:

- The courts will be open to the public. However, to ensure safe working conditions for court staff, counsel, and the public, there will be limits on the numbers who can attend. Priority will be given to those who have business at court.
- The type and volume of work in the courts will continue to expand. This will involve a mixture of in-person hearings, hearings in which some participants may appear remotely, and virtual hearings in which no one, other than a registrar, may be in a courtroom.
- Courts will conduct judge-alone trials involving witnesses, who may be required to attend court. However, jury trials remain suspended until 31 July 2020.
- Courts continue to be cleaned to the higher standards introduced at the start of the pandemic. Hand sanitiser will be readily available. Court participants may wear their own PPE such as gloves and masks if they wish.
- Where feasible, counsel and witnesses are permitted to participate remotely.

¹ Unite against COVID-19 links [Alert level 3 information and summaries](#).

- Descriptions of filing arrangements for each court, and the work that will be heard at alert level 3 are set out in each court's protocol available on the [Courts of New Zealand website](#). Counters remain closed and physical drop boxes will be provided for urgent documents that are delivered by hand.
- Accredited media continue to have access to the courts during all alert levels including remote hearings. Detailed information for media is available on the [Courts of New Zealand website](#).

Helen Winkelmann
Chief Justice/Te Tumu Whakawā