



CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

# Annual Report

---

*For the period*

1 JANUARY 2024 TO 31 DECEMBER 2024



This report is published by the Office of the Chief Justice | Te Tari Toko i te Tumu Whakawā and is available at [www.courtsofnz.govt.nz](http://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz).

This material is able to be copied, distributed and adapted without seeking permission, if it is properly attributed.

Please contact [courtsnzwebsite@courts.govt.nz](mailto:courtsnzwebsite@courts.govt.nz) if you have any questions regarding reuse of material from this report. Other enquiries can be directed to [officeofthechiefjustice@courts.govt.nz](mailto:officeofthechiefjustice@courts.govt.nz).

Publication Date 2 September 2025



# Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
THE YEAR IN REVIEW	5
PART ONE: THE JUDICIAL BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT	6
The role of the judiciary in New Zealand's constitution	7
An independent and impartial judiciary	13
PART TWO: THE WORK OF THE COURTS	34
New Zealand's court system	35
Courts of general jurisdiction	37
Criminal justice	38
Civil justice	48
Appellate courts	56
PART THREE: ACCESS TO JUSTICE	62
Access to justice	63
Planning for the future – ensuring court technologies support access to justice	70
PART FOUR: OPEN JUSTICE AND ENGAGEMENT	75
The principle of open justice	76
A work programme to support open justice	77
PART FIVE: PACIFIC AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT	81
Appendix 1: Statement of Principles	85
Appendix 2: Judicial and Shared Committees' summaries	89
Appendix 3: How judges are appointed	94
Appendix 4: Current judges and judicial officers of all benches as of 31 December 2024	95
Appendix 5: Judges and judicial officers who retired, resigned or were elevated during 2024	114
Appendix 6: References and further information	117



# Introduction

I am pleased to present my Annual Report for the 2024 calendar year. In it you will find information about judges, about the judicial branch of government, and about the work of the courts.

Judges usually speak only through their judgments. This report provides the opportunity for the judiciary to speak publicly about the functioning of the courts, and in particular the challenges and opportunities for access to justice and the operation of the courts. The judiciary has a unique perspective on these topics, formed through the daily work of administering justice through the courts, and it is essential that this perspective is heard.

The work the courts do in hearing and deciding cases upholds the ideal of the rule of law – the ideal that everyone is equally entitled to the law’s protection and that no one, no matter how rich or powerful, is above the law. The rule of law has recently been in the news a great deal, because of concerns that in some countries it is under attack. The World Justice Project, an organisation dedicated to monitoring and advancing the rule of law globally, reports that between 2023 and 2024

the rule of law was indeed weakened in a majority of countries. Its report describes a continuation of global authoritarian trends, with executive power less likely to be constrained by the courts, legislatures and other centres of institutional power.

Key measures for the World Justice Project are the independence, integrity and accessibility of the courts as well as their resourcing. Independent and accessible courts are a necessary condition for the rule of law. The courts are the institution charged with enforcing the law in individual cases, and ensuring that power is subject to the law – whether that is economic, or public power.

New Zealand scores highly in the World Justice Project’s Rule of Law Index – sixth out of 142 countries monitored. Our high ranking is based in significant part on the assessment that New Zealand’s judiciary is independent and free from corruption. We are in the minority of countries in which the rule of law did not weaken in the year measured.

Even so, New Zealand cannot afford to be complacent. As world events show, the rule of law is a fragile thing. How judges and the courts work, and are supported in their work, is of public importance and interest.

What exactly does it mean to administer justice? Every day, throughout our country, judges conduct hearings in which difficult issues are placed before the court for determination. As you can read in Part 2 of this report, “The Work of the Courts”, different courts do different types of work. But all courts have one thing in common. By providing a fair hearing, and by applying the law to the facts, judges resolve contested issues that are of importance to the parties. Often the outcome of a case will be important beyond the immediate parties – to the families of the parties involved, and the communities they come from. In many cases – be they criminal cases, or family or civil disputes – the decisions and outcomes will reverberate down through generations, and in some instances will shape the content of the future law.

Access to justice through the courts is a prerequisite for a fair society. This report describes work being done to address some of the barriers to accessing justice in New Zealand, including steps taken to reduce delay (page 43), and to reduce cost and complexity in our civil courts (for example, changes aimed at simplifying civil proceedings in the High Court: see page 69).

Access to justice requires not only that people be able to access independent courts or tribunals, but also that when they do, they are able to fully and fairly participate in the proceedings. This report details the work being done to enable better participation (for example, page 41).

The judiciary is also leading work to increase accessibility for people with disabilities who come to our courts (page 65). The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-Based Care highlighted how important this work is. Many of the survivors faced extra barriers in seeking justice in a system not adequately equipped to accommodate disability (page 65).

Access to justice should be timely. Delay in obtaining a hearing can cause distress and wasted expenditure and, at its worst, can result in access to justice being illusory. The judiciary is committed to timely access to justice, but does not control all of the necessary levers. This report describes how some courts in some areas in New Zealand are unable to provide timely hearings. Common issues are too few judges, and in some areas, too few courtrooms.

Overall, our justice system is under considerable stress. I make particular mention in my report of challenges facing the legal profession including

high workloads, difficult and distressing subject matter, security concerns in our courts, and a constrained legal aid system. Lawyers are choosing not to offer their services through the legal aid system. Because the legal profession play a vital role in the work of the courts, this is of serious concern to the judiciary (page 69).

Technology has the potential, if used wisely, to address some of the barriers to justice by better enabling access to the courts, reducing the cost and complexity of taking part in proceedings, and supporting the efficient and timely determination of court proceedings. This report provides updates on two significant projects underway – the use of remote participation technology, and the development of a new court and case management system, Te Au Reka (page 71). It describes steps the judiciary is taking to ensure that technology strengthens and does not hamper access to justice.

The report also describes planning the judiciary is doing to use AI tools and to manage the implications of AI for the work of the courts (page 74). In 2023, the New Zealand judiciary prepared world-leading guidance for the use of AI by lawyers and unrepresented litigants.

As part of a commitment to transparency, the judiciary encourages scrutiny and understanding of its work. This commitment is underpinned by the principle of ‘open justice’. Our open justice initiatives are explored in Part 3 of this report.

The final section of the report, “Pacific and international engagement”, describes the links between our courts and those in Australia and the Pacific. Supporting the rule of law in the

wider Pacific region continues to be a focus for the New Zealand judiciary. In particular, the work of the Pacific Justice Sector Programme, now in its third year, is outlined in Part 5 “Pacific and International Engagement”.

More broadly, New Zealand judges look to other jurisdictions not just for the richness that exists in their case law, but increasingly, as colleagues who face similar challenges. I am grateful for the sharing of information and cooperation that flows out of my membership of the Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand, and for ongoing cooperation with the judiciaries of Singapore and the United Kingdom.

I end by expressing, on behalf of my fellow heads of bench, our gratitude to everyone who supports the operation of the courts and the administration of justice. To the Ministry of Justice who support the operation of the courts. To the court staff, legal profession, and to justice sector agencies, for their everyday hard work in our courts. To the media for its continued role in informing the New Zealand public of what happens in the courts. And to the many people who share their expertise and experiences with the judiciary to help us improve access to justice now and for the future. Finally, to the judges. It is a privilege to lead a skilled and hard-working judiciary, committed to delivering justice in Aotearoa New Zealand.



**Helen Winkelmann**  
Chief Justice | Te Tumu Whakawā



Supreme Court entrance

# The year in review

The following initiatives and responses were key priorities for judicial leadership in 2024. They are expanded upon further in the report.

- » **Access to justice** initiatives, including improving accessibility to ensure that our courts meet the needs of Deaf and disabled court participants.
- » **Timeliness in the courts:** The report highlights the work underway to address delay and improve efficiencies in the courts. These include initiatives in the District Court (page 42), in the High Court (such as the Auckland Commercial List, which aims to increase efficiencies in the Auckland High Court’s civil jurisdiction), and in the Coroners Court (page 55).
- » **Response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care:** In July, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care published its final report on the abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults in the care of the State and faith-based institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand between 1950 and 1999. The report included recommendations for the judiciary. The Commission’s report is discussed at page 64 and the judiciary’s response to its recommendations is discussed at page 31.
- » **Courthouse safety:** The number of reported security incidents was significantly greater than last year, and is part of a longer-term trend. Page 47 describes the work being done to address safety concerns in court.
- » **Technology in the courts:** Remote participation and the soon-to-be-introduced digital case management system Te Au Reka have the potential to transform the work of the courts and improve access to justice. See page 70.
- » **Ensuring the courts are properly resourced:** The courts are dependent on the executive branch of government to provide sufficient and appropriate resources to operate. This year the Heads of Bench continued to advocate with the executive for the appropriate resourcing necessary to support accessible and timely justice, for appropriate technology to expand the courts’ remote participation capability (page 70), and for sufficient judges (page 22) and courtrooms (page 39) to hear the number of cases required.
- » **Open justice and transparency initiatives:** These initiatives aim to make information about the courts and their decisions readily available to the public, and the media. Part 4 “Open justice and engagement” describe these initiatives.
- » **Pacific and international engagement:** The New Zealand judiciary fosters strong links with judiciaries in the Pacific, Australia, and around the world. Part 5 explores these connections.

## PART ONE

---

# The judicial branch of government

*I swear that I will well and truly serve His Majesty, His heirs and successors, according to law, in the office of judge; and I will do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of New Zealand, without fear or favour, affection or ill will. So help me God.*

THE JUDICIAL OATH: SECTION 18 OATHS AND DECLARATIONS ACT 1957.

# The role of the judiciary in New Zealand's constitution

## Unwritten and unique: New Zealand's constitution

New Zealand's constitution is not found in a single document. It is derived from a variety of sources. These include:

- » The Constitution Act 1986, which is the principal formal statement of New Zealand's constitutional arrangements.
- » The Treaty of Waitangi, which is often considered New Zealand's founding document.
- » Other statutes passed by the New Zealand Parliament, such as the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Electoral Act 1993.
- » Common law derived from court decisions.
- » Established constitutional practices known as conventions.
- » Historical statutes from England, such as the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights Act 1688.

## A stable democracy: Separation of powers

A fundamental principle underpinning our constitution is the *separation of powers*. New Zealand has three branches of government, each with well-defined powers. Broadly speaking, the executive<sup>1</sup> branch is responsible for the day-to-day administration of government. The legislative branch<sup>2</sup> is responsible for making laws and granting supply to the executive. The judicial branch (the judiciary) is responsible for administering justice according to law through the courts.

The three branches operate independently from one another. The independence of the judiciary from the other branches of power is critical to it being able to play its constitutional role of administering justice and in so doing upholding the rule of law. The relationship between the three branches is underpinned by the principle of comity

– which is the idea that the separate branches of government exercise respect and restraint towards one another, recognising one another's independence, and do not improperly intrude into or impede the other's appropriate areas of responsibility.

All branches of government have a shared responsibility to uphold basic principles of democracy.

## The judiciary and the courts

Each court consists of its judges: individuals appointed for their experience, expertise and character. On appointment each judge takes the judicial oath, promising to “do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of New Zealand, without fear or favour, affection or ill will”. The judges are collectively referred to as “the judiciary”. The judiciary is also referred to as the “judicial branch” of government.

---

1 The executive is made up of Ministers inside and outside Cabinet, and government departments.

2 The legislative branch is made up of Members of Parliament and the Sovereign in right of New Zealand, represented in New Zealand by the Governor-General.



## PARLIAMENTARY SOVEREIGNTY

In New Zealand, Parliament is sovereign. This means that Parliament has the power to create, amend or repeal any law, and its decisions cannot be overturned by any other body. Unlike in other countries, New Zealand courts have no power to invalidate legislation passed by Parliament.

The courts have the power to declare legislation inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.<sup>3</sup> However, such a declaration does not affect the ongoing validity of the legislation, nor does it instruct Parliament on what to do as a consequence of the inconsistency – Parliament has its own processes for that.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See [courtsofnz.govt.nz](https://courtsofnz.govt.nz) for more on declarations of inconsistency.

<sup>4</sup> This year, the Supreme Court delivered the judgment *Attorney-General and Anor v Mark David Chisnall* [2024] NZSC 178, which indicated the court would issue a declaration of inconsistency regarding aspects of the extended supervision order regime and the entirety of the public protection order regime.

## The work of the courts

Judges hear and determine the proceedings brought before the courts. They do so by:

- » ensuring that the court process is fair and transparent
- » making findings about the facts relevant to that proceeding
- » ascertaining the law relevant to that proceeding
- » applying the relevant law to the facts as found by the court, to determine the outcome of the proceeding
- » giving their reasons for determining that outcome
- » and making appropriate orders to give effect to that outcome.

## The rule of law

The rule of law is the idea that the law applies equally to everyone – both the government and its citizens – and that everyone is equally entitled to its benefit and its protection. It is the idea that everyone should comply with the law, and that each branch of government must follow the law when executing their functions.<sup>5</sup>

The rule of law is foundational to the role of the courts, and the courts are essential for the effective operation of the rule of law in New Zealand. The courts provide an avenue to seek independent and impartial protection of legal rights and to enforce the rule of law. As such, access to independent, fair and efficient courts is an important cornerstone in our democracy.

---

<sup>5</sup> New Zealand ranked six out of 142 countries in the 2024 World Justice Project *Rule of Law Index*, and first in East Asia and the Pacific. In determining rankings, the index considers the extent to which those who govern are bound by law, absence of corruption, openness of government, to what extent the system of law protects fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, access to civil justice, and effective criminal justice. New Zealand scored highly for absence of corruption in the judiciary. See [www.worldjusticeproject.org](https://www.worldjusticeproject.org)

## WHERE OUR LAW COMES FROM

There are various sources of law in New Zealand, but the principal sources are statutes enacted by Parliament and the common law, which is the product of the work of the courts. Common law describes the body of case law decided by the courts and also the processes used by the courts to conduct hearings and issue judgments. This body of case law and procedure has been developed by judges over centuries through the decisions they have made regarding the cases in front of them.

Statutes are written to be general enough to capture a variety of situations. Judges interpret and apply Parliament's statutes to the many different real-life situations that come to court. Judges must ensure that the laws are applied consistently and fairly, taking into account the specific circumstances of each case. This process often involves interpreting the intent of Parliament and considering precedents set by previous judicial decisions.

The common law therefore constantly evolves to meet society's needs – expressed in the changing cases that come before the court. Through their decisions, judges develop the common law to meet these changing circumstances.

Parliament may repeal, modify, or develop the common law by statute.

## How the branches of government work together

It is essential to the stable and effective operation of the courts that the three branches of government – the legislature, the executive, and the judicial branches – can communicate on matters that affect the independent, just, timely and accessible operation of the courts. This is because the executive supports the operation of the courts (see page 11) and because statutes sometimes affect how the courts must operate, or how justice is administered. To uphold the important principles of separation of powers and judicial independence, it is necessary that such communications are formal and appropriate. The forums in which this was done this year are outlined here.

The Attorney-General, as the senior law officer of the Crown, acts as the bridge between the judiciary and both the executive and the legislative branches of government.<sup>6</sup> The Chief Justice meets regularly with the Attorney-General to discuss judicial appointments and issues affecting the operation of the courts that involve the executive and legislative branches of government.

The Attorney-General also facilitates an annual meeting between the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice in their capacity as heads of branches of government.

The Chief Justice meets regularly with the Minister of Justice to discuss high-level policy matters to do with improving the courts such as the availability of legal aid, Family Court reforms and Te Ao Mārama.

---

<sup>6</sup> For an explanation on the three branches of government – Parliament, the executive and the judiciary, see <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/about-the-judiciary/role-of-courts/government>



## NEW MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT EVENT AT THE SUPREME COURT

In May, new Members of Parliament were welcomed to the Supreme Court for an information session on the judicial branch of government. This was an opportunity to discuss the role that the courts play in helping to safeguard and support New Zealand's liberal democracy. The Chief Justice, Chief High Court Judge, Chief District Court Judge and Supreme Court judge Justice Joe Williams, hosted the attending MPs. The event was intended to build understanding of the role the judiciary plays in our constitutional framework and the conventions in place to regulate relations between the branches of government.

## The judiciary and the Ministry of Justice: Sharing responsibility for court administration

Although the judiciary is an independent branch of government, it is dependent on the Ministry of Justice for the courthouses, staff, technology and all other operating systems necessary to support the operation of the courts.

This model must operate in a way that both supports the independence of the judiciary and ensures the best use of public funds to ensure the courts' safe and effective operation. For this reason, the judiciary has a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry that makes clear how the relationship operates in order to respect judicial independence, called the *Statement of Principles*: see **Appendix 1**.

An example of its operation is that although registry staff are employed by the Ministry of Justice, the judiciary is responsible for the direction and supervision of those staff in relation to the business of the courts.

On an operational level, the Courts Strategic Partnership Group (CSPG) is the formal interface between the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary, providing a forum where senior judges and senior Ministry leaders work together to agree how the operation of the courts is to be supported.

CSPG continues to advance its five priority areas to improve access to justice and the efficiency of the courts. The five focus areas and the projects that support them are:

- » **Te Ao Mārama** – Te Ao Mārama is the new operating model for the District Court. It is a priority area for CSPG. See pages 40-41.
- » **Te Au Reka** – The new digital system for case and court management is the most significant investment in the courts' case management system in decades and is therefore a top priority for the judiciary and Ministry. See page 70.
- » **The Digital Strategy for Courts and Tribunals of Aotearoa New Zealand** – Adoption of technology in the courts – such as Te Au Reka, remote participation, and AI – is guided by the principles established in the *Digital Strategy*.
- » **Innovative courthouses** – The Ministry of Justice's building programme aims to ensure that new facilities better serve the needs of New Zealand today and in the future, providing safe spaces for those who come into the courthouse and those who work there. Construction began on a new Whanganui courthouse in late 2024 and the design for a new court building in Tauranga Moana is in development. These projects have also had input from the Chief Victims Advisor.
- » **Access to justice and reform of the civil jurisdiction**. See Part 3 "Access to justice".



Secretary for Justice Andrew Kibblewhite



## Judicial engagement with policy formation

There is a convention that the judiciary does not intrude upon or impede executive policy-making or parliamentary law-making. Nevertheless, it can and does comment on proposed legislation that could affect the operation of the courts, judicial independence, the rule of law, or the administration of justice.

In such situations, the Chief Justice may make a submission to a select committee on a Bill. In 2024 the Chief Justice made three submissions:

- » Fast-track Approvals Bill. The submission to the Environment Committee covered the application of certain clauses to the courts and a submission that it was desirable that the resource implications for the High Court be modelled.  
[Fast-track Approvals Bill submission](#)
- » Disputes Tribunal Amendment Bill
- » Victims of Sexual Violence (Strengthening Legal Protections) Legislation Bill – Amendment Paper 216.

Submissions are generally published on Parliament's website.

# An independent and impartial judiciary

*“The courts are a critical expression of our society’s commitment to the rule of law. They allow people to come to court to argue for, or defend, their rights. They do so in a hearing that occurs in accordance with procedural rules designed to ensure it is fair.*

*The hearing occurs in front of an independent judge who will impartially, and with skill and diligence, resolve the issue through the delivery of a reasoned judgment.”*

CHIEF JUSTICE HELEN WINKELMANN

## Judicial leadership

The Chief Justice is the head of the judiciary and the judicial branch of government. She is also the head of the Supreme Court of New Zealand.

All courts within New Zealand’s court system are headed by a Chief Judge or President who has statutory responsibility for the business of their court or courts.

The Chief Justice is the principal spokesperson for the judiciary and the principal point of interface between the judiciary and the executive branch of government. She is ultimately responsible under the Senior Courts Act 2016 for the orderly and efficient conduct of the business of the High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court.

## The heads of bench as at 31 December 2024 were:



**Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann**  
Chief Justice and head of the Supreme Court



**Chief Judge Heemi Taumaunu**  
Chief District Court Judge



**Janet Robertshawe**  
Principal Disputes Referee



**Justice Christine French**  
President of the Court of Appeal

Justice French was appointed President of the Court of Appeal on 21 November 2024, taking over from Justice Mark Cooper who retired on 20 November.



**Judge Jacquelyn Moran**  
Principal Family Court Judge



**Chief Judge Caren Fox**  
Chief Judge of the Māori Land Court



**Justice Sally Fitzgerald**  
Chief High Court Judge



**Judge Ida Malosi**  
Principal Youth Court Judge



**Chief Judge Christina Inglis**  
Chief Judge of the Employment Court



**Chief Judge David Kirkpatrick**  
Chief Environment Court Judge



**Judge Anna Tutton**  
Chief Coroner



**Chief Judge Kevin Riordan**  
Chief Judge of the Court Martial and Judge Advocate General of the Armed Forces of New Zealand

Detail from senior courts judges' ceremonial robes

## Heads of Bench Committee

Together, the heads of bench form the Heads of Bench Committee. Chaired by the Chief Justice, this committee is the key decision-making body for the judicial branch of government in relation to matters of judicial administration. The committee works collectively to promote access to justice, preserve the judiciary for Aotearoa New Zealand, and deliver effective and efficient justice through the courts. It is made up of the chief and principal judges of each of the courts, the Principal Disputes Tribunal Referee and the Chief Judge of the Court Martial, and is supported by senior judicial office officials.

The committee's areas of focus include:

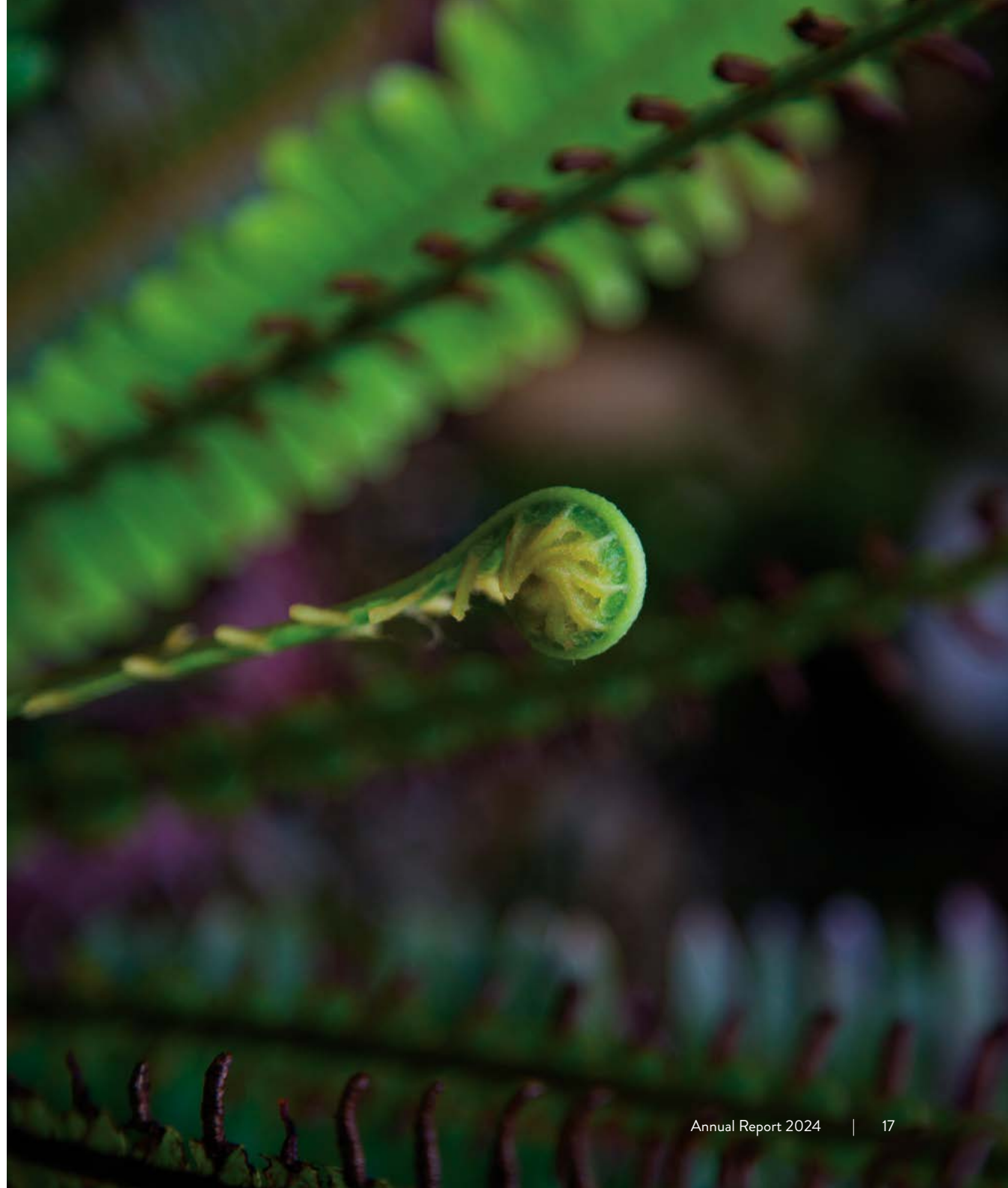
- » Access to justice: Improving public access to the courts, ensuring that courtrooms and workspaces are inclusive, and exploring how technology can be used to enhance access to justice.
- » Connection of courts to the community: Maintaining a physical connection of courts to the community, and understanding the communities served by the courts.

- » Judicial support and courts resourcing: Advocating for judicial resources and court facilities that are appropriate for workloads. Judicial leaders take an active role in championing improvements to, and innovation in, the courts operating model. Effective and efficient courts also require continuing education for judges, and judicial leadership training – see page 30 for more on judicial education.
- » Improving public understanding of the role of the courts in a well-functioning democracy – see Part 4 for more on open justice initiatives.

An important issue for the Heads of Bench Committee this year is the appropriate use of technology in the courts and in particular the use of technology to enable remote participation in the courts. Protocols have been developed following consultation with the profession, Ministry of Justice, and the wider justice sector outlining when remote participation is appropriate. See page 71 for more information.

## Judicial committees: Critical to the administration of justice

Committees plan and deliver initiatives that improve the administration of justice. Some committees are made up of judges only and operate under the oversight of the Heads of Bench Committee. Others are joint committees with the Ministry of Justice (such as the CSPG, see page 11). Still others involve the broader community or sector groups such as the media in the Media and Courts Committee. The full list is available at Appendix 2. Their work is described in this report under the initiatives they are responsible for.





# The judges

## The judicial workforce

The number of judges New Zealand has serving in each court at any given time is set out in legislation.<sup>7</sup> At 31 December 2024 there were 265 permanent judges and associate judges, 38 acting judges and 253<sup>8</sup> judicial officers presiding in New Zealand’s court system.<sup>9</sup> A list of all sitting judges and judicial officers in 2024 can be found in **Appendix 4**. Judges who retired during 2024 are listed in **Appendix 5**.

The numbers of judges by court are as follows:

<b>Supreme Court   Te Kōti Mana Nui</b>	Six judges One acting judge
<b>Court of Appeal   Te Kōti Pira</b>	Ten judges Two acting judges
<b>High Court   Te Kōti Matua</b>	40 judges Four acting judges Eight associate judges <sup>10</sup>

7 Statutes include such as the Senior Courts Act 2016, the District Court Act 2016 and specialist court acts such as the Employment Relations Act 2000.

8 Judicial officers are made up of 75 community magistrates, environment commissioners and deputy commissioners, coroners, relief coroners and associate coroners, and 178 judicial justices of the peace.

9 Some judges and judicial officers hold more than one position or sit in more than one court.

10 One associate judge is currently appointed full-time as Chair of the Independent Police Conduct Authority | Mana Whanonga Pirihiama Motuhake.



<b>District Court   Te Kōti-ā-Rohe</b>	171 judges <sup>11</sup> 30 acting warranted judges 18 community magistrates Two acting community magistrates Six Family Court Associates Approximately 178 judicial justices of the peace (JJP's)
<b>Te Kooti Whenua Māori   Māori Land Court and Te Kooti Pira Māori   Māori Appellate Court</b>	14 judges One acting judge
<b>Employment Court   Te Kōti Take Mahi</b>	Five judges
<b>Environment Court   Te Kōti Taiao</b>	Eight judges 13 alternate judges <sup>12</sup> 11 environment commissioners Two deputy environment commissioners
<b>Coroners Court   Te Kōti Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati</b>	20 coroners <sup>13</sup> Nine relief coroners <sup>14</sup> Eight associate coroners <sup>15</sup>
<b>Court Martial   Te Kōti Whakawā Kaimahi o te Ope Kātua</b>	Ten judges <sup>16</sup>
<b>Court Martial Appeal Court   Te Kōti Pira Whakawā Kaimahi o te Ope Kātua</b>	Three appointed judges <sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Including judges on secondment or performing special roles (such as Children's Commissioner or Chief Coroner) but excluding Environment Court judges.

<sup>12</sup> "Alternate judge" is the terminology used in the Resource Management Act for "acting judge". Alternate judges are either retired Environment Court judges or serving judges of the District Court or Māori Land Court. Alternate judges who are retired Environment Court judges generally serve in a full-time capacity, whereas alternate judges who are serving judges of the District Court or Māori Land Court sit only on select cases.

<sup>13</sup> During 2022, the cap in the Coroners Act 2006 was raised from 20 to 22 – see s 109(2)(a).

<sup>14</sup> Relief coroners perform the same role and function as coroners. They have a fixed-term warrant and may work either full or part-time. Associate coroners hold a fixed-term warrant and do not have the power to hold an inquest.

<sup>15</sup> The Chief Coroner has been included in both the Coroners Court and the District Court counts.

<sup>16</sup> Only the Chief Judge sits full-time in the Court Martial. The Deputy Chief Judge and all other judges are District Court Judges who sit on an as-required basis.

<sup>17</sup> Appointed judges are practising lawyers or retired High Court judges, who sit in this court on an as-required basis. All judges of the High Court are also judges of the Court Martial Appeal Court. The Court sits as a panel of three, with at least one appointed judge.

## Appointments – New judges and judicial officers in 2024

There were 22 new appointments to the judiciary in 2024, including six appointments to the newly-established Family Court associate role.

Judges and judicial officers are appointed from the senior ranks of the legal profession – lawyers who have proven to be excellent in the law. They are generally appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General consults with the Chief Justice for appointments to the senior courts and with the relevant head of bench for appointments to other courts.<sup>18</sup>

Judges are selected against clearly-defined criteria for assessing suitability, set out in protocols that also prescribe the appointment process.<sup>19</sup> These criteria cover legal ability, qualities of character (including personal honesty and integrity, open-mindedness, impartiality, courtesy and social sensitivity), personal technical skills (such as effective communication, mental agility, time management and organisational skills), and reflection of society (the quality of being a person who understands New Zealand society).

For more information on judicial appointments, see Appendix 3.

Justice Jason McHerron (left) with Chief Justice Winkelmann (centre) and Justice Ellen France (right) at Justice McHerron's swearing-in ceremony.



Court	New judges and judicial officers appointed by bench (excluding elevations) <sup>20</sup>
<b>High Court</b>	Five judges <sup>21</sup> One associate judge
<b>District Court</b>	Seven judges Six Family Court Associates
<b>Māori Land Court</b>	One judge
<b>Employment Court</b>	
<b>Environment Court</b>	One judge
<b>Coroners Court</b>	One associate coroner

<sup>18</sup> For the terms and conditions of judicial appointment for the senior courts and Employment Court, see <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/about-the-judiciary/terms-and-conditions-of-judicial-appointment>

<sup>19</sup> See the Judicial Appointments Protocol – Senior Courts; Judicial Appointments Information Booklet – District Court; and Information on Statutory Vacancies (Ministry of Justice).

<sup>20</sup> Elevation is the term used when an existing judge is appointed to a higher court than the court they sit in. For example, Justice Grau was appointed to the High Court from the District Court. She had served as a District Court judge since 2021.

<sup>21</sup> This number does not include Justice Grau who was appointed within the judiciary on 29 January 2024.



Justice Simon Moore at his final sitting at the Auckland High Court, marking his retirement in November.

## ACTING JUDGES

Acting judges are typically judges who have reached the mandatory age of retirement for judges (70) and have been granted an acting warrant or commission to continue on the bench. They play a crucial part in the continued operation of the courts to enable courts to deal with short-term work pressures or judicial absences (for instance, because of ill health). However, the use of acting warrants is not an acceptable solution to long-term judicial workload pressures.

During the year, 16 judges and judicial officers reached the mandatory retirement age. Seven of those judges and judicial officers continued in an acting warranted capacity.

## ENSURING THERE ARE ENOUGH JUDGES FOR THE WORK OF THE COURTS

The number of judges who can serve on each bench at any given time is limited by statutory provisions, referred to as statutory caps.<sup>22</sup> For example, the statutory cap for judges in the senior courts (that is, the High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court) is 55, plus the Chief Justice. This limit has remained the same since 2004 and acts as a constraint on the number of judges who can be appointed to the High Court and the Court of Appeal. Since 2004, the workload of those courts, and the complexity of the work before the courts, has increased considerably.

As a consequence, the High Court and the Court of Appeal have insufficient judges to manage the workload. This is a significant contributor to delays in these courts. To assist in managing this, it is now necessary to use acting judges (that is, judges who have reached 70, the age of retirement for judges, and are appointed on acting warrants until the maximum age of 75) in the Court of Appeal and High Court to carry out the normal range of work.<sup>23</sup>

The challenge is even greater in the District Court, where acting judges currently make up 16 per cent of the effective bench.

Where population growth or long-term changes in workload have occurred, the constitutionally appropriate way to ensure there are enough judges is for the legislative cap to be adjusted.

<sup>22</sup> Statutes include the Senior Courts Act 2016, the District Court Act 2016 and specialist court Acts such as the Employment Relations Act 2000.

<sup>23</sup> In 2024, three acting Court of Appeal judges and five acting High Court judges supported the work of the courts.

## Publication of terms and conditions of judicial appointment

Judges' salaries and superannuation entitlements are publicly available and are set out in the Judicial Officers Salaries and Allowances (2023/24) Determination 2023 and the Judicial Officers Superannuation Determination 2019. In April, the Chief Justice, with the agreement and support of the Attorney-General, announced the release of the detailed terms and conditions of judicial appointment for the Senior Courts and Employment Court.

The District Court terms and conditions of judicial appointment are being updated and will be released once that review has taken place.

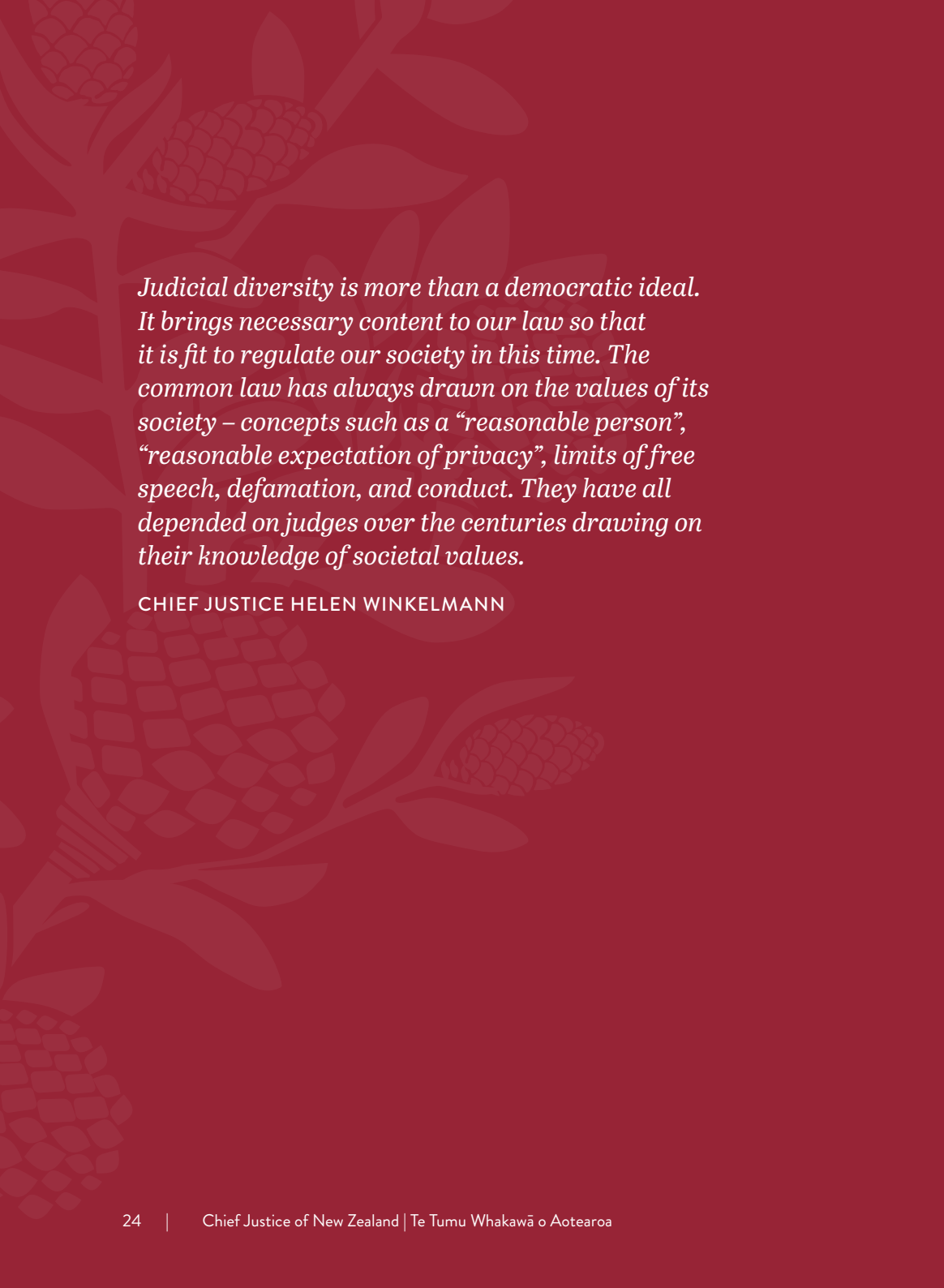


### JUDICIAL APPOINTMENT – THE PATHWAY TO BECOMING A HIGH COURT JUDGE

The Chief Justice and Attorney-General Hon Judith Collins KC MP took part in a webinar in November to discuss what they consider when recommending and selecting appointees to the High Court bench. They also shared their own experiences in becoming leaders within the judiciary and the profession.

Hosted by the New Zealand Law Society's professional development body, NZLS CLE, the *Judicial Appointment – The Pathway to Becoming a High Court Judge* webinar attracted more than 700 online attendees.

For information on the process of judicial appointment, see Appendix 3.




*Judicial diversity is more than a democratic ideal. It brings necessary content to our law so that it is fit to regulate our society in this time. The common law has always drawn on the values of its society – concepts such as a “reasonable person”, “reasonable expectation of privacy”, limits of free speech, defamation, and conduct. They have all depended on judges over the centuries drawing on their knowledge of societal values.*

CHIEF JUSTICE HELEN WINKELMANN

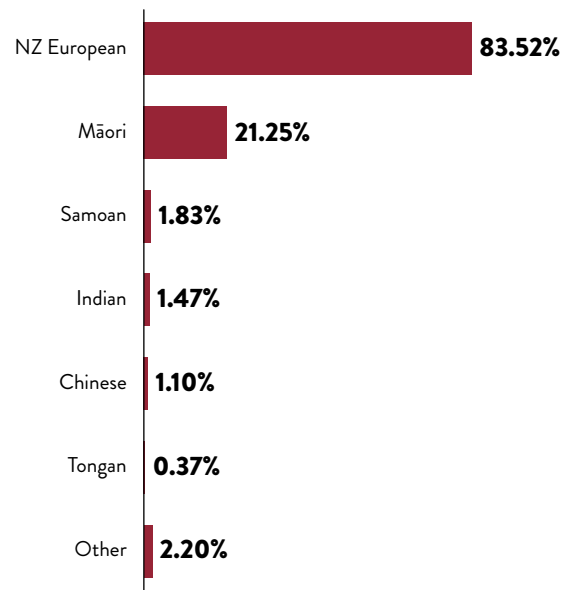
## Judicial diversity census

In 2023, in order to better understand the make-up of the judiciary, the Office of the Chief Justice developed a survey to capture information on education, religion, professional background, ethnicity and geography, gender and sexuality. This information has been collected from new judges since then. The information below is drawn from the census.



## ETHNICITY AND GEOGRAPHY

### Respondents identified with these ethnicities:

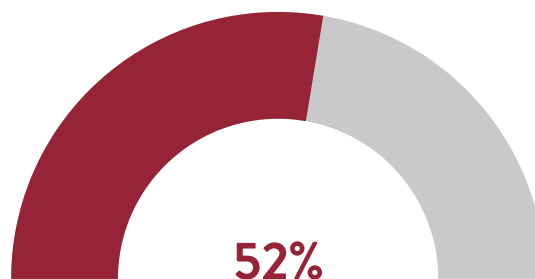


### Origins

- 31 immigrated to NZ
- 40 have one parent who immigrated to NZ
- 31 have two parents who immigrated to NZ

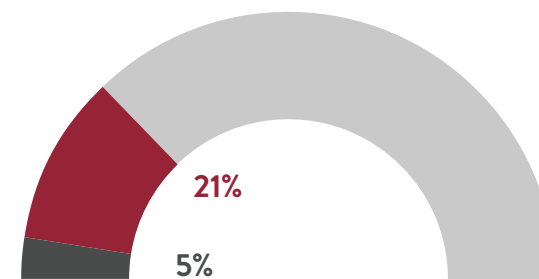
## RELIGION

52% of judges said they identified with a religion, and the majority of these identified as Christian.



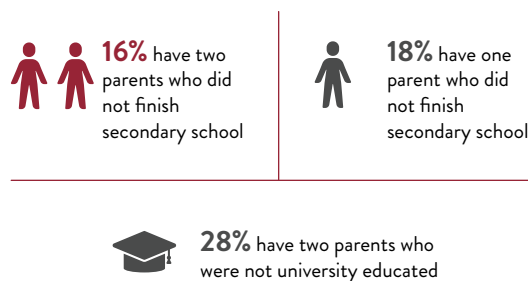
## DISABILITY

5% of judges reported having a disability. A further 21% per cent of judges reported having a close relative with a disability.



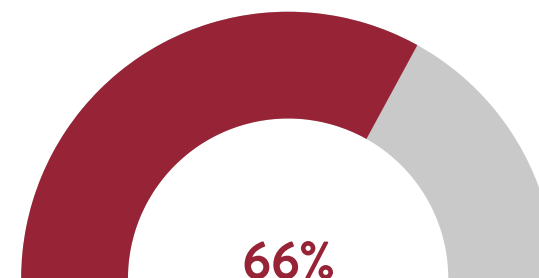
## FAMILY BACKGROUND

This is used as an indicator of socio-economic background.



## LANGUAGE

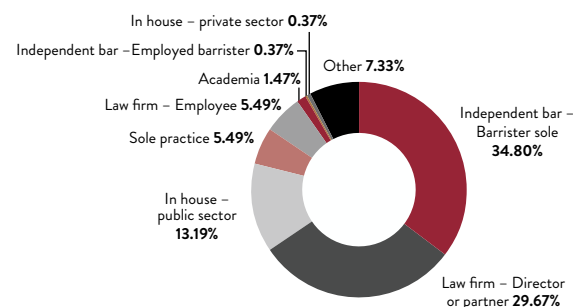
66% of judges have some proficiency in te reo Māori.



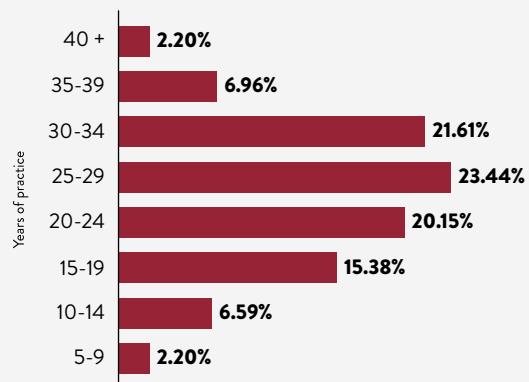
## PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

### Practice areas immediately before judicial appointment:

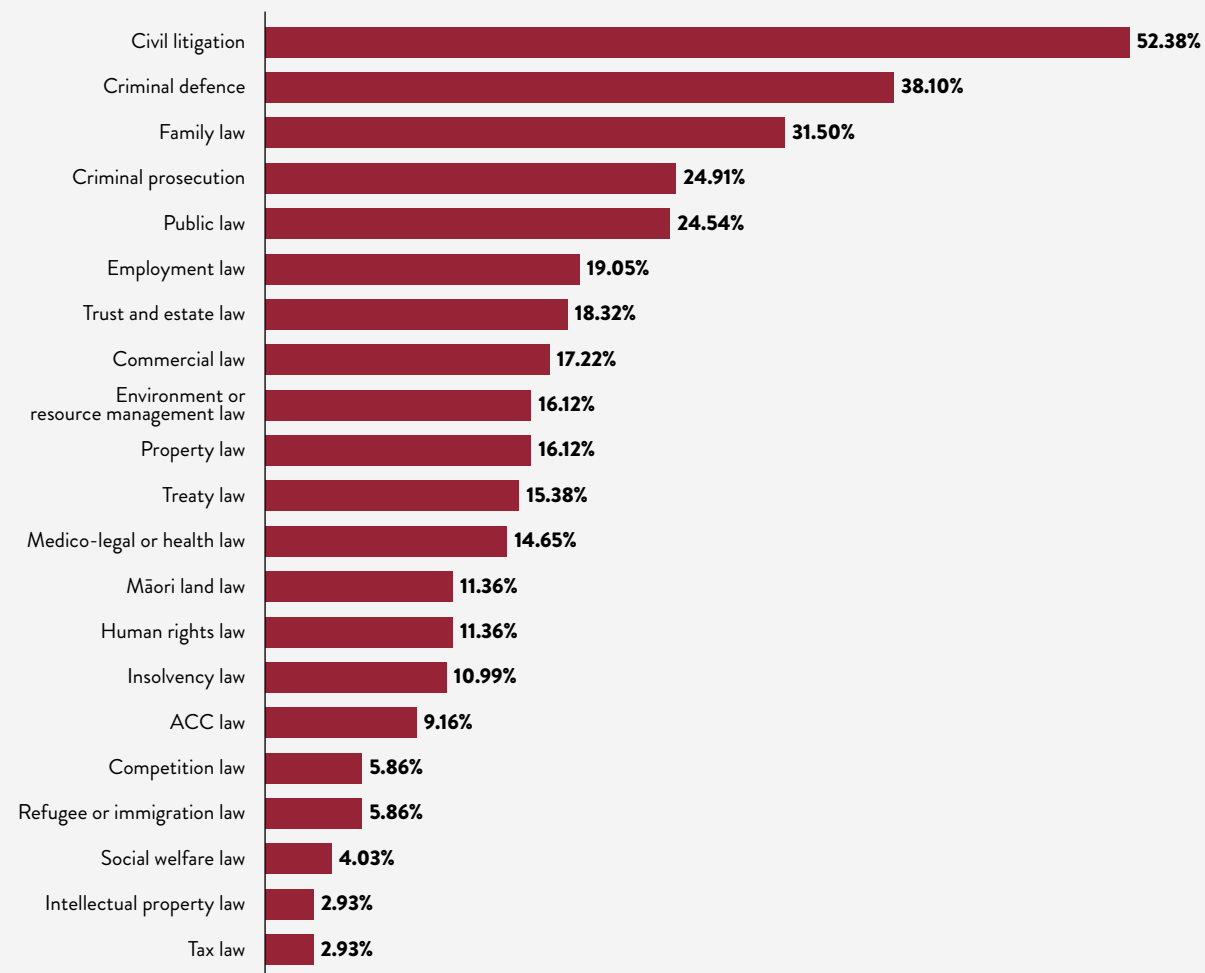
Judges who used to work at Crown Law, Public Defence Service and Police Prosecution Service are categorised as In-house lawyers.



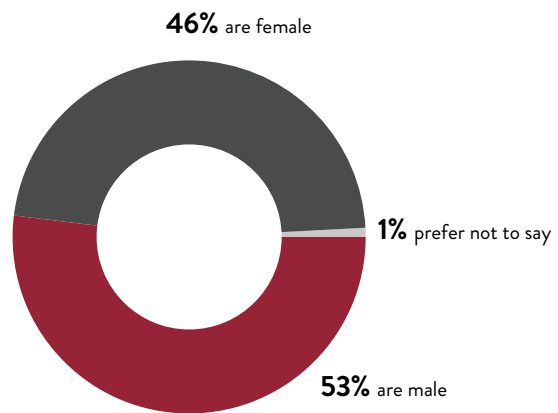
### Post-qualification experience of judge and judicial officers:



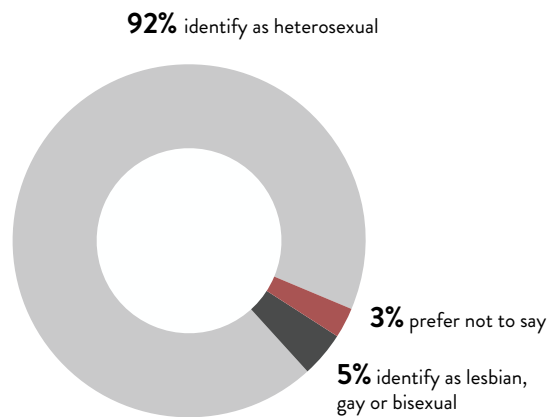
### Judges' areas of practice before judicial appointment:



## GENDER



## SEXUALITY



*These graphs represent statistics from all courts.*



Court of Appeal

## THE APPOINTMENT POOL: MOVING TOWARDS A DIVERSE AND REPRESENTATIVE JUDICIARY

The diversity of the judiciary depends on the diversity of the legal profession. The New Zealand Law Society | Te Kāhui Ture o Aotearoa reports annually to its members about the demographics of the profession,<sup>24</sup> and these reports indicate that the profession is increasing in diversity in the younger ranks.

Some law firms and chambers support initiatives to increase diversity in the profession – for example by providing scholarships and mentorships to support students who may otherwise not have pursued a career in law.<sup>25</sup> Others promote diversity and inclusion initiatives to attract and keep women and diverse candidates to and in their firms.<sup>26</sup> These initiatives to bring and retain a greater diversity of people, thought and experience into the profession are to be commended.

## Judicial wellbeing

High workloads, exposure to distressing content, case management pressures, rising security concerns – there are many factors now recognised to cause work-related stress for judges. Given the impact that judicial decisions have both on the parties to the proceeding and on the development of the law, it is critical that judges are supported to judge well. Heads of bench continue to take a proactive approach to judicial wellbeing.

Judges are able, and encouraged, to get professional support as a routine part of their judicial practice. This initiative was the recommendation of the Judicial Wellbeing Steering Group, which includes judicial representatives and expert advisor Professor Ian Lambie ONZM.

There is a tension between judicial wellbeing and court timeliness. Court resourcing, and in particular judge numbers, has not kept up with population grown and increasing case volumes. Nor has it taken account of the increased complexity of proceedings. These factors have led to increased and unsustainable caseloads for many judges. The Chief Justice and Heads of Bench continue to advocate for better resourcing of the judiciary (see page 22).

## Judicial conduct

Judges are expected to conform to a high standard of behaviour, both off and on the bench. The Guidelines for Judicial Conduct outline these expectations.<sup>27</sup>

There are three processes in place for anyone who wishes to raise concerns about the conduct of a judge:

- » The primary mechanism for dealing with complaints of judicial misconduct is through the independent office of the Judicial Conduct Commissioner, established under the Judicial Conduct Commissioner and Judicial Conduct Panel Act 2004. That Act sets out a process for investigating complaints about judicial conduct and for removal of a judge or relevant judicial officer from office for serious misconduct. The Act's processes are designed to ensure that judicial independence and natural justice are protected and observed.
- » The judiciary and the New Zealand Law Society have an informal process for dealing with concerns about judges' conduct in court (available on the Courts of New Zealand website).

24 Marianne Burt and Jacqui Van Der Kaay, "Snapshot of the profession 2024". [www.lawsociety.org.nz/assets/About-Us-Documents/Annual-Reports/Snapshot-of-Legal-Profession](http://www.lawsociety.org.nz/assets/About-Us-Documents/Annual-Reports/Snapshot-of-Legal-Profession)

25 An example is Meredith Connell's scholarship "Te Kuhunga", which is aimed at supporting students in lower decile schools into and through a legal education.

26 For example, DLA Piper set up a diversity and inclusion steering committee in 2017. The committee promotes an inclusive work environment for all, flexible working and workplace agility, cross-generational understanding, and inclusivity of all races and cultures. Minter Ellison Rudd Watts reports on gender and ethnicity pay gaps, and is committed to closing them.

27 See <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/about-the-judiciary/judicialconduct>

- » The judiciary has established a policy for registry or Ministry of Justice staff members to raise concerns or complain about bullying or harassment by a judge. A complementary policy is being developed for judicial officers (such as community magistrates and judicial justices of the peace), led by the Chief District Court Judge's Chambers | Te Whare o Ngā Kaihautū Waka o te Kōti-a-Rohe o Aotearoa.



#### JUDICIAL ATTENDANCE AT WAITANGI

The judiciary continued the tradition of attending Waitangi Day celebrations to mark the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The judiciary including heads of bench was welcomed onto Te Whare Rūnanga Marae, where Justice Joe Williams, Chief District Court Judge Heemi Taumaunu, and District Court Judge Greg Davis spoke for the judiciary. The Chief Justice was invited to speak at the conclusion of the formalities (see photo above).

*Key competencies for judges include knowledge of the law and society, diligence and fairness. Today we also regard a judicial temperament as part of the judicial skill set. Through the Institute of Judicial Studies, judges receive education about the social structures, values and lives of people from all parts of society. Judges are taught about courtroom management skills to ensure that they can provide a fair hearing which is the centrepiece of our justice system. They are taught about the cognitive and linguistic disabilities which make it difficult for many defendants to engage with a hearing, and which have implications for culpability and sentence.*

CHIEF JUSTICE HELEN WINKELMANN

# Judicial education

## TE KURA KAIWHAKAWĀ | INSTITUTE OF JUDICIAL STUDIES

Te Kura Kaiwhakawā | Institute of Judicial Studies is responsible for providing education to all judges, at all stages of their careers. The education programme includes:

- » an intensive orientation programme for new judges covering the transition to judicial life, the role of the judge and courtroom management
- » regular programmes in evidence and procedure, decision-making and judgment writing
- » updates on substantive law
- » courses on social and legal context
- » renewal and resilience seminars to support judges to judge well – topics include leadership, mentoring and wellbeing and
- » tikanga and te reo.

Te Kura Kaiwhakawā also manages an online suite of resources for judges called bench books.

*kia tika kia pono*

## JUDICIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES THAT RESPOND TO THE FINAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION

Te Kura Kaiwhakawā has developed an education programme responding to recommendation 33 of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based care. Seminars for District and Youth Court judges addressing the report have already been delivered.

Te Kura will provide further seminars in 2025 focusing on the Commission's findings. In addition, it will revise an existing programme – *Responding to Diversity and Vulnerabilities* – to ensure it is directly reflective of recommendation 33 and deliver these to judicial officers across the country. Te Kura will review the content of *Kia Mana te Tangata / Judging in Context: A Handbook*, an online handbook available to all judicial officers, to identify what additional guidance might need to be developed to support the recommendation.<sup>28</sup>

It is of note that recommendation 25 supported existing judicial initiatives that address the causes of offending, naming Te Ao Mārama, the District Court operating model discussed on pages 40-41.

---

28 *Kia Mana te Tangata* is a cross-jurisdictional resource designed to support judges' awareness and understanding of the different circumstances of people who appear in court and provides practical tools that can assist judges in promoting a fair hearing.

## THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN STATE AND FAITH-BASED CARE: RECOMMENDATION 33

*The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care is discussed further in Chapter 3 "Access to Justice".*

The Royal Commission's report *Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light*<sup>29</sup> contains recommendations for the judiciary. Recommendation 33 calls for people involved in the justice system (including judges) to receive education and training from subject matter experts on:

- » the Inquiry's findings, including on the nature and extent of abuse and neglect in care, the pathway from care to custody, and the particular impacts on survivors of abuse and neglect experienced in care
- » trauma-informed investigative and prosecution processes
- » all forms of discrimination
- » engaging with neurodivergent people
- » human rights concepts, including the obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Chief Justice and heads of bench have committed to addressing recommendation 33, resolving that all judges will receive education on the report and its findings. They noted in particular the need for judges to take a trauma-informed approach when dealing with survivors of abuse in State and faith-based care.

---

29 *Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light* can be found at <https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/reports/whanaketia>.



District Court Judge Hana Ellis  
(left) and Environment Court  
Judge Sheena Tepania.

## ADVANCED QUALIFICATION FOR JUDGES ON TIKANGA AND TE REO MĀORI

Tikanga has informed court practice and process for decades in many jurisdictions in New Zealand. Tikanga, and tikanga-sourced concepts, are recognised both in legislation and in the common law. In addition, tikanga continues to guide whānau, hapū and iwi in everyday life, so is important social context for judges.

It is therefore necessary for judges to be educated in tikanga. Te Kura Kaiwhakawā has partnered with Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi to deliver an advanced postgraduate qualification to judges and lawyers on tikanga as a system of law, and its relationship with New Zealand's legal framework. This was the first year that Pourewa Tikanga me te Ture was held. Several judges are part of the inaugural cohort.



## Bench books and related resources

Bench books bring together up-to-date case law and statutes, legal commentary and practice notes for judges and judicial officers. They are an efficient and effective way of providing judges with legal content and contextual information relevant to the cases they commonly deal with.

Te Kura Kaiwhakawā publishes 12 bench books, eight of which relate to particular courts, and four that are specialist bench books. They are:

- » *Senior Courts Bench Book*
- » *District Court Bench Book*
- » *Family Court Bench Book*
- » *Youth Court Bench Book*
- » *Te Puna Manawa Whenua / Māori Land Court Bench Book*
- » *Employment Court Bench Book, Environment Court Bench Book, and*
- » *Coroners Court Bench Book.*

There are also four specialist bench books:

- » *Criminal Jury Trials Bench Book*
- » *Sexual Violence Trials Bench Book*
- » *Family Violence Bench Book*
- » *Kia Mana te Tangata / Judging in Context: A Handbook.*



### PUBLISHING THE CRIMINAL JURY TRIALS BENCH BOOK ON COURTS OF NEW ZEALAND WEBSITE

The *Criminal Jury Trials Bench Book*<sup>30</sup> was published on the Courts of New Zealand website in November – the first New Zealand bench book to be publicly available in full. Its publication is intended to increase transparency into and public understanding of judicial processes and in this way support public access to the content of the law – a key component of access to justice.

The bench book provides guidance and tools for criminal trial judges, helping them prepare their directions and summing-up in criminal trials. Publication provides information on the judicial process and the key questions that juries must address in reaching their verdicts.

Further public releases of bench books will follow in 2025 – beginning with *Te Puna Manawa Whenua / the Māori Land Court Bench Book*, and the *Kia Mana te Tangata / Judging in Context: A Handbook* later in the year.

---

30 The *Criminal Jury Trials Bench Book* can be accessed on the Courts of New Zealand website at <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/publications/bench-books>

## PART TWO

---

# The work of the courts

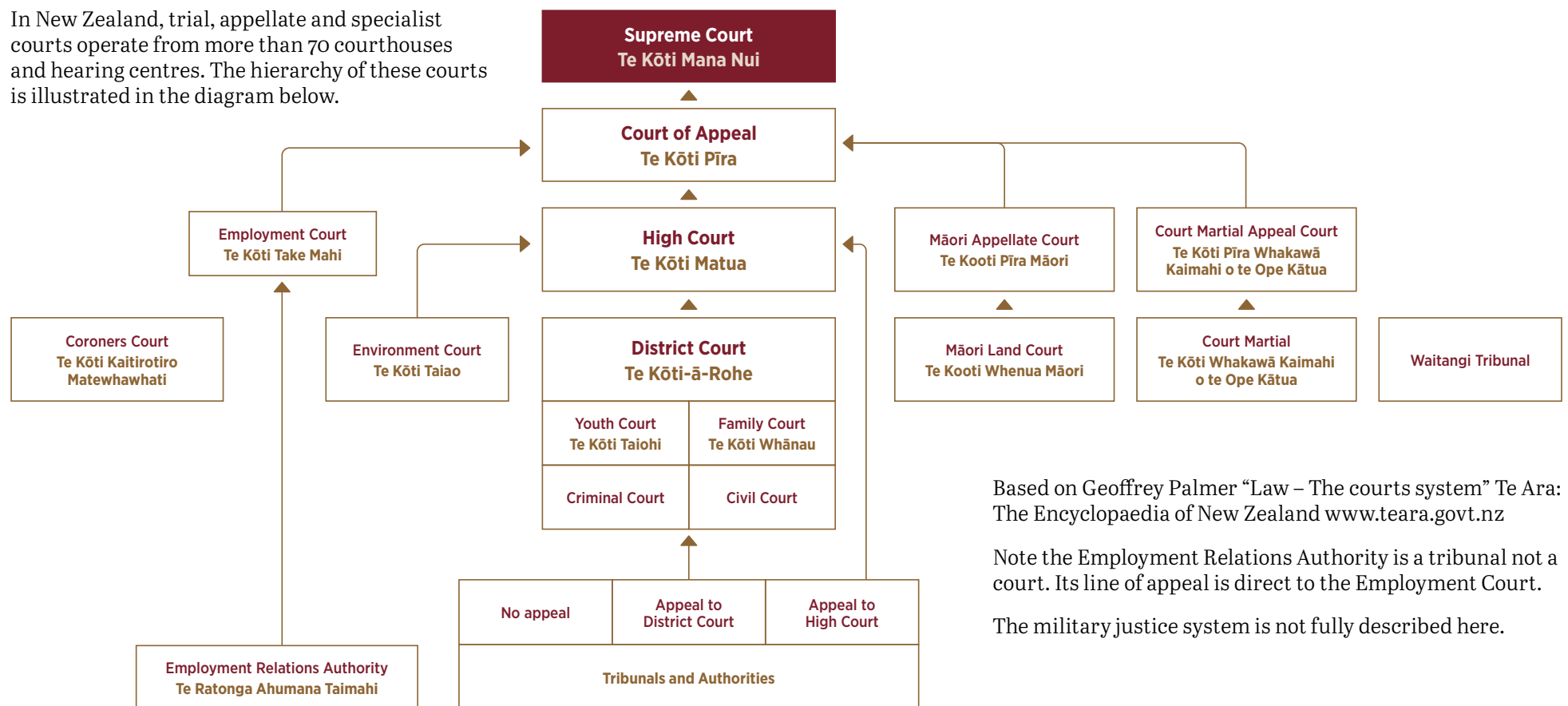
*Independent, fair and efficient courts are an important cornerstone in our democracy. Courts underpin social stability. They give confidence that our rights as citizens can be upheld, that our differences and conflicts can be resolved through law, that those who interfere with our rights can be held to account; that our society can be protected from law breakers, and that the State can be required always to act lawfully.*

FROM THE COURTS OF NEW ZEALAND WEBSITE

# New Zealand's court system

In our democracy the role of the courts is to facilitate access to justice. There are many aspects to this work – administering the criminal law, resolving civil disputes between citizens, upholding the rights of the individual and ensuring that government agencies stay within the law.

In New Zealand, trial, appellate and specialist courts operate from more than 70 courthouses and hearing centres. The hierarchy of these courts is illustrated in the diagram below.



Based on Geoffrey Palmer “Law – The courts system” Te Ara: The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand [www.teara.govt.nz](http://www.teara.govt.nz)

Note the Employment Relations Authority is a tribunal not a court. Its line of appeal is direct to the Employment Court.

The military justice system is not fully described here.

## The Courts of New Zealand

There are four main levels in our mainstream court system.

The **District Court | Te Kōti-ā-Rohe** has the highest volume of cases and hears most criminal cases. Most cities and large towns have a District Court. The District Court sits in 58 courthouses and hearing centres in New Zealand. The **Family Court** and **Youth Court** are divisions of the District Court. Civil cases can be heard in the District Court where the amount in dispute is less than \$350,000. The District Court hears appeals from some tribunals including the Disputes Tribunal.

The **High Court | Te Kōti Matua** is the next level in our court system. It is the highest court in which cases can start. Courts in which cases can start are referred to as “first instance courts”. The High Court hears the most serious criminal cases, and has unlimited civil jurisdiction. The High Court also hears appeals from the decisions of courts and tribunals below it. The High Court deals with judicial review proceedings. These are proceedings in which the courts are asked to review decisions involving the exercise of public power (including by the executive branch of government), to ensure that the power is exercised lawfully and in a procedurally fair manner.

The **Court of Appeal | Te Kōti Pira**, and the **Supreme Court | Te Kōti Mana Nui**, are the two most senior courts. They are appellate courts. If one of the parties to a court case is not satisfied with the result, then that case can be appealed to a higher court. A case in the District Court is normally appealed first to the High Court, unless it was heard by jury, in which case it proceeds straight to the Court of Appeal.<sup>31</sup>

There are also specialist courts – the **Employment Court, Environment Court, Māori Land Court, Coroners Court** and the **Court Martial**.

**Tribunals:** More than 100 tribunals and authorities<sup>32</sup> play a critical role in our system of justice. Tribunals are similar to courts in that they determine people’s rights. They have more flexible, and usually more informal, procedures. In New Zealand, tribunals are generally administered separately from the courts, except the Disputes Tribunal which is a division of the District Court.

» [Tribunals – Ministry of Justice.](#)

---

31 There are three other appellate-only courts – the **Māori Appellate Court** (which hears appeals from the Māori Land Court), the **Court Martial Appeal Court** (which hears appeals from the Court Martial), and the **Summary Appeals Court** (which hears appeals from the disciplinary decisions of military officers).

32 The Ministry of Justice administers 27 tribunals.



# Courts of general jurisdiction

The District Court and High Court are known as courts of general jurisdiction. They undertake criminal, civil and some appellate work.



# Criminal justice

Criminal justice proceedings make up most of the work of New Zealand's courts. Criminal trials are heard in the District Court, Youth Court and High Court.<sup>33</sup> Appeals for criminal cases are heard in the appellate courts – the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the High Court – see also the section on “Appellate Courts”.

## High Court | Te Kōti Matua

The High Court deals with the most serious criminal cases including murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, and serious sexual, drug and violent offending. It conducts all sentencings in which preventive detention is a possible outcome. Some cases may be heard in either the High Court or the District Court. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 provides for a protocol that is intended to ensure that trials involving allegations of the most serious offending, or of the greatest procedural difficulty, are heard in the High Court, if resources allow. However, due to limitations on both the number of courtrooms available and the number of judges, the High Court is unable to provide timely hearings for protocol cases, even for the most serious matters.<sup>34</sup> The Court also has an appellate function, hearing appeals from judge-alone trials in the District Court and Youth Court. It does not hear appeals from District Court jury trials – these are heard in the Court of Appeal. See “Appellate Courts” for more on the High Court's appellate jurisdiction.

There is a general trend towards criminal trials becoming longer and more complex. This year, the average number of days per trial rose to a historically-high level – 17.17 days. When compared to 2021 (when the average was 14.4 days per trial) this represents a 19 per cent increase. Reasons include the rise in number of multiple-defendant trials, an increase in the evidence submitted that must then be tested in court (particularly evidence collected from electronic devices), and an increased number of charges for each defendant.

In addition, there has been a rise in the number of trials for the most serious offending – Category 4 offences (murder, manslaughter, and attempted murder) – which now account for 76 per cent of all new criminal trials in the High Court. For comparison, in 2021 these made up 56 per cent of new criminal trials. Although this has not meant that the overall number of criminal trials “in hand” in the Court is higher – in fact, this number

<sup>33</sup> Criminal trials for military officers and staff are heard in the Court Martial.

<sup>34</sup> Protocol cases are cases that can be heard in the District Court or the High Court. A High Court judge makes the decision as to which court the case will be heard in, in accordance with a protocol, which is used to ensure that cases involving allegations of the most serious nature or procedural complexity are heard in the High Court, if resources allow.



reduced in 2024 from 162 to 155 – it has meant that the court is unable to take many “protocol” cases from the District Court, placing pressure on that court.

Despite these trends, the time for a case to come to trial in the High Court’s criminal jurisdiction has reduced and is back to pre-pandemic timeliness in most centres (but see “Courtroom availability for the High Court” on this page for exceptions). It is noted that in the High Court, the optimal time for a case to come to trial is not less than 12 months – the time required by parties to prepare for a complex criminal trial.

- » [High Court Annual Review](#)
- » [High Court statistics.](#)

## COURTROOM AVAILABILITY FOR THE HIGH COURT

The limited availability of courtrooms in the High Court circuit courts such as Whangārei and Rotorua affects the High Court’s ability to schedule trials and causes significant delays. For example, there is only one courtroom available to the High Court at Whangārei to deal with all civil and criminal work in Northland. This constraint is delaying the conduct of criminal jury trials in the Whangārei High Court, with the result that hearing dates are being scheduled well in excess of the 12-month timeframe that is generally required to bring a case in the High Court to trial.

The judiciary relies on the Ministry of Justice for the provision of courtrooms. The Chief Justice has raised the delays caused by the shortage of courtrooms in Whangarei and elsewhere with the Minister of Justice on previous occasions. She continues to do so. She briefed the (then) incoming Attorney-General on the issue.

To reduce the impact of these constraints, in both regions the Court’s workload is actively managed by the designated List Judge and registry scheduling team. Earlier trials that may or are likely to resolve are closely monitored, so that trials set further out can be brought forward as the earlier trials resolve.

## District Court | Te Kōti-ā-Rohe

Every person in New Zealand who is charged with a criminal offence makes their first appearance in the District Court, even if their charge is ultimately heard in the High Court. In a typical year, more than 107,000 new criminal cases enter the District Court.

The priorities for the District Court are to: enhance the quality of justice (the Te Ao Mārama initiative), improve timely access to justice; increase levels of judicial wellbeing (in particular by addressing workload pressures on judges); and support the design and introduction of the new digital case management system, Te Au Reka. Much of the work of the judicial leadership of the court, including the executive judges in each location, relates to these priorities, in addition to managing the daily business of the court.

The number of new cases entering the court has been decreasing. The age of cases at disposal fell in 2024. Disposal times had been rising in the District Court in recent years, the contributing factors being:<sup>35</sup> an increase in the number of serious and complex Category 3 cases before the courts;<sup>36</sup> more defendants electing a trial by jury

instead of by judge alone; and defendants entering guilty pleas later in the court process. The extra court events needed before a late guilty plea is entered increase the workload of the court.

Initiatives that the District Court is leading and collaborating on to address delay are covered on page 42.

### JUDICIAL OFFICERS IN THE DISTRICT COURT

In addition to District Court judges with general or jury warrants, community magistrates and judicial justices of the peace (JJPs) also play an important role in carrying out District Court criminal work. Community magistrates generally sit in urban courts and preside over a wide range of less serious criminal cases. JJPs preside over some preliminary hearings and bail applications. They hear and sentence in minor cases.

There are 18 community magistrates and two acting community magistrates located in nine courthouses, and more than 170 JJPs who sit nationwide.

## TE AO MĀRAMA – ENHANCING JUSTICE FOR ALL

Te Ao Mārama (*the world of light*) is the new operating model being implemented in the District Court. It has two main goals – to support fair hearings by ensuring full participation of all parties, and to address root causes of offending (in criminal cases) or conflict (in family cases) by connecting defendants and whānau with community and government agencies that can support positive change.

It draws together the best-practice, solution-focused judging principles that have been developed in the Youth Court and specialist courts within the District Court over the course of 40 years.

Te Ao Mārama benefits everyone who attends the District Court, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, abilities, who they are or where they are from. It must be effective for Māori, given the disproportionate representation of Māori in the family violence, care and protection and criminal jurisdictions of the court.

<sup>35</sup> This sentence has been changed since the report was initially released to reflect that the disposal rate fell in 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Category 3 offences are offences with a maximum penalty of a prison term of two years or more (excluding Category 4 offences).



## TE AO MĀRAMA

Enhancing Justice for All

Te Ao Mārama is being progressively implemented in the family, youth and criminal jurisdictions in eight District Court locations (Kaitiāia, Kaikohe, Whangārei, Hamilton, Tauranga, Gisborne, Napier and Hastings), with allocated government funding to support community-based service provision in these courts. The Ministry of Justice has commissioned an evaluation of the effectiveness of these eight Te Ao Mārama courts, and the outcome will determine whether additional funding is sought to support community-based service provision in other courts.<sup>37</sup> In the meantime, other locations are adopting elements of the Te Ao Mārama framework. Te Ao Mārama approaches that are being adopted in courts include:

- » Creating connections with local communities.
- » Ensuring that people have the opportunity to contribute to the proceedings that affect them, and that they feel heard in the courtroom.

- » Improving the quality of information that judicial officers get to inform their decisions.
- » Improving processes for victims and complainants.
- » Reducing formality and using plain language.
- » Alternative courtroom layouts.

Te Ao Mārama operates within the framework of existing legislation including the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, the Bail Act 2000 and the Sentencing Act 2002. It does not require any new legislation, instead being given effect through new behaviours, new information, new services and new processes across both the criminal and civil jurisdictions.

## TE AO MĀRAMA AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

People with learning and communication difficulties are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Conditions such as foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, brain injury, and learning difficulties such as dyslexia are prevalent in legal settings, easily missed, and affect the young person's ability to participate in court proceedings that affect them.

New measures have been developed to improve access to justice for people with these conditions in the District Court, including training for judges, lawyers and registry staff, and the introduction of a new court participation tool that will be piloted in the Porirua Young Adult List Court for six weeks starting in February 2025. Insights from the pilot will inform future projects to increase the accessibility of court proceedings for people with learning and communication difficulties.

<sup>37</sup> The Government has committed to continued support for the implementation of Te Ao Mārama in the eight core locations where implementation is well advanced (Kaitiāia, Kaikohe, Whangārei, Hamilton, Tauranga, Gisborne, Napier and Hastings). A further \$25.3 million of funding previously allocated for future locations has been placed in a tagged contingency fund.

## IMPROVING TIMELINESS AND REDUCING BACKLOGS IN THE DISTRICT COURT

In 2024, the District Court introduced new timeliness initiatives that have enabled it to resolve more cases than came in, evidence that in addition to identifying and dealing with backlogs (including some very old cases), courts kept on top of the active caseload.

This reversed a trend in the District Court, where the number of criminal cases waiting to be heard had been growing steeply since 2015.

This has resulted in a reduction of backlogs - 8 per cent nationally in the criminal jurisdiction, and 24 per cent in the Auckland metro area, which is the busiest area.

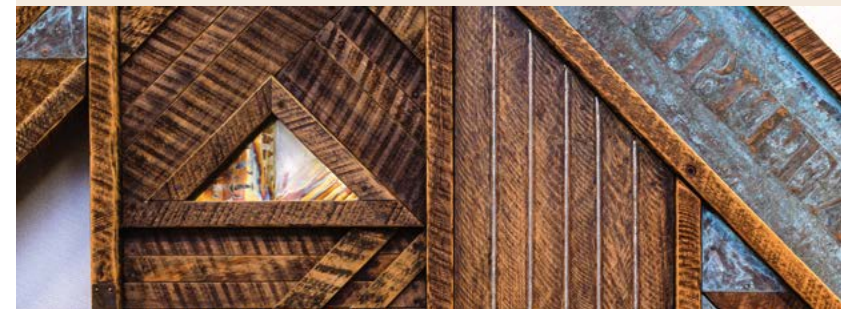
The District Court's timeliness initiatives incorporate and build on the Criminal Process Improvement Programme (CPIP), a judicially-led justice sector-wide initiative to improve timely access to justice. It establishes best practice in criminal procedure to ensure all court hearings are meaningful, and to reduce the time it takes to resolve cases, which have been rolled out in 2023 and this year. These have made improvements in areas such as case management, bail applications, same-day sentencing and improved documentation.

## JUSTICE SECTOR WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE TIMELINESS

In June 2024, Chief District Court Judge Heemi Taumaunu published the *Timely Access to Justice Protocol*, setting a standard of 90 per cent of criminal cases to be disposed of within category-based timeliness thresholds. The thresholds seek to strike the balance between aspirational objectives and operational realities. If a case is not disposed of within the prescribed threshold, then it joins the backlog.

Coordinated action across the justice sector is yielding results. There are lower adjournment rates, which shows that cases are moving through the courts with fewer delays, despite increases in court inflow, jury trial election rates and the remand and overall prison populations in the Auckland metro region. Reducing adjournments is seen as fundamental to improving timeliness in the District Court.

Leaders across the wider justice sector have agreed to support the District Court to reach the 90 per cent standard by June 2027.



## ADDRESSING DELAY IN THE COURTS

The judiciary is keenly aware of the impacts of delay. Addressing the causes of delay is a priority.

Delay in court proceedings is a problem that affects individuals before the courts and those awaiting court determinations or decisions. It also impacts on the public perception of the judicial system and the legitimacy of the courts.

Some causes of delay are systemic, relating to the complexity of the court system and the many agencies and participants involved. Others are due to resource constraints such as the number of available courtrooms. Others are related to external events – such as the pandemic, natural disasters and extreme weather events.

The work of the courts can be dependent upon an entire ecosystem of different agencies and individuals, particularly in the family and criminal jurisdictions. Delay may flow from many different sources, many of them beyond the control of the courts. For example, counsel unavailability, or delay in police disclosure, can cause proceedings to be delayed.

Specialist reports may be needed – for example, from mental health professionals – and all evidence must be disclosed in time for the parties to consider it. Emerging trends that also contribute to delay include more defendants selecting jury trials, trials becoming increasingly complex with more multi-defendant trials and more serious charges, and people entering guilty pleas at a very late stage of proceedings.

A shortage of key personnel including Police prosecutors, defence counsel and psychologists is a contributing factor affecting the timely progression and completion of trials and sentencings in parts of the country.

Information on work underway to address delay and improve timeliness is provided below under individual courts.

## REMAND PRISONERS: WHY DELAY MATTERS TO THOSE REMANDED IN CUSTODY AWAITING SENTENCING

New Zealand has a significant remand population. Research shows that spending even a short period on remand in custody has long-lasting effects on a defendant's life outside of prison – such as the loss of employment and housing – and on their family, in particular their children.

Some remand prisoners will not be convicted once they come to trial, yet will have already spent time, perhaps long periods of time, in prison. Others will be convicted but will receive non-custodial sentences, or sentences that are shorter than their time already spent on remand.

Year ended	Number of prisoners awaiting trial or sentence	Remand prisoners as a % of total prison population
Dec 2024	4,175	41 per cent
Dec 2023	3,930	43 per cent
Dec 2022	3,561 <sup>38</sup>	43 per cent
Dec 2021	2,859	37 per cent
Dec 2020	3,000	35 per cent
Dec 2019	3,613	37 per cent

District Court Annual Report District Court statistics

38 The data for 2021 and 2022 has been updated since the publication of the *Chief Justice's Annual Report 2023*. The updated figures are presented here.

## Youth Court | Te Kōti Taiohi

The Youth Court is a specialist division of the District Court. It deals primarily with offending by young people aged 14 to 17 years. In certain circumstances, the Youth Court also deals with serious offending by children aged 12 to 13 years. Some serious offending by 17-year-olds is transferred to the adult criminal division of the District Court. Any child or young person charged with murder or manslaughter is dealt with by the High Court.

A unique feature of the Youth Court process is the family group conference, which involves a gathering of the young person, their family, the victim(s), Police Youth Aid, the young person's youth advocate (lawyer) and other professionals. The parties establish a plan to address the offending and underlying causes, provide for victims' interests and help the young person take responsibility for their actions.

The Youth Court is led by Principal Youth Court Judge Ida Malosi. It is highly regarded internationally for its innovation and solution-focused judging.

Most young offenders are diverted away from formal court interventions and dealt with by Police Youth Aid officers. This means that the young people who end up in the Youth Court are the most serious offenders. They present to the court with a complex range of issues such as severe trauma, neuro-disability, mental distress, addiction and disengagement from education.

To support judges in identifying and managing these challenging issues, education seminars were delivered this year by Te Kura Kaiwhakawā for Youth Court judges, focused on engaging with neurodivergent people and the importance of a trauma-informed approach to judicial practice. This is part of the court's response to the Royal Commission's recommendation 33.

There are 75 designated Youth Court judges (including acting designated judges). In 2024, the court dealt with around 1,611 children and young people on 11,328 charges – which means that there were more cases before the court in 2024 than in any of the previous five years. The biggest increases have been in Waiariki, Manawatū Wairarapa region, and Otago.

Despite this recent rise, there has been a sustained and significant reduction in the number of young people in the youth justice system since the court was established in 1989. The Youth Justice Indicators Summary Report released in December showed that the rate of Youth Court appearances for young people has decreased by 41 per cent in the decade since 2013/2014.<sup>39</sup> This sustained reduction is the achievement of an evidence-based, system-wide response to youth offending and restorative justice. For more information about trends in youth justice, see the *Youth Justice Indicators Summary Report*, released in December 2024.

### Youth Court statistics

39 Youth Justice Indicators Summary Report, December 2024: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/justice-statistics/youth-justice-indicators/>



## A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COURT

The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which created the Youth Court, draws upon tikanga Māori concepts. It emphasises the engagement of whānau to address a young person's conduct and uses restorative justice principles to support the victim and bring home to the young person the consequences of their offending.

Not all Youth Court proceedings take place in a traditional courtroom. Te Kōti Rangatahi | Rangatahi Courts and Pasifika Courts are held at marae or community venues, and Māori or Pasifika customs and cultural practices are used as part of the court process.

There are 16 Te Kōti Rangatahi nationwide and two Pasifika Courts based in Auckland – in Waitakere and Manukau. These courts were established to address the over-representation of Māori and Pasifika in the youth justice system, a move which has had visible positive effects.

The Youth Court handled more cases in 2024 than in any of the previous five years, with the biggest increases in the Auckland Metro region and Canterbury.

## COURTHOUSE SAFETY

Courthouses can be dangerous places. The matters at issue in court buildings are fundamental to people's lives, and court decisions may affect such vital interests as liberty, people's connection to their children, and livelihoods. Court proceedings can engage strong emotions.

It is essential that the people who work in and visit our courthouses can do so safely and without fear for their security. The judiciary and the Ministry of Justice have been concerned at a rise in incidents of violence and disruption in our courthouses this year and work has been underway to address security concerns.

The Chief Justice and the Secretary for Justice established a working group to examine courthouse security issues. The group prepared a memorandum of understanding between the judiciary and the Ministry of Justice that makes clear the respective responsibilities of the judiciary and the Ministry regarding security in courtrooms and court precincts. It identifies the operational imperatives required to address safety in courthouses, and sets out a framework for working together to keep people safe in our courthouses.

In March, regular security briefings were extended beyond the judiciary and staff to all people who regularly attend court for work. This includes police and Department of Corrections staff, lawyers, journalists and others.

The Ministry continued its dock upgrade programme, which creates greater separation between defendants in the dock and court participants.



## COURT SECURITY OFFICERS

Court security officers have powers under the Courts Security Act 1999 to assist them in their duties at the court. One of the most commonly-used powers is to act in relation to the discovery of potentially dangerous items. Court security staff can take into temporary custody any item that could be a potential weapon and return it to the visitor as they leave. If the item is deemed to be a prohibited offensive weapon, the item will be seized, and the person detained by court security. The item and the person are then referred to the police. In 2024, 600 prohibited weapons were prevented from being brought into court, and another 42,291 items were taken into temporary custody, to be returned when the person left the courthouse.

# Civil justice

*Courts of law developed as a substitute for self-help remedies. The civil action has been described as “civilisation’s substitute for vengeance”. They are essential to social order. The courts’ decisions articulate clearly how the law applies to the citizen, and thereby allow others to order their conduct and affairs so as to comply with the law.*

*Through the independent operation of the courts, society also orders itself in the certain knowledge and belief that all can have a remedy for a wrong, and that no-one, no matter how rich or powerful, is above the law.<sup>40</sup>*

CHIEF JUSTICE HELEN WINKELMANN

Civil proceedings involve the enforcement of rights and obligations outside of the criminal justice system. New Zealanders are more likely to interact with the courts in civil proceedings – for instance to settle a dispute between neighbours or with an employer, resolve a debt or insolvency issue or apply for probate – than they are through criminal proceedings. Civil cases are typically brought by private individuals, businesses or companies, but may include proceedings brought by or against central and local government and regulatory agencies.

The courts discussed in this section are all first-instance civil courts, or courts with a first-instance civil jurisdiction. A “first-instance” court is a court in which proceedings can commence. New Zealand’s principal appellate courts, the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court, hear civil appeals. These courts are discussed from page 56.

Cost, and a lack of understanding about how to navigate the civil justice system are recognised barriers to people who seek to access civil justice in New Zealand. Initiatives underway to understand and address these barriers, are described below under individual courts, and in Chapter 3 “Access to Justice”.

## High Court

The High Court has unlimited jurisdiction for civil claims. It can hear any claim that is not within the exclusive jurisdiction of another court. The judges of the High Court (generally 40 in number) hear a wide variety of cases, including high-value and complex commercial disputes, property disputes, significant regulatory proceedings, defamation claims, intellectual property disputes, disputes arising out of family trusts and wills, claims by the Commissioner of Police to alleged proceeds of crime, judicial review proceedings, and appeals from other courts and tribunals. The court also hears urgent applications for interim injunctions and asset freezing orders.

---

<sup>40</sup> Winkelmann J, Ethel Benjamin Address Access to Justice “Who needs lawyers?”, 2014: <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/publications/speeches-and-papers>

Civil trials can be complex, requiring considerable hearing time – up to several months for some proceedings. Careful case management is required to ensure that cases proceed efficiently, moving through to hearing promptly and minimising necessary hearing time.

This year, the Court has managed a sharp increase in the number of company liquidations and insolvency proceedings. The number of insolvency proceedings alone rose 36 per cent compared to 2023.

There is too much delay in the High Court’s civil jurisdiction. There are a number of reasons for this. As in the criminal jurisdictions, trials are becoming more complex and getting longer. In addition, criminal proceedings are given priority over civil because in the High Court criminal trials often involve a defendant in custody.

The Court is preparing to respond to this growing issue of delay in the civil jurisdiction. Initiatives include the establishment of the Auckland Commercial List (see sidebar) and the implementation of new High Court Rules which have proportionality as an underlying principle. See more on page 69.

Work has also been underway this year to give effect to the recommendations made by the Rules Committee in its 2022 report *“Improving Access to Civil Justice”*. These recommendations are aimed at enabling efficient and timely resolution of proceedings in the civil jurisdiction. See more on page 69.

Because of the complexity of the law and factual issues in High Court civil proceedings, judges must provide detailed written reasons for their decisions. The High Court has set judgment delivery expectations in which 90 per cent of judgments are to be delivered within three months of the conclusion of the hearing. In 2024, the High Court delivered approximately 2,059 reserved civil judgments, 77.3 per cent of which were delivered within one month of the hearing, and 92.1 per cent of which were delivered within three months of the hearing.<sup>41</sup>

Further details of the work of the High Court are available in the High Court’s Annual Report 2024.

## A DEDICATED COMMERCIAL LIST FOR THE AUCKLAND HIGH COURT

Work has been underway since the start of the year to establish a commercial list in the Auckland High Court. The aim of the Auckland Commercial List is to achieve better efficiencies, quicker hearing times, and earlier settlements in commercial matters. It is modelled on the New South Wales Supreme Court’s Commercial List, and has been developed in consultation with the profession.

The Auckland Commercial List is planned to commence in October 2025.

## HOW THE HIGH COURT IS MANAGING PROCEEDINGS RESULTING FROM THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN STATE AND FAITH-BASED CARE

Since 1993, approximately 900 proceedings alleging abuse in State care have been filed in the Wellington Registry of the High Court.

There are 400 proceedings still to go before the court. The majority of these proceedings are on hold while alternative dispute resolution processes take place. Because of the significance of these cases, they are case-managed by one assigned judge and an assigned deputy registrar, and prioritised over other cases in the registry.

For more on the judiciary’s response to the recommendations from the Royal Commission on Abuse in State Care, see page 31.

---

41 Judgment delivery expectations for the High Court are available here: <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/the-courts/high-court/>



## District Court

The District Court has jurisdiction to hear civil claims up to a value of \$350,000 that are not within the exclusive jurisdiction of other courts. It also hears appeals from some tribunals.

The 2022 Rules Committee report “*Improving Access to Civil Justice*” included a number of recommendations for improvements in the civil jurisdiction of the District Court. Key to the work of the District Court, recommendations include the creation of a separate civil division of the District Court led by a Principal Civil Judge, and strengthening the civil registries across the country. There was good progress in 2024 in strengthening the work of the Auckland registry.

There was a rise in civil cases coming to the District Court this year, with debt collection cases dominating the figures. Other examples of common civil claims in the District Court include contractual disputes (where one party has not performed their obligations under an agreement), negligence (such as where services have not been provided with reasonable care and skill) and restraining orders (where a person is seeking an order to prevent harassment).

## Specialist courts

Several courts have specialist jurisdictions. Their work is explained briefly below, along with significant events that occurred over the last year.

### The Family Court | Te Kōti Whānau

The Family Court is part of the District Court. It was established in 1981 to resolve matters relating to the care of children, care and protection, relationship property, mental health, family violence, substance addiction and treatment, adoption, gender registration and surrogacy. The Family Court receives and deals with a significant number of applications, with more than 60,000 filed each year. There are 70 permanent and seven acting judges warranted to sit in the Family Court.

## TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE FAMILY JUSTICE PROCESSES

The jurisdiction of the Family Court involves matters that require prompt resolution—the care and protection of children, the division of property following the end of a relationship—and in which delay causes distress and harm. However, delay continues to be a concern of, and a focus for, the Court. There are many reasons for delay in the Family Court: increasing case numbers and complexity in the cases before the court, changes in the legislation the Court must administer, and in some areas too few judges and too few courtrooms.

Ensuring that the Court makes the changes within its ambit to address delay is therefore critical. In September the Court introduced the Family Court Efficiency Tools, to identify and address causes of delay within the court.

Implementing the District Court’s vision of Te Ao Mārama continues to be a priority in the Family Court, with the primary focus on care and protection.

Te Au Reka, the new digital case and court management system, will be introduced into the Family Court, scheduled to be operational in 2026. See page 71.

## FAMILY COURT ASSOCIATES AND KAIĀRAHI

The Family Court Associate role was established in 2023 to provide additional resource for the overloaded court. Family Court Associates are judicial officers who make decisions at the early stages of proceedings, including conducting interlocutory hearings and in addition, exercising all the powers of a court registrar.

The first six Family Court Associates joined the bench in April. Four are based in Auckland and two are in Christchurch. In August, the Attorney-General approved the recruitment of a second tranche of seven new Family Court Associates. Successful candidates will be inducted in early to mid-2025.

There are now 51 Kaiārahi, or Family Court navigators, in courtrooms across the country. Kaiārahi are a link between the community and the Family Court, providing information and support to parents, caregivers and whānau on how to navigate the court system or access out-of-court services. Kaiārahi are officers of the court. They develop relationships with justice agencies, the community and iwi to improve understanding of court processes.

## FAMILY VIOLENCE OPERATING MODEL

Much of the work before the Family Court is concerned in some way with family and sexual violence. A project trialling a Family Violence Operating Model began in 2023 in the Christchurch Family Court. The project focuses on increasing in-court safety for participants, including providing for different ways of giving evidence (either remotely or in advance), the use of plain language, and improving information-sharing between the Family Court and the criminal courts.

» [Family Court Statistics](#)

## FAMILY COURT JUDGES’ ONGOING EDUCATION

Family Court judges are offered regular educational opportunities that incorporate evolving knowledge and information about their work, including dynamics of family and sexual violence and the impact of abuse on behaviour and memory.

Content on abusive litigation has been added to the *Family Violence Bench Book*. This new topic focuses on tactics that perpetrators of family violence sometimes employ in Family Court proceedings to maintain a pattern of coercive control against their former partners, along with tools that judges may use to counter this form of abuse.



## Employment Court | Te Kōti Take Mahi

The Employment Court hears and determines cases relating to employment disputes. These include challenges to determinations of the Employment Relations Authority, questions of interpretation of law, and disputes over strikes and lockouts. The court hears and determines approximately 150-200 cases a year.

This year there has been an increase in applications to the Employment Court for interim relief (such as reinstatement to a job) and applications for compliance orders. Organisational restructurings, particularly in the public sector, and the current economic climate, affect the workload of the Court. It is anticipated that this will continue into the foreseeable future.

The Court's new case numbers reflect this trend – rising 24 per cent in the last year. Although this has led to a growth in the number of active cases (18 per cent), the Court has continued to meet its judgment delivery expectations, which require that 90 per cent of judgments are to be delivered within three months of the conclusion of the hearing.

In addition to their courtroom work, the Judges of the Employment Court regularly engage with community law centres, students, and the legal profession to increase public understanding of employment law and practice and its stabilising force within our society.

» [Employment Court statistics](#)

## Te Kooti Whenua Māori | Māori Land Court

The Māori Land Court is New Zealand's longest established specialist court. It is the only indigenous land court in the world. The court's key purpose is to promote the retention of Māori land in Māori hands, and to support landowners to use, occupy and develop their whenua for the benefit of all landowners, and their whānau and hapū. The court is responsible for the accurate documentation of the succession and management of Māori land.

Judge Craig Coxhead was appointed as the Deputy Chief Judge of the Māori Land Court on 27 May 2024. Judge Coxhead has sat as a Judge of the Māori Land Court since 2008, based in the Waiariki court registry. The Court also welcomed

new Judge Nathan Milner to the bench in July 2024 with a swearing-in ceremony at Te Poho-o-Rāwiri Marae in Gisborne. Judge Milner will sit in the Tairāwhiti Māori Land Court registry.

Reducing a backlog of cases in the court has been a focus for judges and for staff of the seven Māori Land Court registries. This backlog has in part been caused by difficulties in introducing a new case management system, Pātaka Whenua.

The Court has developed a Mahi Tahī policy, setting out how the judiciary and court staff work together to ensure the delivery of its services to all Māori landowners and other parties.

Māori Land Court judges also sit on the Māori Appellate Court and the Waitangi Tribunal. In addition, some Māori Land Court judges sit as alternate judges in the Environment Court.

There is a longstanding arrangement for serving Māori Land Court judges to sit in the Cook Islands High Court (land division) and the High Court of Niue. Judge Coxhead is also the Chief Justice of Niue – see Chapter 5, “Pacific and International Engagement”.

## **GUIDANCE ISSUED FOR BANKS AND LANDOWNERS ON MORTGAGES FOR MĀORI LAND**

The Court developed and published a Banking Practice Note, providing guidance to Māori landowners, banking professionals and legal practitioners on the legislative framework and court powers available to support landowners seeking to obtain a mortgage over whenua Māori (Māori land). Work on this practice note was led by Judge Miharo Armstrong, and it has received positive feedback from landowners and the banking sector. The practice note can be read on the Māori Land Court’s website.



## **A NEW HOME FOR THE MĀORI LAND COURT IN TAIRĀWHITI**

More than 100 people gathered to witness the closure of the old Tairāwhiti Māori Land Court and its move to its new site on Gladstone Road. The new court was blessed before being officially opened by Sir Derek Lardelli and his team of kaikarakia on 29 November.

Chief Māori Land Court Judge Caren Fox, and resident judges Judge Wilson Isaac and Judge Nathan Milner were joined by Chief District Court Judge Heemi Taumaunu and other members of the Māori Land Court bench for a special sitting that followed the opening ceremony. In attendance were iwi leaders, Her Worship the Mayor Rehette Stoltz, Ministry of Justice and Te Puni Kōkiri officials, and former and current staff.

The three-storey building houses reception and research facilities, mediation and meeting rooms, the courthouse, office space and chambers.

## Environment Court | Te Kōti Taiao

The Environment Court is established under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) principally to hear appeals from decisions under that Act and others, such as appeals about the contents of regional and district plans and appeals arising out of applications for resource consents. The RMA also confers jurisdiction on the Environment Court to hear enforcement proceedings.

### ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN THE ENVIRONMENT COURT

Alternative dispute resolution methods, such as court-assisted mediation, play an important part in the Environment Court. Mediation, offered by the court, agreed to by the parties, and facilitated by an Environment Commissioner, is used in most appeals. Facilitated expert conferencing is also a regular feature. Where expert evidence is to be called, experts in the same field are normally directed to confer, with facilitation by an Environment Commissioner, and produce a joint witness statement prior to any hearing. These methods result in full or partial agreements between parties and the narrowing of evidential issues in approximately 75 per cent of cases. This reduces the time required to hear the cases.

### TIMELINESS IN THE ENVIRONMENT COURT

The Environment Court ended the calendar year with no backlog, through the successful use of remote hearing procedures and alternative dispute resolution.

For prosecutions under the RMA, some of which are heard by jury trial held in the District Court, there continue to be delays.

### FORWARD-FOCUSED POWER TO PREVENT, REMEDY AND MITIGATE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

The Court, in its capacity to hear enforcement proceedings, has powers to order a person not only to stop causing adverse effects on the environment, but also to take steps that may be necessary to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects they might cause. This forward-focused power is essential to achieve sustainable management of resources and maintain and enhance the quality of the environment. Recent cases dealing with problems caused by poor forestry practices in Tairāwhiti | Gisborne have demonstrated that such forward-looking enforcement orders may be more effective in driving changes in industry practice and providing the community with some relief, compared to the outcomes of prosecutions.

### DIRECT REFERRAL OF RESOURCE CONSENT APPLICATIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT COURT

Certain resource consent applications (that qualify to be dealt with in this way) can be directly referred to the Environment Court. This means they can be dealt with swiftly while still providing for public participation and a robust examination of evidence. An example of this approach this year was Meridian Energy's application for a windfarm on Mt Munro in the Wairarapa. The application was directly referred to the Court in March. Court-facilitated mediation occurred in June and July, facilitated expert witness conferencing took place in August and the full hearing was in September with closing submissions received in October. The judgment is scheduled for delivery in February 2025.

» [Environment Court statistics](#)

## Coroners Court | Te Kōti Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati

The Coroners Court conducts inquiries into deaths that are sudden, unexplained, violent, appear to be self-inflicted or that happen in official custody or care. The coroner will determine findings of fact, and consider whether anything could be done differently to prevent similar deaths.

Historically, the demands on the Coroners Court have exceeded the available judicial resource, resulting in delay in providing whānau and other interested parties with answers and in making recommendations to keep the community safer. To tackle the backlog and reduce delay, the Court introduced a backlog reduction strategy in October 2023, with the goal of reducing the backlog of around 1,500 aged cases.

The central pillar of the strategy was to advocate for an increase in the number of coroners. The appointment of four additional coroners and the creation of the new associate coroner role has enabled the Court to close almost 800 cases that would otherwise have not been progressed. The bench has a current total of 37 coroners, relief coroners and associate coroners.

Another aspect of the strategy is more proactive management of the Court's workload and better use of workload data to identify and, if necessary, redistribute aged cases.

Coroners work closely with Police and the Ministry of Justice to improve the coronial process so that it is consistent, efficient, empathetic and culturally responsive. In 2024 the Coroners Court established an advisory group of coroners, whose mandate is to advise the bench regarding matters of tikanga Māori. The advisory group was established with a view to ensuring that, as far as possible, tikanga Māori is recognised and the cultural needs of family and whānau are accommodated throughout the Coroners Court processes. The advisory group has met regularly this year to address issues that have arisen within the Court, and to facilitate improvements to processes going forward.

» [Coroners Court statistics](#)

## Tribunals

Most civil justice in New Zealand takes place in tribunals. Tribunals are specialist bodies set up to deal with specific types of disputes with the intention that they resolve disputes more quickly and less expensively, and with less formality, than the courts.

Apart from the Disputes Tribunal, which sits within the District Court, tribunals are not part of the formal court system. However, they are the primary means for New Zealanders to seek justice and resolve disputes – with more than 100,000 people each year turning to the tribunals for assistance.

### TRIBUNAL REFORM

New Zealanders are more likely to access civil justice through tribunals than through the courts. More than 50 tribunals exist in New Zealand, providing a forum for resolution for a wide range of issues, from motor vehicle disputes to issues with superannuation.

The Chief Justice has called for the structural reforms to tribunals that have been recommended by the Law Commission to be put into effect. These reforms would provide tribunals with the institutional structure to ensure independent and effective decision-making – a critical requirement for the rule of law, given the nature and extent of the work before them.



The Supreme Court bench. From left to right: Justice Joe Williams, Justice Forrie Miller, Justice Susan Glazebrook, Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann, Justice Stephen Kós, Justice Ellen France.

# Appellate courts

## Supreme Court | Te Kōti Mana Nui

The Supreme Court is New Zealand's apex court – the highest court in the country. It has the role of maintaining overall coherence in the legal system. The principles expressed in Supreme Court decisions are binding on all courts in New Zealand. Each decision, therefore, has an impact far beyond the parties directly affected by the decision.

This year marked 20 years since the creation of the Supreme Court of New Zealand. In 2004 the Supreme Court replaced the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as New Zealand's highest court of appeal (see sidebar). The Supreme Court has a broad appellate jurisdiction and hears appeals spanning contract, criminal, employment, family, resource management, torts and intellectual property law. Unlike apex courts in other countries, the Court cannot invalidate legislation, but like the High Court and Court of

Appeal, it can issue a declaration of inconsistency, where it finds a law or part of a law is inconsistent with one of the fundamental rights protected under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.<sup>42</sup>

Appeals to the Supreme Court can be heard only with the leave of the Court.<sup>43</sup> To grant leave to appeal, the Court must be satisfied that hearing an appeal is in the interests of justice. That is, if it involves a matter of general or public importance; if a substantial miscarriage of justice may have occurred or may occur unless the appeal is heard; or if the appeal involves a matter of general commercial significance.<sup>44</sup>

42 This year, the Supreme Court delivered the judgment *Attorney-General and Anor v Mark David Chisnall* [2024] NZSC 178, which indicated the court would issue a declaration of inconsistency regarding aspects of the extended supervision order regime and the entirety of the public protection order regime.

43 Leave decisions are usually made by a panel of three judges.

44 Senior Courts Act 2016, s 74.

The Court allocates 19 sitting weeks per year, divided into three terms (the Waitangi term, the Matariki term and the Kōanga term). The periods between these terms enable judges to complete their judgments.

There are six permanent judges of the Supreme Court. A panel of five judges is required to hear a substantive appeal – the odd number ensures that the Court reaches a majority decision. In the event that more than one permanent judge is unable to sit for any reason, an acting judge (a former judge of the Supreme Court or a sitting Court of Appeal judge) may serve as a member of an appeal panel.

In almost all cases, an appeal to the Supreme Court will involve a case that has already been considered by the Court of Appeal. However, the Court does, in exceptional cases, hear “leapfrog” appeals directly from other lower Courts.

Given its significance, it is important that the work of the Supreme Court is readily available and accessible. The Court takes a proactive approach to increasing the transparency of the Court’s work to ensure that public confidence in the justice system is maintained. Initiatives designed to increase the transparency of the Court’s work include livestreaming of appeal hearings, publication of substantive appeal submissions online, engagement with an educational outreach programme with university law schools (see overleaf) and holding annual sitting weeks in Auckland and Christchurch. These initiatives are described further on page 79.



## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court was established by the Supreme Court Act 2003 to recognise New Zealand as an independent nation with its own history and traditions, to improve access to justice and to enable important legal matters, including those relating to the Treaty of Waitangi, to be resolved with an understanding of New Zealand conditions, history, and traditions.<sup>45</sup>

Before the establishment of the Supreme Court, New Zealand’s highest court of appeal was the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which was located in London. It dealt with a small number of appeals. The idea to abolish appeals to the Privy Council and establish a final court of appeal within New Zealand had been considered for over a century – first proposed by Chief Justice Sir Robert Stout.

The first hearing in the Supreme Court took place in July 2004, some seven years before the current courthouse opened. The Court initially sat in a cramped makeshift courtroom in the basement of the current Wellington High Court. Court legend has it that the registrar bought a goldfish tank in an attempt to dispel the gloom.

To mark the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Court, Auckland University Law School, in conjunction with the Legal Research Foundation, hosted a two-day conference in February. The Chief Justice and Justice Forrest Miller delivered papers at the conference, along with members of the profession and the academy.

In her address, the Chief Justice noted that the Court has proved better placed than the Privy Council to provide systemic oversight of the rule of law both by reason of the greater volume of proceedings it engages with – including leave applications – and, because of the judges’ proximity and understanding of the New Zealand legal and social context.

---

<sup>45</sup> Supreme Court Act 2003, s 3.

## SIGNIFICANT SUPREME COURT DECISIONS FROM 2024

Some significant decisions from 2024 were:

- » *Whakatōhea Kotahitanga Waka (Edwards) v Ngāti Ira o Waioweka* [2024] NZSC 164
  - Claims to customary rights in the harbours, river mouths, beaches, and seascape of the eastern Bay of Plenty addressing the interpretation of the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011.
- » *Smith v Fonterra Co-operative Group Ltd* [2024] NZSC 5
  - Whether carbon-emitting large companies could be liable in tort for damage caused by climate change.
- » *A, B and C v D and E Limited as Trustees of the Z Trust* [2024] NZSC 161
  - Whether, and in what circumstances, the relationship between a parent and their children will be recognised as fiduciary.
- » *Cooper v Pinney* [2024] NZSC 181
  - What rights or powers in respect of assets in a family trust can properly be treated as “property” falling within the ambit of the Property (Relationships) Act 1976.
- » *Attorney-General v Chisnall* [2024] NZSC 178
  - Whether the extended supervision order and public protection order regimes are inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.



## INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAWYERS

The Supreme Court’s engagement programme with law students is designed to foster a deeper understanding of the judicial system and provide inspiration and information to future legal professionals. Through this programme, law students are given the opportunity to observe court proceedings at the Court’s home base in Wellington, or when the Court travels to Auckland or Christchurch. The students participate in a question-and-answer session with the Supreme Court judges and senior legal counsel, and then have an opportunity to talk with the judges over afternoon tea in the court. The programme underscores the Supreme Court’s commitment to education, transparency and its role in promoting a career in the law to the next generation.

- » [Supreme Court statistics](#)

## Court of Appeal | Te Kōti Pira

The Court of Appeal is New Zealand's intermediate appellate court. The Court of Appeal has a key role in developing legal principle, correcting errors, and ensuring that the law is applied consistently.

The Court hears appeals from the civil and criminal cases heard in the High Court and appeals from criminal jury trials in the District Court. In addition, matters appealed to the High Court from the District Court and certain tribunals may be taken to the Court of Appeal with leave if they are of sufficient significance to warrant a second appeal. The Court may hear appeals against pre-trial rulings in criminal cases. The Court can also hear appeals on questions of law from the Employment Court and appeals from the Māori Appellate Court and Court Martial Appeal Court. The Court ordinarily sits with a panel of three judges.

The Court's principal responsibility is to correct errors in conviction and sentence appeals. Because of the volume of appeals it hears, the Court of Appeal also has primary responsibility for direction and consistency in the delivery of criminal justice. The Court may issue guideline judgments to provide general direction for sentencing for certain categories of criminal offending.

The Court's workload remains at a historic high, particularly in the civil jurisdiction. It delivered 701 judgments in 2024, up from 672 in 2023.

The Court of Appeal has 10 permanent judges, but this number is supplemented by approximately 20 High Court judges who each sit as divisional members for up to four weeks a year, bringing current criminal trial experience to the Court. Acting judges provide additional capacity.

The Court sits year-round in Wellington and Auckland. The Court also sat twice in Christchurch and once in Dunedin as part of its divisional sitting programme.



### COURT OF APPEAL BENCH APPOINTMENTS AND RETIREMENTS

There were a number of retirements from the Court of Appeal this year: Justice Mark Cooper retired as President of the Court, after serving as a Judge of the Court of Appeal for 10 years, and President for two and a half years. Justices Brendan Brown, David Collins, Murray Gilbert and David Goddard also retired.

As a consequence, a number of new appointments were made: Justice Christine French was appointed as President of the Court of Appeal. Justices Rebecca Ellis, Francis Cooke, Matthew Palmer, Neil Campbell, and Christian Whata were appointed to the bench, and Justices David Collins and Anne Hinton were appointed as acting Judges to assist the Court with its workload.

### CRIMINAL RULES

The Rules Committee continued work to introduce the Court of Appeal (Criminal) Rules (which will replace the 2001 Criminal Rules). Work will continue in 2025.

» [Court of Appeal statistics](#)



Back row, from left to right: Justice Francis Cooke, Justice Susan Thomas, Justice Jillian Mallon, Justice Rebecca Ellis, Justice Matthew Palmer.

Front row, from left to right: Justice David Goddard, Justice Christine French, President of the Court of Appeal Justice Mark Cooper, Justice Patricia Courtney, Justice Sarah Katz.



## High Court | Te Kōti Matua – Appellate jurisdiction

The High Court hears criminal appeals from judge-alone trials in the District Court and Youth Court. It does not hear appeals from District Court jury trials – these are heard in the Court of Appeal. It hears civil appeals from the District Court, the Family Court, the Youth Court and the Environment Court as well as appeals from many administrative tribunals and regulatory bodies. All High Court judges can, and do, hear appeals.

The number of criminal appeals lodged in the High Court is currently very high. There were 1,913 new appeals lodged with the Court this year, compared to 1,688 in 2023 (a 13 per cent increase). There was a corresponding rise in the number of disposals of appeals – 1,899 this year compared to 1,715 in 2023 (an 11 per cent increase).

## District Court | Te Kōti-ā-Rohe – Appellate jurisdiction

The District Court hears appeals from a wide range of administrative tribunals and regulatory bodies, including the Disputes Tribunal, Tenancy Tribunal and Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal.

## Employment Court | Te Kōti Take Mahi

The Employment Court hears appeals from the Employment Relations Authority. Where an appeal raises an important issue, it will generally be heard by a full court sitting with three or more judges. There are limited rights of appeal to the Court of Appeal and beyond that, to the Supreme Court.

## Te Kooti Pira Māori | Māori Appellate Court

Te Kooti Pira Māori | Māori Appellate Court was established in 1894 as the appellate body for all decisions of the Māori Land Court. The Appellate Court bench is made up of the judges of the Māori Land Court, sitting in panels of three or more judges to hear appeals. Māori Appellate Court sittings are held quarterly, with judges sitting in different panels (appointed by the Chief Judge and Deputy Chief Judge of the Māori Land Court) to hear all appeals filed with the Appellate Court in the previous three-month period. Each appeal is heard in the region to which it relates.

The Māori Appellate Court generally hears between 20 and 30 appeals per year. Māori Appellate Court judgments may be appealed to the Court of Appeal.

## Military justice appeals

New Zealand has a parallel military justice system. The Court Martial is a specialist court of record that hears cases of serious offending and breaches of military discipline by members of the Armed Forces, and, in rare cases, other persons closely associated with their operations. All its judges are civilians and sit with a panel of military members who are the deciders of fact (see sidebar).

Although the Court Martial is part of the system of military justice, at the appellate level its appeals come into the civilian court system and are therefore included in this report.

The Court Martial Appeal Court | Te Kōti Pira Whakawā Kaimahi o te Ope Kātua hears appeals from the Court Martial. The Court Martial Appeal Court is summoned by the Chief High Court Judge and consists of current High Court judges and appointed judges (who are either barristers or retired High Court judges). Appointed judges are civilians, but to date have also had previous military experience.

The Court Martial Appeal Court has jurisdiction to determine all questions necessary for the purpose of doing justice in any case before it. Like the Court Martial, the Court Martial Appeal Court hears cases involving offences committed anywhere in the world and may sit in any location in New Zealand or overseas as required. This court can also hear any other case from the Court Martial by special reference from the Judge Advocate General or from the Minister of Defence. The court sits with at least three judges, at least one of which must be an appointed judge. Parties have a further appeal avenue (by leave) to the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court.

## THE COURT MARTIAL

The Court Martial has jurisdiction to hear charges alleging offences against both military and criminal law committed anywhere in the world. Its powers of punishment are equivalent to those of the High Court but include unique sentences, such as detention in the Services Corrective Establishment or dismissal from His Majesty's Service. The Court Martial has adopted the principles of Te Ao Mārama from the District Court in its proceedings. Appeals from the Court Martial are heard by the Court Martial Appeal Court, and above that by leave to the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court.

Less serious offending is tried before disciplinary officers (who are not judicial officers). Appeals against the findings, punishment, or orders of disciplinary officers are heard in another military court – the Summary Appeal Court | Te Kōti Whakawā Pira Whakaraupapa Kaimahi o te Ope Kātua. All judges of the Court Martial are also judges of the Summary Appeal Court. Cases are heard by a single judge sitting alone. There is no further right of appeal from the Summary Appeal Court.

## PART THREE

---

# Access to justice

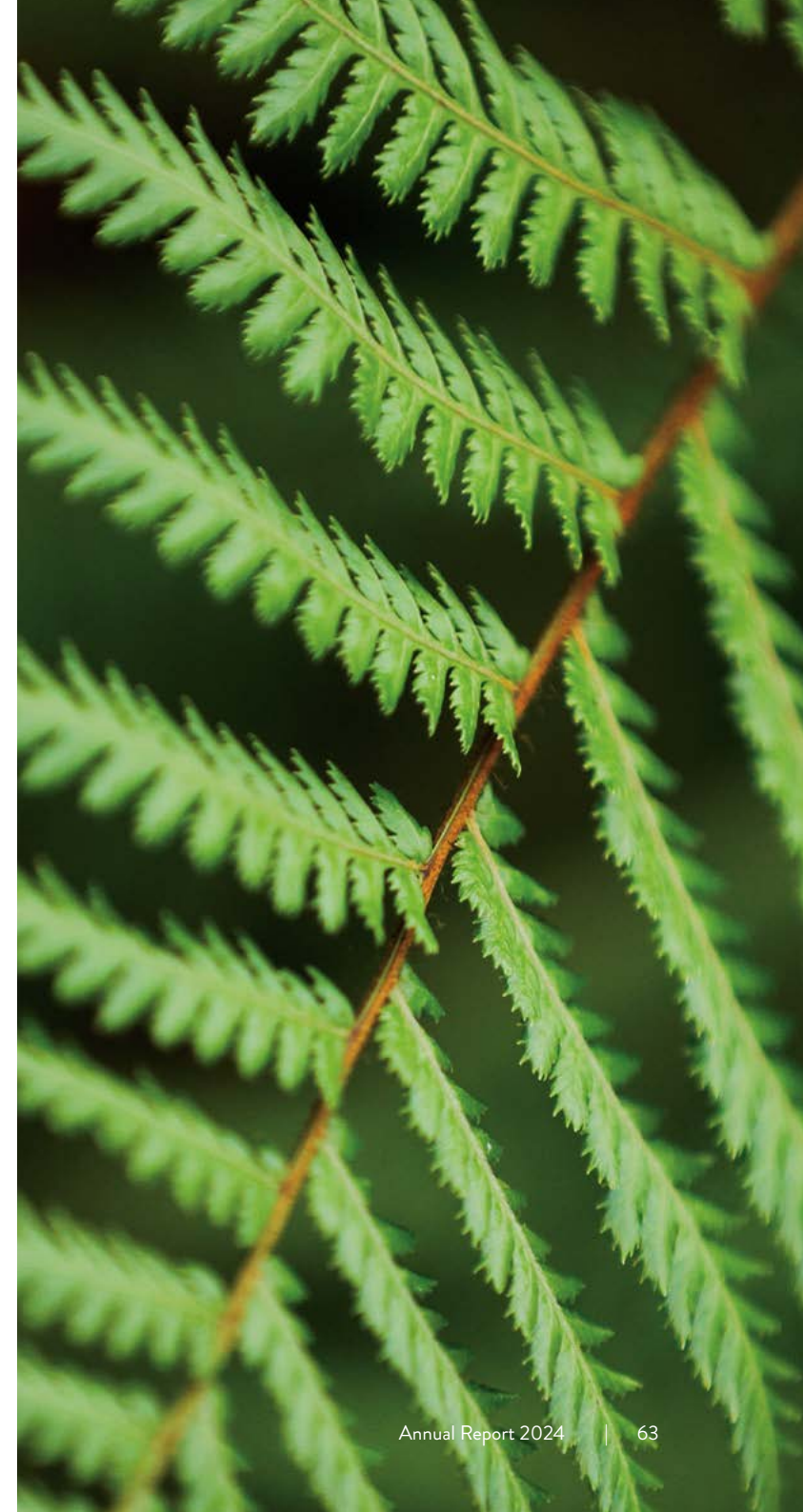
*“Access to justice has two strands – ensuring that people have access to the institutions and procedures that will uphold and enforce their rights and ensuring that people have access to the content of the law – that they understand their rights and how to access and enforce them.”*

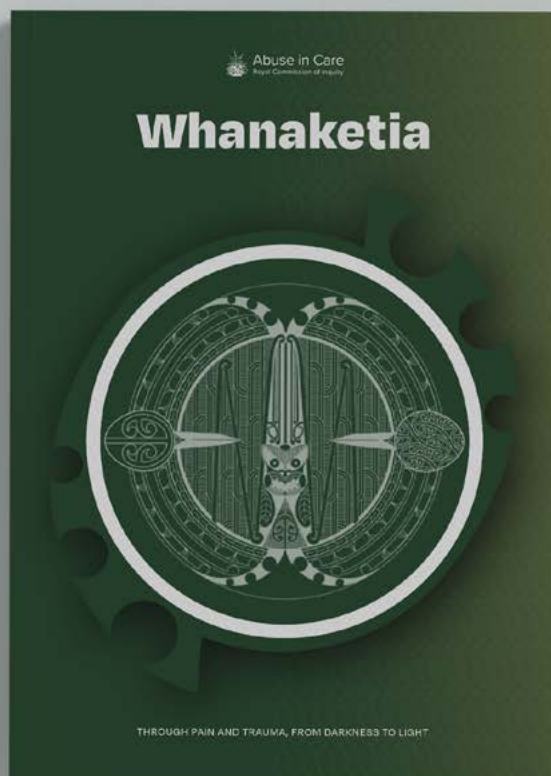
CHIEF JUSTICE HELEN WINKELMANN

# Access to justice

Improving access to justice by improving the quality of all interactions the public have with the courts and with judicial processes is a priority for the judiciary. Information about legal rights must be accessible and easy to understand. The processes to defend and assert those rights in our courts and tribunals must be easy to use, and must enable timely and affordable justice.

This year, the final report from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care identified many barriers for survivors attempting to access justice through our court system. This chapter explores the access to justice imperatives and initiatives that were a focus of the judiciary in 2024, and will continue to be in the years to come.





## The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care – An imperative to improve equitable access to justice

In July, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care published its final report on the abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults in the care of the State and faith-based institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand between 1950 and 1999. *Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light* is the culmination of five years of investigations, research and public hearings, in what was New Zealand's biggest and most complex public inquiry. It makes 138 recommendations for change.<sup>46</sup>

The report describes how institutions and systems, including the justice system, failed to protect the most vulnerable members of our society – children and young people. This failure was compounded by the failures over many years to acknowledge those wrongs and to assist survivors as they tried to access justice and sought compensation for the harm that was done. The barriers survivors faced to accessing justice included delay, inadequate support to navigate gruelling court processes, and the retraumatising effects of being in court in our adversarial system.

The report makes recommendations for the judiciary, in particular with regard to judicial education. See page 31 for the judicial education programme related to the Commission's findings.

The report endorsed Te Ao Mārama (at Recommendation 25), which aims to address several aspects present in the reports' findings, including:

- » acknowledging the disproportionate representation of Māori in the justice system
- » providing accommodations where possible so that people can participate in proceedings that affect them and
- » adopting 'solution-focused' judging – asking “what has happened to this person to bring them to this point in their life?” and then addressing those causes.

<sup>46</sup> *Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light* and its recommendations can be found at <https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/reports/whanaketia>.

The report adds to the increasing evidence of the association between abuse in State care, and the likelihood of ending up in one of this country's prisons. It tells how this has disproportionately affected Māori – 42 per cent of Māori who were in State care as children ended up in prison as an adult. Judicial education relating to te reo Māori, te ao Māori and tikanga Māori is described on page 32.

Many of the access to justice initiatives below also speak to the recommendations in the report. They are aimed at improving people's ability to access the courts and to fully take part in their proceedings, and at providing timely and efficient justice.

## ADVANCING ACCESSIBILITY IN THE COURTS FOR DEAF AND DISABLED PEOPLE

When thinking about how to improve the accessibility of the courts and their processes, the courts must focus upon the needs of disabled people and communities. Disabled people are overrepresented in our courts. They are overrepresented as victims – disabled people suffer much higher levels of victimisation than the general population. They are overrepresented in our civil courts, and in our defendant population. Almost all people in prison (91 per cent) have a lifetime diagnosable mental illness or substance abuse disorder, often existing with other conditions such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and traumatic brain injuries.<sup>47</sup>

The work of the Royal Commission also highlighted how many of the victims of abuse were made vulnerable through disability, and faced extra barriers in seeking justice.

Fairness and justice require that our courts better support disabled and Deaf communities. Everyone appearing in court has the right to participate in proceedings that affect them, and it is the duty of judges to ensure that every person who comes before the court, in whatever capacity, is able to do that. Many people who appear in courtrooms have disabilities that may impact on their ability to participate, if their disabilities are not known, understood and accommodated.

The judiciary is working to build knowledge within the judiciary and the legal profession about the barriers that disabled people and the Deaf community experience when they try to access courts. Workstreams underway include the following:

- » the District Court's Te Ao Mārama model has a strong focus on accommodating disability, and in particular neuro-disability, in the courtroom.
- » The judicial committee Tomo Mai<sup>48</sup> has established a disability working group to develop principles to guide the judiciary's engagement on disability matters. These principles will draw on the recommendations of the 2022 United Nations report on New Zealand's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including the recommendation that government engage with external organisations of disabled people in finding solutions and develop meaningful partnerships to co-design, co-produce and co-evaluate processes.<sup>49</sup>
- » *Kia Mana te Tangata | Judging in Context: A Handbook*: This is an important resource for judges. It provides information on how to better accommodate disability and thereby support full participation for disabled people and members of the Deaf community in court proceedings. The handbook will be made available on Courts of New Zealand website, once completed.

<sup>47</sup> Ian Lambie "What were they thinking? A discussion paper on brain and behaviour in relation to the justice system in New Zealand" (Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor | Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia, 29 January 2020) at [4] and [15].

<sup>48</sup> Tomo Mai is the Judicial Diversity Committee – see page 90.

<sup>49</sup> Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of New Zealand UN Doc CRPD/C/NZL/CO/2-3 (26 September 2022) at [23(a)].



## Civil justice – Access to justice initiatives underway in 2024

### THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE ADVISORY GROUP

The Access to Justice Advisory Group was established in 2020 to advise the Courts Strategic Partnership Group (CSPG) in its work to improve access to justice, and to drive forward an access to justice work programme focused on civil justice. Civil proceedings are those that focus on enforcing people's rights outside of the criminal justice system.

The group has been responsible for delivering the Access to Justice Legal Needs Survey and the *Wayfinding for Civil Justice* stakeholder strategy.

### *Understanding the extent of the problem – Access to Justice Legal Needs Survey*

The results of the Access to Justice Legal Needs Survey were published in October. These identified that one third of the people surveyed had experienced a civil justice issue in the preceding year. The survey also found that certain groups of people are more likely to experience civil justice issues than others, including disabled people, LGBT+ people, single parents, and Māori, and that 40 per cent of small businesses experience at least one issue or dispute in any given year, with the most common being consumer debt or late payments, and customer complaints.

The Access to Justice Advisory Group commissioned the nationwide survey to gather data about people's experiences with civil justice issues and how they seek (or do not seek) resolution of those issues. The survey was developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and the Ministry of Justice.<sup>50</sup>

The survey results and subsequent analysis will inform future work to improve access to civil justice.

---

<sup>50</sup> The survey reports can be found at: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/access-to-civil-justice/>

## WAYFINDING FOR CIVIL JUSTICE

The *Wayfinding for Civil Justice* strategy was launched in late 2023 and encourages a unified and coordinated approach to the design and planning of initiatives to improve access to civil justice. It provides a set of guiding lights or principles and waypoints or goals. The outcomes it seeks are:

1. Legal assistance is accessible, appropriate and integrated.
2. Providers of legal assistance understand and serve the needs of their communities.
3. Dispute resolution – from initiation to enforcement – is accessible and equitable.
4. There is knowledge about the system and progress towards these goals can be monitored, evaluated and improved.

*Wayfinding for Civil Justice* is available in both te reo Māori and English.<sup>51</sup>

As part of implementation, the working group recommended establishing a National Civil Justice Observatory to ensure the *Wayfinding for Civil Justice* strategy is useful in practice. The Observatory would be responsible for coordinating reporting of initiatives, sharing information between stakeholders, and maintaining momentum for the strategy.

In 2024, funding was secured from the Borrin Foundation to launch a pilot of the Observatory for a period of one year. The *Wayfinding* Observatory pilot is expected to be launched in early 2025.

The working group was greatly assisted by feedback from civil justice stakeholders.

## COURT FEES AS A BARRIER TO SEEKING JUSTICE

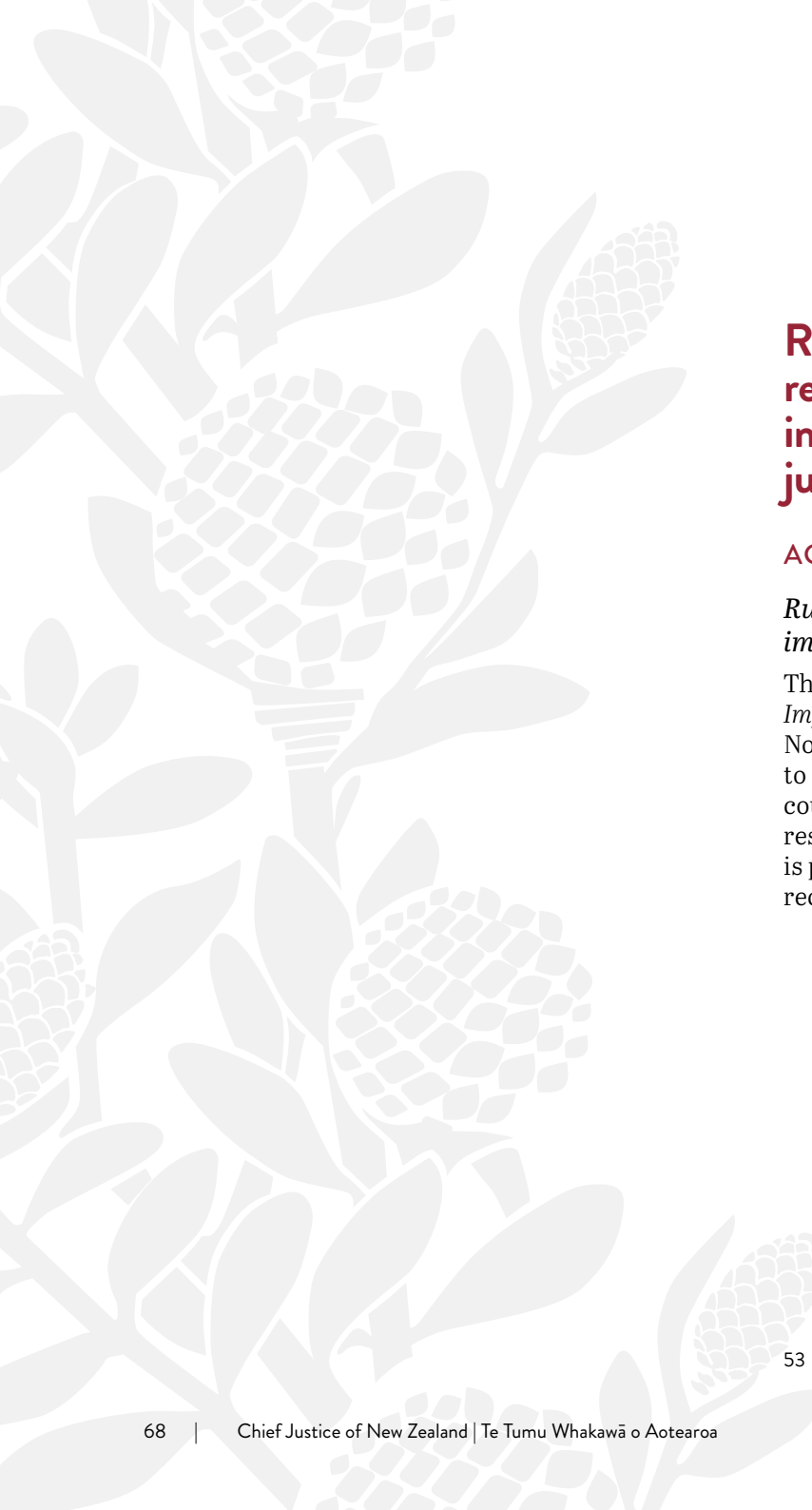
Fees were increased in the civil jurisdiction of the District and High Court, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court, and a range of ministry-administered tribunals from 1 July, as were fees and costs related to the collection and enforcement of fines. The court fees are set by regulations, not by the judiciary.

The impact that these increased fees will have on access to justice is a significant concern for Heads of Bench.

The Chief Justice has previously highlighted the barrier that court fees create for people attempting to assert or defend their rights in our civil courts. She has said that it is inappropriate to apply a cost recovery model to the courts – that is, to set court fees at a level to recoup the cost to the Ministry of Justice of running the courts – and that court fees contribute to civil justice being unaffordable for some people.<sup>52</sup>

52 Winkelmann J, Ethel Benjamin Address Access to Justice “Who needs lawyers?”, 2014, <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/publications/speeches-and-papers>

51 *Wayfinding for Civil Justice – Imagining a better way of working together to improve access to civil justice in Aotearoa New Zealand (2022)*



## Rules Committee's recommendations to improve access to civil justice – An update

### ACCESS TO CIVIL JUSTICE

#### *Rules Committee's recommendations to improve access to civil justice – An update*

The Rules Committee, in its report entitled *Improving Access to Civil Justice*, issued in November 2022,<sup>53</sup> proposed substantial changes to the civil justice framework aimed at simplifying court procedures so that disputes can be resolved more quickly and efficiently. An update is provided here on some of the Committee's recommendations.

#### *Expanding the role of the Disputes Tribunal*

The Disputes Tribunal is a relatively quick and inexpensive way for people to settle civil disputes without incurring expensive legal fees. The Rules Committee recommended extending its jurisdiction to address claims up to \$70,000 as of right or \$100,000 with consent so that more people could benefit from the Tribunal. In December the government introduced legislation to raise the jurisdiction for the Disputes Tribunal from \$30,000 to \$60,000.

---

<sup>53</sup> *Improving Access to Civil Justice* can be found here: <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/about-the-judiciary/rules-committee>

### *Improving the institutional capabilities of the District Court*

The Committee recommended the establishment of a civil division of the District Court, the appointment of a Principal Civil Division Judge, increasing the civil expertise of the registry, and the use of part time deputy judges/recorders appointed from the profession to improve the District Court's civil jurisdiction. These steps require legislative action if the recommendations are to be furthered.

### *Reforming the regime for determining civil disputes in the High Court to make them more effective and proportionate*

This year the Committee's work was focused on finalising the new High Court Rules to reform the procedures in the High Court. The changes will require a culture change to the way litigation is managed. They emphasise the need for proportionality between the matters at issue in a proceeding, and the way the case is managed through the courts. They include a greater emphasis on identifying key issues earlier.

The new Rules take effect on 1 January 2026. A joint seminar with the Law Society will be delivered to inform and educate the profession on the upcoming changes.

## ESSENTIAL TO ACCESS TO JUSTICE: THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND LEGAL AID

Lawyers play a vital role in the functioning of our courts. They enable people to understand their rights, and to understand what is taking place in the courtroom. They also enable the courts' business to be dealt with efficiently. Inability to access legal representation is a barrier to accessing justice. It is therefore of concern to the judiciary that the legal profession is reporting that it is under significant stress. Also concerning is that in some regions there are succession issues, with senior practitioners not being replaced as they retire from practice.

There are a number of factors contributing to this stress. Some of these are described elsewhere in the report, such as the rising number of security incidents in courts (page 47), the increasing complexity and length of criminal and civil hearings (page 49), and the complex needs of the people coming before the courts (page 45).

Those who undertake legal aid work face particular challenges. Long-term underfunding of legal aid has resulted in a reducing pool of legal professionals prepared to take on work at legal aid rates. This affects all court work, but has particularly affected the criminal defence bar, where there is now a grave shortage of senior practitioners available for more complex and serious cases. This means that those who remain have unacceptably high workloads. The same is true for family lawyers. Added to that is the stressful nature of much of the work of criminal and family lawyers.

The Chief Justice has expressed her concerns about the legal aid system. She has said that it does not adequately serve the people in our

court system who need legal representation, or the lawyers undertaking the work. For those who require legal representation, the eligibility thresholds are set unacceptably low, meaning that many people who cannot afford to pay for legal advice are still not eligible for legal aid. For the lawyers willing to do legal aid work, she has pointed to the inadequacy of pay rates, and the cumbersome administrative burden that the current system places on people.

She looks forward to the Ministry of Justice's triennial review of the Legal Aid system, which will take place in 2025.

The judiciary regularly meets with the legal profession in a variety of forums to identify barriers to their work in the courts. These forums include:

- » The Criminal Practice Committee, chaired by the Chief Justice and made up of judges, representatives of justice sector agencies, and members of the legal profession (page 92).
- » Local executive judges hold stakeholder meetings in courthouses with members of the local criminal bar, Police, Crown solicitors, and Department of Corrections staff, among others.
- » Chief Judges of the High and District Courts meet regularly with legal professional groups, the Police Prosecution Service, Crown Law and the Department of Corrections to address operational issues that are hindering the prompt disposal of cases.



# Planning for the future – ensuring court technologies support access to justice

The Chief Justice and heads of bench have a responsibility to ensure that New Zealand's justice system remains fit for purpose and that future courts are equipped to serve their evolving communities, and for ensuring just outcomes for all participants in court proceedings.

Using technology wisely to support this goal is essential. Technology has the potential to be transformative by better enabling access to the courts and reducing the cost and complexity of proceedings. However, its use must be consistent with fair process, and with a justice system run by and for people.

This section describes the work the judiciary and others are undertaking to ensure a modern and responsive court system that will work for all the people of New Zealand, now and in the future.

## A progress report on the priority technological initiatives for the court

The *Digital Strategy for the Courts and Tribunals of Aotearoa New Zealand* (the Digital Strategy), released in 2023, identified priority initiatives for the courts to address the most acute justice infrastructure needs. This section provides an update on progress for these initiatives.

### TE AU REKA: THE NEW DIGITAL DOCUMENT AND CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Te Au Reka<sup>54</sup> is a digital case and court management system intended to modernise the way New Zealand's courts and tribunals function. It will make it simpler, faster and easier to engage with courts and tribunals.

It is being built in conjunction with the people who will use it – judges, court staff and lawyers – to make sure that it meets the requirements of busy courts. To this end, a number of mock courts were held this year to test the first iterations of the new system.

Te Au Reka will be implemented in three phases, starting in the Family Court in 2026.

### *Training staff and judges*

Te Au Reka is being designed to be intuitive for judges, court staff, lawyers, and other users. The mock courts held this year provided insights into the kind of training the judiciary and registry (and legal profession) will need. This aligns with another of the *Digital Strategy's* priority initiatives – to ensure high-quality and responsive training and support can be accessed by users of the digital technologies on which the court system depends.

### *Rule changes required*

The Ministry of Justice is working with Parliamentary Counsel Office to draft the first tranche of amendments to the Family Court Rules that are required for the solution to be implemented in the Family Court. The focus of the rule changes is on permitting (and for lawyers, requiring) use of digital technology to file documents, and to enable the Court to use digital technology to communicate with lawyers and with parties who choose to use Te Au Reka.

### REMOTE PARTICIPATION IN COURT

One of the highest priority initiatives identified in the *Digital Strategy* is implementation of a high-quality and reliable system for remote participation in court proceedings. Used well, remote technology has the potential to enhance access to justice, and to support the efficient and timely determination of court proceedings.

Remote participation refers to a proceeding in court where one or more participants takes part using audio-visual (AV) or audio technology (or the matter is decided on the papers), rather than appearing in person. Remote participation was invaluable during the pandemic and has been in increasing use compared with pre-pandemic rates.

This year, the judiciary has been developing protocols that outline when the use of remote participation is likely to be appropriate and the procedural safeguards that must accompany its use.

---

54 Te au translates as 'current' or 'flow', and 'reka' as 'sweet, palatable and pleasant.' Te Au Reka means the sweet flow – envisaging a case management system that enables court processes to flow seamlessly from beginning to end.

It is the duty of judges to ensure procedural fairness and to ensure that every person who comes before the court, in whatever capacity, is seen, heard and understood. Therefore, judges must retain ultimate control over the conduct of hearings, including the use of remote participation technology.

However, providing default settings and guidance about when a departure from those defaults is likely to be considered will support a more consistent and predictable approach to the use of remote participation.

Consultation with the Ministry of Justice and legal professional associations on the civil and family protocols on remote participation occurred late in the year, for finalisation in early 2025. They set out an expanded range of hearings in which AVL can normally be used. Protocols guiding the use of the technology for criminal proceedings in the High Court and District Court will follow.

It is envisaged that the protocols will provide confidence for the justice system as a whole about the circumstances in which remote participation is likely to be used, based on current legislative settings.

The Courts (Remote Participation) Amendment Act received the Royal Assent on 2 September. The Act introduces a presumption that victims may observe criminal trials and sentencings remotely if the statutory criteria are met and authorises the use of audio links in appropriate criminal, civil and family proceedings. The judiciary is working with the Ministry of Justice to ensure implementation of the Act is well informed by judicial expertise and experience.

## REMOTE PARTICIPATION TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT

There is great variation across the country in the robustness and quality of the technological infrastructure to support remote participation. The fourth priority initiative identified in the *Digital Strategy* is to ensure that reliable, secure, fit-for-purpose network infrastructure and devices are in place across all courts and tribunals. This is critical for the successful and fair implementation of further remote participation.

To better understand the capability across all agencies who have a part in court proceedings, a joint judicial and Ministry of Justice committee, the Remote Participation Services Steering Committee (previously the AV Roadmap Steering Committee) will next year build a view of existing facilities and capability, usage data and analysis of the impacts on proceedings, and an understanding of the infrastructure and processes required for remote participation to enhance access to justice.

## PRINCIPLES GOVERNING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE COURTS

The judiciary has identified 13 core principles to guide all decisions about digital technology used in the court system.

1. **Consistent with core values** – technology should support the delivery of justice in a manner that promotes the rule of law and respects human dignity and the values that underpin the legal system of Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. **Consistent with constitutional responsibilities** – technology solutions should be consistent with the judiciary’s constitutional responsibility for court information, judicial information, and court business.
3. **People-centred** – technology should be centred on meeting the needs of all its users. Users should be involved in design processes, development and testing. Systems should be accessible, intuitive and easy to use; they should make it easier for people to participate in the court system, and to do the right thing.
4. **Inclusive** – the adoption of digital technologies should reduce barriers to access to the court system, including barriers currently faced by people with disabilities, people using languages other than English, and people with limited means. Technology must not increase barriers to access for people who are digitally disadvantaged.
5. **Reliable** – technology used in the courts must be reliable and resilient, appropriately scaled to meet peak demand, and well maintained and supported.
6. **Secure** – information that is communicated and stored using digital technologies must be appropriately secure, appropriately protecting of privacy and confidentiality interests.
7. **Transparent** – people who provide information that is stored digitally should be able to ascertain how that information is stored, who will have access to that information, and the purposes for which that information may be used.
8. **Integrated** – systems should be appropriately integrated to ensure simplicity, ease of use and efficiency.
9. **Flexible and enabling** – the technology that supports the courts must be capable of iterative evolution to meet changing needs and to generate, and take advantage of, new opportunities for innovation and enhanced delivery of justice.
10. **Implementable** – all technology changes should be accompanied by appropriate organisational and process changes to maximise the benefits from the technology, such as targeted change management processes, training and support.
11. **Properly supported** – ongoing training and high-quality and responsive support for users are essential to enable digital technologies to be used effectively across the court system.
12. **Data-driven** – systems should be able to gather data, report on the operation of the court system, and obtain feedback from users to assess efficacy and identify opportunities for improvement.
13. **Based on proven solutions** – our court system should aim to be a fast-follower; we should learn from the experience of other similar jurisdictions and adopt “best of class” solutions that have been deployed successfully in their courts and tribunals.

## AI IN THE COURTS

The Chief Justice established the Artificial Intelligence Advisory Group in 2023, initially to produce best practice guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence. These were the first court guidelines on AI to be issued in the world, and have served as a template for other jurisdictions.<sup>55</sup>

In 2024, following the publication of best practice guidelines here and in several other jurisdictions, UNESCO published *Draft Guidelines for the Use of AI Systems in Courts and Tribunals* for consultation as part of its AI and the Rule of Law programme. The guidelines aim to offer comprehensive guidance to courts and tribunals to ensure that the deployment of AI technologies aligns with the fundamental principles of justice, human rights, and the rule of law. These guidelines should be of interest to judges, legal practitioners and all agencies working in the justice area.

---

<sup>55</sup> The draft guidelines are found at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390781>



## PART FOUR

---

# Open justice and engagement

*The principle of open justice helps to maintain public confidence in our judicial system by allowing the public to see that the judges who administer justice do so diligently and in accordance with the demands of the judicial oath. Ideally, it allows the public a deeper understanding of the issues and tensions that judges must confront and resolve when making decisions about bail and in sentencing.*

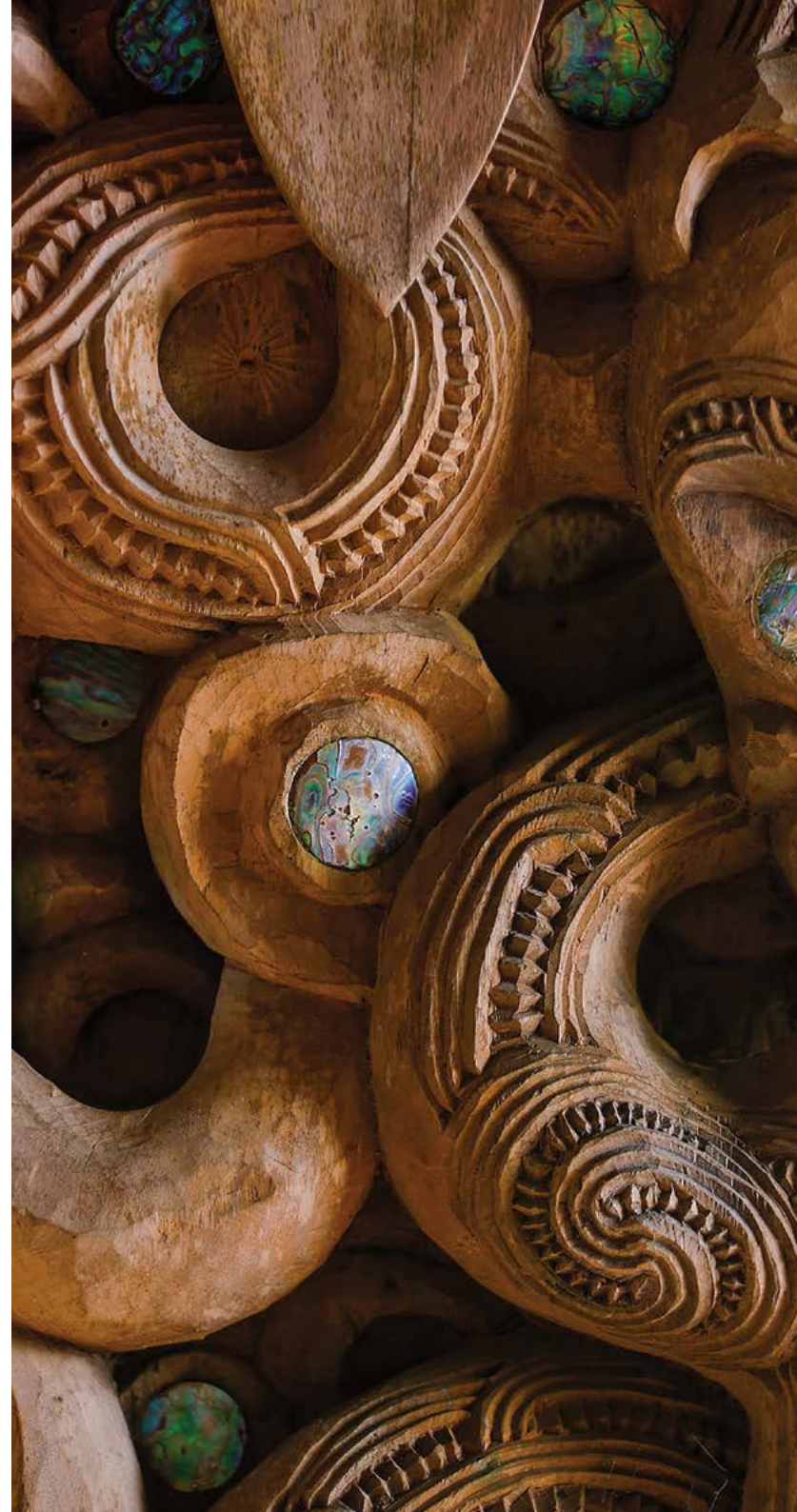
CHIEF JUSTICE HELEN WINKELMANN TO THE LAW  
ASSOCIATION, JULY 2024.

# The principle of open justice

A fundamental principle of the common law is that justice should be administered in public. This principle underpins the public's right to attend court hearings, the media's right to report proceedings, and access rights to court documents (subject to some specific statutory exceptions). Because of this principle, it is not open to the parties to agree to private hearings, to the sealing of the court file, or to the suppression of a judgment.

The requirement that justice be administered in a manner that renders it open to public scrutiny is the surest means of holding judges and courts to the ideal of a fair hearing. In this way, the principle of open justice maintains public confidence in the justice system.

Open justice initiatives aim to make accurate information about the courts and their decisions readily available to the media and the public. This access is critical to public confidence in the judiciary. Some initiatives that support open justice also have the potential to enable access to justice by allowing people who are interested in proceedings, but unable to attend in person, to view them.



# A work programme to support open justice

Two judicial committees are responsible for overseeing the work that supports the principle of open justice.

## Media and Courts Committee

The Media and Courts Committee is an advisory group comprised of judges, senior news leaders, senior Māori media representatives and senior registry staff. The Committee is a forum where media organisations and the judiciary can discuss topics of common concern, identify issues impacting the accurate and timely reporting of the work of the courts, and facilitate understanding between the two institutions.

The District Court Media Committee acts as a sub-committee to the Media and Courts Committee and meets twice a year. The meeting is an opportunity for the District Court judiciary to hear from court reporters and other working journalists to discuss key areas creating difficulty or confusion. The meeting is also attended by Ministry of Justice representatives as many of the action items are assigned to court staff rather than judges.

Concerns identified by these committees are often passed to Huakina kia Tika, for solutions.

## Huakina kia Tika | Open Justice Committee

The Huakina kia Tika | Open Justice Committee is a cross-bench committee which applies an open justice lens to the work of all courts, identifying and promoting practical steps that can be taken to preserve and promote transparency and access. The Committee was established at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when, for the first time, the public was prevented from attend court hearings and when many hearings took place remotely.

The Committee's responsibilities have evolved to include overseeing and promoting initiatives to improve public and media access to the courts and public understanding of the courts and their constitutional role. It also provides a judicial perspective on issues relating to access to court records.

Work on publishing the judgments of all courts on one site, Judicial Decisions Online (JDO), continues. Holding all decisions in one place will make them easier to find and improve access to justice. The Committee is supervising the Ministry of Justice's project to achieve this.

In addition to the decisions of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and High Court, the decisions of the Māori Appellate Court, Māori Land Court and Environment Court are now available through JDO. Before the end of 2025 it is expected that decisions from the Employment, Coroners, Family and Youth Courts will be available on JDO.

In 2024, Huakina kia Tika established the Access to Court Documents Working Group to address inconsistencies in access to documents across registries, and apply holistic solutions.

The Committee is reviewing whether the open justice principles underpinning judgment publication and transparency initiatives remain fit for purpose in an AI-powered online environment.

The Committee also supervised the Supreme Court transparency initiatives outlined below.

## Improving the transparency of judicial administration and court business

This is the fourth year in which the Chief Justice has published an Annual Report to share judicial progress in which she explains issues that exist for the operation of the courts, and initiatives the judiciary are leading to better serve the community.

The Chief Justice as the principal spokesperson for the judiciary regularly speaks on issues relating to the courts, and on the judicial branch of government. The Chief Justice's speeches are published on the Courts of New Zealand website.

## Social media presence

Courts of New Zealand uses two social media platforms – LinkedIn and X. In particular, the social media platforms support the courts' judgment publishing practice. Judgments of public interest that are published on the Courts of New Zealand website are announced on X. All Supreme Court judgments are announced on LinkedIn. The Courts have used Twitter/X since 2015.

Through LinkedIn, the Courts of New Zealand engage with members of the legal profession, academia and the public service, sharing judicial news, events and appointments.

## Publication of bench books on Courts of New Zealand website

Te Kura Kaiwhakawā | Institute of Judicial Studies develops and maintains a suite of online resources for the judiciary called bench books – 12 in total (see page 33) – for judges' use in their day-to-day work on the bench. As part of increasing transparency into court processes, Te Kura published the *Criminal Jury Trials Bench Book* on the Courts of New Zealand website in November.<sup>56</sup> *Te Puna Manawa Whenua | the Māori Land Court Bench Book* and *Kia Mana te Tangata | Judging in Context: A Handbook* are anticipated in 2025.

---

<sup>56</sup> The *Criminal Jury Trials Bench Book* can be found on the Courts of New Zealand website: <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/publications/bench-books>



## Supreme Court outreach and transparency initiatives

The principles expressed in Supreme Court decisions are binding on all courts in New Zealand and have an impact far beyond the parties directly involved in the cases it hears. Therefore, it is important that the work of the Supreme Court is readily available and accessible. There are a number of initiatives in place to increase accessibility:

- » *Providing supporting information about upcoming cases, and about judgments delivered:* To improve public understanding of the work of the Supreme Court, a case synopsis is prepared for each case the court hears. In addition, each judgment issued by the Court is accompanied by an explanatory media release. Both case synopses and media releases are published on the Courts of New Zealand website and shared via social media.
- » *Live streaming of hearings:* Increasingly, hearings of the Supreme Court are livestreamed with a link made available through the Courts of New Zealand website. Hearings that feature suppressed information are not livestreamed.
- » *Publication of recorded livestreamed hearings on Courts of New Zealand website:* Livestreamed hearings are recorded and published on the Courts of New Zealand website after the hearing has concluded.<sup>57</sup> This gives educational institutions, members of the legal profession and members of the public the ability to view the hearing at any time.
- » *Publication of substantive appeal submissions online:* The written submissions of counsel for appeal hearings are now published on the Courts of New Zealand website a day before the hearing begins, with limited exceptions. Publishing these documents supports law schools with the teaching of law, advocacy, and procedure.
- » *Embargo judgment process:* The court provides judgments under embargo in cases of high public interest. In this situation, the judgment is provided in advance of its formal delivery to counsel, parties, and media (and, sometimes, others).
- » *Supreme Court sitting outside of Wellington:* The Court has adopted a practice of having sitting weeks in Auckland and Christchurch every year. Holding hearings outside Wellington enables interested members of the public, the profession, academics and law students to see the court in action.

---

<sup>57</sup> Livestreamed hearings can be found on the Courts of New Zealand website: <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/streaming>

- » *Supreme Court complex tours:* The tours programme at the Supreme Court complex was refreshed in 2024, with a focus on engaging with schools and their students, and aligning tour content with curriculum content for intermediate and secondary schools. Students recreate a trial in the Old High Court, using resources derived from historic cases that have been tried there. Visitors to the complex learn about New Zealand's court system, the constitutional role of the courts, the Supreme Court as the apex court of New Zealand, and some of the history of the building.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH LAW SCHOOLS

On its away sittings, the Court hosted a question-and-answer session between the judges of the Supreme Court and counsel appearing, and academics and students from local law schools. For preparation for the event, the Court recorded a video introduction to the hearing, outlining the cases that would be advanced by counsel, and provided this in advance to law schools.

## Publication of briefing to incoming Attorney-General

In March 2024, with the agreement of the Attorney-General, the Chief Justice publicly released the memorandum she provided to the incoming Attorney-General following the 2023 general election. This document covers topics such as promoting access to justice, strengthening the rule of law through efficient and effective courts and ensuring a well-functioning judiciary. The memorandum was published on the Courts of New Zealand website. See Memorandum to incoming Attorney-General (2023).

## WELLINGTON HERITAGE FESTIVAL: OPENING THE DOORS OF THE OLD HIGH COURT

More than 140 visitors, including families, school groups and a local Cubs group, were welcomed through the Old High Court in Wellington on a Wednesday evening in November as part of the city's Heritage Festival. Guests learnt about past Chief Justices, the history of the building and previous cases heard in the Old High Court, including how sentencing has changed over time.

## PART FIVE

---

# Pacific and international engagement

*The strength of the links of history and family between all our nations is powerful. So, we should be working together, because we all want to build more just societies in our jurisdictions. There are enormous benefits to be gained from sharing our wisdom and knowledge, but also I think we can be more ambitious than that and start to work together to share our efforts to strengthen the court and judicial systems that support that just society.*

CHIEF JUSTICE HELEN WINKELMANN TO THE PACIFIC CHIEF JUSTICES LEADERSHIP FORUM, FEBRUARY 2024.

The New Zealand judiciary fosters strong links with judiciaries in the Pacific, Australia, and around the world. The Chief Justice regularly engages with judicial forums, such as the Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand, and the Chief Justices of the Pacific.

## Supporting justice in the Pacific: The Pacific Justice Sector Programme

The Pacific Justice Sector Programme (PJSP) works with Chief Justices and courts across the Pacific to support accessible, fair, responsive and efficient justice. In this way, it contributes towards a stable, prosperous and resilient Pacific region. PJSP's work is part of New Zealand's regional justice support activity, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and delivered by Te Kura Kaiwhakawā | Institute of Judicial Studies, which sits within the Office of the Chief Justice.

An effective justice system relies on a number of different officials and agencies working effectively together – judges, lay judicial officers, court staff, legal profession, other justice stakeholders, and communities all contribute to an effective justice system. Therefore, PJSP's programme is built around six strategic priorities or pou (pillars) that support the wider justice system. These are: judicial education, litigation skills for lawyers and legal advocates, access to justice for vulnerable groups, judicial leadership, partnerships, and the efficiency and transparency of courts.

PJSP's partner countries are the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

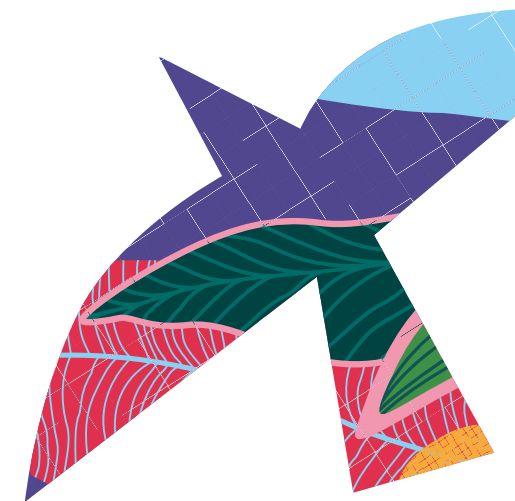
### PROVIDING TRAINING FOR JUDGES AND JUDICIAL OFFICERS IN THE PACIFIC

In 2024, PJSP provided training for hundreds of judicial officers, including judges and lay judicial officers, across the region. Approximately half of those participants were women – despite the systemic underrepresentation of women in legal roles in most Pacific Island countries.

In February, Samoa hosted the second Chief Justices' Leadership Forum. This two-day conference was attended by 14 Chief Justices from the region. The forum attendees were honoured to be invited by the village of Amaile to view how an ifoga ceremony is conducted.

PJSP continued to develop regional resources such as bench books and publications on important legal topics. The revised edition of the *Cook Islands High Court Bench Book* was published in March 2024.

PJSP also facilitated the attendance of judicial officers at international conferences.





## ADVANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN THE PACIFIC

One of the main strategic priorities for PJSP is to support, improve and expand access to justice across the Pacific, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, children, remote communities and people with disabilities.

In September 2024, PJSP facilitated two engagement workshops in Kiribati as part of an “Expanding Access to Justice” Project, to consult with community and government stakeholders about how the justice sector could respond to the needs of women and children more effectively. A sector-wide range of participants were recommended by Chief Justice of Kiribati, Tetiro Semilota, and included representatives from the police, courts, Ministry of Justice, the Attorney-General, Ministry of Interior (Island and Local Councils), Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs, the Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre, Office of the People’s Lawyer and community leaders.

Three initiatives have been set up as a result: a mechanism has been established to co-ordinate between the courts, police and other partners to ensure vulnerable individuals are not overlooked in the justice system; key project activities to improve access to justice have been designed for the courts, police and the Office of the People’s Lawyer; and a multi-stakeholder Coordinating Committee has been established to ensure that the justice sector continues to identify ways to enhance access to justice for women and children.

## SUPPORTING THE LEGAL PROFESSION IN THE PACIFIC

Skilled legal advocates are essential to the efficient and just outcomes in court, and indeed to the rule of law. In 2024, PJSP and the New Zealand Law Society Continuing Learning Education (NZLS CLE) delivered a three-day *Introduction to Civil Litigation Skills* course in Samoa.

The workshop was designed to support 30 entry-level litigation lawyers from across the Pacific develop practical skills and confidence with civil litigation. Chief Justice of New Zealand and Tokelau Helen Winkelmann, Chief Justice of Samoa Satiu Simativa Perese, former Chief Justice of Tonga Michael Whitten, and Justices Willie Young and Raynor Asher of the Court of Appeal of Samoa were on the teaching faculty.

A similar course was delivered in the Solomon Islands to 30 more lawyers from across the Pacific in November.

PJSP supports the delivery of resources, training and tools to legal practitioners and other justice sector advocates to provide them with the confidence to perform their roles well and therefore to support just and timely decisions. The first of PJSP’s Litigation Skills video series was released this year, in which legal experts from New Zealand cover key topics to help legal counsel prepare for court.

## JUDICIAL SUPPORT FOR PACIFIC COURTS AND COURT STAFF

There is a strong tradition of retired and sitting New Zealand judges supporting education programmes and acting as mentors for new Pacific judges and judicial officers. This includes longstanding arrangements for the secondment of serving District Court judges to the Supreme Court of Vanuatu, and for serving Māori Land Court judges to sit in the Cook Islands High Court (land division) and the High Court of Niue. The Chief Justice of Niue Craig Coxhead also serves on the Māori Land Court Bench as Deputy Chief Judge.

Retired and sitting New Zealand judges also sit in a variety of first-instance and appellate courts.

In 2024, current and former members of the New Zealand judiciary served in courts in:

- » the Cook Islands
- » the Republic of Fiji
- » Niue
- » the Pitcairn Islands
- » the Solomon Islands
- » the Independent State of Samoa
- » the Kingdom of Tonga and
- » the Republic of Vanuatu.

## Tokelau justice sector reform

Tokelau is part of the Realm of New Zealand. The Chief Justice of New Zealand is also the Chief Justice of Tokelau. This year the Chief Justice met with senior officials at the Tokelau Liaison Office in Apia. Plans for the Chief Justice to visit Tokelau in October were postponed as she was to have travelled on the *HMS Manawanui*. This would have been the first visit of a Chief Justice to the island nation since 2011, when Chief Justice Sian Elias visited.

Tokelau faces a number of issues relating to access to justice. It is a country with a very small population spread over three islands geographically distant from each other. Recommendations to address these issues and to strengthen access to justice were made in late 2019. A project in partnership with the government of Tokelau has been established to progress improvements.

Decision-making on these reforms is to be undertaken in partnership between the government of Tokelau and the government of New Zealand. A working party comprising equal representation from Tokelau and New Zealand has been established to begin the process for progressing reform options. Tokelau is continuing to consider and discuss the options for reform.

## Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration

New Zealand judges, court administrators and counsel are among the members of the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration (AIJA). Its principal objectives include research into judicial administration and the development and conduct of educational programmes for judicial officers, court administrators and members of the legal profession in relation to court administration and judicial systems.

## International Association of Women Judges

The New Zealand judiciary maintains proactive connections with international colleagues. The New Zealand Association of Women Judges | Te Kāhui Kaiwhakawā Wāhine o Aotearoa is affiliated with the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ). The IAWJ is dedicated to the rule of law, gender equality and access to justice. It has over 6,500 members from around 100 countries.

# Appendix 1

## The Statement of Principles

29 NOVEMBER 2018

The Statement of Principles—Courts of New Zealand ([courtsofnz.govt.nz](http://courtsofnz.govt.nz))

### 1. PURPOSE OF STATEMENT

- 1.1. The constitutional principle of separation of powers requires that the courts be independent of the Executive to ensure impartiality in judicial decisions. As well as requiring freedom from interference in individual judicial decisions, the constitutional principle also depends on institutional independence in organising and managing the work of the courts.
- 1.2. The legislation under which the courts of New Zealand operate places on the judiciary the responsibility for the orderly and efficient conduct of the business of the courts. One of the purposes of the legislation is to improve the transparency of court arrangements “in a manner consistent with judicial independence”.
- 1.3. The judiciary is responsible for the work of the courts, but is supported by the Ministry of Justice, a department of the Executive government. The Secretary for Justice (through the Minister for Courts) is accountable to Parliament for the expenditure of the public funds needed to administer justice in the courts.
- 1.4. The judiciary and the Ministry of Justice therefore share responsibility for delivering justice through the courts. Both have interests in developing and maintaining a system of justice that is just, fair, accessible, modern, and effective, and which delivers timely, impartial, and open justice. The effective and efficient functioning of courts is assisted by the Ministry and the judges maintaining a constructive relationship involving open communication and respect for their respective responsibilities and institutional constraints.
- 1.5. The purpose of this statement of principles is to recognise the respective separate responsibilities of the judiciary and the Ministry, and responsibilities that are shared between the judiciary and the Ministry.

## 2 THE ROLES OF THE MINISTRY AND THE JUDICIARY

- 2.1. The Secretary for Justice, as Chief Executive of the Ministry of Justice, is responsible to the Minister for Courts. The Minister is responsible to Parliament for the proper use of the public resources used to support and run the courts, and for ensuring that sufficient resources are available to provide an accessible and effective justice system. The Secretary for Justice is formally responsible under the State Sector Act 1988 for employing staff who support the judiciary, including the Registry staff of the courts. Registrars, Deputy Registrars and other officers may be appointed under the State Sector Act 1988 to support the conduct of the business of each court, but act under judicial direction in doing so.
- 2.2. The Chief Justice is head of the judiciary in New Zealand and is also ultimately responsible under the Senior Courts Act 2016 for the orderly and efficient conduct of the Senior Courts' business. The Chief Judge of the District Court is ultimately responsible under the District Court Act 2016 for the orderly and efficient conduct of the business of the District Court. The Chief Judges of the Employment Court, Māori Land Court and Environment Court similarly have statutory responsibilities for the orderly and expeditious discharge of the business of their courts.
- 2.3. In conducting the business of the courts, it is necessary for the judiciary to engage with the Ministry of Justice on matters of overlapping responsibility, including in the assessment of need and in the provision of facilities and resources to support the courts. Where the engagement is in relation to matters affecting all courts, the Chief Justice and the Secretary for Justice need to lead the engagement. This statement addresses the basis for the necessary engagement to ensure that it does not compromise the constitutional principle of judicial independence and is similarly respectful of the Executive's different statutory and constitutional responsibilities.

### 3. JUDICIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1. The judiciary's responsibilities in relation to conducting the business of the courts include:
- a) the scheduling of sittings of the court, the assignment of judges and judicial officers, and the listing of cases and applications (including those for alternative dispute resolution);
  - b) the use to be made of courts and their precincts;
  - c) the direction and supervision of Registry staff in relation to the business of the court;
  - d) the selection and supervision of immediate judicial support staff such as personal assistants, clerks and other similar staff (subject to paragraph 4.2(d));
  - e) the management of staff to support the Chief Justice and heads of bench;
  - f) the provision of judicial education and training;
  - g) the control and supervision of the use of information technology for the business of the court;
  - h) the custody and control of court records, whether or not held electronically, and control over access to them;
  - i) measuring court performance.

### 4. MINISTRY OF JUSTICE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COURT SUPPORT

- 4.1. The Secretary for Justice is solely responsible for decisions on all matters of expenditure of public money. The Secretary is accountable to the responsible Minister for the financial management, financial performance, and financial sustainability of the department.
- 4.2. Ministry of Justice responsibilities in relation to the business of the courts include:
- a) providing the judiciary with support to enable heads of bench to discharge their responsibility for the orderly and efficient conduct of court business, including those responsibilities in paragraph 3 above;
  - b) supporting the judiciary in improving access to justice and best practice in the courts;
  - c) the provision, maintenance and operation of technology and buildings for the operation of the courts;
  - d) discharging its responsibilities with respect to staff in accordance with the State Sector Act 1988;
  - e) the maintenance of court registries;
  - f) ensuring security and safety in court buildings;

- g) measuring and reporting on the use of the resources for which it is responsible;
- h) supporting the offices of the Chief Justice and the offices of the heads of the other courts to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.

## 5. SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1. Because the work of the courts draws on public resources, it is necessary for the judiciary and the Ministry of Justice to cooperate so that those resources are used efficiently and effectively.
- 5.2. The Secretary for Justice is responsible for ensuring there is appropriate and timely consultation through the Chief Justice about how its responsibilities for court administration will be provided, including the structuring of staff support and other resources required. Such consultation also includes the design and provision of appropriate court facilities and information technology strategies and initiatives.
- 5.3. The Secretary for Justice will consult the Chief Justice annually about the operating budgets for the courts.
- 5.4. The Secretary for Justice and the judiciary will cooperate in the collection and sharing of information necessary to assist each in their functions consistently with the principle of judicial independence and executive accountability for the expenditure of public funds.

- 5.5. The maintenance of court records is a shared responsibility between the Secretary for Justice and the Chief Justice. The judiciary has the responsibility for the custody and control of records of court proceedings and associated court administration, whether or not held electronically, and control over access to them (subject to any legislative requirements and any policies developed by the judiciary). The Ministry is responsible for the collection and storage of records relating to the use of Ministry resources, including the archiving of court and judicial records on the basis agreed between the Chief Justice and the Secretary for Justice from time to time.

## 6. STANDING COMMITTEES FOR ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE MINISTRY AND THE JUDICIARY

- 6.1. Following enactment of the 2016 legislation and restructuring of responsibilities for operations in the Ministry of Justice, restructuring of the processes of engagement is necessary. Courts administration requires cooperation between the Ministry and the judiciary at the operating level for the Senior Courts, District Court and specialist courts. It is also necessary to ensure that strategic direction for the courts be set by cooperation between the judiciary and the Ministry. The Chief Justice and the Secretary for Justice are to agree on a new structure for engagement between the Ministry and the judiciary at both the operational and at a strategic level (through separate joint committees for the Senior Courts, District Court and specialist courts) and it is agreed that any such means of engagement will be kept under review.

## Appendix 2

### Judicial and Shared Committees' summaries

#### PRINCIPAL JUDICIAL COMMITTEES

» The cross-court **Legislation and Law Reform Committee** provides the Chief Justice and heads of bench with advice and recommendations on legislation and other law reform proposals that have implications for the operation of the courts and the judiciary. The Committee comprises judges from the courts of general jurisdiction and, as required, representatives of the specialist jurisdictions.

The Committee advises the Chief Justice and heads of bench about Bills and other law reform proposals on which it may be appropriate for the judiciary to comment. Matters that the committee considers, and may bring to the attention of the Chief Justice, include:

- restrictions on accessing the courts, including in particular restrictions on judicial review;
- provisions affecting access to justice, including matters such as legal aid and court fees;

- changes to any existing role, function, jurisdiction, or power of all courts of general and specialised jurisdiction, including proposals for new roles, functions, jurisdiction or powers of these courts;
- measures with implications for the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court;
- measures affecting the scope and enforcement of the law of contempt;
- proposals affecting the reporting of or commentary on court proceedings;
- proposals affecting court procedure, including proposals for separate rules of procedure for a court;
- proposals involving the disclosure of court record information;
- proposals affecting the role and powers of court registrars;
- creation of new offences and penalties and use of the civil jurisdiction to enforce criminal penalties;
- creation of new powers of arrest and detention;
- proposals affecting the law of evidence, including self-incrimination and privilege;
- creation of new powers of investigation, including compulsory provision or sharing of information;
- implications for the courts of changes in sentencing laws, without comment on government policy motivating proposed changes;
- proposals involving the status and terms and conditions of appointment of judges;
- proposals with implications for fundamental rights and freedoms or the rule of law;
- proposals that would extend a court's workload and require additional resources;
- proposals concerning cross-border legal co-operation, and in particular cross-border judicial cooperation.

The Committee engaged on several law reform proposals, including:

- Victims of Family Violence (Strengthening Legal Protections) Legislation Bill – consideration of workability issues.
- Victims of Sexual Violence (Strengthening Legal Protections) Legislation Bill – assisting the Chief Justice in preparation of a submission to the Select Committee on the name suppression proposal contained in the Bill as reported back.
- Gangs Legislation Reform Bill – consideration of workability issues.
- Sentencing Reforms – consideration of workability issues and implications for the constitutional responsibilities of the judiciary in relation to sentencing.
- Remote Participation Bill – engagement with the Ministry of Justice on workability issues identified by judges.
- Remote Participation (First Principles Review) – engagement on options for reform in the context of a first principles review.
- Community Magistrates – assisting with response to the Ministry Discussion Paper.
- Review of Adult Decision-Making Capacity – review of the Law Commission Issues Paper and assisting with a response to the Law Commission.

- Review of Preventive Measures Proposals (preventive detention, extended supervision orders and public protection orders) – assisting the Chief Justice with a response to the Law Commission.
- Fast-track Approvals Bill – assisting the Chief Justice with a submission to the Select Committee.
- Jury Trial Reforms – consideration of Ministry of Justice Consultation Paper and provision of advice to the Chief Justice.
- Court Fees Consultation Paper – supporting the Chief Justice in providing a response to the Ministry of Justice consultation process.
- Disputes Tribunal Amendment Bill – assisting the Chief Justice with a submission to the Select Committee.

» **Tomo Mai** was established in August 2024 (merging the former Te Awa Tuia Tangata | Judicial Diversity and Tomo Mai | Inclusive Workplace and Courtrooms committees) to oversee diversity and inclusion initiatives across the judiciary. Delivering initiatives via working groups, the Committee’s overarching purpose is to:

- promote a judiciary reflective of and knowledgeable about the communities it serves.
- promote a court environment in which everyone can meaningfully participate in proceedings.

In 2024, the committee established working groups to focus on the following three initiatives:

- *Revising the Etiquette guidelines for counsel in court* – the working group continued to refine a revised draft which includes a brief additional section on remote participation. A review is underway to ensure that disability and accessibility issues have been given due consideration. The revised draft will be shared with heads of bench for feedback in 2025.

- Disability and Access to Justice – the working group drafted a framework to guide its work, adopting the UNCRPD definition of disability and identifying short, medium-, and long-term goals; undertook stakeholder mapping; and collaborated with Te Kura including providing feedback on *Kia Mana te Tangata Judging in Context: A Handbook*, developing education programmes including education on disability awareness, ableism and in response to Recommendation 33 of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care (see page 31).
- Judicial Diversity – The group is planning consultation with current and previous heads of bench involved in the appointment of the senior court judges to establish: how the appointment process takes place in practice; selection criteria for assessing candidates; practical constraints that impact diversity in judicial appointments; potential unconscious biases in the appointment process.
- » The cross-court **Judicial Wellbeing Steering Group** provides oversight and direction to the whole of courts wellbeing work programme, and, in conjunction with the heads of bench, encourages uptake of wellbeing support across the judiciary (see page 28). The group has an “expert-informed but judge-led” wellbeing stewardship role and advocates frontline perspectives to ensure that wellbeing factors are at the forefront of all judicial administration discussions.

In 2024, the group revised its terms of reference to reflect its role as the kaitiaki of judges’ wellbeing and clarify its overarching purposes. It has established a future work programme that includes gathering feedback from judges who have accessed support, drafting guidance to support wellbeing conversations and collaborating with other judicial wellbeing groups and the Senior Courts Education Committee.

- » The governing board of **Te Kura Kaiwhakawā | Institute of Judicial Studies** directs the educational programme and under the direction of judicial editorial committees develops judicial educational resources (bench books) for most courts.

Te Kura endeavours to be:

- proactive – developing programmes and resources that align with significant initiatives and developments for the courts, whilst anticipating future needs and opportunities;
- tailored and personalised – meeting the individual needs of a more diverse judiciary, wherever judges are in their career;
- grounded in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific – supporting the judiciary with knowledge and skills to administer the laws of Aotearoa New Zealand; making well-informed decisions, responsive to community needs, in a culturally safe environment; and
- enduring and agile – building sustainable organisational foundations, whilst preserving flexibility.

2024 was Te Kura’s first year implementing its refreshed strategic plan focused on the four goals above to provide more relevant legal and contextual judicial education and resources, and to be more responsive to judicial education needs by focusing on the day-to-day experiences of judges sitting in court.

- » The role of the **Judicial Conduct Advisory Committee** is to advise the Heads of Bench Committee on the currency of the Guidelines for Judicial Conduct, to review existing internal processes for dealing with complaints against judges, including (but not limited to) complaints made by members of the legal profession, and to provide informal ad hoc advice on various conduct issues as they arise.

## SHARED COMMITTEES

Committees made up of judges, registry or ministry staff and, on occasion, members of the legal profession consider strategic and operational matters. The key strategic committee is the Courts Strategic Partnership Group mentioned above at page 11. Other committees include the following:

- » In February 2024, the Information Governance Committee and the Judicial Reference Group for Technology in Courts merged to form the **Information and Digital Governance Committee (IDGC)**. The IDGC is a joint committee that enables the judiciary to work with the Ministry of Justice to progress the Digital Strategy and to give effect to their separate and shared responsibilities in relation to information management and use and performance of digital technology. The IDGC is responsible for making recommendations and providing advice to the Chief Justice and the Secretary for Justice on relevant topics.

- » **The Judicial Libraries Management Board** guides the acquisition and provision of online and hard copy research materials for judges.

The board continued its focus on improving the quality and accessibility of online resources. Group and individual training was provided so that judges can feel confident using online resources effectively and efficiently and increasingly take an online-first approach. Annual reviews of the library material provided for judges' chambers ensure they best reflect individual subject interests and requirements and that they complement rather than duplicate online resources. The

Board supports judges' efforts to increase their knowledge of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori through the implementation of Mātauranga Māori in the Judicial Libraries programme.

- » **Huakina kia Tika | Open Justice Committee** is a cross-bench committee which applies an open justice lens to the work of all courts, identifying and promoting practical steps that can be taken to preserve and promote transparency and access.

Committee activity is reported at page 77.

- » The **Media and Courts Committee** reviews the arrangements to facilitate news media reporting of the courts and provides a forum for the judiciary, media and the ministry to discuss related issues such as access to court records.

Committee activity is reported at page 77.

- » The **Rules Committee** is a statutory body that includes judges, senior law officers, ministry staff and members of the profession. The Committee has responsibility for making rules concerning civil and criminal procedure for most courts.

The Committee continued to focus on giving effect to the *Improving Access to Civil Justice* report, released in 2022, by progressing work to amend the High Court Rules (the Rules). The changes will significantly alter civil procedure and are aimed at bringing earlier focus to the issues of determinative significance in a case, in order to achieve faster resolution in civil proceedings.

A series of judicially-led roadshows will take place in mid-2025, to inform and educate the profession on the upcoming changes before they take effect from 1 January 2026.

In 2024, the Committee also:

- » saw the promulgation of changes to the District Court, High Court and Court of Appeal that allow self-represented litigants to claim costs;
- » continued to consider rules on participants' use of te reo Māori in court proceedings;
- » addressed changes to the Criminal Procedure Rules in light of the repeal of the three strikes legislation;
- » undertook sub-committee work exploring whether experts in criminal proceedings should comply with a code of conduct, timeframes for the provision of victim impact statements, and considering the Law Commission's recommendations in its third review of the Evidence Act 2006.
- » continued work to introduce new Court of Appeal Criminal Rules which would replace the 2001 Criminal Rules. Work will continue in 2025.
- » The **Criminal Practice Committee** reviews matters of criminal practice and procedure at a systemic level, recommending appropriate changes. Committee membership comprises justice sector departmental representatives, members of the legal profession and judges from the criminal trial and appellate courts, uniquely positioning it to encourage collaboration and provide oversight.

- » In 2024, a significant, overarching consideration for all aspects of the Committee's work was understanding and beginning to respond to the recommendations contained in *Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light*, the final report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into abuse in state care. The Committee continued to discuss custodial and sentencing issues for caregivers with dependent family members, and the closely related issue of women in custody. Following the removal of legal aid funding for s 27 reports, a subcommittee was established to identify alternative methods for ensuring that judges are provided with background information about defendants that may be critical to sentencing.

The Committee considered security and courtroom layout, issues with mental health legislation in the criminal jurisdiction, and the use of technology in prisons to enable prisoners to access disclosure, lawyers, and the courts. The Legal Services Commissioner was invited to join the Committee, and shared updates on the review of the Duty Lawyer Service and pre-approval of junior counsel for certain sexual violence matters. Updates on the progress of the Te Au Reka project and the work of Te Kura Kaiwhakawā were also received by the Committee.

- » The judiciary and Ministry of Justice share responsibility for delivering justice through the courts. The Secretary for Justice is responsible for obtaining sufficient funds from Parliament to run the courts and for their proper use.

The **Strategic Priorities and Budget Group** (SPB, formerly the Judicial Budget Advisory Group) was established in 2024 to support the Chief Justice and heads of bench to engage effectively with the Ministry of Justice and, when appropriate, with Ministers on courts-related budget bids, and on resourcing of the infrastructure to support the judicial branch of government.

SPB met regularly with Ministry officials to inform the Ministry-led Performance Plan, which outlines the management of Ministry resources (many of which affect court operations), including workforce, technology and property, and advise on the efficacy of savings and “invest to save” proposals.

In light of prospective change to the courts operating model, the Chief Justice set up a group in late 2024 to develop a judicial view of “future courts”.

## Appendix 3

# How judges are Appointed

### THE SELECTION PROCESS

Judges and judicial officers are generally appointed by the Governor-General who acts on the advice of the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General consults with the Chief Justice for appointments to the senior courts, and with the relevant head of bench for appointments to other courts.

There are protocols setting out the process and criteria for appointment to the High Court and the District Court.

- » Judicial Appointments Protocol – Senior Courts;
- » Judicial Appointments Information Booklet – District Court; and
- » Information on Statutory Vacancies (Ministry of Justice).

For appointment of the Chief Justice, the Governor-General acts on the advice of the Prime Minister. For the appointment of Environment Court judges, the Attorney-General is required to consult with both the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Māori Development before advising the Governor-General. Appointments to the Māori Land Court and the Māori Appellate Court are made by the Minister of Māori Affairs after consultation with the Attorney-General. Appointments to the Coroners Court are made by the Governor-General on the advice of the Attorney-General, after consultation with the Minister of Justice.

### QUALITIES OF A JUDGE

The Judicial Appointments Protocol provides clearly defined criteria for assessing whether a person is suitable for judicial appointment. These criteria cover legal ability, qualities of character (including personal honesty and integrity, open-mindedness, impartiality, courtesy and social sensitivity), personal technical skills (such as effective oral communication, mental agility and time management and organisational skills), and reflection of society (the quality of being a person who is aware of, and sensitive to, the diversity of modern New Zealand society).

### RECOGNISING PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN JUDICIAL APPLICANTS

The application process ensures that consideration is given to an applicant's previous professional and personal experience, including information about previous service to the community and commitment to access to justice.

The expression of interest form that is filled in by anyone nominating a candidate for, or expressing interest in, appointment to the bench contains specific questions about language and cultural knowledge, life experience, past involvement in access to justice initiatives, and in teaching and learning in the field of legal or judicial education. An example is the High Court judge expression of interest form.

- » [Expression of Interest High Court Judge 2022 \(justice.govt.nz\)](https://justice.govt.nz/).

## Appendix 4

# Current judges and judicial officers of the Courts of New Zealand | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Ngā Kōti o Aotearoa

*As of 31 December 2024 (unless otherwise stated)*

### SUPREME COURT | TE KŌTI MANA NUI

#### Chief Justice of New Zealand | Te Tumu Whakawā o Aotearoa

The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann GNZM

#### Judges of the Supreme Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Mātāmua o Te Kōti Mana Nui

##### *In order of seniority*

The Honourable Dame Susan Glazebrook DNZM

The Honourable Dame Ellen France DNZM

The Honourable Sir Joe Williams KNZM

The Honourable Sir Stephen Kós KNZM

The Honourable Justice Forrest Miller

#### Acting Judges of the Supreme Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Mātāmua Whakakapi o Te Kōti Mana Nui

The Honourable Sir William Young KNZM  
(until 13 April 2024)

The Honourable Sir Mark O'Regan KNZM  
(from 1 February 2024)

### COURT OF APPEAL | TE KŌTI PĪRA

#### President of the Court of Appeal | Te Tumuaki o Te Kōti Pīra

The Honourable Justice Mark Cooper  
*Ngāti Māhanga*  
(until 20 November 2024)

The Honourable Justice Christine French  
(from 21 November 2024)

#### Judges of the Court of Appeal | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Mātāmua o Te Kōti Pīra

##### *In order of seniority*

The Honourable Justice Brendan Brown  
(until 12 January 2024)

The Honourable Justice Murray Gilbert  
(until 31 May 2024)

The Honourable Justice Patricia Courtney

The Honourable Justice David Collins  
(until 18 March 2024)

The Honourable Justice David Goddard

The Honourable Justice Sarah Katz

The Honourable Justice Jillian Mallon  
The Honourable Justice Susan Thomas  
The Honourable Justice Rebecca Ellis  
(from 15 January 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Francis Cooke  
(from 19 March 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Matthew Palmer  
(from 1 June 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Neil Campbell  
(from 21 November 2024)

**Acting Judges of the Court of Appeal | Ngā Kaiwhakawā  
Mātāmua Whakakapi o Te Kōti Pira**

*In order of seniority*

The Honourable Justice David Collins  
(from 19 March 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Edwin Wylie  
(until 30 June 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Anne Hinton  
(from 1 July 2024)

**HIGH COURT | TE KŌTI MATUA**

**Chief High Court Judge | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o Te Kōti Matua**

The Honourable Justice Sally Fitzgerald  
Based in Auckland

**Judges of the High Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Mātāmua o Te Kōti Matua**  
*In order of seniority, grouped by location*

**Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau**

The Honourable Justice Geoffrey Venning  
The Honourable Justice Graham Lang  
The Honourable Justice Timothy Brewer ONZM ED  
The Honourable Justice Mary Peters  
The Honourable Justice Mark Woolford  
(until 30 April 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Christian Whata  
*Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Tamateatūtahi-Kawiti of Te Arawa*  
The Honourable Justice Matthew Muir  
The Honourable Justice Rebecca Edwards  
The Honourable Justice Mathew Downs  
The Honourable Justice Pheroze Jagose  
The Honourable Justice Gerard van Bohemen  
The Honourable Justice Grant Powell  
The Honourable Justice Ian Gault  
The Honourable Justice Tracey Walker  
The Honourable Justice Neil Campbell  
(until 20 November 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Michael Robinson  
The Honourable Justice Layne Harvey  
*Ngāti Awa, Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki,  
Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa, Te Whānau-a-Apanui*  
The Honourable Justice Kiri Tahana  
*Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Māhino, Tapuika*  
The Honourable Justice Peter Andrew

The Honourable Justice David Johnstone  
The Honourable Justice Andrew Becroft <sup>QSO</sup>  
The Honourable Justice Jane Anderson  
The Honourable Justice Laura O’Gorman  
The Honourable Justice Michele Wilkinson-Smith  
(from 1 February 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Gregory Blanchard  
(from 1 July 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Dani Gardiner  
(from 21 November 2024)

#### Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara

The Honourable Justice Rebecca Ellis  
(until 14 January 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Matthew Palmer  
(until 31 May 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Peter Churchman  
The Honourable Justice Christine Grice <sup>CNZM</sup>  
The Honourable Justice Francis Cooke  
(until 18 March 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Cheryl Gwyn  
*Ngāi Tahu, Ngāpuhi*  
The Honourable Justice Andru Isac  
The Honourable Justice Helen McQueen  
The Honourable Justice Paul Radich  
The Honourable Justice Dale La Hood  
The Honourable Justice Karen Grau  
(from 29 January 2024)

The Honourable Justice Jason McHerron  
(from 19 March 2024)  
The Honourable Justice David Boldt  
(from 1 May 2024)

#### Christchurch | Ōtautahi

The Honourable Justice Cameron Mander  
The Honourable Justice Rachel Dunningham  
The Honourable Justice Melanie Harland  
The Honourable Justice Jonathan Eaton  
The Honourable Justice Lisa Preston

#### Acting Judges of the High Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Mātāmua Whakakapi o Te Kōti Matua *Grouped by location*

#### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

The Honourable Justice Christine Gordon  
(until 31 December 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Anne Hinton  
(until 30 June 2024)  
The Honourable Justice Simon Moore  
(until 31 December 2024)

#### Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara

The Honourable Justice Helen Cull  
(until 31 December 2024)

#### Christchurch | Ōtautahi

The Honourable Justice Rob Osborne  
(until 31 December 2024)

**Associate Judges of the High Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Tuarua o Te Kōti Matua**  
*In order of seniority, grouped by location*

**Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau**

Associate Judge Dani Gardiner  
(until 20 November 2024)

Associate Judge Rachel Sussock

Associate Judge Clive Taylor

Associate Judge Grant Brittain

Associate Judge Paul Cogswell  
(from 21 November 2024)

**Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara**

Associate Judge Kenneth Johnston  
(Chair, Independent Police Conduct Authority |  
Mana Whanonga Pirihimana Motuhake from 1 May 2023)

Associate Judge Andrew Skelton

**Christchurch | Ōtautahi**

Associate Judge Dale Lester

Associate Judge Owen Paulsen

**DISTRICT COURT | TE KŌTI-Ā-ROHE**

**District Court Leadership | Ngā Kaihautū o te Waka o Te Kōti-ā-Rohe**

Chief Judge Heemi Taumaunu <i>Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Konohi, Ngāi Tahu</i> Chief District Court Judge   Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o te Kōti-ā-Rohe	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Jacquelyn Moran Principal Family Court Judge   Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o te Kōti Whānau	General/Family

Judge Ida Malosi Principal Youth Court Judge   Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o te Kōti Taiohi	General/Family/Youth
Judge Russell Collins National Executive Judge	General/Jury/Civil

**Judges of the District Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Te Kōti-ā-Rohe**  
*In alphabetical order, grouped by location*

**Kaikohe**

Judge Michelle Howard-Sager <i>Te Whakatōhea, Ngāpuhi</i>	General/Family/Youth
Judge Brandt Shortland <i>Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Ranginui</i>	General/Jury/Youth

**Whangārei | Whangārei-terenga-parāoa**

Judge Taryn Bayley <i>Ngāti Mutunga</i>	General/Jury
Judge Peter Davey (from 14 June 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Greg Davis <i>Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Tai, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kahungunu</i>	General/Jury/Youth
Judge La-Verne King <i>Ngāti Kahu ki Whangaroa, Ngāti Paoa</i>	General/Family/Youth
Judge Deidre Orchard (until 7 April 2024)	General/Jury
Judge Philip Rzepecky	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Gene Tomlinson	General/Jury
Judge Tania Williams Blyth <i>Ngāti Pūkenga, Te Arawa</i>	General/Family

## North Shore | Ōkahukura

Judge Clare Bennett (until 11 August 2024 – based at Manukau District Court from 12 August 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Anna Fitzgibbon	General/ Jury/ Youth
Judge Simon Maude (until 6 March 2024)	General/Family
Judge Sarah Morrison <i>Te Arawa, Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Ngāti Mutunga</i> (from 1 April 2024 – based at Waitākere District Court until 31 March 2024)	General/Family
Judge Paul Murray (from 17 June 2024)	General/Jury
Judge Dianne Partridge <i>Ngāti Kahungunu</i>	General/Family

## Waitākere

Judge Ophir Cassidy <i>Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara</i>	General/Family
Judge Kiri Lee Guthrie <i>Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Kurauia, Tokaanu marae, Ngāti Pūkenga, Ngāti Porou</i> (from 14 December 2024)	General/Jury
Judge Sarah Morrison <i>Te Arawa, Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Ngāti Mutunga</i> (until 31 March 2024 – based at North Shore District Court from 1 April 2024)	General/Family
Judge Emma Parsons	General/Family/Youth
Judge Maria Pecotic <i>Ngāti Whakaue</i>	General/Jury
Judge Terence Singh	General/Jury
Judge Kirsty Swadling (from 12 June 2024)	General/Family
Judge Lisa Tremewan	General/Jury/Youth

## Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Judge Debra Bell <i>Ngāpuhi</i>	General/Jury
Judge John Bergseng (until 30 June 2024 – based at Rotorua District Court from 1 July 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Stephen Bonnar <sup>KC</sup>	General/Jury
Judge David Burns	General/Family
Judge David Clark <i>Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Hāua ki Taumarunui</i>	General/Civil
Judge Jacqui Clark (from 11 October 2024)	General
Judge Kate Davenport <sup>KC</sup>	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Hana Ellis <i>Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou</i>	General/Family
Judge Tony FitzGerald	General/Family/Youth
Judge Brooke Gibson	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Kevin Glubb	General/Jury
Judge June Jelaš	General/Jury
Judge Simon Lance	General/Jury
Judge Kirsten Lummis	General/Jury
Judge Andrea Manuel	General/Family
Judge Nicola Mathers	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Kathryn Maxwell	General/Jury
Judge Kevin Muir	General/Family
Judge Eddie Paul <i>Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Hokopū, Ngāti Rangataua, Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāti Moewhare</i> (from 1 July 2024 – based at Rotorua District Court until 30 June 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Belinda Pidwell	General/Family

Judge Claire Ryan	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Belinda Sellars <sup>KC</sup> <i>Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāi Tūkairangi</i>	General/Jury
Judge David Sharp	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Mary-Elizabeth Sharp	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Allison Sinclair (until 29 March 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Pippa Sinclair	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Anna Skellern <i>Ngāpuhi</i> (until 30 June 2024 – based at Rotorua District Court from 1 July 2024)	General/Jury/Family
Judge Evangelos (Barney) Thomas	General/Jury
Judge Robyn von Keisenberg	General/Family
Judge Peter Winter	General/Jury

#### Manukau

Judge Ali'imuamua Sandra Alofivae <sup>MNZM</sup>	General/ Youth
Judge Clare Bennett (from 12 August 2024 – based at North Shore District Court until 11 August 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Frances Eivers <i>Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato-Tainui</i>	General/Family/Youth
Judge Janey Forrest	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Lope Matalavea	General/Family
Judge Alan Goodwin	General/Family
Judge Karen Grau (until 28 January 2024)	General/Jury
Judge Antony Mahon	General/Family
Judge Richard McIlraith	General/Jury/Civil
Judge David McNaughton	General/Jury

Judge Soana Moala <i>Ngāti Awa</i>	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Jonathan Moses	General/Jury
Judge Sharyn Otene <i>Ngāpuhi</i>	General/Jury/Civil/ Family/Youth
Judge Sanjay Patel	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Luke Radich (from 13 September 2024)	General/Jury
Judge Margaret Rogers	General/Family
Judge Tania Sharkey	General/Family
Judge Ngaroma Tahana <i>Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Māhino, Tapuika</i>	General/Jury
Judge Gabrielle Wagner	General/Family/Youth
Judge Nick Webby	General/Jury
Judge Mina Wharepourī <i>Taranaki, Te Ātiawa, Tonga</i>	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Yelena Yelavich	General/Jury

#### Papakura

Judge Alexander Laurenson <i>Ngāi Tahu, Ngāi Tūmapuhia-a-rangi, Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangī, Ngāti Rangi, Ngāti Tūwharetoa</i>	General/Family
Judge Gerard Winter	General/Jury

#### Hamilton | Kirikiriroa

Judge Dean Blair	General/Family
Judge Denise Clark <i>Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa</i>	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Stephen Clark <i>Ngāti Hāua ki Taumarunui, Ngāti Maniapoto</i>	General/Jury/Civil

Judge Tini Clark <i>Waikato Tainui</i>	General/Jury/Youth	<b>Rotorua   Te Rotorua-nui-a-Kahumatamomoe</b>	Judge John Bergseng (from 1 July 2024 – based at Auckland District Court until 30 June 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Noel Cocurullo <i>Ngāti Pikiao</i>	General/Jury/Family/Youth		Judge Melinda Marama Broek <i>Ngāi Tai, Ngāti Koata</i>	General/Family/Youth
Judge Garry Collin	General/Family		Judge Greg Hollister-Jones	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Philip Crayton	General/Jury/Civil		Judge Maree MacKenzie (until 30 June 2024 – Seconded to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Vanuatu from 1 July 2024)	General/Jury/Family/Youth
Judge Brett Crowley (until 25 February 2024 – based at Wellington District Court from 26 February 2024)	General/Jury/Youth		Judge Eddie Paul <i>Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Hokopū, Ngāti Rangataua, Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāti Moewhare</i> (until 30 June 2024 – based at Auckland District Court from 1 July 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Nicky Grimes	General/Family		Judge Anna Skellern <i>Ngāpuhi</i> (from 1 July 2024 – based at Auckland District Court until 30 June 2024)	General/Jury/Family/Youth
Judge Glen Marshall	General/Jury/Civil		Judge Tony Snell (until 1 September 2024 – based at Nelson District Court from 2 September 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Rachel Paul <i>Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Hokopū, Ngāti Rangataua, Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāti Moewhare</i>	General/Family/Youth		Judge Alayne Wills <i>Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe, Waitaha</i>	General/Family/Youth
Judge Kim Saunders	General/Jury			
Judge Kiriana Tan <i>Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Mutunga</i>	General/Family/Youth			
Judge Arthur Tompkins (from 26 February 2024 – based at Wellington District Court until 25 February 2024)	General/Jury/Civil			
<b>Tauranga   Tauranga Moana</b>			<b>Gisborne   Tūranganui-a-Kiwa</b>	
Judge Louis Bidois <i>Te Arawa</i>	General/Jury/Youth		Judge Turitea Bolstad <i>Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāruahine</i>	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Christina Cook	General/Family/Youth		Judge Warren Cathcart	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Stephen Coyle	General/Jury/Family		Judge Haamiora Raumati <i>Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Toa, Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Kahungunu</i>	General/Family/Youth
Judge Lex de Jong	General/Family			
Judge Paul Geoghegan	General/Family/Youth			
Judge Bill Lawson	General/Jury			
Judge Melinda Mason <i>Ngāti Tama, Te Ātiawa, Te Arawa</i>	General/Jury			

**Napier | Ahuriri**

Judge Peter Callinicos	General/Family/Youth
Judge Richard Earwaker	General/Jury
Judge Bridget Mackintosh	General/Jury/Civil/Youth

**Hastings | Heretaunga**

Judge Jacqueline Blake <i>Ngāti Konohi, Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki, Te Whānau-a-Kai</i>	General/Family
Judge Gordon Matenga <i>Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri</i>	General/Jury/Youth

**New Plymouth | Ngāmotu**

Judge Tony Greig	General/Jury/Civil/ Family/Youth
Judge Lynne Harrison	General/Family/Youth
Judge Gregory Hikaka <i>Ngā Ruahine, Ngāti Tamaahuroa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Ruanui</i>	General/Jury/Family/ Youth

**Whanganui**

Judge Keryn Broughton <i>Ngā Rauru Kītahi, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāruahine</i>	General/Family/Youth
Judge Justin Marinovich	General/Jury

**Palmerston North | Te Papaioea**

Judge Stephanie Edwards	General/Jury
Judge Caroline Hickman	General/Family
Judge Jonathan Krebs	General/Jury

Judge Jill Moss	General/Family/Youth
Judge Bruce Northwood <i>Te Aupōuri</i>	General/Jury
Judge Lance Rowe	General/Jury/Civil/Youth

**Masterton | Whakaoriori**

Judge Barbara Morris	General/Jury/Youth
----------------------	--------------------

**Porirua**

Judge James Johnston <i>Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-a-Apanui</i>	General/Jury/Youth
--	--------------------

**Hutt Valley | Te Awakairangi**

Judge Mike Mika	General/Jury/Youth
-----------------	--------------------

**Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara**

Judge Jennifer Binns	General/Family
Judge Tim Black	General/Family
Judge Ian Carter <i>Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Te Rangi</i>	General/Jury/Civil/ Accident Compensation Appeals
Judge Brett Crowley (from 26 February 2024 – based at Hamilton District Court until 25 February 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Katie Elkin (until 7 January 2024 – based at Christchurch District Court from 8 January 2024)	General/Jury
Judge Stephen Harrop	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Bill Hastings	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Peter Hobbs	General/Jury

Judge Susie Houghton	General/Family	Judge Katie Elkin	General/Jury
Judge Jan Kelly	General/Jury/Civil/Youth	(from 8 January 2024 – based at Wellington District Court until 7 January 2024)	
<i>Ngāti Kahungunu</i>		Judge Jane Farish	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Kevin Kelly	General/Civil	Judge Tom Gilbert	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Alison McLeod	General/Family	Judge Joanne Hambleton	General/Family
Judge Christine Montague	General/Family	Judge Quentin Hix	General/Youth
Judge Andy Nicholls	General/Jury	<i>Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Māmoë, Waitaha, Rapuwai, Hāwea</i>	
Judge Noel Sainsbury	General/Jury/Civil	Judge Murray Hunt	General/Civil/Family
Judge Arthur Tompkins	General/Jury/Civil	<i>Ngāi Tahu</i>	
(until 25 February 2024 – based at Hamilton District Court from 26 February 2024)		Judge Paul Kellar	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Tania Warburton	General/Jury	Judge Sarah Lindsay	General/Family/Youth
Judge Nicola Wills	General/Jury/Civil	Judge Gerard Lynch	General/Jury/Youth
		Judge Traicee McKenzie	General/Family
<b>Nelson   Whakatū</b>		Judge Jane McMeeken	General/Family/Youth
Judge Garry Barkle	General/Jury/Civil/ Family/Youth	Judge Raoul Neave	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Joanne (Jo) Rielly	General/Jury/Youth	Judge Stephen O'Driscoll	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Richard Russell	General/Family/Youth	Judge Paul Shearer	General/Family
Judge Tony Snell	General/Jury/Youth	Judge Tony Zohrab	General/Jury/Civil/Youth
(from 2 September 2024 – based at Rotorua District Court until 1 September 2024)		(from 2 September 2024 – based at Nelson District Court until 1 September 2024)	
Judge Tony Zohrab	General/Jury/Civil/Youth		
(until 1 September 2024 – based at Christchurch District Court from 2 September 2024)		<b>Timaru   Te Tihi-o-Marū</b>	
		Judge Dominic Dravitzki	General/Family/Youth
		Judge Campbell Savage	General/Jury
<b>Christchurch   Ōtautahi</b>			
Judge Mark Callaghan	General/Jury/Civil/Family	<b>Dunedin   Ōtepoti</b>	
(until 21 November 2024)		Judge Dominic Flatley	General/Family/Youth
Judge Mike Crosbie	General/Jury/Civil	Judge David Robinson	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Michelle Duggan	General/Family	Judge Emma Smith	General/Jury/Family
		Judge Michael Turner	General/Jury/Civil/ Family/Youth

### Invercargill | Waihōpai

Judge Catriona Doyle	General/Family/Youth
Judge Bernadette Farnan (until 21 March 2024)	General/Jury/Family/ Youth
Judge Russell Walker	General/Jury/Family/ Youth
Judge Mark Williams (from 25 July 2024)	General/Jury/Civil

### Other locations | Ngā wāhi kē

Judge Maree MacKenzie Seconded to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Vanuatu (1 July 2024 until 20 June 2026)	General/Family/Youth
Judge Philip Connell Chair, Alcohol Regulatory Licencing Authority   Te Mana Waeture Take Waipiro (until 14 August 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Simon Menzies Chair, Alcohol Regulatory Licencing Authority   Te Mana Waeture Take Waipiro (from 14 August 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Anna Tutton Chief Coroner   Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati Matua	General
Judge Martin Treadwell <i>Ngāpuhi</i> Chair, Immigration and Protection Tribunal	General

### Acting Warranted Judges of the District Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Whakakapi o Te Kōti-ā-Rohe

#### In alphabetical order

Judge Ema Aitken	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Gus Andrée Wiltens	General/Jury/Civil

Judge Brian Callaghan	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Mark Callaghan (from 22 November 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
Judge David Cameron	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Philip Connell (until 14 August 2024)	General/Jury/Youth/ Alcohol Regulatory Licencing Authority
Judge Phillip Cooper (until 15 January 2024)	General/Jury/Civil/Youth
Judge Tony Couch	General
Judge Bruce Davidson <i>Ngāi Tahu</i>	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Nevin Dawson	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Keith de Ridder	General/Jury/Civil/Youth
Judge Sarah Fleming	General/Family
Judge Grant Fraser	General/Jury
Judge Chris Harding	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Duncan Harvey	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Denese Henare <sup>ONZM</sup> <i>Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi</i>	General/Civil/Accident Compensation Appeals
Judge Lawry Hinton <i>Te Arawa</i> (until 28 December 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Tom Ingram	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Jim Large (until 21 October 2024)	General/Jury/Youth
Judge Jane Lovell-Smith (until 7 June 2024)	General/Jury/Civil/Youth
Judge Paul Mabey <sup>KC</sup>	General/Jury/Civil
Judge Simon Maude (from 7 March 2024)	General/Family

Judge John McDonald  
Judge Ian McHardy  
Judge Alisdair (Simon) Menzies

Judge Ian Mill  
(until 19 October 2024)

Judge Jocelyn Munro  
(until 18 March 2024)

Judge Mary O'Dwyer

Judge Diedre Orchard  
(from 8 April 2024)

Judge Kevin Phillips  
(until 7 January 2024)

Judge Geoff Rea

Judge David Ruth

Judge Allison Sinclair  
(from 30 March 2024)

Judge Ajit Singh

Judge David Smith  
(until 21 February 2024)

Judge Maureen Southwick KC  
(until 15 May 2024)

Judge Lee Spear

Judge Peter Spiller

Judge Chris Tuohy  
(until 2 March 2024)

Judge John Walker

Judge Noel Walsh

General/Jury/Civil

General/Family

General/Jury/Civil/  
Alcohol Regulatory  
Licencing Authority

General/Jury/Youth

General/Family/Youth

General/Family/Youth

General/Jury

General/Jury

General/Jury

General/Jury/Youth

General/Civil

General

General/Jury/Civil/Family

General/Family

General/Jury/Civil

General/Civil/Accident  
Compensation Appeals

General/Jury/Civil

General/Jury/Civil/Youth

General/Family/Youth

## Community Magistrates | Ngā Kaiwhakawā-ā-Hapori

*In alphabetical order, grouped by location*

### North Shore | Ōkahukura

Community Magistrate Philippa King  
(until 31 December 2024)

Community Magistrate Lavinia Nathan  
*Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whātua*

### Waitākere

Community Magistrate Russell Bagley

Community Magistrate Fenella Thomas

### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Community Magistrate Terry Bourke

Community Magistrate Janet Holmes  
(until 29 September 2024)

Community Magistrate Rosemary Fitzpatrick

### Manukau

Community Magistrate Lauolefale Lemalu

Community Magistrate Jo Sihamu

### Hamilton | Kirikiriroa

Community Magistrate Ngaire Mascelle  
*Te Whakatōhea, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Whakāue, Te Rarawa*

Community Magistrate Dr Brenda Midson

Community Magistrate Dr Kaye Davies  
*Ngātiwai, Ngāti Porou*  
(until 21 May 2024)

#### Tauranga | Tauranga Moana

Community Magistrate Shaun Cole  
Community Magistrate Sherida Cooper  
Community Magistrate Lesley Jensen

#### Palmerston North | Te Papaioea

Community Magistrate Carla na Nagara

#### Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Community Magistrate Jodie Winterburn  
*Ngāpuhi*

#### Christchurch | Ōtautahi

Community Magistrate Sally O'Brien  
Community Magistrate Elder Robati  
Community Magistrate Sarah Steele

#### Acting Community Magistrates |

Community Magistrate Kaye Davies  
*Ngātiwai, Ngāti Porou*  
(from 22 May 2024)  
  
Community Magistrate Janet Holmes  
(from 30 September 2024)

#### Family Court Associates | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Tuarua

##### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Family Court Associate Johan Niemand  
(from 2 April 2024)  
  
Family Court Associate Johanna Robertson  
(from 2 April 2024)  
  
Family Court Associate Sonya Singh  
(from 2 April 2024)  
  
Family Court Associate Mark Tolich  
(from 2 April 2024)

##### Christchurch | Ōtautahi

Family Court Associate Rachel Lohrey  
(from 2 April 2024)  
  
Family Court Associate Rebecca Murphy  
(from 2 April 2024)

## MĀORI LAND COURT | TE KOOTI WHENUA MĀORI & MĀORI APPELLATE COURT | TE KOOTI PĪRA MĀORI

### Chief Judge of the Māori Land Court & Māori Appellate Court | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o Te Kooti Whenua Māori me Te Kooti Pira Māori

Chief Judge Caren Fox  
*Ngāti Porou, Rongowhakaata*  
Tairāwhiti District – Based in Gisborne

### Deputy Chief Judge of the Māori Land Court & Māori Appellate Court | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua Tuarua o Te Kooti Whenua Māori me Te Kooti Pira Māori

Deputy Chief Judge Craig Coxhead  
*Ngāti Mākino, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Maru*  
Waiairiki District – Based in Rotorua  
(from 27 May 2024)

### Judges of the Māori Land Court & Māori Appellate Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Te Kooti Whenua Māori me Te Kooti Pira Māori

#### *In order of seniority*

Judge Carolyn Wainwright  
Tairāwhiti District – Based in Wellington

Judge Stephanie Milroy  
*Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Whakaue*  
Waikato Maniapoto District – Based in Hamilton

Judge Craig Coxhead  
*Ngāti Mākino, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Maru*  
Waiairiki District – Based in Rotorua  
(until 26 May 2024)

Judge Sarah Reeves  
*Te Ātiawa*  
Te Waipounamu District – Based in Wellington

Judge Michael Doogan  
Aotea District – Based in Wellington

Judge Miharo Armstrong  
*Te Whānau-a-Apanui*  
Taitokerau District – Based in Whangārei

Judge Terena Wara  
*Waikato, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga*  
Waiairiki District – Based in Rotorua

Judge Damian Stone  
*Ngāti Kahungunu*  
Aotea and Tākitimu Districts – Based in Wellington

Judge Rachel Mullins  
*Ngāti Kahungunu, Kāi Tahu*  
Waikato Maniapoto District – Based in Hamilton

Judge Aidan Warren  
*Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāi Tahu*  
Aotea District – Based in Hamilton

Judge Te Kani Williams  
*Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Manawa, Te Aupōuri, Whakatōhea,  
Ngāi Tai ki Tōrere, Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato Tainui*  
Taitokerau District – Based in Whangārei

Judge Alana Thomas  
*Ngāpuhi*  
Aotea District – Based in Wellington

Judge Nathan Milner  
*Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tahu*  
Aotea District – Based in Wellington  
(from 30 July 2024)

### Acting Judges of the Māori Land Court & Māori Appellate Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Whakakapi o Te Kooti Whenua Māori me Te Kooti Pira Māori

Judge Wilson Isaac  
*Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu*  
Tairāwhiti District – Based in Gisborne

## EMPLOYMENT COURT | TE KŌTI TAKE MAHI

### Chief Judge of the Employment Court | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o Te Kōti Take Mahi

Chief Judge Christina Inglis  
Based in Wellington

### Judges of the Employment Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Te Kōti Take Mahi

#### *In order of seniority*

Judge Kerry Smith  
Based in Christchurch

Judge Joanna Holden  
Based in Wellington

Judge Kathryn Beck  
Based in Auckland

Judge Merepaia King  
*Ngāti Māhanga, Ngāti Te Wehi – Tainui*  
Based in Auckland

### Acting Judges of the Employment Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Whakakapi o Te Kōti Take Mahi

Judge Bruce Corkill  
Based in Wellington  
(until 2 February 2024)

## ENVIRONMENT COURT | TE KŌTI TAIAO

### Chief Environment Court Judge | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o Te Kōti Taiao

Chief Judge David Kirkpatrick  
Based in Auckland  
*Jury Warranted*

### Judges of the Environment Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Te Kōti Taiao

#### *In order of seniority*

Judge Jeff Smith  
Based in Auckland

Judge Jane Borthwick  
Based in Christchurch  
*Jury Warranted*  
(until 15 May 2024)

Judge John Hassan  
Based in Christchurch  
*Jury Warranted*

Judge Melinda Dickey  
Based in Auckland

Judge Pru Steven KC  
Based in Christchurch  
*Jury Warranted*

Judge Lauren Semple  
Based in Wellington  
*Jury Warranted*

Judge Sheena Tepania  
*Ngāti Kahu ki Whangaroa, Ngāti Kuri, Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi*  
Based in Auckland

Judge Kelvin Reid  
Based in Christchurch  
*Jury Warranted*  
(from 26 January 2024)

**Alternate Judges of the Environment Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā  
Whakakapi o Te Kōti Taiao**

*In alphabetical order*

**Alternate Judge Stephen Clark**

*Ngāti Hāua ki Taumarunui, Ngāti Maniapoto*

District Court Judge

Based in Hamilton

*Jury Warranted*

**Alternate Judge Greg Davis**

*Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Tai, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kahungunu*

District Court Judge

Based in Whangārei

*Jury Warranted*

**Alternate Judge Michael Doogan**

Judge of the Māori Land Court

Based in Wellington

**Alternate Judge Brian Dwyer**

Retired Environment Court Judge

Based in Wellington

(until 6 December 2024)

**Alternate Judge Caren Fox**

*Ngāti Porou, Rongowhakaata*

Deputy Chief Judge of the Māori Land Court

Based in Gisborne

**Alternate Judge Murray Hunt**

*Ngāi Tahu*

District Court Judge

Based in Christchurch

(from 22 May 2024)

**Alternate Judge Paul Kellar**

District Court Judge

Based in Christchurch

*Jury Warranted*

**Alternate Judge Jan Kelly**

*Ngāti Kahungunu*

District Court Judge

Based in Wellington

*Jury Warranted*

**Alternate Judge Stephanie Milroy**

*Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Whakaue*

Judge of the Māori Land Court

Based in Hamilton

**Alternate Judge Laurie Newhook**

Retired Chief Environment Judge

Based in Auckland

*Jury Warranted*

**Alternate Judge Stephen O'Driscoll**

District Court Judge

Based in Christchurch

*Jury Warranted*

**Alternate Judge Geoff Rea**

District Court Judge

Based in Napier

(until 15 September 2024)

*Jury Warranted*

**Alternate Judge Terena Wara**

*Waikato, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga*

Judge of the Māori Land Court

Based in Rotorua

**Alternate Judge Aidan Warren**

*Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāi Tahu*

Judge of the Māori Land Court

Based in Hamilton

**Alternate Judge Te Kani Williams**

*Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Manawa, Te Aupōuri, Whakatōhea,*

*Ngāi Tai ki Tōrere, Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato Tainui*

Judge of the Māori Land Court

Based in Whangārei

**Environment Commissioners | Ngā Kaikōmihana Taiao**

*In alphabetical order*

Commissioner James Baines  
Based in Christchurch

Commissioner Ruth Bartlett  
Based in Auckland

Commissioner Ian Buchanan  
Based in Wellington

Commissioner David Bunting  
Based in Wellington

Commissioner Kathryn Edmonds  
Based in Wellington

Commissioner Andrew Gysberts  
Based in Auckland

Commissioner Jim Hodges  
Based in Auckland

Commissioner Anne Leijnen  
Based in Auckland

Commissioner Mark Mabin  
Based in Christchurch

Commissioner Shona Myers  
Based in Auckland

The Honourable Commissioner Kate Wilkinson  
Based in Christchurch

**Deputy Environment Commissioners | Ngā Kaikōmihana Taiao Tuarua**

*In alphabetical order*

Deputy Commissioner Ross Dunlop  
Based in Auckland  
(until 6 April 2024)

Deputy Commissioner Glenice Paine  
*Te Ātiawa, Ngāi Tahu*  
Based in Wellington

Deputy Commissioner Miria Pomare  
*Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Whakaue,  
Ngāti Kahungunu, Rongowhakaata*  
Based in Wellington

**CORONERS COURT | TE KŌTI KAITIROTIRO  
MATEWHAWHATI**

**Chief Coroner | Te Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati Matua**

Judge Anna Tutton  
Based in Wellington

**Deputy Chief Coroner | Te Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati Matua Tuarua**

Coroner Brigitte Windley  
Based in Wellington

**Coroners | Ngā Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati**

*In alphabetical order, grouped by location*

**Whangārei | Whangārei-terenga-parāoa**

Coroner Alison Mills

Coroner Tania Tetitaha  
*Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Tai, Ngāti Raukawa*

#### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Coroner Janet Anderson  
Coroner Tracey Fitzgibbon  
*Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngare Hauata*  
Coroner Alexander Ho  
Coroner Ian Telford  
Coroner Erin Woolley

#### Hamilton | Kirikiriroa

Coroner Matthew Bates  
Coroner Michael Robb  
Coroner Peter Ryan

#### Rotorua | Te Rotorua-nui-a-Kahumatamomoe

Coroner Bruce Hesketh  
*Ngāi Tahu*  
Coroner Donna Llewellyn  
*Ngāpuhi*

#### Hastings | Heretaunga

Coroner Heidi Wrigley

#### Palmerston North | Te Papaioia

Coroner Robin Kay

#### Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Coroner Mary-Anne Borrowdale  
Coroner Katherine Greig  
(until 19 October 2024)

#### Christchurch | Ōtautahi

Coroner Alexandra Cunninghame  
Coroner Marcus Elliott  
Coroner Sue Johnson  
(until 31 October 2024)

#### Dunedin | Ōtepoti

Coroner Heather McKenzie

#### Relief Coroners | Ngā Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati Whakakapi

*In alphabetical order, grouped by location*

#### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Relief Coroner Megan Armistead  
Relief Coroner Meenal Duggal  
Relief Coroner Andrew Schirnack

#### Hamilton | Kirikiriroa

Relief Coroner Louella Dunn

#### Palmerston North | Te Papaioia

Relief Coroner Rachael Schmidt-McCleave  
Relief Coroner Ruth Thomas

#### Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Relief Coroner Mark Wilton  
Relief Coroner Katherine Greig  
(from 20 October 2024)

## Dunedin | Ōtepoti

Relief Coroner Amelia Steel  
*Ngāi Tahu*

## Associate Coroners | Ngā Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati Tuarua

### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Associate Coroner Hannah Cheeseman  
(from 22 July 2024)

Associate Coroner Dustin Luo

Associate Coroner Jennifer Smith  
*Te Ātiawa*

Associate Coroner Emma van Son

### Hamilton | Kirikiriroa

Associate Coroner James Buckle  
Associate Coroner Seung Youn

### Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Associate Coroner Dan Moore  
*Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu*

### Christchurch | Ōtautahi

Associate Coroner Stephen Burdes

## COURT MARTIAL | TE KŌTI WHAKAWĀ KAIMAHI O TE OPE KĀTUA & SUMMARY APPEAL COURT | TE KŌTI PIRA WHAKARAUPAPA KAIMAHI O TE OPE KĀTUA

Chief Judge of the Court Martial and Judge Advocate General of the Armed  
Forces of New Zealand | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o Te Kōti Whakawā Kaimahi o  
Te Ope Kātua me te Kaiwhakawā Ihorei Whānui o Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa

Chief Judge Kevin Riordan ONZM

Deputy Chief Judge of the Court Martial and Deputy Judge Advocate General of  
the Armed Forces of New Zealand | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua Tuarua o Te Kōti  
Whakawā Kaimahi o Te Ope Kātua me te Kaiwhakawā Ihorei Whānui Tuarua o  
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa

Deputy Chief Judge Heemi Taumaunu  
*Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Konohi, Ngāi Tahu*

Judges of the Court Martial and Summary Appeal Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o  
Te Kōti Whakawā Kaimahi o Te Ope Kātua me te Kōti Pira Whakaraupapa  
Kaimahi o Te Ope Kātua

*In order of seniority*

Judge Bill Hastings

Judge Brooke Gibson

Judge Maree MacKenzie

(until 30 June 2024 – Seconded to the Supreme Court of  
the Republic of Vanuatu from 1 July 2024)

Judge Jonathan Moses

Judge Gerard Winter

Judge Mina Wharepouri  
*Taranaki, Te Ātiawa, Tonga*

Judge Tini Clark  
*Waikato Tainui*

Judge Mike Crosbie

Judge Tom Gilbert

## COURT MARTIAL APPEAL COURT | TE KŌTI PĪRA WHAKAWĀ KAIMAHI O TE OPE KĀTUA

Chief Judge of the Court Martial Appeal Court | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o  
Te Kōti Pira Whakawā Kaimahi o Te Ope Kātua

The Honourable Justice Sally Fitzgerald

Chief High Court Judge | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o Te Kōti Matua

Judges of the Court Martial Appeal Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o  
Te Kōti Pira Whakawā Kaimahi o Te Ope Kātua

*In order of seniority*

Judge James Wilding <sup>KC</sup>

Judge Robyn Loversidge <sup>VRD\*</sup>

Judge Craig Ruane <sup>ED\*\*</sup>



## Appendix 5

# Judges and judicial officers who retired, resigned or were elevated during 2024

### COURT OF APPEAL | TE KŌTI PĀRA

#### President of the Court of Appeal | Te Tumuaki o Te Kōti Pāra

The Honourable Justice Mark Cooper  
*Ngāti Māhanga*  
Retired on 20 November 2024

#### Judges of the Court of Appeal | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Mātāmua o Te Kōti Pāra

##### *In order of seniority*

The Honourable Justice Brendan Brown  
Retired on 12 January 2024

The Honourable Justice Murray Gilbert  
Retired on 31 May 2024

The Honourable Justice David Collins  
Retired on 18 March 2024  
(Appointed as an Acting Judge of the Court of Appeal effective 19 March 2024)

### HIGH COURT | TE KŌTI MATUA

#### Judges of the High Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Mātāmua o Te Kōti Matua

##### *In order of seniority, grouped by location*

##### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

The Honourable Justice Mark Woolford  
Retired on 30 April 2024

The Honourable Justice Neil Campbell  
Appointed as a Judge of the Court of Appeal effective 21 November 2024

##### Wellington | Te Whanganui-a-Tara

The Honourable Justice Rebecca Ellis  
Appointed as a Judge of the Court of Appeal effective 15 January 2024

The Honourable Justice Matthew Palmer  
Appointed as a Judge of the Court of Appeal effective 1 June 2024

The Honourable Justice Francis Cooke  
Appointed as a Judge of the Court of Appeal effective 19 March 2024

#### Associate Judges of the High Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Tuarua o Te Kōti Matua

##### *In order of seniority, grouped by location*

##### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Associate Judge Dani Gardiner  
Appointed as a Judge of the High Court effective 21 November 2024

## DISTRICT COURT | TE KŌTI-Ā-ROHE

### Judges of the District Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Te Kōti-ā-Rohe

*In alphabetical order, grouped by location*

#### Whangārei | Whangārei-terenga-parāoa

Judge Deidre Orchard Retired on 7 April 2024 (Appointed as an Acting Warranted Judge effective 8 April 2024)	General/Jury
--	--------------

#### North Shore | Ōkahukura

Judge Simon Maude Retired on 6 March 2024 (Appointed as an Acting Warranted Judge effective 7 March 2024)	General/Family
---	----------------

#### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Judge Allison Sinclair Retired on 29 March 2024 (Appointed as an Acting Warranted Judge effective 30 March 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
--	--------------------

#### Manukau

Judge Karen Grau Appointed as a Judge of the High Court effective 29 January 2024	General/Jury
--	--------------

#### Christchurch | Ōtautahi

Judge Mark Callaghan Retired on 21 November 2024 (Appointed as an Acting Warranted Judge effective 22 November 2024)	General/Jury/Civil
--	--------------------

#### Invercargill | Waihōpai

Judge Bernadette Farnan Died on 21 March 2023	General/Jury/ Family/Youth
--	-------------------------------

#### Other locations | Ngā wāhi kē

Judge Philip Connell Chair, Alcohol Regulatory Licencing Authority  Te Mana Waeture Take Waipiro Retired on 14 August 2024	General/Jury/Youth
---	--------------------

#### Community Magistrates | Ngā Kaiwhakawā-ā-Hapori

*In alphabetical order, grouped by location*

#### Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

Community Magistrate Janet Holmes Retired on 29 September 2024 (Appointed as an Acting Warranted Community Magistrate effective 30 September 2024)	
--	--

#### North Shore | Ōkahukura

Community Magistrate Philippa King Retired on 31 December 2024	
---	--

#### Hamilton | Kirikiriroa

Community Magistrate Kaye Davies Retired on 21 May 2024 (Appointed as an Acting Warranted Community Magistrate effective 22 May 2024)	
---	--

## MĀORI LAND COURT | TE KOOTI WHENUA MĀORI & MĀORI APPELLATE COURT | TE KOOTI PĪRA MĀORI

Judges of the Māori Land Court & Māori Appellate Court |  
Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Te Kooti Whenua Māori me Te Kooti Pira Māori

Deputy Chief Judge Craig Coxhead  
*Ngāti Māhino, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Maru*  
Waiariki District – Based in Rotorua  
Appointed as Deputy Chief Judge effective 27 May 2024

## ENVIRONMENT COURT | TE KŌTI TAIAO

Judges of the Environment Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā o Te Kōti Taiao  
(*In order of seniority*)

Judge Jane Borthwick  
Based in Christchurch  
*Jury Warranted*  
(Retired on 15 May 2024)

Alternate Judges of the Environment Court | Ngā Kaiwhakawā Whakakapi o Te Kōti Taiao

Alternate Judge Geoff Rea  
District Court Judge  
Based in Napier  
(Retired on 15 September 2024)  
*Jury Warranted*

Deputy Environment Commissioners | Ngā Kaikōmihana Taiao

Deputy Commissioner Ross Dunlop  
Based in Auckland  
Retired on 6 April 2024

## CORONERS COURT | TE KŌTI KAITIROTIRO MATEWHAWHATI

Coroners | Ngā Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati

Coroner Sue Johnson  
Retired on 31 September 2024

## Appendix 6

### References and further information

#### COURT WEBSITES

**Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and High Court**  
[Courtsofnz.govt.nz](https://courtsofnz.govt.nz)

**District Court**  
[Districtcourts.govt.nz](https://districtcourts.govt.nz)

**Māori Land Court**  
[Maorilandcourt.govt.nz](https://maorilandcourt.govt.nz)

**Employment Court**  
[Employmentcourt.govt.nz](https://employmentcourt.govt.nz)

**Environment Court**  
[Environmentcourt.govt.nz](https://environmentcourt.govt.nz)

**Coroners Court**  
[Coronialservices.justice.govt.nz](https://coronialservices.justice.govt.nz)

#### COURT CONTACT DETAILS

**Contact a court**  
0800 COURTS (0800 268 787)

#### ANNUAL REPORTS AND STATISTICS

**Supreme Court | Te Kōti Mana Nui**  
[2017 to 2023 statistics](#)  
[Earlier statistics](#)

**Court of Appeal | Te Kōti Pira**  
[Statistics](#)  
[2023](#)  
[2022](#)  
[2021](#)  
[2020](#)  
[2019](#)  
[2018](#)  
[2017](#)  
[Earlier statistics](#)

**High Court | Te Kōti Matua**  
[Annual reports](#)  
[2023](#)  
[2022](#)  
[2021](#)  
[2020](#)  
[2019](#)  
[2018](#)  
[2017](#)  
[Earlier reports](#)  
[Statistics](#)  
[2023](#)  
[2022](#)  
[2021](#)  
[2020](#)  
[2019](#)  
[2018](#)  
[2017](#)  
[Earlier statistics](#)

### **District Court | Te Kōti-ā-Rohe**

[Annual reports](#)

[2023](#)

[2022](#)

[2021](#)

[2020](#)

[2019](#)

[2018](#)

[2017](#)

[Earlier reports](#)

[Statistics](#)

[2021](#)

[2020](#)

[2019](#)

[2018](#)

### **Māori Land Court | Te Kooti Whenua Māori**

[Māori Land Update – Ngā Āhuatanga o te whenua](#)

[2022](#)

[2021](#)

[2020](#)

[2019](#)

[2018](#)

[2017](#)

[Earlier updates](#)

### **Employment Court | Te Kōti Take Mahi**

[2015 to 2023 statistics](#)

### **Environment Court | Te Kōti Taiao**

[Annual reports](#)

[2021/2022](#)

[2020/2021](#)

[2019/2020](#)

[2018/2019](#)

[2017/2018](#)

[2016/2017](#)

[Earlier reports](#)

### **Coroners Court | Te Kōti Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati**

[Annual reports](#)

[2023/2024](#)

[2022/2023](#)

[2021/2022](#)

[2020/2021](#)

[2019/2020](#)

[2018/2019](#)

[2017/2018](#)

[2016/2017](#)

[2015/2016](#)

## **OTHER USEFUL LINKS**

[Digital Strategy for Courts and Tribunals of Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

[Rules Committee Improving Access to Justice Report](#)

### **Tribunals**

[justice.govt.nz/tribunals](https://justice.govt.nz/tribunals)

### **Office of the Judicial Conduct Commissioner**

[jcc.govt.nz](https://jcc.govt.nz)

[Annual reports](#)

### **Criminal Cases Review Commission | Te Kāhui Tātari Ture**

[ccrc.nz](https://ccrc.nz)

### **Question trails**

[courtsofnz.govt.nz](https://courtsofnz.govt.nz)

### **Te Ara Ture**

[Te Ara Ture FAQs](#)





CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

