



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

21 November 2025

## MEDIA STATEMENT

# Chief Justice welcomes judicial appointments

The Chief Justice welcomes the Attorney-General's announcement today of the following appointments:

- Justice Francis Cooke as a Judge of the Supreme Court
- Justice Rebecca Edwards as a Judge of the Court of Appeal
- Auckland Barrister and Solicitor Michael Arthur as a Judge of the High Court
- Auckland Barrister Amokura Kawharu as a Judge of the High Court.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Justice Francis Cooke

Justice Cooke graduated with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) from Victoria University of Wellington in 1989, and a Master of Laws from Cambridge University in 1990. He worked as a foreign solicitor with Ashurst Morris Crisp in London before returning to New Zealand in 1992, where he worked for Chapman Tripp until 1994.

He went to the independent bar in 1994 and acted as junior counsel assisting the Winebox Inquiry between 1994 and 1997. He was subsequently involved in a range of public law and commercial litigation and was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 2004.

Justice Cooke was appointed a Judge of the High Court in 2018, and a Judge of the Court of Appeal in 2024. His appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court will take effect on 9 February 2026.

### Justice Rebecca Edwards

Justice Edwards graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) from the University of Auckland in 1993 and commenced work as a solicitor with

Russell McVeagh in Auckland. In 1996 she graduated with a Master of Laws from the University of Virginia.

In 1997 Justice Edwards took a position with Herbert Smith in London, before returning to Russell McVeagh as a senior solicitor in 1998. She left Russell McVeagh in 2003 to practise as a barrister sole, specialising in commercial civil litigation with a particular focus on contract, shareholder and insolvency related disputes.

Justice Edwards was admitted to the permanent bar in the Cook Islands in 2010 and subsequently represented the respondents in the first two Cook Islands appeals to the Privy Council.

Justice Edwards was appointed a Judge of the High Court in June 2015. Her appointment as a Judge of the Court of Appeal will take effect on 9 February 2026.

### **Justice Michael Arthur**

Justice Arthur graduated from Victoria University of Wellington in 1989 with a Bachelor of Laws, and joined Whanganui law firm Jack Riddett Tripe as a solicitor in 1990.

From 1994 to 1996 he worked at London law firm Cameron Markby Hewitt in the defence of large professional indemnity claims. He was admitted to the English bar in 1995.

Justice Arthur joined Chapman Tripp in 1997 and has been a partner in the Auckland litigation team since 2006, specialising in corporate restructuring and insolvency and maintaining a general commercial litigation practice. In 2009 he graduated from Auckland University with a Master of Laws in Commercial Law.

Justice Arthur will take up his appointment as a Judge of the High Court on 1 December 2025, and will sit in Auckland. He will be sworn in on 17 December 2025 at the Auckland High Court.

### **Justice Amokura Kawharu**

Justice Kawharu (Ngāti Whātua and Ngāpuhi) graduated from the University of Auckland in 1996 with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws (Honours). She was a clerk and then a solicitor with Chapman Tripp in Auckland, before joining law firm Gilbert & Tobin in Sydney as a solicitor in 2000.

During 2003 and 2004 she was Corporate Counsel with Vodafone NZ Ltd. In 2004, she graduated with a Master of Laws (First Class) from the University of Cambridge in England.

From 2005 to 2020 she taught at the University of Auckland, progressing from Lecturer to Associate Professor. During that time, she published extensively in legal journals and books, focussing her research primarily in the areas of commercial and international arbitration and related fields.

Justice Kawharu obtained a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Victoria University of Wellington in 2023 and completed a five-year term as President of the Law Commission in September 2025.

Justice Kawharu will take up her appointment as a Judge of the High Court on 9 February 2026 and will sit in Auckland. She will be sworn in on 16 February 2026 at the Auckland High Court.

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

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