



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

6 August 2026

MEDIA STATEMENT

Chief Justice's Annual Report released today

Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann has today released her 2025 Annual Report. The report provides information about judges, about the role and responsibilities of the judicial branch of government, and about the work of the courts in 2025.

The *Chief Justice's Annual Report 2025* describes the priorities of judicial leadership, which include initiatives to improve access to justice, to address court delays, and to modernise the courts' systems and processes. It is intended to support public understanding of the courts, and to enable public scrutiny of how they are administered, the Chief Justice said today.

"Every day, in courtrooms across New Zealand, judges hear and determine disputes across the full range of the law. They resolve matters of great significance to individuals, whānau, communities and businesses. This report gives a sense of the range of the work that courts do, and of the challenges that exist for their effective operation."

Insights from the report and where to find them

- The role an independent and impartial judiciary plays in upholding the rule of law in New Zealand, information about how the judiciary and the Ministry of Justice share responsibility for court administration, and information about the judicial workforce (Part 1).
- Work underway to address delay and improve efficiencies in the courts (Part 2).
- Work underway on the priority technological initiatives for the courts – Te Au Reka, remote participation in court, and generative artificial intelligence – and steps the judiciary is taking to ensure adoption of technology in the courts strengthens rather than hampers access to justice (from page 61).
- Initiatives to improve access to civil justice, including preparatory work in 2025 for the introduction of changes to the High Court Rules (pages 36 and 58) and the introduction of the Auckland Commercial List (page 37).
- Open justice initiatives and engagement, aimed at making accurate information about the courts and their decisions readily available to the media and the public (Part 4).

- A work programme to improve access to justice for Deaf and disabled people by advancing accessibility in the courts (pages 56-57).
- Introduction of new processes in the criminal jurisdiction of the District and High Courts to help make children visible in the court proceedings of their parent or caregiver (page 27).
- Judicial education, including education initiatives in response to the final report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-Based Care (page 19).

The report will be published today on the Courts of New Zealand website.

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