



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

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## MEDIA STATEMENT

# Chief Justice pays tribute to the Hon Nicholas Davidson KC



Caption: The Hon Nicholas Richard William Davidson KC (1948 – 2025)  
(Photo credit: Bankside Chambers)

The Chief Justice, the Rt Hon Dame Helen Winkelmann, today paid tribute on behalf of New Zealand’s judiciary to the Hon Nicholas (Nick) Richard William Davidson KC, who passed away on 8 March 2025, aged 76.

“On behalf of the New Zealand judiciary, I acknowledge the Hon Nick Davidson KC’s service to the law and to the judiciary. Nick will be greatly missed by his many friends and colleagues in the judiciary and the profession who remember him as a kind, wise and unfailingly courteous man. I extend my deepest sympathy to his family.”

Nick served as a Judge of the High Court from June 2015 to December 2018, sitting in the Christchurch High Court as resident judge.

The characteristics that made him such an effective and successful counsel were the characteristics that also made him an effective and respected judge. He had an ease of manner that others found reassuring. When he was in practice his skill, charm and integrity combined to instil in his clients the confidence that they would be well represented, whilst also reassuring his opponents and judges alike that the position he advocated for was reasonable, and surely right. As a judge his manner of dealing with people gave confidence to all that there would be a fair hearing.

Nick's practice before coming to the bench was wide-ranging. He approached legal issues in a common-sense way, concerned that the law should be used to find solutions, and not exacerbate problems. He had great empathy for others. For all these reasons he particularly shone when working to support those who had been victims of traumatic events. He was lead counsel to the Royal Commission of Inquiry for the families of the 29 men who died in the Pike River Mine disaster in 2010. He was counsel for one of the pilots in the investigation into the fatal air accident involving a Dash 8 aircraft before the Transport Accident Investigation Commission and was also counsel for business owners in claims arising out of the wreck of the *MV Rena* on Astrolabe Reef.

He undertook criminal defence work and later prosecutorial work for the Crown in multiple fraud prosecutions. He represented the Serious Fraud Office in the Commission of Inquiry into various tax-related matters (referred to as the "Wine Box" Inquiry).

Nick was also an experienced arbitrator. He was a Fellow (Arbitration) of the Arbitrators' and Mediators' Institute of New Zealand, and before appointment to the High Court bench, he was sole arbitrator in multiple domestic arbitrations, and mediator in others.

Following his retirement as a permanent Judge in 2018, Nick was an Associate Member at Bankside Chambers, and at Plymouth Chambers in Christchurch resuming his practice as an arbitrator.

### **Career milestones**

Nick obtained his LLB (Hons) from the University of Canterbury in 1971. He practised in Duncan Cotterill in Christchurch as a barrister and solicitor before joining Young Hunter in 1974, becoming a partner in 1975. Nick moved to the independent bar in 1988 and was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1996.

In 1988, he established Clarendon Chambers with the Hon Sir William Young, both of whom were litigation partners at Young Hunter, and later Canterbury Chambers with Associate Judge Dale Lester and the Hon Justice Robert Osborne.

### **Service to the community and the profession.**

Nick gave great service to sport in New Zealand, through involvement. He was appointed to the International Cricket Council Code of Conduct Commission in Dubai and was National Commissioner for New Zealand Cricket for many years. Together with the late Hon Sir Ian Barker KC, he was a member of the Committee of Inquiry which investigated allegations of corruption in Cricket.

His fondness for cricket extended to his tenure as immediate Past President of Willows Cricket Club in Canterbury. In the club's annual report for 2023/24, it is said that "Just as Nick

Davidson's sure hands snared four catches in his first match at The Willows in 1995 we have had the benefit of those same safe hands as our Club President for the past five seasons."<sup>1</sup>

He also gave service to other sporting codes. He was appointed a founding Deputy Chair of the New Zealand Sports Disputes Tribunal in 2003, President of New Zealand Football from 2005 to 2015, and a member of the disciplinary structures within the SANZAR, the International Rugby Board and FIFA.

Nick's longstanding commitment to youth and disadvantaged children was notable. He was first a supporter, then trustee, of 180 Degrees Trust in Christchurch, which runs development programmes using the natural environment to challenge youths physically and emotionally. Nick was also involved with the Springboard Trust in Warkworth.

He was a Council member of the Canterbury District Law Society from 1986 to 1992 and held various positions including Chair of the Canterbury-Westland District Disciplinary Tribunal. He lectured part-time and tutored at the University of Canterbury, in law and commerce, and was a former member and later Fellow for 17 years of College House, the oldest tertiary college in New Zealand.

Nick is survived by his wife Rosie, his three children, Guy, Annabel, and Tommy, and eight grandchildren.

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<sup>1</sup> John Mitchell "Highlights of Nick Davidson's term as Willows President" (28 October 2024) The Willows Cricket Club <[thewillows.nz](http://thewillows.nz)>.