



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

21 December 2021

## MEDIA STATEMENT

# Court operations under the COVID-19 Protection Framework

Transitional protocols are in place prior to week of 31 January 2022

Transitional protocols are currently in place that cover court operations up to 31 January 2022. They are available on the [Courts of NZ website](#).

### Court operations from 31 January 2022 under the COVID-19 Protection Framework

The Courts have developed protocols that align with the COVID-19 Protection Framework (the Framework), which will be implemented from 31 January. The protocols address health and safety issues arising from the pandemic while maintaining access to courts. All protocols will be published on the [Courts of NZ website](#) as they are finalised. This media release outlines some important elements of the protocols.

### Entry requirements to courthouses under the COVID-19 Protection Framework protocols

Under **Green**, **Orange** and **Red** settings, every person entering a court building will be asked to show their My Vaccine Pass, or evidence of a recent negative COVID-19 test.

A person who shows their My Vaccine Pass or provides evidence of a recent negative test will be able to enter the building.

In the High Court and the District Court (including the Family Court and Youth Court), people who are required to attend court in person (for example, pursuant to a summons, legislative requirement or judicial direction) will be allowed to enter the building even if they do not show a My Vaccine Pass or provide evidence of a negative test. However, their entry may be subject to special measures to manage health and safety risks.

These entry requirements are subject to any court protocols, and to judicial direction.

See the Ministry of Justice's [information for the public on entry requirements and health and safety practices in the courts](#).

### Jury trials under the COVID-19 Protection Framework protocols

Jury trials are scheduled to begin from 31 January 2022 in the District Court, and from 8 February 2022 in the High Court. Jury trials in the High Court and District Court will be

conducted at all Framework settings. Processes for managing criminal jury trials in the Framework settings are being developed.

### Implementing the court processes to support the protocols

Processes to support the new protocols will be implemented across court locations as the Ministry of Justice has resource and capacity to do so. This means, for instance, that some courts will be able to apply entry requirements before others. From 31 January 2022, in places where the necessary processes are not yet in place, the transitional protocols will continue to apply until the new protocols are operational.

### Safeguarding the health of people in courthouses

The judiciary is committed to minimising the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in court buildings. People can expect that all court staff, judges and judicial officers in court buildings are fully vaccinated.

The judiciary continues to work with the Ministry of Justice to safeguard the health of people in court buildings. The Ministry is responsible for setting up the necessary systems in courthouses to manage the risks posed by COVID-19.

See the Ministry of Justice's [information for the public on entry requirements and health and safety practices in the courts](#).

### Media access to courts

Accredited news media can attend court hearings in person at any setting (provided they meet the entry requirements, outlined above) to report court proceedings, and to ensure continued open and transparent justice.

Remote access for accredited news media will continue to be provided. See the [Protocol for Remote Viewing of Hearings for Senior Courts](#).

### Key dates

- 23 December 2021: Courts close for the year, other than the District Court
- 24 December 2021: District Courts close for the year
- 5 January 2022: All Courts re-open
- 31 January 2022: District Court jury trials commence.
- 31 January 2022: Courts begin operating in accordance with their new protocols under the COVID-19 Protection Framework, as operational capacity allows.
- 8 February 2022: High Court jury trials commence.

See also [opening hours of the Courts](#) over December and January. Contact 0800 COURTS for more information.

### Media inquiries

Liz Kennedy, Senior Judicial Communications Advisor, 027 369 6701,  
[liz.kennedy@courts.govt.nz](mailto:liz.kennedy@courts.govt.nz)