



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

21 February 2022

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### MEDIA RELEASE

### **Court operations in Wellington for week of 21 February 2022**

The Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and Wellington High Court buildings will be closed this week due to the impact of COVID-19 on staffing levels. All scheduled hearings will go ahead in the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal using remote technology. Most scheduled hearings in the High Court will also take place, again using remote technology.

The Courts have anticipated the possibility of closures due to the impact of COVID-19 on staffing levels and have plans in place to make sure they can continue to operate at all phases of the pandemic. These plans include making best use of remote technology, and allocating resources in order to ensure that priority proceedings – those that affect the liberty of the individual, personal safety and matters that are time-critical – are able to be heard, the Chief Justice said today.

“Omicron will continue to impact on court operations and we have planned for that. There may be other court closures in the future, and further disruption to the work of the courts. The courts are dependent upon the participation of judges, court staff, lawyers, witnesses and parties – any of whom may be unable to participate because of COVID-19.”

Remote access to hearings at the three affected courts will be available for media and the public to ensure that the principle of open justice is upheld, the Chief Justice said.

“Our courts must be open to public scrutiny, even when we operate remotely in this way and when there is no physical access to courtrooms. We have strengthened our capacity to allow media and the public participation in remote hearings so that this important principle of our justice system is maintained.”

### Key points

- Members of the public who wish to attend a hearing at the Wellington High Court are asked to contact 0800 268 787.
- Members of the public who wish to view a Court of Appeal hearing remotely should contact the Registry by emailing [courtofappeal@justice.govt.nz](mailto:courtofappeal@justice.govt.nz)
- The Supreme Court is livestreaming a hearing this week – contact [supremecourt@justice.govt.nz](mailto:supremecourt@justice.govt.nz) for access.
- The [Protocol for Remote Viewing of Hearings](#) provides guidance on how to request remote access, timeframes for requesting access and important information on attending a hearing remotely.
- Registries ask for notice of requests for remote access to hearings, in order to ensure they can process them on time. The [Protocol for Remote Viewing of Hearings](#) states that requests should be in by 1pm the day before the hearing that is to be viewed, although requests may be accommodated after this time.

### Contacts:

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

Alix Chapman: Senior Judicial Communications Advisor, [alix.chapman@courts.govt.nz](mailto:alix.chapman@courts.govt.nz),  
0272 860 198