



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

27 August 2024

## MEDIA STATEMENT

# Chief Justice's Annual Report released today

Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann today released her Annual Report for 2023. The report is intended to support public understanding of the courts and to enable public scrutiny of how they are administered. It outlines work programmes that support the efficient and effective administration of justice and includes information about judicial education, development and wellbeing initiatives.

It identifies the priority areas of focus for the judiciary in 2023. These include modernising the courts' systems and processes, addressing delay in the courts, and reducing barriers to access to justice.

The purpose of the report is to provide openness and transparency into this work that takes place outside the courtroom, the Chief Justice says.

“A central principle in our court system is that the administration of justice must take place in open court. Cases are argued and decided in a public forum so that people can watch and scrutinise the court's processes and the judge's decision-making.”

“There is also legitimate public interest in the nature of the work of the judiciary outside the courtroom – the decisions that judicial leadership make to address issues facing the courts now and into the future. These decisions affect everyone who comes before the courts, so it is important that the principle of open justice applies to this aspect of our work too.”

### Insights from the report and where to find them

- The communication pathways between the judicial branch of government and the executive and Parliament are explained at pages 12 to 15.
- A snapshot of the business of all the courts during 2023, including an update on the District Court's new operating model, Te Ao Mārama, is provided at Part 2.
- Challenges facing the courts, particularly the complex issue of delay, and ensuring equitable access to justice, are discussed in Part 3. This includes:
  - An update on technologies with the potential to modernise and streamline the courts – pages 61 and 62.
  - The principles the judiciary has established to capture the benefits of technology without compromising the human quality of our justice system – pages 59 to 60.
  - Delay in the courts (from page 64) and the responses underway to address it (from page 66).

- Access to justice initiatives – pages 68 to 71.
- Open justice and engagement initiatives – Part 4.
- Pacific and international engagement – Part 5.
- The judicial rollcall – a list of all judges serving in the courts as at 31 December 2023 (Appendix 3).

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

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