

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern

Prime Minister
MP for Mt Albert



PĀNUI PĀPĀHO
MEDIA STATEMENT

17 December 2018

Helen Winkelmann appointed Chief Justice of New Zealand

Judge of the Court of Appeal, the Honourable Justice Helen Winkelmann, has been appointed Chief Justice of New Zealand and a Judge of the Supreme Court of New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced today.

“It is a pleasure to announce that her Honour Helen Winkelmann has been appointed the new Chief Justice of New Zealand, and will take office on 13 March 2019,” Jacinda Ardern said.

“The consultation process highlighted the enormous esteem Justice Winkelmann is held in by the legal community. There was a high degree of consensus from all quarters for her appointment.

“Her Honour is recognised by her peers and the profession for her superior intellect, her judicial instinct and experience, coupled with strong leadership, qualities that I am sure will make an outstanding Chief Justice,” Jacinda Ardern said.

Justice Winkelmann graduated with an LLB and a BA in History from Auckland University in 1987 and began work as a law clerk with Auckland firm Nicholson Gribbin (later Phillips Fox, now DLA Piper). In 1988, at age 25, Justice Winkelmann became the first female partner and one of the youngest partners ever in the firm’s then 117- year history.

In 2001, Justice Winkelmann left Phillips Fox to join the independent Bar, specialising in commercial litigation, insolvency and medico-legal.

Justice Winkelmann was appointed a High Court Judge in 2004 and Chief High Court Judge in 2009. In 2015 she was appointed a Judge of the Court of Appeal.

The new Chief Justice will commence her role on 13 March 2019, on the retirement of the Rt Hon Dame Sian Elias as Chief Justice of New Zealand.

While judicial appointments are made by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Attorney-General, the Senior Courts Act provides that the Prime Minister makes the recommendation for appointment of the Chief Justice.

There is no statutory process for the appointment. The Solicitor-General Una Jagose QC conducted a consultation process to inform the Prime Minister’s decision, consulting the Chief Justice Dame Sian Elias, retired senior Court judges, the New Zealand Law Society,

the New Zealand Bar Association and Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aoteroa (the Māori Law Society). That consultation was to determine who was thought to meet the criteria for Chief Justice.

The Solicitor-General then formed a panel comprising Dame Silvia Cartwright, retired High Court judge and former Governor-General and Sir Terence Arnold, retired Supreme Court judge. That panel considered the consultation feedback. The Solicitor-General then provided advice to the Prime Minister to enable her to take a decision to make a recommendation to the Governor-General.

In announcing this appointment the Prime Minister pays tribute to the excellent service the Right Honourable Dame Sian Elias has given as Chief Justice. Dame Sian has played a significant role in the development of our laws and constitution and has represented New Zealand superbly on the international stage.

For many years, Justice Winkelmann was a trustee of the Starship Foundation and Lynfield College Development Trust.

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