

The Rt Hon Helen Winkelmann (GNZM) was sworn in as New Zealand's 13th Chief Justice on 14 March 2019. She is the second Chief Justice since introduction of the Supreme Court Act 2004 which ended appeals to the Privy Council.

A graduate from Auckland University, Justice Winkelmann began work as a law clerk with Auckland firm Nicholson Gribbin (later Phillips Fox, now DLA Piper). She was admitted to the bar in 1985. In 1988, she became the first female partner and one of the youngest ever in the firm's then 117-year history. Justice Winkelmann remained at the firm until 2001 when she began practice as a barrister sole specialising in insolvency, commercial litigation, and medical disciplinary litigation. In 2004 she was appointed as a High Court Judge; followed by Chief High Court Judge in 2010 and was appointed to the Court of Appeal in 2015.

Justice Winkelmann, the youngest of four children, grew up in the west Auckland suburb of Blockhouse Bay. She attended the local secondary school, Lynfield College, then studied history and law at Auckland University, winning the Auckland District Law Society Centenary Prize for Best Undergraduate Degree.

As Chief High Court Judge Justice Winkelmann introduced reforms aimed at improving accessibility to High Court processes in its civil jurisdiction, improving the timeliness with which the Court dealt with both civil and criminal matters, and improving public understanding of the work of the Courts. Justice Winkelmann reintroduced publication of High Court annual reporting, including judgment timeliness data, and established a senior courts Twitter account to improve communication with the public.

In 2011, following the devastating Canterbury earthquakes, Justice Winkelmann worked with Justice Miller to set up the Earthquake List, designed to enable proceedings flowing out of the Christchurch earthquake to be dealt with promptly and in a time frame that met the needs of the community. (Refer to [Civil Justice Response to Natural Disaster: New Zealand's Christchurch High Court Earthquake List](#)). Justices Winkelmann and Miller received the 2013 Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration Award for Excellence for this work.

With other Heads of Bench, Justice Winkelmann adapted Court procedures to better reflect the two founding cultures of New Zealand: Māori and Pakeha. Court sessions now begin and conclude in English and te Reo Māori.

She has spoken regularly on issues concerning the just and efficient operation of the Courts, and access to justice, as evident in her keynote speech to Te Hūnga Rōia Māori (Māori Law Society) [Renovating the House of the Law](#) (Aug 2019) and the Dame Silvia Cartwright Address ['Access to justice, who needs lawyers?'](#) (Oct 2019).

Justice Winkelmann is Chair of:

- Courts Strategic Partnership Committee
- Chief Justice Advisory Committee
- Heads of Bench Committee
- Senior Courts Education Committee

She is the New Zealand representative on the Board of the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration and from November 2012 – November 2019 was Chair of the Institute of Judicial Studies – the body responsible for providing continued education to judges. As Chief Justice she retains a keen interest in judicial education.

Justice Winkelmann's speeches are available on the [Courts of New Zealand website](#).