

Dame Helen Winkelmann, Chief Justice of New Zealand

***Valedictory sitting for Justice Susan Glazebrook
on the occasion of her retirement***

Supreme Court - Wellington

Friday 20 February 2026

Kei te mana whenua, Te Āti Awa, tēnā koutou.

Kei te hunga kua whetūrangitia,

koutou ko te hunga i takahi i te ara o te ture,

tēnā, hoki wairua mai.

Kei te whare e tū nei,

te pukenga wai o te ture i Pōneke

tēnā koe.

E te whetū o te rangi nei, Justice Glazebrook, tēnā koutou ko tō whānau.

Kei aku rangatira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, otirā tēnā tātou katoa.

I welcome you all to this special sitting of Te Kōti Mana Nui o Aotearoa, the Supreme Court of New Zealand, to mark the retirement of Justice Susan Glazebrook.

Sitting alongside the judges of this court in this courtroom are judges of the Court of Appeal and High Court. We are also joined via AVL by Court of Appeal and High Court judges sitting in Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch. I acknowledge other members of the judiciary — the Chief Judges of the Employment and Māori Land Courts, and the Coroners Court, and judges from the District Court.

I welcome Justice Glazebrook's family — her husband Greg Kane, and sons James and Alex, and the extended Glazebrook-Kane whānau. I am very glad that you are here. It is right that you hear first-hand today of the contribution your wife, mother, whanaunga, has made to the law and to the administration of justice, and of the high regard in which she is held.

I welcome our many distinguished guests. I acknowledge the presence, amongst counsel, of the Attorney-General. I acknowledge also the Minister for Courts, Minister McKee, and the Secretary for Justice, Mr Andrew Kibblewhite.

Present also are many of the retired judges of this court. I record the apology of the Right Honourable Dame Sian Elias, who has asked me to pass on her deep regret that she is unable to be here today due to an important commitment in Auckland. And the apology of your colleague Justice Joe Williams, who is overseas at the moment.

The business of this Court today is nothing other than Justice Glazebrook. We sit today to acknowledge her service to the law and society, and to the judiciary.

Justice Glazebrook has served the administration of justice for more than twenty-five years. Her valedictory sitting is an important occasion, because it provides the chance to reflect upon the contributions she has made over that time. As you will hear, it is not to over-speak to say that hers has been a truly remarkable career.

We conduct this sitting in a way that is appropriate for this country, and which reflects the mana of the occasion. I thank the kai karanga, Florence Oakley and Kiani Duffull, for their beautiful welcome, and give my thanks also to Justice Whata for his mihi whakatau on behalf of the judges of the Senior Courts. Thanks also to the rōpu waiata, made up of clerks, registry and judicial support staff. Ka rere ngā mihi ki a koutou.

As to the order of events, I will shortly take the appearances of King's Counsel who have rights of first audience before the Court. I will then address some remarks to the Judge to outline her contribution to the judiciary, and to reflect upon her qualities as a colleague.

I will then invite the Attorney-General to address the Court on behalf of the Government; Mr Frazer Barton, President of the Law Society, to speak on behalf of the profession; and Mr Paul David KC, President of the New Zealand Bar Association, to speak on behalf of the Bar.

After that, we will hear an address from Judge Robyn Tupman from the New South Wales District Court, who, as Vice President of the International Association of Women Judges, will speak on behalf of that organisation. Judge Venus Azizi, who is a former member of the Court of Appeal and Judge of the Criminal Court of Afghanistan, will then speak.

Finally, her Honour will have the right of reply.

I will now take the appearances of King's Counsel.

Justice Glazebrook, the last time you were the business of the court was at your swearing in at the Auckland High Court on Wednesday 14 June 2000. I recall that at the time, the talk around town was of your meteoric rise through the law. You had been in legal practice for only 14 years but had already built a formidable reputation as a skilled practitioner in the highly technical field of taxation law.

The Chief Justice, Dame Sian Elias, said of you that you had a fine intellect which had soared over several areas of scholarship. We will hear more of that from other speakers. At this point, it is enough to say that you had already excelled in fields outside the law, as both a linguist and historian.

At your swearing in, the Chief Justice observed that you brought extensive experience in commercial, tax and finance law to the bench. And so you did. You had mastered the accrual rules like no one else, and you were the author of many learned tomes and articles on the law of tax. And you had served on the boards of public listed companies and government entities.

I mention these facts because, after lengthy judicial service, a judge's professional achievements before the bench are easily forgotten.

As a judge, you quickly gained a reputation for your formidable intellect. You were appointed to the Court of Appeal in May 2002, less than two years after beginning your judicial career. On the Court of Appeal, you shone as a jurist — writing many important judgments such as *Williams*, which set out a framework for assessing the legality of search warrants and searches. While no longer the leading authority, in part because of your own later judgments, *Williams* remains an important source of legal concepts and principles that continue to play a part in the development of the law.

You also gained a reputation for independence of mind. In dissent in *Barker*, you disagreed with the majority's application of your own Court of Appeal judgment in *Lee* — both of

those judgments addressing the challenging issue of the defence of consent to a charge of causing grievous bodily harm.

Your appointment to the Supreme Court was inevitable. Since 2012, in this Court, your contributions to the law have continued. For example, writing for the majority in *Debut Homes*, you mapped a pathway through the very difficult provisions of the Companies Act as they regulate director's duties in insolvency situations. Your jurisprudential legacy, both when you have been in the majority and in your dissents, is and will continue to be important.

Along the way, you have also gained a reputation for keeping counsel on their mettle during hearings. You are a master of the multi-part question, and you are known for the speed of your speech. I feel free to comment on this since I also have something of a reputation for being a fast talker. However, when speed of speech is combined with your agility of thought, it can be a challenge for counsel, and at times your colleagues, to keep up.

Your contribution to the New Zealand judiciary goes well beyond the day-to-day work of judging. From 2007 to 2012, you were the chair of Te Kura Kaiwhakawā, the Institute of Judicial Studies. The work of that educational body is critical to the administration of justice through the courts in New Zealand, supporting judges to refine the technical skills of judging, and the knowledge of the law, and of their society that is required for their work.

Throughout your career you have also been an advocate for gender equity. You have used speaking opportunities to highlight the under-representation of women in senior roles within the profession. Recognising how important it is that our legal practitioners and our courts are reflective of our society, you have challenged the profession to do better.

You have put your commitment to gender equity into action. The many women you have mentored into the profession and into successful and rewarding careers are testament to that.

So too is your work to promote gender diversity in the judiciary.

You were involved with the New Zealand Association of Women Judges from its inception in 2006. You took over the Presidency of the International Association of Women Judges in 2021 — shortly before the events which accompanied the withdrawal of American armed forces from Afghanistan, and which imperilled the safety of Afghani women judges and their families. Judge Tupman and Judge Azizi will speak about your work at the IAWJ, and the leadership role you played in helping the Afghani women judges.

I also wish to say something about you as a colleague. When I asked the current members of this bench and your former colleagues for their thoughts, they all asked me to stress your kindness and generosity.

You are known to be intellectually generous. You take time to understand the perspectives of other panel members about the issues before the court. You put effort in to improving the judgments of others, even when you do not agree with them. One of your colleagues said of you: "No colleague has been more generous, or more fun to collaborate with".

And you are kind. You have a deep interest in your colleagues, and a concern for their wellbeing. This extends beyond judges and encompasses the entire team who work at the Supreme Court.

You have encouraged associates who have worked with you to aim high in their careers, and you have been supportive of their decisions to work part-time in order to pursue studies. For many years, you have overseen the Supreme Court judges' clerk programme. I know I would be in trouble if I did not mention on behalf of clerks past and present how much they have valued your kindness, guidance and encouragement.

Your Honour, to express the deep affection and gratitude your Supreme Court colleagues have for you, we wish to present you with a kākahu. Justice Ellen France is going to help me with the presentation. But before we move to the formal presentation, I take a moment to explain the kākahu's creation and design.

The kākahu was designed and woven by Tania Morgan, who is Te Māhurehure of Ngāpuhi on her grandmother's side, and also Ngāti Rārua from Te Tau Ihu (Nelson/Marlborough) on her grandfather's side.

More than 135 hours of aroha and mahi are woven into this piece, which is made with cotton and wool, and peacock and pheasant feathers.

The designs reflect your whakapapa and your illustrious career. The niho taniwha, seen at the top and centre of the piece, represents guardianship, trust and protection.

The central weave represents spiritual connection, wisdom and protection.

The blocks of weaving represent all the people you have worked with and helped throughout your career.

At the base and centre of the kākahu, you will see the Cheshire Coat of Arms, represented by the three golden sheaves of wheat, symbolising your place of birth, Cheshire, England. It also symbolises the wheat shown on the flag of Afghanistan, to remember the work you have done for Afghan women.

The Poutama, on the corners at the base, represent whakapapa, the pursuit of knowledge and levels of achievement.

The colours chosen for you are cream, which represents enlightenment and peace; yellow, which represents warmth, energy and knowledge; green, which represents renewal and the natural world; and blue, which represents the sky, water, calmness and trust.

Justice France, can you please assist me with the presentation.

Your Honour, I invite you to stand –

[Presentation of kākahu]

Your Honour, the waiata, that has just been sung here publicly for the first time, was composed by Justice Williams especially for your valedictory sitting. The waiata is called "He Wāhine Toa" – a brave woman – and is about you. It celebrates the power of your

intellect, your sense of justice and your contribution as a judge of this country and it says: "We will miss you".

The kākahu has been named "Te Maruao" which has a double meaning. Its primary meaning is "protect the world", a name that speaks to your life's work in the law and, in particular, as a champion of human rights both here and internationally.

The secondary meaning of "maruao" is "new dawn". Given that you are about to become a retired Judge, that meaning seems equally apt.

Your Honour, I conclude with expressing, on behalf of the New Zealand judiciary, our deep gratitude for your service. And I thank you for your service to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Kia ora tātou katoa.