

**Senior Crown Counsel address on behalf of the Attorney-General for the
swearing in of Liz Gellert as Associate Judge of the High Court at Auckland
1 August 2025**

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, tēnā rā koutou katoa.

E ngā kaiwhakawā o ngā kōti katoa o te motu, tēnā koutou.

E te kaiwhakawā hou, Associate Judge Gellert, ka nui te mihi.

Your Honour, the Attorney-General cannot be here today. It is my privilege to appear in her stead, on behalf of the Government, as you take the oaths of office as an Associate Judge of the High Court. I am delighted to be able to pass on the Government's warmest congratulations to you.

My role is to introduce you in public and to outline the attributes which make you the right appointment, the right person to take on this significant role and I am delighted to be able to do so. The challenge, however, is to distil your attributes and extensive experience into brief remarks.

First, I acknowledge your family and whānau, friends, and colleagues supporting you today as they have throughout your career, as well as those unable to join in the occasion. I would particularly like to acknowledge your children. They can all be exceedingly proud of you.

Her Honour, the Chief Justice has spoken about those essential characteristics a member of the judiciary should possess. This is not a role that anyone can undertake lightly. Those that do take this step carry the weight of the past as well as hopes of New Zealanders for the future. We are grateful to you for putting your hands to this important responsibility.

The Court is one of the sources of executive governments' legitimacy. For our system of democratic government according to law, we need judicial officers to hold Government decisions makers to account, without fear or favour, and who are clear in their expectations and their responsibilities. New Zealand is not served by courts that rubber stamp executive decisions, nor by a judiciary in which everyone comes from the same background and has followed the same path.

The Attorney-General is committed to appointing a judiciary that as well as maintaining the highest standards, reflects the community it serves. Your path demonstrates practical understanding and experience of business and banking, alongside excellent appreciation for and ability to navigate the intricacies and intellectual challenges that come with commercial litigation as well as experience in the Associate Judge jurisdiction. Your reputation as a preeminent commercial litigator is well-deserved, earned over 20 years of practice, with skills honed both in large firms and in-house.

To start at the beginning of your legal path, Your Honour graduated from the University of Auckland in 2003 with a Bachelor of Laws with Honours and Bachelor of Arts, earning scholarships along the way and gaining admission as a

barrister and solicitor in 2004. You walked along this path at the same time as building up practical experience working in the banking sector.

You were a law clerk with David Williams KC before joining Russell McVeagh's general commercial litigation team in 2004. You then joined Simpson Grierson as an Associate in 2007, becoming a Senior Associate in 2008, specialising in banking and finance litigation.

Your Honour has also spent time working as in-house counsel, building relationships, establishing yourself as a trusted advisor and gaining expertise and insight of operations. You joined ASB Bank as head of disputes and corporate advisory in 2017, and acted as the bank's legal services general manager during 2020 and 2021, keeping across a broad range of issues during a particularly complicated time for us all.

Later in 2021, Your Honour became a litigation partner with Lowndes Jordan in Auckland, establishing a broad-ranging practice focusing on general commercial litigation, insolvency, debt recovery, enforcement, regulatory advice, and maritime law. You have thrived in that partnership, earning recognition from your clients and peers and while they celebrated this next move and are extremely proud of you, it seems clear you will be missed by your colleagues.

The character of an applicant is a factor which weighs heavily in the appointment process for new members of the judiciary. Your pro bono work, providing advice to people facing solvency and debt-related issues who

otherwise cannot access quality legal advice, speaks to your commitment to making justice accessible to all in your community. Your involvement in supporting the development of the profession, in the form of providing continuing legal education in your specialist areas, is also noteworthy.

You have served on membership bodies, including the Restructuring, Insolvency and Turnaround Association of New Zealand, where you were a Board Member for six years and as part of Women in Restructuring and Insolvency, for whom you served on the organising committee. These bodies are important not just for connecting lawyers and supporting professional development but also for raising understanding and awareness of this area of practice.

The Government has full confidence that you bring the necessary skills, qualities, and experience to your role as an Associate Judge, and that you will discharge the role with the same insight, determination and commitment that we have seen throughout your career.

Once again, your Honour, on behalf of the Government, I congratulate you on your appointment and extend my best wishes to you and your family for your time on the bench.

Nō reira, e te kaiwhakawā, kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui
Ka rite ki te pai o te Kōti/as the Court pleases