

## STATEMENT OF CHIEF JUSTICE

Serving and former members of the judiciary have been deeply saddened to hear of the death of Sir Thomas Eichelbaum, Chief Justice of New Zealand from 1989 to 1999. Dame Sian Elias, who succeeded Sir Thomas as Chief Justice, said today that Chief Justice Eichelbaum was a reforming leader of the judiciary who modernised courts administration during his time in office. He was held in the highest affection by the judges who served under him both for his leadership and for his personal warmth and kindness. He was greatly admired as a very fine judge.

Sir Thomas was born in Germany in 1931 and emigrated to New Zealand with his parents in 1938. He was educated at Hutt Valley High School and Victoria University College where he graduated with an LLB in 1954. Sir Thomas was a former representative tennis player and had a long association with the New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association.

After admission to the profession, Sir Thomas joined Chapman Tripp and Co where he became a partner in 1958. In addition to his wide-ranging litigation practice before the New Zealand courts and tribunals at all levels, Sir Thomas was counsel in a number of Commissions of Inquiry, including the Lake Manapouri Commission in 1970, the Inquiry into Chiropractic in 1978 and the Marginal Lands Inquiry in 1981. Sir Thomas left Chapman Tripp to practise as a barrister in 1978 and was appointed Queen's Counsel that year.

During his time in legal practice, Sir Thomas gave lengthy service to the profession. He was President of the Wellington District Law Society from 1968-1975 and President of the New Zealand Law Society from 1980-1982.

Sir Thomas was appointed a High Court Judge in 1982. In addition to producing judgments of exceptional quality, he undertook many of the chores in judicial administration, serving on a number of committees working on the High Court Rules and reform of court processes. In 1989 Sir Thomas was appointed Chief Justice. Later that year he was made a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (GBE) and a Privy Councillor. Sir Thomas sat in the Privy Council to hear a number of appeals. He was made an Honorary Bencher of Lincoln's Inn. He is widely accepted to have been an outstanding Chief Justice.

Lady Eichelbaum died in 2013. Sir Thomas is survived by their three sons.