



JUDICIAL OFFICE FOR SENIOR COURTS
Te Tari Kaiwhakawā mo ngā Kōti Mātāmua

New Ceremonial Robes for Supreme Court Judges

The Judges of the Supreme Court have adopted new ceremonial robes to reflect New Zealand traditions and history and the aspirations with which the Court was established by Parliament in 2004.

The new robes replace the full-bottomed wigs and red robes patterned on those worn by the judges of the High Court of England and Wales which were introduced as ceremonial wear in New Zealand for judges of the High Court in the 1940s. Similar replacements have occurred in a number of Common Law jurisdictions and the red robes and full-bottomed wigs are no longer retained by the United Kingdom Supreme Court. The full-bottomed wigs and red woollen medieval gowns were felt by the judges to be anachronisms which are inappropriate in New Zealand conditions today.

The new robes were designed by Wellington artist Ros Bignell. The brief she was given was to adapt the traditional black gowns worn by barristers and judges to reflect our common law heritage, by incorporating elements which position the Court in New Zealand and draw on our own heritage and traditions.

The gown is the same design used in the ceremonial dress of the judges of the United Kingdom Supreme Court. It reflects New Zealand's common law heritage and links the judges of New Zealand to those who share the same tradition. The fabric is silk and cotton. Instead of a traditional English design, it features a stylised kauri cone and leaves in the black on black weave, to represent the country of New Zealand and the shelter of the law. New Zealand's distinctive heritage under the Treaty of Waitangi is reflected in a poutama pattern trim in red, black and gold. Embroidered shoulder wings feature the three baskets of knowledge of Maori tradition set in fern fronds, representing the common law method which is to work with knowledge of the past and an eye to the knowledge of the future, while adding the insights of the present when responding to the needs and questions of today.

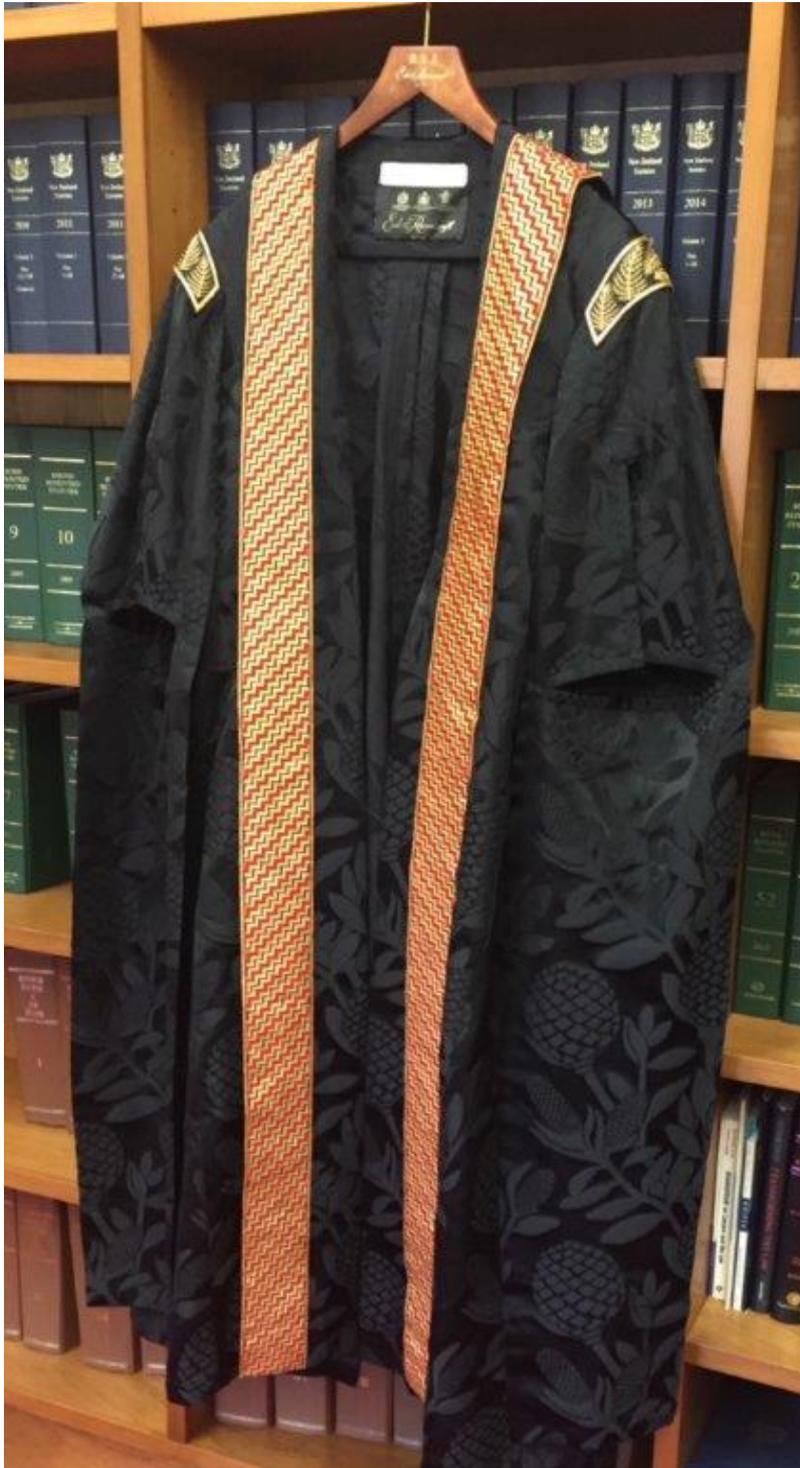
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The Supreme Court's new ceremonial robes