



**CHIEF DISTRICT COURT JUDGE FOR NEW ZEALAND
TE KAIWHAKAWĀ MATUA O TE KŌTI-Ā-ROHE
Judge Jan-Marie Doogue**

*Statement from the Chief District Court Judge, Judge Jan-Marie Doogue
For immediate release*

31 October, 2016

Community Magistrates Join Christchurch District Court

Christchurch is the latest District Court to add Community Magistrates to its judicial ranks. Three Community Magistrates from Auckland have been rostered to pilot the service in Christchurch for three days a week.

From today, a Community Magistrate will sit every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Christchurch. The magistrates will deal with overnight arrests of people charged with category 2 offences, where the maximum penalty is not greater than three months imprisonment or a fine of up to \$40,000 and they have pleaded guilty.

Chief District Court Judge, Judge Jan-Marie Doogue, said this would free up District Court judges to deal with more serious matters.

It is the first step in what is hoped will be permanent appointments of Community Magistrates in Christchurch when the District Court moves into the Christchurch Justice and Emergency Services Precinct next year, and will contribute to wider court scheduling improvements.

Southern Region Executive Judge, Judge Paul Kellar, says delay in the court system is undesirable for complainants, witnesses and defendants alike.

“A key aim in the introduction of Community Magistrates to the Christchurch District Court is to reduce the amount of time people have to wait for their cases to be heard,” Judge Kellar said. “Their appointment will also mean that District Court Judges have more time to deal with the more serious cases.”

If the pilot becomes permanent, the Auckland Magistrates will eventually be replaced with people drawn from the local community.

Community Magistrates are part-time judicial officers recruited for their diverse range of skills, experience and perspectives. They currently sit in courts in Northland, Auckland, Manukau, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, Wairoa, New Plymouth and Whanganui.

Chief Judge Doogue said New Zealand's 16 Community Magistrates are an important part of the District Court judiciary. They work mostly in the busy list courts, dealing with sentencing of offenders who have pleaded guilty on the day, hearing opposed bail applications and dealing with administrative matters such as taking pleas and remanding defendants for probation, forensic or restorative justice reports, as well as voluntary alcohol, drug or rehabilitative programmes.

Chief Judge Doogue said Justices of the Peace will continue to undertake list and fixture courts for category 1 offences as they do now.

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