



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

Statement for immediate release, 1 March 2017

Historic Day for New Zealand Courts

New Zealand District Court judges are ready to play their part in ensuring new governing legislation for the structure of Australasia's biggest court further enhances the administration of open justice and serves New Zealanders well.

The District Court Act 2016 which takes effect in full today is part of a suite of legislation modernising New Zealand courts.

The Chief District Court Judge, Jan-Marie Doogue, says it marks the biggest shift in legislation underpinning the courts for nearly 40 years.

Instead of a network of separate district courts, the District Court is now consolidated into a unified entity with general, Family, Youth and Disputes Tribunal divisions.

Changes include an expanded jurisdiction in civil matters from \$200,000 previously to \$350,000; the availability of new orders; a lift in the maximum number of permanent judges to 160; more specified powers for the Chief Judge; and requirements to publish progress on delivery of reserved judgments.

Chief Judge Doogue said that when taken alongside accompanying legislative changes, such as that opening the way for more audio visual links in court, the District Court Act 2016 Act simplifies the structure of the court and better reflects modern approaches.

"The vast majority of people who go to court in New Zealand rely on a District Court, and will continue to attend their nearest courthouse," Chief Judge Doogue said.

"They may notice little practical change, but this is a historic milestone. The measures are designed to bring more clarity and transparency and will help the District Court adapt to changes experienced since the landmark Royal Commission on the Courts recommended establishment of district courts in 1978."

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