



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

Statement for immediate release, 6 March 2017

The District Court at Nelson makes progress on jury trials

A concerted effort to make inroads into jury trial cases in the District Court at Nelson is beginning to pay off for the people of the region.

Chief District Court Judge Jan-Marie Doogue says the number of active cases on hand in Nelson has fallen to the lowest point in three years.

By January this year, 70 jury trial cases were waiting to be progressed, compared to 114 at the same time last year – representing a 39% annual improvement. These active cases in the system reached a peak of 120 during November 2015.

Chief Judge Doogue credits the progress made in Nelson to the introduction last year of multi-week hearing blocs for jury trials, alongside the hard work and commitment of court registry staff, judges and the local justice community. The approach allows for more flexibility in scheduling cases from a single pool of jurors, especially when there are a small number of judges and a limited number of courtrooms available.

Chief Judge Doogue said Nelson judges and Ministry of Justice support staff were proactively engaging with Crown and defence counsel to ensure that back-up work was available for a court to go on with should a trial be resolved on or before a trial date, thereby ensuring more efficient use of judges' time.

“District Court judges take access to justice seriously, and have tried to find innovative ways to reduce delays within resource constraints,” Chief Judge Doogue said.

“It has required some new and nimble approaches and I am grateful to everyone who has played a part. We will now be turning our attention to judge-alone trials. While the trend for jury trials is encouraging, the increase that is coming into the judge-alone trial jurisdiction means some resources will have to be redirected.”

Nelson boosted its number of resident judges from two to three in 2015, two of whom hold jury warrants.

*Media contact: Marie McNicholas, Strategic Communications Advisor, Office of the Chief District Court Judge
Marie.McNicholas@justice.govt.nz - mob 021 88 22 225*