



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

2 August 2016

District Court decisions published online

A new website, www.districtcourts.govt.nz, has started publishing judicial decisions from the District Courts.

The website is run from the Office of the Chief District Court Judge and marks a significant milestone in the modernisation of New Zealand's District Courts.

About 200,000 criminal, family, youth and civil matters come before the District Courts every year, where 160 judges make about 25,000 decisions, sentences or orders.

Chief District Court Judge Jan-Marie Doogue said that from now on, a Publications Unit working under an editorial board of senior judges, will select for online publication those decisions considered of high public or legal interest and which meet criteria for publication. This calendar year, the website expects to publish about 2500 decisions, rising to about 4000 next year.

Chief Judge Doogue believes the website will provide timely access to a wide range of significant decisions across all jurisdictions. It is hoped this will improve understanding of the court process and contribute to the open administration of justice.

“The information will serve the profession and legal community as well as the general public, by providing access to accurate, complete information about significant cases without the need to navigate individual court registries,” Chief Judge Doogue said

Criteria for publication in the criminal jurisdiction include sentencing notes and reserved decisions from judge-alone trials in cases of more serious offending, or cases where there has been discussion of high-level principles.

In the civil jurisdiction where volumes are lower, the aim is to publish all reserved judgments and costs awards, injunction decisions, judgments discussing interpretation of the District Court Rules, appeals from tribunals, and decisions related to professional bodies.

In the Family Court, selection criteria differ depending on the legislation that proceedings are brought under. For Youth Court, while criteria of public or legal interest will apply, there will also be emphasis on points of law on which there is little or no previous authority.

All decisions resulting from proceedings brought under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 will be published automatically because this is a requirement of that legislation.

Chief Judge Doogue says the large volumes of cases in the District Courts mean not all decisions can be published, and she stresses that the service is not intended as a substitute for news media attending court.

Where there are statutory reporting prohibitions or suppression orders, such as in some Youth Court and Family Court proceedings, the website uses different names and removes all identifying information.

The website was developed on time and under budget.

*Media contact: Marie McNicholas, Strategic Communications Advisor, Office of the Chief District Court Judge
DDI: 04 466 1323 ext 45153, Mobile: 027 88 2222 5*