



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

Statement for immediate release

May 23, 2017

Milestone for Sexual Violence Court Pilot

The Sexual Violence Court Pilot led by District Court judges is on track to reach a milestone in coming weeks as the first cases are scheduled to reach jury trial.

The pilot involves all sexual violence cases proceeding to jury trial in the District Court at Auckland and Whangarei, as they enter the court system from December 2016. The pilot aims to improve the way the courts respond to sexual violence cases, within existing law. It combines pro-active, best-practice trial and pre-trial case management with enhanced judicial education to reduce delays and improve the court experience for participants in jury trials.

Chief District Court Judge Jan-Marie Doogue said that at the outset it was hoped more intensive pre-trial case management would help cases to reach trial sooner, and there was potential for the first cases to reach trial stage in mid-2017.

“As the pilot nears the six month mark, there are encouraging early signs of improvements in timeliness. As of mid-May, charges involving 19 defendants were scheduled to reach jury trial during June, July and August, provided pleas are not changed prior.¹ For these cases at least, this indicates there will be a reduction in the average time from first appearance to jury trial.”

Sexual violence cases in the District Court have on average taken more than a year to reach jury trial. However, Chief Judge Doogue cautions that it is still very early days for the pilot. “It will be several months before the evaluation process provides a fuller picture of the impact of the more intensive approach to case management, as more cases enter the pilot. Ultimately, the pilot will test whether this early improvement is sustainable over time.”

More background about the pilot can be found in the October 2016 media release announcing the pilot on the District Court website -

<http://www.districtcourts.govt.nz/media-information/media-releases/>

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¹ *The figures do not include two trials scheduled in May that were disposed of before proceeding to trial.*