



**CHIEF DISTRICT COURT JUDGE FOR NEW ZEALAND
TE KAIWHAKAWĀ MATUA O TE KŌTI-Ā-ROHE
Judge Heemi Taumaunu**

Media Release

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Young Adult List launched in the Gisborne District Court

The Young Adult List was launched in the Gisborne District Court today. This is a specialist criminal court that recognises young adulthood is a time of increased vulnerability and that those appearing in court are more likely than the general population to experience neurodiversity issues as well as mental health and substance abuse issues.

The primary objective of the Young Adult List is to support participants aged 18 to 25, victims, whānau and support people to meaningfully engage in the court process. The Young Adult List also helps judges, lawyers and support services better understand and address any barriers affecting young adults' participation.

The initiative was first piloted in the Porirua District Court in 2020 by Principal Youth Court Judge, Judge John Walker. Following an evaluation of the pilot that showed a wide range of benefits for participants, the Judiciary, with support from the Ministry of Justice, announced the Young Adult List would be implemented in Gisborne.

The Chief District Court, Judge Heemi Taumaunu says "the Young Adult List is an important pillar of Te Ao Mārama kaupapa, as it incorporates many of the best practices that form its underlying principles of improving access to justice, improving procedural and substantive fairness, and supporting stronger connections between the court and participants, whānau and their communities.

"The Te Ao Mārama kaupapa will require the judiciary to play its part. This will include the adoption of a solution-focussed judging approach in the mainstream. It will also need the support of local communities and local NGOs. Perhaps most importantly, the Te Ao Mārama kaupapa will need the support of local iwi and local iwi providers."

Work to continue growing the Young Adult List in Gisborne will take place throughout 2022, including a focus on establishing pathways for additional support and services to help participants better understand, participate, and engage in the court process, and to support improved outcomes.

"There is a high prevalence of neuro-disabilities and mental illness in this age group so as a matter of procedural fairness, young adults require a different approach," says Principal Youth Court Judge, Judge John Walker.

"Ultimately it is hoped that the provision of wrap-around services and the tailored processes used in court will provide these young adults with the support they need to live healthy, productive lives, reduce the likelihood of reoffending and enhance their sense of having been treated fairly by the justice system."

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