



PRINCIPAL YOUTH COURT JUDGE OF NEW ZEALAND  
TE KAIWHAKAWĀ MATUA O TE KŌTI TAIOHI  
Judge John Walker

## *Statement from the Principal Youth Court Judge*

*31 July 2020*

### **Trial of Young Adult List court officially launched in Porirua**

An initiative which provides for a new way of handling young adults appearing in court has had its official launch today.

A trial of the Young Adult List began at the Porirua District Court in March, and an official launch was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

The Young Adult List separates out those aged 18-25 from others appearing in court and has extra support to identify any particular health needs or disabilities they may have, adapting an approach used in the Youth Court.

Local iwi Ngāti Toa gifted the name, Iti rearea teitei kahikatea ka taea, to the Young Adult List at a ceremony this morning at Takapūwāhia Marae in Porirua.

The name symbolises overcoming challenges by applying the same determination as the iti rearea bird (little bellbird). Even though it is amongst the smallest in the forest, by sheer determination the iti rearea manages to overcome strong winds and fly over the top of the kahikatea, one of the tallest trees. In a similar way, the Young Adult List has been established to help those in this critical age bracket to overcome their challenges and reach great heights in their future lives, through values such as Mana Tangata, Awhi, Tautoko, Aroha and Manaakitanga.

A ceremony was also held at the court before today's session of the Young Adult List began.

Judge John Walker, the Principal Youth Court Judge, has led development of the Young Adult List court with the support of the Ministry of Justice, Judges from the Porirua District Court and the local Porirua community.

He says the new approach recognises that a high percentage of young adult offenders suffer from neuro-disabilities such as dyslexia, acquired brain injury and foetal-alcohol spectrum disorder.

“Often they also come from a background of being exposed to trauma and abuse. Those challenges do not expire when they turn 18 and come into the adult court.

“We also know that for people in this age group the brain is not fully developed. Currently we treat them as fully functioning adults when demonstrably they are not.”

Judge Walker says that if the law is to deliver effective interventions to reduce reoffending, then the underlying issues for young adult offenders need to be identified and addressed.

The language used in the court is simplified and legal jargon is avoided, so that all participants, defendants, victims, and whānau, can understand what is happening and be engaged in the process.

Those appearing in the Young Adult List can access a range of wrap-around services similar to those available in the Youth Court, including specialist probation officers, adolescent mental health services, alcohol and other drug screening, and links to community support.

Information sharing from the Family Court and Youth Court is also in place.

It is hoped that the process will identify any disabilities the young adults have and enable them to better understand the court process, which is important to procedural fairness, Judge Walker says.

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Read more information about the development of the Young Adult List trial [here](#).

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