



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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First session of Young Adult List begins in Porirua District Court

A trial of a new way for handling young adults appearing in the District Court began today at the District Court in Porirua.

The Young Adult List separates out those aged 18-25 from others appearing in court and provides extra support to help identify any health needs or impairments the young people may have.

Judge John Walker, the Principal Youth Court Judge, has led the initiative with the support of the Ministry of Justice, Judges from the Porirua District Court, justice agencies, local iwi and others from 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 come into the adult court. We also know their brains are not fully developed. Currently we treat them as fully functioning adults when demonstrably they are not.”

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

The Young Adult List sessions also feature greater explanation of court procedure to ensure the young adults better engage with the process and understand the proceedings.

Those appearing are able to access a range of wrap-around services similar to those available in the Youth Court, and services represented in the court include specialist forensic services, adolescent focused Corrections Officers, iwi liaison, Alcohol and Other Drug Clinician, Community Link, and Restorative Justice.

Today's session began with a mihi whakatau, karakia and waiata. Judge Walker opened the court by explaining that that the wrap-around services were to ensure procedural fairness and just outcomes for all those who come before the court.

Porirua District Court will hold the Young Adult List sessions every Friday.

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