

Te Kōti Rangatahi ki Whangārei

Terenga Paraoa Marae – 25 February 2018

E ngā mana, e ngā reo,

Ki ngā tini karanga no ngā hau e wha

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Ki ngā aitua maha huri noa

E moe koutou, haere atu ra

Ki a tātou kua huihui mai nei

Nau mai, piki mai, haere mai ki Whangārei Terenga Paraoa -

ki te whenua e tu rangatira ai a Manaia.

He rā whakahirahira tenei ma tātou katoa.

No reira, ki a tātou katoa, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

I begin by paying tribute to this marae and this community for encouraging the establishment of the 15th Rangatahi Court in Whangarei. It is very important that these courts are not imposed on communities, that they are a response to an invitation to do so.

I also want to acknowledge the vision of Judge Taumaunu, more than a decade ago, that these courts were possible, and acknowledge his careful work to guide them into becoming reality.

I acknowledge the enormous amount of work that Judge Davis and Judge Clark have done to engage with this community and work with this community, to gather the resources around the court so important to making it a success.

The Chief Judge of the District Court, Judge Jan-Marie Doogue, sends her apologies from Australia.

She wishes to pass on her best wishes for this very special day for the delivery of justice to the rangatahi of Northland.

She reminds us that Rangatahi Courts have allowed the indigenous voices and cultures of Aotearoa to be heard, recognised, and respected by our youth justice system.

And she wishes to acknowledge on behalf of all judges of the District Court the generosity, goodwill and patience of the mana whenua of Terenga Paraoa marae in making this court a reality in Northland.

The Chief Judge says she has every confidence this marae will rise to the challenge, because the prize from restoring the lives of our rangatahi is so precious.

All views that I endorse.

The Youth Court cannot operate in isolation. If the court is to have any chance of turning young lives around it must rely on the experience and skills of those who can deliver effective interventions. In the Youth Court we are faced with young highly complex lives – those affected by childhood trauma, neuro disability, traumatic brain injury, early onset of mental illness, alcohol and other drug dependency, out of school, and in many cases disconnected from culture. Many will have more than one of these challenging features. Increasingly we are seeing young women offending in a serious way.

Delivering effective interventions for such well-established problems is a major challenge in the short time frame we have in the Youth Court before they become adults. This is made even more difficult where a young person has no sense of identity and belonging.

Te Kōti Rangatahi provide this sense of identity and belonging, knowing where one fits in the world. A court surrounded by marae protocol, with kaumātua engaging with the young people in a formal setting, whānau feeling more able to engage in the process, the community seeing the court as relevant to their daily lives, is a court being connected with the community it serves. It enhances the legitimacy of the court as an institution. The court is not something off to one side, but something a community can see as part of the community.

Our Pasifika Youth Courts , developed alongside Rangatahi Courts, achieve all of this in the communities in which they are established.

Rangatahi Courts have allowed the indigenous voices and cultures of Aotearoa to be heard, recognised, and respected by our youth justice system.

The Youth Court, and the wider District Court, have learnt a great deal from the Rangatahi Courts and have much more to learn.

While this court will learn from the experience of the other 14 Rangatahi Courts , I am sure that it will develop its own approaches and reflect the values and kaupapa of the community it serves. It is that adaptability, responsiveness, which is a great strength of these courts.

I acknowledge all of you who will work with the court, I thank you for being willing to do so, it will be challenging but rewarding. It can be a roller coaster ride with some of our young people, highs and lows, hang in there, it will be worth it if we reclaim young lives for the benefit of all.