



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

Statement for immediate release, 24 November 2017

District Court of NZ website Wins International Award

A new website set up to publish decisions from the District Court of New Zealand and to improve public access to the court's work <http://www.districtcourts.govt.nz/> has been recognised internationally.

The 2017 Annual Award for Excellence in Judicial Administration from the Australasian Institute for Judicial Administration has gone to those who established the website.

It is the third time in five years the District Court has won the award. It has previously been honoured for its Te Koti Rangatahi, Rangatahi Court initiative and its restoration of court services in Christchurch after the 2011 earthquakes.

The recipients of the 2017 award are Karen Harvey, Director of Publications in the Office of the Chief District Court Judge, and Tony Fisher, the former General Manager of District Courts (now Director of Maori Strategy) at the Ministry of Justice.

The award recognises initiatives that improve access to justice, demonstrate innovation and deliver real benefits. The award's selection panel said they were particularly impressed at the range and breadth of judgments met by the website.

Chief District Court Judge Jan-Marie Doogue heads the editorial board of senior judges which oversees the selection and publishing process run by a small publishing team based in her office. It has published more than 1,400 decisions since the website's launch in mid-2016.

Chief Judge Doogue says the website gives unprecedented public and professional access to significant judicial decisions from multiple jurisdictions of the District Court, where the vast majority of justice is dispensed in New Zealand.

“Before the website existed, District Court decisions were rarely published and were difficult to access, unless in summary as reported by news media,” Chief Judge Doogue said.

“The award is richly deserved by those who devised an online publishing system capable of managing the volume and diversity of decisions in the District Court, along with a gold standard system for vetting the sensitive nature of some of the material.”

The project was motivated by principles of transparency, judicial accountability, openness and equal access to justice.

“The website shines new light on the administration of justice in Australasia’s biggest court where more than 20,000 written judgments a year are delivered in its criminal, family, civil and youth jurisdictions,” Chief Judge Doogue said.

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