



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

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MEDIA STATEMENT

Chief Justice pays tribute to the Hon John Laurenson CNZM KC



(Photo credit: Taranaki Daily News)

The Chief Justice, the Rt Hon Dame Helen Winkelmann, today paid tribute on behalf of New Zealand's judiciary to the Hon John Arthur Laurenson CNZM KC, who passed away on Saturday 6 July 2024, aged 86.

Justice Laurenson served on the High Court of New Zealand from July 1997 to September 2005, also sitting regularly in the Divisional Courts of the Court of Appeal. Justice Laurenson had a down-to-earth style as a judge – he was practical and to the point in his management of hearings and trials. He was polite and scrupulously fair to all who came before his court, and kind to those in need of support. He was a man of great humanity.

With his extensive experience before the courts as counsel, he was asked to handle some of the more demanding trial assignments, including the first case in recent history (Operation Mexico) where a jury was sequestered for the entire duration of a trial – 17 days.

Justice Laurenson was a supportive colleague. He was a thoughtful and gifted mentor to many, with newer judges often seeking out his wise counsel on points of procedure or trial management. He is remembered with great affection by the judges and staff who worked with him.

Following retirement from the bench Justice Laurenson provided judicial service in the Pacific as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Tonga in 2007 and 2009. He also served as acting Chief Justice of Tonga for a short period.

Highlights of career in practice

Justice Laurenson graduated with an LLB in 1961 from Victoria University. He was a partner in the legal firm of Govett Quilliam in New Plymouth from 1962 to 1988 and was Crown Solicitor in that firm from 1970 to 1988, responsible for the region's Crown prosecutions. He was considered an outstanding Crown Solicitor and prosecuted in many of

the significant trials of the day. In 1989 he was appointed Taranaki's first Queen's Counsel in 70 years.

He also gave considerable service to the profession. He was the President of the Taranaki District Law Society in 1979, Vice President of the New Zealand Law Society in 1983, and a member of the New Zealand Law Society Appeal Board in 1987.

Beyond that, his reputation in the profession was such that he was asked to serve on public inquiries and public bodies. He was on a Committee of Inquiry under the Health Act 1956 in 1990, Chairman of the Police Disciplinary Tribunal in 1995, Hearing Commissioner under the Resource Management Act 1991 in 1996, and a member of the Serious Fraud Office prosecution board in 1990–1997. He was also the Chairperson and Vice Chair of various education, health, sport and legal advice committees. As a devoted rugby fan, he chaired both the NZ Rugby Union Judicial Committee and Appeal Council in 1994–1996, and the Taranaki Rugby Football Union's Appeal Committee.¹

Honoured for services as a judge



The Hon John Arthur Laurenson receiving the Insignia of a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) from the Governor-General, Sir Anand Satyanand GNZM QSO on 24 March 2009 (Photo credit: Office of the Governor-General)

In 2009, Justice Laurenson became a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services as a Judge of the High Court of New Zealand.

Family

Justice Laurenson is survived by his wife, Helen, and by his three sons Peter, David and Andrew, his eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

¹ He was also the Chairperson of the Brooklands Kindergarten Committee, Chairperson of the Vogeltown School Committee, Vice Chair and Chair of the New Plymouth Boys' High School Board of Governors in 1978–1984, Chairperson of the New Plymouth Citizens Advice Bureau Trust, a trustee of the Taranaki Scanner Trust, and Chairman and Director of Powerco in 1996–1997.