



The Right Honourable Dame Helen Winkelmann

CHIEF JUSTICE OF NEW ZEALAND | TE TUMU WHAKAWĀ O AOTEAROA

4 April 2022

## MEDIA STATEMENT

# Revised court operating protocols published today

The Prime Minister has announced that at 11.59pm tonight, vaccine passes will no longer be mandatory under the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

The court operating protocols have been revised following this announcement, and are now available on the [Courts of New Zealand website](#).

### Court operating protocols are under regular review

The judiciary – working with the Ministry of Justice – has taken into account up-to-date public health advice when reviewing the court operating protocols in order to keep the courts operating safely, the Chief Justice said today.

“This pandemic requires us to review our protocols regularly to make sure they adapt to the demands of COVID-19, and the developments in our understanding of the most effective precautions to limit transmission. We are advised that a combination of stringent mask-wearing requirements inside the courthouse, and rapid antigen testing to detect COVID-19 will provide a substantial level of protection against transmission of the virus in our buildings.”

“Therefore, the revised operating protocols include expanded requirements for rapid antigen testing. They provide for the use of high-quality masks for participants in jury trials and in other hearings where people are in court for extended periods. These measures provide a high level of assurance that people will be safe in our courts.”

### Changes to the protocols published today

Vaccine passes no longer an entry requirement to courts

- From 11.59pm tonight, people entering the courts are not required to show proof of vaccination and court staff will not be checking vaccine passes.

New testing requirements for people attending court a day or more

- People attending court for hearings of more than one day may be asked to take a rapid antigen test on each morning before the court hearing commences. The requirement to take a test will also apply to people attending hearings of half a day or longer if the presiding judge so directs.

- Court registries will advise counsel and any party who is not legally represented of the testing arrangements for their particular case.

Provision for this expanded testing regime may not be available at some courts outside the main centres from 5 April but will be progressively rolled out as capacity allows.

### Mask-wearing in court

- Masks must continue to be worn inside court buildings and will be supplied to anyone attending court who does not have one. Surgical masks or KN95 (or equivalent) masks are required.
- Cloth masks are not to be worn as they provide insufficient protection against transmission of COVID-19.

### Jury trials and jury “bubbles”

- The Jury Trial Bubble Guidelines outline a number of measures employed in courtrooms to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission during jury trials.

The Jury Trial Bubble Guidelines are currently under review. Revised guidelines will be issued later this month, and are expected to come into effect on Tuesday 26 April 2022.

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