
MS MARIA DEW KC
President of Bar Association
9 September 2023.

Swearing in for Judge Merepaia King, Employment Court,
Te Papa o Rotu Marae, Whatawhata

E te kaiwhakawā Matua, tēnā koe.

Greetings to you, Chief Judge of the Employment Court

Nga kaiwhakawā, tēna koutou

Greetings to you all other Judges of the Courts

E te Kingitanga tēnā koutou.

I acknowledge the Kingitanga present here today.

E te Honore, kaiwhakawa Judge King

Your Honour, Judge King

Nei rā, te mihi mahana, e te Rangatira, tēnā koe.

I bring you warm wishes, we greet you, Your Honour Judge King

May it please the Court,

It is my great pleasure to speak on behalf of:

- Ngā Ahorangi Motuhake o te Ture | the New Zealand Bar Association;
- Te Kahui Ture o Aotearoa | The New Zealand Law Society;
- The Employment Law Institute; and
- The Auckland District Law Society.

All of the profession is represented here today, to honour you, Judge King. Your Honour has given close to 20 years of service, as a member of our legal profession. It is perhaps a daunting prospect today to consider that you may well provide the same years of service as a judicial officer.

However, the success Your Honour has achieved to date, leaves the profession in no doubt that you will enjoy every success as a Judge of the Employment Court.

Your Honour built your career in the law, from the strong foundation of two university degrees ; one in Social Science and other an Hons Degree in Law . This was an early sign that you have always seen the study of the law and people as “a two stranded rope” *Te Rino*.

Your former partners at the national law firm, employment law team at Buddle Findlay, who you have spent the last 8 years working alongside you have reported to me of your career. The strong theme that emerges is your passion for doing right by the “people” you work for and with.

This is why, your former law firms have been so well represented her today. They have come in droves to celebrate and honour your success. Your Honour has been described by your former partners, as having the following qualities:

- A strong moral compass for what is right;
- You have never been interested in the “business” of law, as an end goal, but rather hold a passion for making a difference for those who must engage with the law;
- You have at the same time, had an equal passion and commitment to your colleagues, in the law. Whether acting as a mentor for junior staff or giving your support to senior colleagues who needed to call on your skills.
- Your down to earth nature and ability to laugh, has seen you warmly regarded by clients and colleagues.
- You have had the breath of experience necessary for judicial office given your 18 years practising law for clients from all walks of life from Universities, the Construction Industry, Banks, Media, Health care settings, public and private sector clients, a rich diversity of experience that has allowed you to understand the true nature of work and working relationships.

You are also widely regarded by your former partners ,as possessing a combination of qualities that are not always available to every lawyer. These qualities have proved to be a powerful combination for you. They describe you as:

- Technically brilliant in the law, but with a quiet modesty;
- Never to be underestimated, because underlying your calm exterior is a fierce and steely determination.
- You are never scared to speak up, but always “fierce on the issue, not the person”.
- Your success has not just happened, by luck or good fortune, but goals set for your success.
- In fact, one of your partners recalls you had set yourself the bold ambition that one day “far into the future”, in your words “you would love to be an Employment Court Judge”.

Your Honour has not just focused on personal goals, you have consistently given back to the legal profession. You have been a long-standing member of Auckland District Law Society's Employment Law Committee, which they particularly wish to acknowledge. You have presented regularly at national Employment Law Conferences and somehow, found the time to be a contributing author and co-editor of leading Employment Law publications.

Sherridan Cook, the law partner who has worked with you most closely over the last 8 years, has summed up his high regard for you with the following words: *"She carries her mana with ease and humility, and for this reason she will make a fine member of the judiciary."* These are hallmarks of your career to date and what make you so well suited for appointment to the Employment Court bench.

Your Honour will be, in more than one sense, a "new generation" Judge. Your Honour will not only be this Court's first Judge of Māori descent, more will be said on that by Ms Kopu for Te Hunga Roia Māori, but you will also be the first Employment Court Judge whose career has taken place exclusively in the modern era of the Employment Relations Act 2000.

You will therefore add new perspective and a valuable set of fresh eyes, alongside the depth and breadth of experience we are fortunate to have with the Chief Judge and the other Judges of this vital Court, the Employment Court.

Your Honour Judge King, on behalf of the profession, I acknowledge your contribution to our profession, and offer you our very best wishes in your new role as a member of the judiciary.

Ka rite, ki te pai o te Kōti

As the Court pleases