



# **Te Tari Ture o te Karauna**

## Crown Law

**13 May 2024**

### **APPOINTMENT OF CROWN SOLICITOR TO THE GISBORNE WARRANT**

The Solicitor-General Una Jagose KC today announced the appointment of Riki Donnelly, supported by the firm Rāwhiti Legal, as the Crown Solicitor for Gisborne and the first locally based Gisborne Crown Solicitor in almost 20 years.

The appointment will take effect from 1 July 2024.

Mr Donnelly was born and raised in Tairāwhiti and went to school in Gisborne. The iwi and hapū he most strongly connects with are Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-a-Rakairoa and Te Whānau-a-Pokai. Mr Donnelly brings with him a deep understanding of te ao Māori and tikanga that will be an asset to the Crown Solicitor Network.

Mr Donnelly began his legal career in Invercargill, with Preston Russell Law. He worked in both the Crown and employment law teams under the supervision of Mary-Jane Thomas, the current Crown Solicitor for Invercargill. In that role he undertook numerous criminal trials.

Between 2014 and 2016, Mr Donnelly worked as a defence and employment lawyer at Rishworth, Wall and Mathieson in Gisborne. As a criminal defence lawyer he undertook jury and judge alone trials and appeals. He moved back to Invercargill when Preston Russell offered him a partnership position in 2016, and he later became a Director when the firm incorporated as PR Law.

From 2016 to the start of 2024 Mr Donnelly was involved in the most serious crime prosecuted by PR Law, including working with the Crown Solicitor on all of Invercargill's homicide trials in that period. Over his career Mr Donnelly has prosecuted the full spectrum of criminal cases including domestic violence, serious drug offending, fraud, serious violence and sexual cases, and gang related crimes.

As a partner/director of the Invercargill Crown Solicitor's office for the last eight years, Mr Donnelly understands what it takes to manage a legal practice and provide leadership within an organisation. He has been active in his professional leadership, providing development guidance to young lawyers, particularly roia Māori (Māori lawyers) and as kaiārahi (leader) of the Māori Crown Prosecutors' Rōpū (group). Mr Donnelly's application emphasised his belief that the Crown should be closely embedded in the community in which it works. He says the Crown should understand the needs of the community, its history, and its local context, including the community support services available, to deliver its prosecutions function according to law and the Solicitor-General's Guidelines.

Since 2005 the Gisborne warrant has been held by the Crown Solicitor for Napier, as a separate warrant, first by Russell Collins (now Judge Collins) and until now by Steve Manning (both of Elvidge & Partners). This arrangement has been extremely effective, and stakeholders are unanimous that over the years Elvidge & Partners, based in Napier, has served Tairāwhiti very well. Mr Manning, however, has always regarded his position in Gisborne as subject to review. He approached the Solicitor-General with the suggestion that now was a suitable time to consider recruiting for a local Crown Solicitor to hold the Gisborne warrant.

After a public and contestable recruitment process, the Solicitor-General is delighted that such a well-qualified local Crown Solicitor can be appointed. Mr Donnelly will be supported in leading the new law firm, Rāwhiti Legal, by Leighvi Maynard, a local senior practitioner experienced in both Crown prosecution and criminal defence work.

Mr Manning, who continues with the Napier warrant, has offered Mr Donnelly and Mr Maynard his on-going support, as needed, along with his congratulations.

Crown Solicitors are private legal practitioners appointed on the recommendation of the Attorney-General and by warrant of the Governor-General. The Crown Solicitors are appointed for a particular district, usually in a High Court centre, and are responsible for the conduct of Crown prosecutions (previously known as indictable) in the High Court and District Court on behalf of the Crown. The Solicitor-General has overall responsibility for the supervision of Crown Solicitors, with assistance from the Deputy Solicitor-General, Criminal in relation to prosecutions.

For more information see [Crown Solicitor Network » Crown Law](#).

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