

2026 Chief Justices' Leadership Forum



Nadi, Fiji
9-10 February
Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay



**Australia Pacific
Judicial Partnership**

DAY 1 Monday 9 February 2026 – Grand Salon

8.30–10.30

OFFICIAL WELCOME

Attendees: Chief Justices' Leadership Forum (CJLF) members, speakers, dignitaries and invited guests. Staff from New Zealand's Pacific Justice Sector Programme (PJSP) and the Australia Pacific Judicial Partnership (APJP).

MC: Chief Registrar Tomasi Bainivalu

1. Opening prayer:
2. Traditional Welcome (1.5 hours)
3. Words of welcome Hon. Chief Justice Salesi Temo (Fiji), Rt. Hon. Chief Justice Dame Helen Winkelmann (New Zealand and Tokelau), Hon. Chief Justice Debra Mortimer (Federal Court of Australia) (15 min)
4. Introduction to programme (5 min)
5. Formal photo (10 min)

10.30–11.00

MORNING TEA

11:00–12:30

SESSION 1 – Keynote Speech: Separation of Powers and Judicial Independence

Presentation by Prof. Cheryl Saunders, University of Melbourne (30 mins), followed by discussion drawing on case studies/ practical examples to be used to highlight challenges arising within the region.

Facilitator: Hon. Chief Justice Debra Mortimer (Federal Court of Australia)

12:30–13:30

LUNCH

13:30–15:00

SESSION 2 – Judicial Administration and Judicial Independence

Short opening presentation by Rt Hon Chief Justice Dame Helen Winkelmann: issues that judges must manage to meet the needs and expectations of society. (Material [annexed](#)). Followed by discussion, using practical regional examples, covering:

- relationship with the chief executive and courts administration
- budgeting and financial autonomy
- sharing the administrative load.

Followed by break-out sessions to discuss different aspects of judicial administration, judicial independence and dealing with change.

Facilitator: Rt. Hon. Chief Justice Dame Helen Winkelmann (New Zealand and Tokelau)

DAY 1 Monday 9 February 2026 – Grand Salon

15:00-15:30

AFTERNOON TEA

15:30-17:00

SESSION 3 – Drugs in the Pacific

Opening presentation by Steve Symon, barrister and Chair of the NZ Ministerial Advisory Group targeting Transnational, Serious Organised Crime. Steve will give a brief description of the rule of law challenge presented by the growth of organised crime driven drug offending in the Pacific - from policing to prosecuting, to protection of the court (registry and judges), the practicalities of trial management and keeping juries safe (30 mins). Justice Leutele Mata Tuatagaloa will detail the experiences of Samoa's Drugs and Alcohol Court, a therapeutic court championed by the judiciary in collaboration with community groups. Followed by discussion on:

- The challenges individual jurisdictions are seeing;
- Education opportunities for judges that might face long and complex trials;
- Tools to support judges manage these trials; and
- Approaches that might be adopted to evidence issues and multi-party trials.

Facilitator: Hon. Chief Justice Satiu Simativa Perese (Samoa)

Presenters: Steve Symon (NZ), Justice Leutele Mata Tuatagaloa (Samoa)

18:30-22:00

COCKTAIL FUNCTION

North Point (On-site)

Hosted by the Honourable Salesi Temo, Chief Justice of Fiji
Dress Code: Relaxed Island style

DAY 1 END

Day 2 Tuesday 10 February 2026 – Grand Salon

09:00-10:30

SESSION 4 – Communications Strategy/Dealing with Media

Presentation on issues arising in court communications/media strategies covering:

1. Addressing media, purpose and content, use of social media, simplifying and localising content, mis/disinformation management, effective comms with limited resources
2. Interactive session with participants to break into groups to work on development of a comms strategy.

Facilitator: Hon. Chief Justice Debra Mortimer (Federal Court of Australia)

Presenters: Abbi Clifford (Director of Comms Federal Court of Australia), Michael Navallo (Chief of Comms, Philippines Supreme Court), Associate Justice Monette Singh (Philippines Supreme Courts)

10:30-11:00

MORNING TEA

11:00-12:30

SESSION 5 – PJSP Reflections and the future

1. 2024-2025 highlights and strategy
2. Report back on the priorities identified at the last Chief Justices' Leadership Forum

Faculty: Hon. Justice Gerard van Bohemen, PJSP team, Mereana White (Te Kura Kaiwahakawā Representative), Sophia Lourie (NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

12:30-13:30

LUNCH

13:30-15:30

SESSION 6 – Regional judicial priorities and needs – APJP

Update by Australia-Pacific Judicial Partnership (APJP), followed by discussion about the needs and priorities of judiciaries in the region. This will inform programme planning and development of implementation of activities.

Faculty: Hon. Justice Stephen Burley, APJP team, Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Day 2 Tuesday 10 February 2026 – Grand Salon

15:30-16:00

AFTERNOON TEA

16:00-17:00

SESSION 7 – Closed Chief Justices' Session

Chief Justices and invited attendees

17:00-17:30

REFLECTION & CLOSING OF FORUM

18:30–21:30

CJLF CLOSING DINNER
Voi Voi Bar (On-site)
Dress Code: Relaxed Island style

DRESS CODE

For all business sessions: Business Pacific style.
 For social gathers: Relaxed Island style.



Chief Justices' Leadership Forum 2026

CHIEF JUSTICES' PROFILES



Chief Justice Vincent Lunabek (attending remotely)
Vanuatu



Chief Justice Lunabek was appointed Chief Justice in 2001 (after serving as Acting Chief Justice from 1996 to 2001). He is the longest-serving Chief Justice in the Pacific. He is the first and only Ni-Vanuatu to have occupied this position.

Chief Justice Carl Ingram
Republic of Marshall Islands



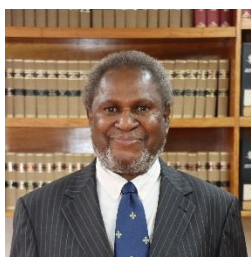
Chief Justice Carl Ingram has served on the High Court of the Marshall Islands since 2003 and is currently in his third ten-year term as Chief Justice. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Stanford University and a Juris Doctor from Stanford Law School.

Chief Justice Sir Albert Rocky Palmer
Solomon Islands



Chief Justice Sir Albert Rocky Palmer was appointed Chief Justice of Solomon Islands in 2004. Sir Albert graduated from the University of Otago with a Bachelor of Arts (Economics) and Bachelor of Laws. He was appointed to the High Court Bench in Solomon Islands in 1992.

Chief Justice Gibbs Salika
Papua New Guinea



The Honourable Sir Gibuma Gibbs Salika was first appointed as judge on 1 December 1989. Chief Justice Salika has served in the National Courts and the Supreme Courts of Papua New Guinea. He was appointed Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea in December 2018. Justice Salika is the longest serving judge of the National and Supreme Courts of Papua New Guinea and was appointed judge of the Court of Appeal of Kiribati and Solomon Islands two years ago.

Chief Justices' Leadership Forum 2026

CHIEF JUSTICES' PROFILES



Chief Justice Craig Coxhead
Niue



Chief Justice Craig Coxhead (Ngāti Makino, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Maru) was appointed Chief Justice of Niue in November 2018. He was appointed to the Māori Land Court in January 2008 and is a member of the Waitangi Tribunal. In 2011 he was appointed a High Court Judge of Niue and has served as a Justice of the High Court of the Cook Islands since 2016.

Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann
Tokelau



The Rt Hon Dame Helen Winkelmann was sworn in as New Zealand's 13th Chief Justice on 14 March 2019. As the Chief Justice of New Zealand, the Rt Hon Dame Helen Winkelmann is automatically Chief Justice of Tokelau. She was appointed as a High Court Judge in 2004, followed by Chief High Court Judge in 2010. She was appointed to the Court of Appeal in 2015, before being appointed to the Supreme Court in 2018.

Chief Justice Satiu Simativa Perese
Samoa



Chief Justice Satiu Perese was appointed Chief Justice in June 2020. He is a Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington Law School alumni and was admitted to the New Zealand bar in 1990. He obtained his Master of Laws from Columbia University Law School, New York. He was admitted to the bar in Samoa in 1999.

Chief Justice Oldiais Ngiraikelau (attending remotely)
Palau



Chief Justice Oldiais Ngiraikelau was appointed Chief Justice of Palau in August 2020. He was previously sworn in as Associate Justice of the Trial Division in 2017. Justice Ngiraikelau is the third chief justice since the inception of the constitutional government in 1981.

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CHIEF JUSTICES' PROFILES



Chief Justice Patrick Keane
Cook Islands



Chief Justice Patrick Keane was appointed Chief Justice of the Cook Islands in December 2022. From 2003 to 2016, Chief Justice Keane was a judge of the High Court of New Zealand.

Chief Justice Debra Mortimer
Federal Court of Australia



In April 2023, Justice Debra Mortimer was appointed as the Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Australia. Chief Justice Mortimer is the fifth Chief Justice and first female Chief Justice of the Federal Court. She was previously a judge of the Federal Court since 2013.

Chief Justice Tetiro Semilota Maate Moaniba
Kiribati



Chief Justice Semilota was appointed to the position in October 2022 and is the first I-Kiribati and the first woman assigned to it. She served as Acting Chief Justice until her swearing-in as Chief Justice on April 5, 2024. She is passionate about ensuring that the rights of every citizen are observed and that access to justice is promoted and achieved in every possible way, especially for the vulnerable.

Lord Chief Justice Malcolm Bishop
Tonga



Lord Chief Justice, President of the Land Court and Court of Appeal of the Kingdom of Tonga. Lord Chief Justice Bishop KC was appointed Lord Chief Justice of the Kingdom of Tonga on 1 September 2024.

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CHIEF JUSTICES' PROFILES



Acting Chief Justice Sir John Muria
Tuvalu



In 2021, Sir Muria was appointed judge of the High Court in Tuvalu. He was appointed Acting Chief Justice on 21 December 2024.

Chief Justice Salesi Temo
Fiji



Chief Justice Temo was appointed as acting Chief Justice of Fiji in January 2023. He was sworn in as Chief Justice on 24 December 2024. Before that he was a judge of the High Court since June 2009 and a Resident Magistrate since 1994. He has a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Political Science from Victoria University of Wellington and a Bachelor of Law from Auckland University. He was admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand in 1987.

Chief Justice Janmai Jay Udit
Nauru



Chief Justice Janmai Jay Udit was appointed as the Chief Justice of Nauru on 14 January 2026. He joined Nauru's Department of Justice and Border Control (JBC) in 2015, later serving three years as solicitor-general before becoming secretary for JBC in 2019. He has 33 years of legal practice, including extensive work in constitutional, legislative, and land matters. He has also led key reforms such as the law revision project.

Associate Justice Larry Wentworth
Federated States of Micronesia



Associate Justice of the Federated States of Micronesia Supreme Court, resident in the State of Chuuk. Delegate for Acting Chief Justice Beaulen Carl-Worswick of Federated States of Micronesia. He was sworn into office in October 2016 as Associate Justice resident of the Island State of Chuuk. He is a graduate of Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, and New England School of Law, Boston, Massachusetts. He worked as a judicial law clerk for the Federated States of Micronesia Supreme Court for twenty years before being appointed to the bench.

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PRESENTERS' PROFILES



Cheryl Saunders

Emeritus Professor University of Melbourne



Cheryl Saunders is a Laureate Professor Emeritus at the University of Melbourne, the founding director of the Centre for Comparative Constitutional Studies and a convenor of the Constitution Transformation Network. She has specialist research interests in Australian and comparative public law, including comparative constitutional law, with a particular focus on Asia and the Pacific. She is a President Emeritus of the International Association of Constitutional Law and of the International Association of Centres for Federal Studies, a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, a corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, and a foundation fellow of the Australian Academy of Law. She is an officer in the Order of Australia and a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, France. In 2022 she was awarded the Tang Prize in the Rule of Law.

Steve Symon

Mills Lane Chambers



Steve is one of New Zealand's leading regulatory and criminal lawyers. Steve joined the bar at the end of last year after a successful career as a Partner at the Auckland Crown Solicitor's office Meredith Connell. Over 23 years, Steve has undertaken some of the largest and most complex prosecutions for government departments and agencies, including significant cases involving drug offending and organised criminal activity. He has advised government departments and agencies on regulatory enforcement strategies, including the detection, investigation, and prosecution of offences. Steve was appointed Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Transnational, Serious and Organised Crime, providing independent, expert advice on strengthening New Zealand's ability to detect, disrupt, and dismantle organised criminal groups, including those driving the transnational drug trade.

Judge Leutele Mata Tuatagaloa

Supreme Court of Samoa



Judge Leutele Mata Tuatagaloa is Samoa's first woman judge, appointed to the District Court in 2011 and to the Supreme Court in 2015. She has presided over criminal matters throughout her judicial career, including in the District Court, Youth Court, and Supreme Court. Since the establishment of Samoa's Alcohol and Drugs Court in February 2016, Judge Tuatagaloa has been one of its presiding judges. The Court was created to address the high proportion of offending linked to alcohol and drug use, with up to 72% of Supreme Court cases involving alcohol or drugs prior to its establishment. Within the Court, Judge Tuatagaloa has overseen treatment-focused responses for eligible offenders and has credited the Court's processes—particularly its structured programmes and community engagement—with reducing the proportion of alcohol-related cases from 61% to 55%.

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Abbi Clifford

Senior Communications Professional



Abbi Clifford is a senior communications professional with more than 25 years' experience across the private sector, consulting, state and federal government and the university sector. She has developed and led successful positioning and identity communication strategies and their implementation across a wide range of channels. Abbi has managed major strategic initiatives and projects in Australia and internationally, led multidisciplinary teams, developed successful brand identities, and advised organisations across a broad range of sectors including banking, ESG, property, film and media, and multicultural affairs. She has also led crisis communications and media in government and private industry. Abbi holds undergraduate and post graduate degrees including a Juris Doctor from the University of Sydney where she was a recipient of the Walter Reid Memorial Prize Class II and on the Dean's List for Academic Excellence. Abbi is passionate about crafting strategic communications that meet stakeholder needs and expectations.

Michael Navallo

Chief Communications Officer – Philippines Supreme Court



Attorney Mike Navallo is the Chief Communications Officer of the Supreme Court of the Philippines. Since assuming the role in August 2024, he has led key social media initiatives within the court, including visual explainers and reels, a revamped podcast and a weekly video recap of news about the Supreme Court. He previously worked as a reporter and presenter for Manila-based ABS-CBN News for 8 years, covering justice and human rights stories. He was a member of the team that won the 2017 Society of Publishers in Asia Award for Human Rights Reporting and was given the Award of Distinction by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility in 2023. He is also the recipient of several fellowships, including the Reham al-Farra Fellowship from the United Nations in New York. He has also worked as a litigator at SyCip Law and as a research consultant for Amnesty International's research on police torture. He holds journalism and Juris Doctor degrees from the University of the Philippines.

Justice Monette Singh

Associate Justice – Philippines Supreme Court



Justice Maria Filomena D. Singh has been an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines since 2022. She joined the Judiciary in October 2002 as the Presiding Judge of the Metropolitan Trial Court of Quezon City and has served in various judicial functions including as Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals. She is currently a Co-Chairperson of the Supreme Court Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary (CGRJ). She is also the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee for the Review of the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary; the Sub-Committee for the Review of the Code of Conduct for Court Personnel; the Technical Working Group on Feminism in Philippine Jurisprudence; and the Justice Sector Coordinating Council (JSCC) Technical Working Group on Processes and Capacity Building, among others. She is likewise the Working Vice Chairperson of the Supreme Court Governing Council for

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Mental Health. Justice Singh has been involved in studies on Gender Mobility and Representation tracing the progression of women in the judicial hierarchy and highlighting obstacles to women's rise in the judiciary. Recently, she was unanimously elected as President Elect of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) during the 2025 Biennial Conference in Cape Town, South Africa, following her term as Regional Director for the Asia Pacific Region of the IAWJ. In 2024, she led the IAWJ Asia and the Pacific Regional Conference in the Philippines, involving 450 women judges from countries across the region. Justice Singh leads several gender justice initiatives in the Supreme Court, including the formulation of the Guidelines on the Use of Gender-Fair Language in the Judiciary and Gender-Fair Courtroom Etiquette. She is currently spearheading the development of the Manual and Protocol for Women in Conflict with the Law. Under Justice Singh's leadership, the JSCC released the Victim-Sensitive Guidelines, which include specific provisions on victims' safety and privacy, right to information, physical, psychological, and social recovery, standards for evidence, rules governing interactions with victims, forensic evidence procedures, and special provisions for child victims and victims with disabilities. Justice Singh also led the launch of several Specialty Justice Zones in the Philippines, including a Tri-City Justice Zone covering the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, and Ozamiz to combat Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children, as well as a Specialty Justice Zone in Zamboanga City dedicated to combating trafficking in persons.

Hon Justice van Bohemen
PJSP Strategy



Justice van Bohemen was sworn in as a judge of the High Court of New Zealand in August 2017. Prior to his appointment, he had been New Zealand's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and New Zealand's representative on the United Nations Security Council. From 2005–2010, he was Director of the Legal Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and New Zealand's International Legal Adviser. From June 2010–April 2015, he was a Deputy Secretary at the Ministry, responsible for Multilateral and Legal Affairs. In 2022, he was asked by the Chief Justice of New Zealand to take responsibility for the Pacific Sector Justice Programme (PJSP). He is the Chair of the PJSP Komiti.

Mereana White
Manager Judicial Resources Te Kura Kaiwhakawā



Mereana has worked for Te Kura Kaiwhakawā for 8 years and is Manager of the Judicial Resources team, with responsibility for the development and maintenance of Te Kura's 14 online bench books. She is also the primary researcher and author of Te Kura's Family Violence Bench Book. Mereana started her career as a judges' clerk before going into commercial law. She then shifted to public sector work, working in a number of senior Government roles in New Zealand and Victoria. Mereana worked for seven years as a manager in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria where she managed the development and roll-out of specialist family violence courts. Before joining Te Kura Kaiwhakawā, Mereana worked at the Judicial College of Victoria in legal research and judicial education roles.

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Hon Justice Stephen Burley

Looking back and priorities for the future – Federal Court of Australia



The Hon Justice Stephen Burley was appointed to the Federal Court of Australia on 23 May 2016. Graduating from the University of Sydney in Arts and Law, he was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1987, where he was subsequently awarded a Master of Laws from the London School of Economics and Political Science, in the United Kingdom. Justice Burley practised at the Bar from 5 Wentworth Chambers, Sydney, from 1993 until 2016, and was appointed Senior Counsel in 2007. His Honour hears cases in the Federal Court across a wide range of areas including intellectual property (including patents, trademarks, copyright and designs), administrative law, admiralty, commercial and corporations, and native title. His Honour is a national coordinating judge in the intellectual property practice area of the Federal Court and chair of the Federal Court's International Cooperation Committee. His Honour regularly contributes to publications and events hosted by the World Intellectual Property Organisation, an agency of the United Nations tasked with leading the development of a balanced and effective international IP system. His Honour is the series editor for the World Intellectual Property Organisation's Intellectual Property Bench Books for the Philippines and Viet Nam.



Te Kura PJSP Contacts

Toli Sagaga

Director

Toli.Sagaga@justice.govt.nz

+64 27 214 3152

Dimitris Potusa

Projects Advisor

Dimitris.Potusa@justice.govt.nz

+64 27 212 3445

Liaison with MOJ FIJI AV and
Regional Coordination Meeting.

Naomi Kyriacopoulos

Deputy Director

Naomi.Kyriacopoulos@justice.govt.nz

+64 22 626 5438

Matauaina (Taua) Fagalilo

Support Services and Programme

Coordinator

Matauaina.Fagalilo@justice.govt.nz

+64 27 201 2182

Liaison for travel, accommodation, per
diems and venue.

Sylvia Riches

Senior Projects Advisor

Sylvia.Riches@justice.govt.nz

+64 27 421 3990

Liaison for travel,
accommodation, per diems
and venue.

APJP Contacts

Helen Burrows

Director

helen.burrows@fedcourt.gov.au

+61 (2) 8099 8441

Martin Clutterbuck

Manager

martin.clutterbuck@fedcourt.gov.au

+61 426201878

Aye Mya Mya Moe (Moe)

Project Coordinator

moe.moe@fedcourt.gov.au

+61 456109553

Zoom Links



Link to CJLF Feedback Survey



The cover of this programme features the Fijian hibiscus to honour our hosts, and also sets the kalia/vaka as our guiding metaphor—representing both the Forum's voyage to Fiji and our collective journey toward a sustainable, prosperous, stable, and thriving Pacific.