

AIJA Indigenous Youth Justice Conference

Panellist

Day 2 – Session 14: Youth people with disability in the criminal justice system



His Honour Judge

John Walker

Principal Youth Court Judge for
New Zealand

Kaiwhakawā Matua o te Kōti Taiohi

His Honour Judge John Walker was appointed to the role of Principal Youth Court Judge for New Zealand in 2016.

Born in Belfast, Ireland, Judge Walker graduated with an LLB from Victoria University of Wellington. He was admitted to the bar in 1976 and practised in Palmerston North and then in Wellington as a partner in Macalister Mazengarb and then as a barrister at Harbour Chambers until appointment to the District Court Bench in 1994.

Judge Walker has been instrumental in the development of court assisted interventions for alcohol and other drug dependency, including the establishment of the Youth Drug Court in Christchurch and the Adult Drug Courts in Auckland. During his time as Resident Judge for the Porirua District Court, Judge Walker encouraged better engagement between the Court and the community, mainstreaming the community justice centre model and developing a solution focused judging approach. In recent years, Judge Walker has been leading the development of District Court responses to Family Violence. A focus for Judge Walker is the implementation of Young Adult List pilot, a court for 18-25 year olds taking Youth Court approaches into the Adult Court, in Porirua, and implementing those lists in other courts in New Zealand.

Judge Walker is engaged in the education of judges through the Institute of Judicial Studies on a number of subjects, including solution focused judging and Family Violence.