



Centre for Labour,  
Employment and Work

## Obituary: Chief Judge Tom Goddard (1937-2019)

Readers will have been saddened to learn of the death, on 14 March, of the former Chief Judge of the Employment Court, Tom Goddard. Tom, along with his family, arrived in New Zealand as a refugees in 1948. He graduated from Victoria University of Wellington with degrees in French and Law.

Following graduation he had a successful career in law specialising in defamation and labour law with Oakley Moran. Tom was appointed a judge of the then Labour Court in 1989 shortly thereafter becoming Chief Judge of the Court and in 1991 Chief Judge of the Employment Court, a position he held until his retirement in 2005. At his funeral his sons, who were somewhat apprehensive about Tom's retirement, remarked that he took to it like a duck to water.

The early years of Tom's term as Chief Judge were marked by controversy, particularly in the year's following the enactment of the Employment Contracts Act. In the early years of that Act the Court, but particularly Tom, were subjected to an extraordinary and sustained level of personal and unjustifiable attacks. At the time these went largely unanswered by the traditional defenders of the judiciary. Tom and the other judges of the Court remained dignified and professional in the face of those attacks and in time Tom was to lead the Court into the somewhat more welcoming era of the Employment Relations Act.

Tom's contribution to the development of labour law was immense and was marked not only by his intellect and rigorous analysis of the law but also by his compassion and humaneness. Tom's funeral was, as is fitting, largely a family affair reflecting on Tom's qualities that also made him an outstanding judge. Tom's legal achievements will be marked at a future special sitting of the Employment Court. Tom's funeral was attended by many members of the legal profession, lawyers, judges and former judges of his own Court as well as the current Chief Justice, Dame Helen Winkelmann and her predecessor, Dame Sian Elias.

**Professor Gordon Anderson**

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