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NEW ZEALAND LEGAL NEWS

# Chris Finlayson Cashing in on Title

by Vince Siemer | Published May 9, 2021



Minister Christopher Finlayson QC shortland chambers

Former National Party List MP Chris Finalyson is cashing in on political favours he dispensed while in public office.

Though never successful in his attempts at elected office, Mr Finlayson was nonetheless able to become Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations as well as Attorney-General between 2008 and 2017. The power of each position is immense. Evolving evidence now suggests his consequent personal enrichment from the posts is likely unprecedented since he left Parliament in 2019 – and almost certainly set to increase.

The signs were certainly there during Finlayson’s time in Parliament. In early 2010, Finlayson was twice caught out for failure to disclose his company and trust interests. Despite being the highest-ranking law officer in New Zealand, Finlayson at the time blamed his failures on legal advice he had obtained.

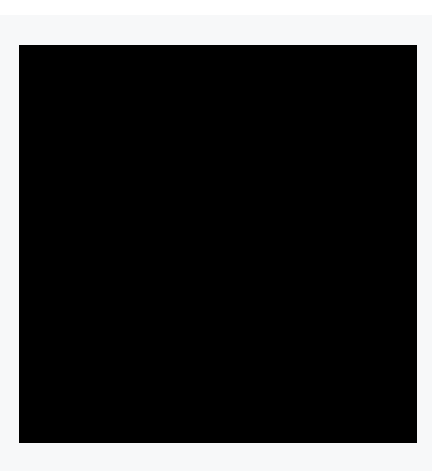
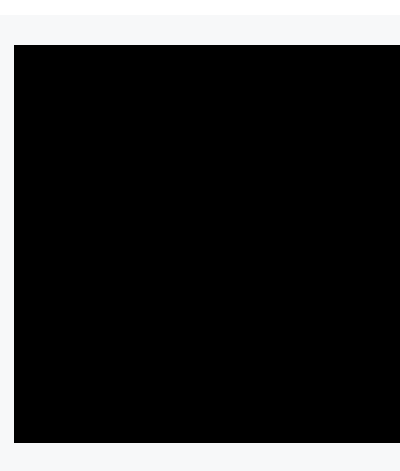
Prior to serving in Parliament Finlayson bragged about his hardball and successful tactics as lawyer for Maori settlement claims against the Crown. After he became Minister for Treaty Negotiations he bragged about giving away taxpayers money in more Maori financial settlements than all previously reached, 59 in all.

As Attorney General, Finlayson appointed two thirds of New Zealand’s judges. When the Labour Party won in 2017, Finlayson remained as an opposition list MP just long enough to introduce and ensure passage of the [Contempt of Court Act 2019](#) which, under section 22, imposes up to 6 months in prison and a \$25,000 fine for individuals who publish false statements about judges.

Mr Finlayson appointed himself Queens Counsel before leaving his post as Attorney-General, then joined [Shortland Chambers](#) before exiting Parliament.

You may have guessed Finlayson’s preferred legal brief. He is a litigator, representing Maori interests he gave money to as Minister of Treaty Negotiations, appearing before judges he appointed when Attorney-General. He does not discriminate between criminals and worthy stewards. Last month he was In the Auckland High Court defending Maori trustees accused of malfeasance. Whoever can pay his \$1,500/hour fees – plus \$400/hour for his multiple assistants – has his services. All done in his inimitable you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours style.

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