



(Bathgate, B., 2022)

NEW ZEALAND (/NEWS/NATIONAL) / LAW (/TAGS/LAW)

## NZ legal history made as Graham Philip pleads

11:03 am on 4 November 2022

By Benn Bathgate of **Stuff**  
(<https://www.stuff.co.nz/>)



Graham Philip in the High Court at Rotorua on Friday. Photo: Stuff / Christel Yardley

Graham Philip has become the first person in New Zealand legal history to plead guilty to charges of sabotage.

Philip entered the guilty pleas at the High Court in Rotorua on Friday, but legal restrictions in place until his sentencing on 1 December prevent *Stuff* from reporting the target of his sabotage, or any details of the offending.

The Taupō man entered guilty pleas to seven charges of sabotage, which carry a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment, as well as one charge of entering agricultural land with intent to commit an imprisonable offence, which also carries a 10-year jail term maximum.

He was convicted of the charges by Justice Mark Woolford and remanded in custody until sentencing.

Philip, who was charged with the offences in December 2021, has been in prison on remand since and had initially pleaded not guilty to all charges.

While legal restrictions requested by the Crown, citing fears of copycat offending, mean *Stuff* is unable to reveal the specific critical infrastructure Philip targeted, the Crown Charge Notice document notes the charges relate to offending between 6 November and 27 November last year.

Before his change of plea, Philip has made appearances at both Rotorua and Taupō district courts, at one hearing asking the judge: "are you a Freemason?"

Philip also made New Zealand legal history when he became the first person to be charged with sabotage.

According to information from the Ministry of Justice, obtained by *Stuff* via an Official Information Act request, Philip is the first person to face sabotage charges in New Zealand legal history.

"The Ministry's Case Management System holds records from 1980 onwards," the OIA response said.

"A search of the Case Management System for records for the period of January 1, 1980 and December 31, 2021 for charges or convictions of sabotage produced no results."

*Stuff* understands that even before 1980, no New Zealander has ever faced charges of sabotage

Philip also faces a separate Covid-19 infringement charge of \$300, which he has opted to defend in a judge-alone trial set for 19 December. In court, where he said he will cite the Magna Carta and "the wisdom of Charles II" as his key defence arguments.

5th