

# NSW's Longest Serving Chief Magistrate Set to Retire

New South Wales' [Chief Magistrate, Judge Graeme Henson AM](#), has announced he will be retiring in August 2021 after 33 years on the bench.

Judge Henson is the state's longest serving Chief Magistrate, having spent the past 15 years as the head of Local Court in New South Wales.

The judge is well known for his 'straight talking' and 'no-nonsense' style, as well as his contributions to the legal profession as a whole.

## **Passionate about justice**

Throughout his career, Judge Henson has been a tireless campaigner for greater efficiency in the delivery of justice, gender parity on the bench, transparency in the court process, and the adoption of technology in a profession that is traditionally resistant to change.

He has also been a champion in supporting the mental wellbeing of magistrates by highlighting their heavy workloads and pressures, which can lead to stress and depression.

Over the years, Judge Henson has [lobbied the state government to provide sufficient funding](#) to the court hierarchy's busiest jurisdiction, in order to ensure the Local Court is able to achieve timely justice for all involved.

## **COVID-19**

Since March 2020, the judge has steered the Local Court system through [the challenges presented by COVID-19](#) – issuing directions [and implementing a number of innovative measures](#) to ensure the wheels of justice continued to turn in incredibly

difficult circumstances.

### **Moving with the times**

The judge also participated in the [Foxtel series Court Justice](#), which was filmed in [the Downing Centre Local Court](#) in 2017, giving audiences a 'fly-on-the-wall' experience of court proceedings in Australia's busiest courthouse.

The objective of the move was to help the public to better understand how the court process works and the various roles of those involved – including magistrates, [criminal defence lawyers](#) and police prosecutors.

### **Looking after those on the bench**

In 2012, Judge Henson campaigned for a range of entitlements for magistrates, including a minimum two-week court break over the holiday season, as well as mid-year break for the Local Court Conference.

He has also championed extended long service leave, greater carers' leave entitlements and free travel on public transport.

### **An exceptional career**

His Honour Judge Henson was admitted to the Bar in 1980.

He spent two years working for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions between 1986 and 1988, before being appointed a Local Court Magistrate.

The judge was appointed Deputy Chief Magistrate in 1994, Chief Magistrate of the Local Court in 2006, and a judge of the District Court in 2010 – the same year he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

He is a member of the Governing Council of the Judicial Conference of Australia and the Judicial Commission of New

South Wales.

Judge Henson is also a member of the Wollongong University Faculty of Law Committee and the Anglican Aged Care Board.

He will retire as Chief Magistrate on 27 August.

His replacement is yet to be announced.