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MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW SPECIALIST JUDGES APPOINTED TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

The appointment of two specialist judges will make access to justice faster and easier for victims of child sexual assault, Attorney General Gabrielle Upton today announced.

The NSW Government has delivered on a key election promise by appointing Ms Jennie Girdham SC and Ms Catherine Traill as specialist District Court Judges who will hear child sexual assault matters across NSW.

Ms Upton said the specialist judges will make access to justice easier for child sexual assault victims and boost the community's confidence in the system.

"The justice system can be stressful and at times traumatic for victims, particularly for children and young people. These specialist judges, with their experience and expertise, will reduce the stress and trauma experienced by victims and help bring offenders to justice," Ms Upton said.

Ms Girdham SC and Ms Traill are both barristers with experience in child sexual assault matters. They will undergo intensive training for their roles. The training program is currently being developed in consultation with the Chief Judge of the District Court and the Judicial Commission of New South Wales.

The appointment of specialist judges is the latest step taken by the NSW Government to better protect, and deliver justice for, child sexual assault victims. The NSW Government has already increased the maximum sentence for sexual intercourse with a child under 10 from 25 years to life imprisonment, and included an additional 13 child sexual assault offences in the Standard Non-Parole Period Scheme.

The NSW Government has also convened a Child Sexual Assault Taskforce to advise on the best way to pilot the use of Children's Champions who will support child witnesses through the court process, and the pre-recording of children's evidence. The Taskforce includes the Department of Justice, NSW Police Force, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Victims Services and Legal Aid NSW. The specialist judges will also be invited to join the Taskforce.

A swearing-in ceremony for the new judges will be held later this month.

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