

Media Release

Eleven new magistrates appointed in landmark lift for Local Court

Wednesday, 11 December 2024

The Attorney General today announced one of the largest appointments of judicial officers in the state's history, with 11 new full-time magistrates to join the Local Court of New South Wales.

From police prosecutors and barristers working with the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutors (ODPP), to senior solicitors practising in the public and private sectors in Australia and overseas, the group brings an enormous breadth of legal expertise to the state's busiest court.

Five of the roles are new and six of the individuals will move into positions vacated by magistrates appointed to other jurisdictions, retiring magistrates or magistrates converting to part-time.

The magistrates will initially be posted in different parts of NSW as part of their training, including regional circuits, before presiding at a more permanent location.

The 11 appointments provide a big boost for the Local Court, bringing the total number of magistrates to 159, which includes 26 magistrates in the Children's and Coroner's Court.

The appointees will be sworn in and commence as magistrates in early 2025.

Attorney General Michael Daley said:

"I am delighted to announce the appointment of 11 outstanding lawyers to the Local Court bench.

"The Local Court is the backbone of the NSW justice system, with magistrates responsible for more than 90 per cent of judicial decisions in the state, including increasingly complex cases.

"These individuals bring a wide range of legal expertise and will be invaluable to the Court and everyone who interacts with it.

"I congratulate each appointee on this well-deserved achievement."

MEDIA: Nathan Vass | Attorney General | 0439 419 465

BIOGRAPHIES

Elizabeth Bushby

Elizabeth Bushby is an experienced solicitor who has worked in various criminal law roles with Legal Aid NSW for more than 15 years, most recently as a trial advocate in the Central Sydney office.

Ms Bushby appears in the Local, Children's, District and Supreme Court. Her practice includes a mix of work in these jurisdictions, including release applications, defended and disputed facts hearings, mental health applications, sentences and Early Appropriate Guilty Plea matters.

She has worked across NSW as a Senior Criminal Law Solicitor, Senior Local Court Solicitor and Relief Solicitor including in the Central Coast, Riverina, Western Sydney, along with locations in the Central West and Mid North Coast and Western NSW.

Ms Bushby will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 28 January 2025.

Shaun Mortimer

Since being admitted as a solicitor in 2007, Shaun Mortimer has devoted most of his career to the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) (ALS).

Mr Mortimer started out as junior criminal defence lawyer with the ALS at Dubbo in 2008 and since then has moved between that organisation and others, gaining experience he has brought back to the ALS.

In 2013 he was awarded Specialist Accreditation in Criminal Law by the Law Society of NSW and for the past two years he has led the ALS's criminal law services across the state as Principal Solicitor of Criminal Practice.

Mr Mortimer will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 29 January 2025.

Rosheehan O'Meagher

Rosheehan O'Meagher joins the Local Court with over 13 years' experience in criminal law. She was appointed a Crown Prosecutor with the NSW ODPP in 2021 and has worked in the Sydney and Dubbo offices appearing in complex District Court trials and sentences.

Ms O'Meagher started her legal career as a solicitor with Harmers Workplace Lawyers in 2010 before joining the ODPP 12 months later. She spent six years in the role of solicitor before moving across the country in 2017 to take up the role of Managing Lawyer for the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia. Ms O'Meagher was based in the Kununurra office in the East Kimberley region and was responsible for providing legal services to remote communities across the area.

Ms O'Meagher moved back to NSW in 2018 and worked as a solicitor advocate with the ODPP in Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Sydney from 2018 to 2021. As part of that role, she appeared in District Court trials in various regional locations.

Ms O'Meagher will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 29 January 2025.

Bryan Robinson

Bryan Robinson has practised as a barrister for 17 years in criminal law, mainly defending in Supreme and District Court jury trials, sentences and appeals, along with matters before the Local, Drug and Children's Court.

Prior to this Mr Robinson was a solicitor with Legal Aid NSW from 1999 to 2007. He worked as a duty solicitor in the Local and Children's Court before specialising in committal matters and District Court sentences and appeals from 2002 onwards.

Mr Robinson started his career as a NSW police officer in 1985, doing general policing and investigative duties before becoming a police prosecutor in 1991, where he appeared in all summary matters before the Local and Children's Court.

Mr Robinson will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 30 January 2025.

Chris Brown

Chris Brown has been employed in the legal service industry for 35 years in several community and public sector roles in NSW and the ACT.

Mr Brown started his career in the NSW Attorney General's Department in 1989, working as a clerk and Registrar for almost a decade at various Local and District Court locations including Parramatta, Katoomba and Goulburn.

Since being admitted as a solicitor in 1998 he has predominantly practised criminal law. He started out as Principal Solicitor with Blue Mountains Community Legal Centre for two years before joining Legal Aid NSW in 2001 initially practising in family law, before moving to the criminal law practice in 2002. He currently works as a Solicitor Advocate in the Penrith office of Legal Aid NSW where he has conducted a range of complex criminal law cases in the Local and District Court.

Between 2019 and 2021, he held a senior policy role with the Law Council of Australia in Canberra in criminal and national security law and also worked with Legal Aid ACT practising in criminal law.

Mr Brown will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 30 January 2025.

Razia Shafiq

Ms Razia Shafiq is a highly regarded barrister with 30 years of legal experience spanning across institutions in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.

In 2014, Ms Shafiq was admitted as a barrister in NSW, practising in criminal law matters, including serious assaults, white collar crime and drug trafficking. She practised with Arthur Phillip Chambers for six years before managing her own barrister's practice in Western Sydney.

Ms Shafiq was first admitted as a legal practitioner in 1994 in NSW and began her career in Fiji prosecuting matters in the Local Court, High Court and Appeals Courts. She joined the NSW ODPP in 1999, working in Lismore and other country courts.

After a short stint at the NSW Drug Court in 2000, she joined the ODPP at Parramatta as Senior Solicitor, prosecuting some of the states more complex cases where she remained until 2014.

Ms Shafiq will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 31 January 2025.

Lisa Graham

Lisa Graham has practised as a solicitor with the NSW ODPP for more than 30 years in its Sydney, Parramatta and Penrith offices, predominantly in Sydney West.

During this time Ms Graham has worked in several roles within the organisation, starting out as a junior solicitor in 1993. She spent many years working as an advocate appearing regularly in lists in the Local and District Court before becoming a Senior Solicitor in 2018.

In her current position, she is a charge certifier as well as solicitor with carriage of the most serious and difficult cases. These include murder, manslaughter, strike force matters such as large-scale drug offences and serious child and adult sexual assaults, serious offences of violence, fraud, arson and other complex criminal offences including high profile matters.

Prior to joining the NSW ODPP, Ms Graham worked with the Victoria ODPP for more than three years and a private law firm in that state.

Ms Graham will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 31 January 2025.

Michael Blair

Michael Blair has two decades of experience practising as a criminal defence solicitor and has been an Accredited Specialist in criminal law for more than 15 years.

Since 2011 Mr Blair has led his own firm as Principal Solicitor and Director of Blair Criminal Lawyers, which specialises in a full range of criminal law matters in most NSW jurisdictions and the High Court of Australia. Prior to this, he worked with The Law Practice in Sydney for seven years.

Originally studying business then completing a Master of Commerce, Mr Blair started his career working in finance with banks and telecommunication companies in various leadership roles.

Mr Blair will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 3 February 2025.

Jeff Tunks

Jeff Tunks has practised law for more than 35 years, including as a solicitor and prosecutor for NSW Police, barrister and has been a Crown Prosecutor with the ODPP since 2015.

Mr Tunks was appointed a police prosecutor in 1987 and worked in the Local, Children's and Coroner's Court in various Sydney and South Coast locations for 10 years before becoming a senior solicitor and acting deputy director.

In 2004 he joined Marsdens Law Group and led the Criminal Law Division for almost a decade then became a barrister with in 2013. In this role Mr Tunks briefed in trials and sentencing, including in the District, Supreme and Appeal Court, and the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Mr Tunks will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 3 February 2025.

Arthur Aguirre

Mr Arthur Aguirre has practised as a solicitor for more than 25 years and for the last two decades has led his own firm in Sydney, employing a number of lawyers.

Mr Aguirre appears daily as an advocate in hearings and committals before the Local and Children's Court and often conducts matters in the District Court, Supreme Court as well as various Tribunals and Commissions of Inquiry.

He has regularly held instructions in some of Australia's biggest prosecutions in NSW and elsewhere. This includes murders, drug offences, multi-million-dollar frauds and sexual impropriety allegations in the District Court, Supreme Court, Court of Criminal Appeal and the High Court of Australia.

His legal journey began in 1991 as a Judge's Associate in the District Court, where he remained until 1998 when he joined Hicksons Lawyers shortly prior to his admission as a solicitor.

Mr Aguirre will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 4 February 2025.

Pilar Lopez

Pilar Lopez is an experienced and passionate advocate for the most disadvantaged people in the state, practising law with NSW public and community sector services for almost 20 years.

Ms Lopez joined Legal Aid NSW in 2007 as a solicitor in the busy Local Court team at its Campbelltown office. She has since held several other positions in the organisation including, Local Court practice manager, District Court appeals, Commonwealth committals, Policy and In-house counsel. Across her career she has appeared in a range of jurisdictions in Sydney, regional areas and remote NSW, and is currently one of the senior Early Appropriate Guilty Plea solicitors at the Burwood office.

Before this, Ms Lopez worked with the Attorney General's Department, the Illawarra Community Legal Centre and the Western Aboriginal Legal Services based in Dubbo providing advice to large and diverse client-bases in all areas of law.

Ms Lopez will be sworn in and commence as a magistrate on 4 February 2025.