



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General  
Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**EDITORS NOTE: Brief biographical details of the appointees are below**

Thursday, 16 December 2021

### **FIVE APPOINTMENTS TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL COURT**

Three additional magistrates have been appointed to the Local Court of NSW, in the first stage of a \$56.1 million investment to strengthen the state's busiest court to deliver more efficient justice across the state.

Attorney General and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence Mark Speakman said the appointment of two deputy chief magistrates, one to provide leadership on domestic violence matters, will help further reinforce the Local Court's role as the backbone of NSW's justice system.

"These five appointments will together help equip the Local Court to deal efficiently with a caseload that amounts to 96 percent of all criminal prosecutions and more than 90 percent of civil matters before the state's courts," Mr Speakman said.

"The addition of three extra magistrates bringing the total number of judicial officers on the Local Court bench to a record 144. Further appointments of extra magistrates to be announced in coming months will boost the bench to 149."

Magistrates Sharon Freund and Theo Tsavdaridis will commence as deputy chief magistrates on 17 December. Magistrate Freund replaces former deputy chief magistrate Jane Mottley, who is now Senior Judge of the Drug Court, and will have a specific focus on domestic violence cases. Magistrate Theo Tsavdaridis' appointment will boost the number of deputy chief magistrates to three.

Mr Speakman also welcomed new magistrates Emma Manea, Catherine Samuels and Stephen Barlow.

"The people of NSW are indeed fortunate to have at their disposal the wealth of legal talent represented by these three appointees. They will all bring their broad experience and deep understanding of the law to their new roles on the Local Court bench," Mr Speakman said.

"The investment announced in this year's budget for eight additional magistrates will also provide more resources to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid NSW."

Mr Barlow will become a magistrate on 17 January, Ms Manea on 1 February and Ms Samuels 2 February. Each appointee will complete a training course after which they'll preside at locations to be determined by NSW Chief Magistrate Peter Johnstone.

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## **Deputy chief magistrates' biographies**

### **Sharon Freund**

Her Honour's legal career spans almost 30 years. Prior to joining the judiciary, Magistrate Freund worked in private practice holding senior associate and partner positions across several Sydney and national law firms. Her Honour was appointed as a magistrate in 2006. She has served as an arbitrator in the District and Local Court of NSW as well as a Deputy State Coroner and in the Children's Court. Her Honour is also an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Notre Dame.

### **Theo Tsavdaridis**

His Honour holds a Master of Laws in criminal justice and has almost 25 years' legal experience. He was the principal of his own firm in Sydney, practising in criminal law, and commercial and corporate litigation. He was sworn in as a magistrate in 2011. His Honour has sat at several courts, including in Sydney, Bourke and Brewarrina. Magistrate Tsavdaridis has made presentations to Community Corrections officers and community legal centre volunteers, delivered continuing legal education seminars, and provided advice for students at faculty of law careers nights and acted as an electoral arbiter for university student unions.

## **Magistrates' biographies**

### **Emma Manea**

Ms Manea has more than 22 years' experience as a solicitor, with the majority in criminal law practice. She rises to the bench from Legal Aid NSW, where she was a duty and indictable offences solicitor. Most recently, Ms Manea managed professional development in the Criminal Law Executive, overseeing the training needs of more than 400 in-house and private practice lawyers across NSW.

### **Catherine Samuels**

Ms Samuels brings more than 20 years of legal experience to the role of magistrate. She rises to the bench from the Department of Communities and Justice, where she has been the Director Child Protection in Legal Services since 2016, providing advice to the Secretary and Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

### **Stephen Barlow**

Mr Barlow has worked in public defence and prosecution offices for 21 years and has extensive experience in criminal law. He has conducted jury trials in the District Court for the ODPP and previously worked as a solicitor for the Aboriginal Legal Service. Mr Barlow joins the judiciary from the Crown Prosecutors' Chambers.