

## Media Release

# Justice Huggett first woman appointed as Chief Judge of District Court of New South Wales

10 April 2024

Supreme Court Justice Sarah Huggett has been appointed Chief Judge of the District Court of New South Wales.

Her Honour will be the first woman Chief Judge of the District Court of NSW.

Before her appointment to the Supreme Court in 2023, Justice Huggett served with distinction on the NSW District Court Bench for 12 years as she presided over many high-profile and complex matters which attracted widespread media interest, including the carnal knowledge trial of convicted murderer Christopher Dawson.

Born in Moree as one of eight children, her Honour, herself a mother of two, has been a contributor to improvements in the operation of the courts over many years.

This has involved a strong focus on improving the experiences of women, children and Indigenous people who come into contact with the legal system.

Justice Huggett has also played a significant role in updating the Criminal Trial Bench Book which assists judges in running criminal trials.

Her Honour joined the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in 1993. She went on an exchange to the Crown Prosecutions Service in the United Kingdom where she gained invaluable international experience.

The daughter of a police officer, Justice Huggett began practising at the NSW Bar and was appointed a Crown prosecutor in 2001.

Sworn in as a District Court judge on 15 October 2012, Justice Huggett served as the Court's representative on the Consent Monitoring and Advisory Group Meeting and Chair of the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program Steering Committee.

Justice Huggett was the Director of Public Prosecution's sole instructing solicitor in the prosecution of serial killer Ivan Milat.

Her Honour was also one of the judges of the District Court's Walama List, a trial of alternative sentencing procedures aimed at reducing the incarceration of, and reoffending by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Justice Huggett has stated that the lengthy sentences she has delivered in cases of sexual offence against women and children were designed to punish the offender, denounce their conduct, protect the community and recognise the harm done to the victims.

She set prison terms of more than 40 years for two men who, in separate cases, committed violent sexual offences against their biological daughters, sentences which survived on appeal.

Justice Huggett also sent a clergy member at a residential school for boys with troubled backgrounds to gaol for 33 years after he was convicted of multiple historic sexual offences against a number of boys in his care.

Her Honour sentenced a swim school teacher to 32 years imprisonment for a large number of historic sexual offences on children.

**NSW Attorney General Michael Daley said:**

“I am delighted to appoint Justice Sarah Huggett to the role of Chief Judge of the District Court of NSW. She makes history by becoming the first woman Chief Judge and she is richly deserving of that honour.

“NSW is set to gain a new Chief Judge with great breadth and depth of experience in criminal law.

“Justice Huggett is well respected by both her peers and the community and I congratulate her warmly on her new role.”

**Biography**

Justice Sarah Huggett holds a Bachelor of Arts from Macquarie University and went on to graduate with first class honours in Law from the University of Sydney in 1991. She completed her Master of Laws in 1995. She was an adjunct professor at the Loyola Law School in Los Angeles in 2009.

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