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MEDIA RELEASE

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STATE'S LONGEST SERVING CHIEF MAGISTRATE TO RETIRE

NSW's longest serving Chief Magistrate, Judge Graeme Henson AM, will retire after 33 years on the bench, including 15 as the head of the Local Court jurisdiction.

Attorney General Mark Speakman today paid tribute to Judge Henson for his contribution to the NSW justice system.

"Under Judge Henson's stewardship, the Local Court has consistently led the nation in the efficient delivery of justice," Mr Speakman said.

"This is a great achievement when you consider the Local Court finalises 96 per cent of NSW's criminal prosecutions and more than 90 per cent of its civil litigation."

Mr Speakman said Judge Henson had displayed strong leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Last year, the Chief Magistrate implemented effective measures to keep court users safe and the wheels of justice moving," Mr Speakman said.

"These included increasing the use of audio visual link, postponing certain non-urgent hearings and keeping foot traffic in courts to a minimum."

During Judge Henson's time as Chief Magistrate, the Local Court bench has also improved gender parity, with the proportion of female Local Court magistrates now at 49.6 per cent.

His Honour also participated in a landmark 10-part television series on the Local Court in 2017, which gave audiences fly-on-the-wall access to hearings in Australia's busiest courthouse, the Downing Centre.

His Honour was appointed as a magistrate in 1988, a Deputy Chief Magistrate in 1994, Chief Magistrate of the Local Court in 2006, and a judge of the District Court in 2010.

Prior to serving on the bench, Judge Henson was admitted as a barrister and served as Deputy Solicitor for Public Prosecutions in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Judge Henson will retire as Chief Magistrate and as a member of the Judicial Commission of NSW on 27 August.