



Mark Speakman
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOUR NEW MAGISTRATES FOR THE LOCAL COURT

Four new magistrates have been appointed to the NSW Local Court, continuing the NSW Government's commitment to deliver more efficient justice in the state's busiest court.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said solicitors John Arms, Michael Maher, Gemma Slack-Smith and Julie Zaki bring impressive experience to the justice system.

"Mr Arms, Mr Maher, Ms Slack-Smith and Ms Zaki have a wealth of legal knowledge developed over the course of successful careers. With decades of experience between them, they have clearly demonstrated they have the capabilities and attributes to manage the demands of the Local Court."

A record 149 magistrates sit in the Local Court, thanks to the NSW Government's \$56.1 million additional investment in the 2021-22 State budget.

"The Local Court is the engine room of the justice system, underpinned by more than 700 registry staff working in 150 locations across the state to deliver timely access to justice," Mr Speakman added.

"Our magistrates manage a caseload equivalent to 96 per cent of all criminal prosecutions and 90 per cent of civil matters in NSW."

All four appointees will be sworn in during the week of 6 February 2023.

Biographies

John Arms

Mr Arms began his career with the then Magistrates Courts Administration unit in the Department of Attorney General and Justice in 1983. He served as a clerk at various Local Courts before being appointed as Registrar of the Gosford Court in 1998. In 2017, Mr Arms took up private practice and is currently a sole practitioner specialising in criminal law advocacy.

Michael Maher

Mr Maher began his career with the NSW Police in 1990, becoming a Police Prosecutor in 1994. In 2010, he joined the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, where he is currently a Solicitor Advocate.

Gemma Slack-Smith

Ms Slack-Smith has over 15 years' experience as a lawyer. She commenced at the Aboriginal Legal Service in 2008 and, in 2012, was appointed Principal Legal Officer in the ALS' Child Protection and Family Law Unit. She was a 2016 Churchill Fellow. In 2016, she was appointed Senior Presiding Member of the Guardianship Division of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Julie Zaki

Ms Zaki has worked at the Office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions since 2007. In 201, she was appointed a Principal Federal Prosecutor in in the CDPP's Organised crime and Counter-Terrorism prosecutions branch. Prior to work at the CDPP, she practised at a number of private law firms, including Prime Lawyers, Fox O'Brien and Armstrong Legal.

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