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Attorney General

## STATEMENT

Monday, 2 September 2019

### **NSW's FIRST FEMALE JUDGE PASSES AWAY**

I am saddened to hear of the death of the Hon Jane Mathews AO, a renowned jurist and trailblazer for women in the law both in Australia and internationally.

Ms Mathews decided to pursue law as a profession in an era when very few women made that choice. When she was called to the NSW Bar in 1969, there were around only a dozen women in active practice as barristers.

In 1974, her intellect and passion for family and women's issues were recognised through her appointment as counsel assisting the Commonwealth Royal Commission on Human Relationships.

In 1977, Ms Mathews was appointed a Crown Prosecutor. In that role she had a special focus on sexual assault matters, bringing comfort and support to female victims in the days of all-male juries.

In 1980, at the relatively young age of 39, Ms Mathews became NSW's first female judge when she was appointed to the District Court of NSW. In 1985, she took up a position on the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, where she found schools that failed to offer girls the same elective subjects as boys were guilty of discrimination. Her judgment was upheld on appeal.

The firsts continued in 1987, when Ms Mathews rose to the bench of the NSW Supreme Court. She became only the second female Supreme Court justice in Australia, following the appointment in 1965 of Dame Roma Mitchell to the Supreme Court of South Australia.

In 1994, Ms Mathews became a Justice of the Federal Court of Australia when she assumed the presidency of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Fortunately for our State, Ms Mathews was lured back to the NSW Supreme Court bench as an Acting Justice in 2001 where she presided until her retirement last year.

In 2001, Ms Mathews founded the Australian Association of Women Judges, later becoming the head of the International Association.

I offer my condolences and those of the NSW Government to Ms Mathews' family.