

MEDIA RELEASE

President of the NSW Legislative Council
The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox MLC



**** Images and footage available at**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/75fezn7hbz6oxag/AAC8FHvWGP8AbL6APsHww2-ja?dl=0>

Photos and footage of the unveiling ceremony will be added ASAP to this link on the day

11 May 2022

Trailblazer Virginia Chadwick Immortalised by NSW Parliament's First Female Marble Bust

The late Honourable Virginia Chadwick AO has today become the first female to be immortalised in the NSW Legislative Council.

The richly deserved honour comes in the form of a marble bust of the Legislative Council's first-ever female President, having been unveiled in the Legislative Council chamber of NSW Parliament House. She becomes the first female figure to be immortalised in the chamber, and is the Parliament's first new marble bust to be sculpted in more than a century.

The NSW Premier, Dominic Perrottet said: "Virginia's record as a member of the NSW Parliament, including being the first female Presiding Officer, together with her many other achievements, reflect her unquestioned commitment and service to the people of NSW.

"The honour being bestowed on Virginia today is much deserved. I offer my congratulations to her family on this historic occasion."

President of the Legislative Council Matthew Mason-Cox said: "A trailblazer of her time, Virginia achieved many important firsts during her 20-year parliamentary career and beyond – so it is incredibly fitting that a rare honour is added to the list, as her likeness joins fellow august figures from our history along the chamber walls."

Among her achievements, in 1998 Virginia became the Legislative Council's first female President – and indeed the first female Presiding Officer of the state's parliament. Prior to that, she had been the first Liberal woman to gain a ministerial appointment in a NSW Government, NSW's first female Minister for Education and the state's first female Opposition Whip.

"During her time in NSW Parliament, Virginia smashed many glass ceilings, also having had a strong involvement in social and education reforms," Mr Mason-Cox said.

"As Minister for Education she established the independent Board of Studies and took the state's first steps to address homophobic bullying and violence in schools, and as Minister for Family and Community Services Virginia was instrumental in the restructuring of disability services."

Following her retirement from the Legislative Council, Virginia went on to make an indelible mark in environmental conservation. Becoming the first female chairperson of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in 1999, she received global recognition for leading efforts that saw the area of reef declared protected from 4.5 to 33 per cent.

Virginia passed away in 2009 at 64 years of age.

The installation of Virginia's marble likeness at Parliament was marked by an official ceremony today, attended by the former President's family, colleagues and esteemed guests – among them, her husband of more than 40 years, Bruce Chadwick.

"Virginia was a tireless and fiercely intelligent woman, who truly believed in helping and serving the community. She wasn't afraid to tackle the big issues, and that's why she was able to leave the mark that she has," Mr Chadwick said.

"Our family is so moved to see her commemorated in this way, and we know she would have loved the idea of watching over the Council chamber in perpetuity."

The bust was carved from a single block of white Italian 'Statuario' marble by prominent sculptor Peter Schipperheyn.

"The bust of Virginia Chadwick is the first marble bust to be crafted for the Parliament in some 107 years, and of course the first representation of a female in a room of men," Mr Schipperheyn said. "I am thrilled to have been involved. I trained in Carrara, Italy in the grand tradition of figurative sculpture in marble, and feel close to the other sculptors whose works sit in the chamber."

Visitors to NSW Parliament House can see the bust on display during a free tour of the parliamentary precinct. Official tours run Mondays and Fridays at 1:30pm (no booking required), and more frequently during school holidays. Find details via www.parliament.nsw.gov.au.

Media backgrounder, including Virginia Chadwick bio, available below

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER



About the Honourable Virginia Chadwick AO

The Honourable Virginia Chadwick AO (1944 – 2009) was a woman of firsts. In her parliamentary career she was the first woman to serve as President of the NSW Legislative Council and in doing so, became the NSW Parliament's first female Presiding Officer. She was also the first female Opposition Whip in NSW, the first Liberal woman to gain a ministerial appointment in a NSW Government, and the state's first female Minister for Education.

When Virginia retired from Parliament she went on to become the first female chairperson of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in 1999. Here she left an important and long-lasting legacy before retiring in 2007, receiving global recognition for her efforts in the environmental protection of the reef. Under Virginia's leadership, a rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was accomplished and the percentage of the reef declared protected grew from 4.5 to 33 per cent.

Personal life

Known for her intelligence, sense of humour and quick wit, Virginia grew up in New Lambton, Newcastle. She was the first in her family to complete school and graduate university, attending Newcastle Girls' High School and later Newcastle University under a Commonwealth scholarship.

Virginia joined the Young Liberals at the age of 15 and during her university days was active on the Student Representative Council and the University Senate, where she recalled learning the basics of politics – particularly how to get elected.

Virginia worked as a teacher before joining the NSW Parliament. She married Bruce Chadwick in 1967 and together they had two children, Amanda and David. She is also survived by three grandchildren. Virginia passed away in 2009 at the age of 64.

Political career

Virginia was among the first cohort of members to be directly elected to the Legislative Council in 1978, and retired from Parliament in 1999. In addition to serving as President at the end of her parliamentary career, she spent some seven years as a government minister, including as Minister for Family and Community Services; Minister for School Education and Youth Affairs; Minister for Employment and Training; Minister for Tourism; and Minister Assisting the Premier. Details and dates: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/member-details.aspx?pk=2014>.

Among her achievements, Virginia was instrumental in relocating disability services out of the Department of Health into the Department of Family and Community Services, and eventually to a stand-alone department. She also delivered extensive reforms as Minister for Education, including establishing the independent Board of

Studies, introducing key learning areas and the accreditation of vocational studies in schools, and enhancing selective education.

Virginia was also the first Minister for Education to address homophobic bullying and violence in NSW schools, including through the introduction of the 'School Anti-discrimination Grievance Procedures for Students' (which provided the first avenue for gay and lesbian students to achieve legal redress under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977). She also oversaw the Department's release of anti-homophobia videos.

About sculptor Peter Schipperheyn

Known for his marble and bronze depictions of the human form, sculptor Peter Schipperheyn's work can be found in public and private collections across Australia and in Europe, Asia and the US.

Peter completed his artistic training in Melbourne, Rome and in Carrara, which included receiving an Italian government scholarship to study marble carving at the famed Academia di Belle Arti. He has completed a number of high-profile commissions, including a relief panel honouring Dame Joan Sutherland for the Sydney Town Hall, a baptismal font for Saint Stephan's Cathedral in Brisbane, and a granite 'Eternal Flame' for the Holocaust Centre in Melbourne. He is a previous recipient of the NSW Art Gallery's Wynne Prize.

About the NSW Legislative Council

The NSW Legislative Council is the first and oldest legislative body in Australia. Established in 1823 by an Act of the British Parliament and meeting for the first time in 1824, the Council will soon be celebrating its Bicentenary.

As the Upper House of the NSW Parliament, the House is often called the 'House of Review' because of its role in scrutinising government legislation, and holding the government to account – including through its active committee system. Further details can be found via <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/pages/welcome2.aspx>.

Virginia Chadwick joins seven other people immortalised in marble in the Legislative Council chamber, including former Presidents Sir John Hay, Sir John Lackey, Sir Alfred Stephen and Sir Francis Bathurst Suttor, as well as former Members William Bede Dalley, John Blaxland and James Macarthur.

The last bust to be unveiled in the Legislative Council chamber was that of Sir Francis Bathurst Suttor in 1915, 107 years ago.