

Hon MAHLA PEARLMAN AO

**Response by Justice Terry Sheahan AO on Mahla's behalf to the recognition
by the Law Council of Australia of her contribution to the field of
Environmental and Planning Law**

Sydney, 25 November 2011

As many of you know Mahla has had serious health issues off and on for many years. I am honoured that when I recently visited her in hospital she asked me to accept this honour/recognition on her behalf.

She is not well at all, and is hoping to embark soon on some revolutionary treatment, which we hope will restore her voice and general health. I have been assured she is not in imminent danger of leaving us, and we must recall that her mother made it to 101 and she is only 74!

Mahla completed Arts and Law Honours in the late 1950s. I first met her in the 1970s, and I worked with her when I was a Minister in the 1980s, when she was a highly regarded consultant to many parts of the public sector.

She held many senior posts in the law, remained competitive in equestrian/dressage till 1989, and was appointed to the court in 1992, the first female Head of Jurisdiction in a Superior Court in New South Wales.

She was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1985, and an Officer in that Order in 2004, and, among many other things, chaired the Library Council in New South Wales from 1996.

Mahla is a woman of great charm, dry wit, deep loyalty, and supreme ability, but has never lost her unassuming down-to-earth Boggabri manner, nor her love of the bush – Boggabri to Bendooley to Gresford.

She's a great "lady of the land" in every way.

She led the Court supremely well, and did all the "Chief Judge cases" of her time. She brought to them her fine legal mind and her beautiful writing style.

She richly deserves this recognition, but is "seriously chuffed" by it, and pleased to be joined in it with Ben Boer and Rob Fowler.

I thank you sincerely on her behalf.