

BALANCE

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Justice Sally Thomas first woman appointed to NT bench

The Northern Territory's Chief Stipendiary Magistrate for the past six years has been appointed to the bench. She is the first woman to be appointed a Supreme Court judge in the Northern Territory.

The Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie, announced Ms Thomas' appointment late last month.

Ms Thomas is expected to take up her new position towards the end of this month.

Ms Thomas was admitted to practice in New South Wales in 1963.

There she was in practice with her husband and former Executive Officer of the Law Society, Ted Rowe, until she was appointed a Stipendiary Magistrate in the NT in 1978.

She was appointed to the Family Law Council in July last year.

Ms Thomas spent two years as President of the Australian Stipendiary Magistrates Association.

She was Deputy Chairman of the University College of the Northern Territory (prior to its amalgamation with the Darwin Institute of Technology to become the Northern Territory University), after which she was

appointed to Council of the NTU and chairs two committees.

Earlier this year Ms Thomas was appointed Regional Chairman of the NT Branch of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust after four years of serving on the Board.

She is Chairman of the NT Legal Aid Commission, Patron of the NT AIDS Council and a member of the Board of Directors of the Darwin Theatre Company.



Announcing Ms Thomas' appointment, the Attorney-General said her extensive experience in magistrates' jurisdictions will be a major benefit to her new responsibilities in the Supreme Court.

Mr Manzie said Ms Thomas is widely

respected for her work in the NT legal system.

The President of the Law Society, John Stirk, welcomed Ms Thomas' appointment saying it was a loss to the magistracy but a coup for the Supreme Court.

"Sally Thomas is highly regarded as a no-nonsense magistrate who acts with honesty, integrity and fairness.

"Her appointment to the bench is hardly surprising, given her track record and her capacity for hard work.

"It is pleasing to see that Sir William Forster's wish for local practitioners to be appointed to the bench has been granted on several occasions now," Mr Stirk said.

Ms Thomas said she was "looking forward to the challenge" of the bench.

She said there was a lot to be done before she went to the Supreme Court.

"I have a number of matters to conclude and, of course, some reorganisation of the magistrates courts."

Ms Thomas said the magistracy has a heavy workload

and the loss of a magistrate would have a significant effect.

The Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie, is expected to announce both the new magistrate and the new chief stipendiary magistrate some time later this month.