



William Forster Chambers Welcomes His Honour Justice Riley

Trevor Riley QC, was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court on 4th December 1998. Attorney-General Shane Stone, QC made the announcement by Press Release late in the day, finally confirming the most eagerly anticipated judicial appointment in local memory.

Coincidentally, this was the day of the William Forster Chambers Annual Christmas Party. As is customary its members gather for lunch seeking inspiration for their award giving ceremony. His Honour, Reeves QC and myself were striding jauntily past the Commonwealth Bank. Reeves and I renewed our by now long standing cross-examination of His Honour.

Reeves QC: "Would you agree Your Honour, that your appointment to the Supreme Court Bench has been made and will take effect in the New Year?"

His Honour: (resolutely) "You always have better information than I do Reeves."

Silvester: "C'mon Your Honour, it's the last day of the year. You've been returning briefs. We're going out to lunch. Then you're going away on holidays. Surely you can tell us now."

His Honour: (obstinately, if properly so) "Not so far as I am aware."

Just then ABC News Reporter, Kate Carter sailed up. She spied His Honour, capturing his total attention, leaving us standing there, bystanders in the great media game. "Hello Mr Riley. How does it feel to have been appointed the new Supreme Court Judge?"

Reeves and I roared our approval. His Honour looked at us in a way that clearly implied we were responsible. And blushed furiously.

We announced His Honour's appointment at the Christmas Party. Just for good measure we gave him the "1998 Worst Kept Secret" Award, while David Alderman read the memorable opening lines of the transcript of Trevor's last appearance as Counsel in the High Court (*Northern Territory of Australia v GPO, High Court, 29 April 1998, Austlii*).

His Honour Mr Justice Riley and wife Jan arrived in Darwin in 1974. Trevor was there

to take up an appointment with Withnall & Barker as a litigation solicitor. When Cyclone Tracy, quite literally, blew that firm away, Trevor and Jan returned to Perth. Upon returning, refreshed, they found the once bustling Withnall & Barker reduced to underneath Nerolie Withnall's house. Accommodation was scarce and the Rileys moved in with the Bradleys. When the old firm further downsized in late 1975, Trevor migrated to Ward Keller. He worked there as a litigation solicitor until April 1985 when he became one of the founding members of William Forster Chambers. He took Silk in 1989.

His practice was predominantly common law and commercial, with lashings of administrative and constitutional law and His Honour appeared very regularly in the High Court and the NT Court of Appeal. He was President of the Northern Territory Bar Association for several years until 1997, and several variously on committees of the Northern Territory Law Society, and the Legal Practitioners Complaints Committee.

His Honour has for many years taught Advocacy in the courses run for the local legal profession by the Australian Advocacy Institute. Many Darwin barristers and solicitors have attended the courses taught by Trevor, mostly, he would want it said, with excellent effect. His role teaching advocacy included two stints in Bangladesh helping their independent bar to develop advocacy skills. For the last five years His Honour has devoted most Saturday mornings giving free legal advice to clients of the Darwin Community Legal Service. His Presidency of the Northern Territory Football (Aussie Rules) Tribunal has given him wonderful training in sending people on holidays, although their duration may well have members of the Criminal Bar scratching their heads in anticipation. He is also a long standing member of the Council of St John Ambulance in the Northern Territory, and for the last two years has been a Director of the Territory Building Society.

The Supreme Court Bench has gained as its newest member one of the Territory's best known and respected lawyers. The acknowledged leader of the local bar, His Honour's resolute and unwavering commitment to an independent Northern Territory bar, to advocacy standards, to ethics, to etiquette in and out of the courtroom, to his profession as a whole and its place in the Territory commu-

nity have equipped him extraordinarily well for his appointment.

Nowhere will his elevation be felt more keenly than in William Forster Chambers. Trevor was our elder statesman. His door was always open. It didn't seem to matter how hard he was working, or how busy he was. If any of us had a problem, wanted advice or guidance, or just wanted to chew the fat, Trevor would stop, and listen, and talk. He was a true leader, and I think it fair to say, a role model and guide for us all.

Moreover, this tribute to His Honour cannot be complete without mention of his wife, Jan. To those who know her, Jan Riley is the most wonderful and warm person. Throughout her career as mother of their children, Shane and Jennifer, Jan has worked alongside Trevor in Chambers, keeping his accounts and records, managing and being part of our Chambers family. One thinks of Jan as an ocean of calm amidst a sea of (often) confusion. Her contribution to the well-being of our Chambers and the profession generally cannot be overstated.

William Forster Chambers' loss is the Territory's gain. This is an appointment to the bench which is unquestionably deserved and which will be universally popular. It is also very gratifying to see a member of the local bar appointed as a Judge of our Court.

Finally, it just has to be repeated, that His Honour is the proud owner and rider of a Harley Davidson motor cycle. Apparently his riding skills have improved enormously since a certain incident at a local tennis court. Ride on Your Honour!

Lex Silvester
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