
Faces in the law

FACES IN THE LAW ASKS LOCAL PRACTITIONERS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THEMSELVES, THEIR CAREERS AND THEIR LIFE OUTSIDE THE LAW.

Marguerite Bowen Bowens Lawyers, Darwin

Brief career history

I was accepted to the Arts/Laws degree at the NTU, which I commenced in 1994, full time. I completed Arts Degree, graduating in May 1997, and Laws Degree in 1999. I completed my 12 months Articles with De Silva Hebron, and was admitted to the legal profession on 7 March 2000. Mid-2000 I was offered a position at Cecil Black Family Lawyer's practice which I joined 2 October 2000. On 29 November 2005 I commenced operating family law practice as a sole practitioner at the Nightcliff Shopping Village, which I continue to run to this date. During the period of my studies I worked for William Forster Chambers, Department of Justice, David Dalrymple, Hunt & Hunt, and the Don Dale Detention Centre.

What motivated you to start working in the legal profession?

As much as I would not like to admit, it was because of vagaries of my own marital history. I separated in 1991, and it took two years to finalise the legal process associated with property distribution, child support and parenting of my then very young two daughters (Samantha was four at separation and Danielle two and a half). My Polish cousin could have also contributed to my choice of career. He operates a large legal practice (about 15 advocates) in Silesia (southern part of Poland), where I come from.

How long have you been in the Territory and what brought you up here?

I am originally from Poland. I arrived in this wonderful land of plenty on 13 October 1978 to stay with my Polish Uncle and Aunt, who lived in Adelaide, and mined opals in Coober Pedy and Mintabi. One week after my arrival in Adelaide, I was on my way in a big F100 to Mintabi, dodging kangaroos, jumping in and out of the car to open grid gates in the bright red dust of the desert, and helping my Uncle to change several flat tyres. I was quite glad I enjoyed geography before leaving Poland, and had the patience of an early education teacher (as I was before leaving for Australia) to experience my first long trip on the driest continent. Mintabi was great – it gave me the experience of washing in a small bucket of water – most desirable for water economy! And admiring bypassing UFOs flashing fantastic electric lights around...true story! And no, I was not on anything. When staying in Coober Pedy, I worked at a Yugoslav coffee shop, owned by a Greek person. The working hours were quite challenging - 5 pm – 7 am seven days a week, but nevertheless I managed to earn enough to pay for my ticket to Australia, and buy few pieces of clothing, as my luggage got lost on the way. After a huge fight among patrons one night, I was ready for a change, and asked around where is a good place for me to go to in this country.



Marguerite Bowen

As the overwhelming majority pointed towards Darwin ("Police are friendly", "bananas grow out bush"), I was on my way the next day, hitting a big red roo on the way, smashing the front end of my car. A most generous passing-by truckie offered me a chain-tow behind his third trailer to the nearest garage - Alice Springs, about 150 miles away. And three days later – on 2 March 1980 – I arrived in Darwin. I have been in Darwin over 27 years now.

What is the best, and the worst, thing about living and working in the Territory?

The best thing about living in the NT: not everybody may agree with me, but I do love the weather. When I was 15, it was my dream to live in a country where trees were green all year around, and the sun set as it does over Fannie Bay. I had a postcard from Australia, and I kept looking at it, dreaming, until my actual arrival in Darwin on 2 March 1980. I love the convenience of short distances to get about town. I live in Coconut Grove, a two minute drive

Faces in the law - Marguerite Bowen...cont

from work, 10 minute drive from the City, Casuarina and the airport, another dream... I love the weather as I can sail all year around. I don't have to worry about looking for different wardrobes throughout the year, and I love being on the water, sailing around Darwin in clean air, rain or shine. I have a huge circle of friends, nowhere else to be found. About working: being a small town, and myself being here over 27 years now, I like the local knowledge, and the ability to use it in my daily work.

The worst thing about living in the NT

My plan was to leave Darwin two years after my arrival, to study in Sydney. I'm still here, nowhere near Sydney! I'm so settled here, that I wonder if I'll ever leave. About working: long distances to attend various interstate seminars, continuing xenophobia among some of the mainstream members of the profession.

If you had the power to change one thing in the world, what would it be?

To develop people's unequivocal desire to parent their children without separation and conflict.

What is your greatest achievement?

To complete my two degrees over five years as a single parent of two very young daughters, with three or four jobs on the go, and to have both daughters now completing their own degrees.

What are your hobbies?

Sailing, especially racing, simply takes precedent over everything else (I'm a foredeckie crew responsible for putting up spinners and headsails, and climbing up the mast, as required, on a 36 foot yacht). I love running, gym, working out, classical music, soaking up the sun, be-

ing at one with nature, reading (time allowing), gardening and maintaining my huge fish pond and waterfall. I love involving myself in social events and volunteering (with Crisis Line 14 years, Multicultural Council, TEWLS, Women's Advisory Council, DCLS 11 years, Darwin Sailing Club three years publicity officer, member since 1985, contact person for the Polish Community in Darwin since 1984, Public Officer with European Union Top End).

Describe your perfect weekend.

Saturday: get up around 7 am, go for a refreshing run around East Point or Casuarina Drive foreshore, call in at the markets to get some fresh fruit for home made fruit juice, do a DCLS session, or go to Boxercising class at Time Out. If I'm not on the roster, mow the lawns, then sunbake with a good book in my well manicured back yard, with Buffy (my daughter's dog I've been dog-sitting for the last 3 years) on guard, get together with friends with a nice crisp Evens & Tate Classic white, for the rest of the day/evening.

Sunday: another refreshing run in the morning, visit my office for a Nightcliff Markets session for a couple of hours for those clients that can't make it during the week, and rush off to the Cullen Bay marina to get on the boat for 1 o'clock lock to start racing at 2 pm. The rest of the day - wining the race and celebrating at the Club.

What are you most passionate about?

Commitment to a cause, hard work, honesty, loyalty.

What was the last book you read?

'High Society' by Ben Elton, now reading 'Knockdown' by Martin Dugard.

What is your favourite movie?

The 'Pianist' by Polanski.

What is your favourite holiday destination and why?

Always love going back to Poland, and especially to the Tatry Mountains, where I climb mountains with my friends. I love the old castles on rivers, and museums around Poland, which give a lot of information about the past. Outside Poland - I love the Falling Waters in Pennsylvania, the most interesting architectural design of all times.

Describe your perfect meal.

Fresh oysters with lemon juice, cracked pepper and sea salt and sweet basil with a splash of tobasco sauce, with a piece of fresh crusty bread, washed down with a Gin and Tonic. Followed by Atlantic Salmon cooked in cold pressed virgin oil, with fresh lemon juice, on a bed of cos lettuce, avocado, cue, tomato sprinkled with myrtle and lemon dressing, accompanied by a couple of glasses of crisp Marlborough Oyster Bay sauvignon blanc. If time permits, mixed fruit salad with lemon sorbet (or vanilla ice cream) sprinkled with rose syrup and saturated with Grand Marnier (or Cointreau), a cup of Green tea for good digestion, topped up with gently warmed Hennessy and a piece of dark chocolate would complete my perfect meal.

After a long week at work it is finally Friday, you walk up to the bar and order a?

G & T with a slice of lemon.

Three words that describe you?

Hardworking nature-lover.

Faces in the law

Charlie Martel Morgan Buckley, Alice Springs

Brief career history

Grew up on a sheep/wheat farm in Central/West NSW. Economics/Law at UNE, one year on the farm after Uni and another year working and travelling around Australia (two months of which I spent in Alice and two months in Darwin), Articles at Bartlett & Co (boutique industrial relations firm in Perth), four years at Clayton Utz in Perth (working mostly in commercial agribusiness team). Commenced with Morgan Buckley in August 2004 and became a partner in September 2005.

What motivated you to start working in the legal profession?

I always wanted to end up on the farm. However, it was made fairly clear to me that I would not be returning to the farm before completing tertiary education. I enjoy arguing, and on that basis my mother was of the view that law would be a good profession for me. It has to be said, on the back of 6 years in drought at our farm, Mum may not be as silly as she may appear.

How long have you been in the Territory and what brought you up here?

My wife (Claire) and I moved to Alice Springs in August 2004. We are both from the country and were keen to get out of Perth and the lifestyle that goes with working your way up the ladder at a national law firm.

What is the best, and the worst, thing about living and working in the Territory?

The Territory still has the feel

of being a “last frontier” which means everyone has an opportunity to “have a go” and if you do, you will normally be rewarded with success. The worst is it’s a long way from the beach (well at least Alice is) and they play the wrong code of Footy.

If you had the power to change one thing in the world, what would it be?

To control the weather.

What is your greatest achievement?

Yet to occur.

What are your hobbies?

Playing and watching sport (mostly Rugby Union, Cricket and Tennis), camping, jogging, playing 500, reading, cooking (and eating) and travelling overseas.

Describe your perfect weekend.

Friday, a few beers with the Morgan Buckley team after work, Nazi Pizza from La Casalinga for dinner in front of a DVD and accompanied by Claire and a bottle of Red.

Saturday, bit of time in the garden or tinkering in the shed, sport in the arvo hopefully with a win that I have contributed to, watch the Wallabies beat the All Blacks.

Sunday, early morning jog with Pip (Blue Heeler), cooked breakfast and a long Sunday lunch at home with my wife and a few close mates.

What are you most passionate about?

Rugby Union.



Charlie Martel

What was the last book you read?

Tobruk.

What is your favourite movie?

Good Will Hunting.

What was the last CD you bought?

Sara Storer - Firefly.

What is your favourite holiday destination and why?

Anywhere that is completely different to Australia. I enjoy experiencing the different food and culture.

Describe your perfect meal.

A Seafood Entrée, Red Meat main and heaps of cheese and Red Wine for dessert.

After a long week at work it is finally Friday, you walk up to the bar and order a?

Beer.

Three words that describe who you are?

Pragmatic, determined and Australian.