

## Donna Maira Isabella Dreier (nee Wolfgramm)

18.08.1956 - 22.10.2008

By Michael Grant QC

Donna's father was born in New Zealand, of German Tongan heritage, and her mother was originally from Western Australia. They married in 1953, and Donna was born in Melbourne three years later. The family moved to the Gold Coast when Donna was a young child. Her father was a tailor and her mother owned and operated a number of clothing stores along Cavill Avenue.

In 1975, Donna commenced study towards a Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of Queensland. She completed her studies in 1978, and was admitted to the degree on 10 April 1979. She was part of the first class to undertake the newly established Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice at the Queensland Institute of Technology and qualified to practise on 20 March 1980.

In 1980, Donna started work as

a solicitor with MG Lyons & Co (now Ebsworth & Ebsworth), one of Queensland's oldest and most respected firms. She was engaged exclusively in major commercial litigation, and was made an Associate after a short time with the firm. In 1985, she married Terry Dreier, who was then the Practice Manager with MG Lyons & Co.

Donna and Terry left Brisbane in 1989 with plans for an extended working and camping holiday. They travelled to the Northern Territory with Paul and Jan Evans, and established a camp on the Daly River.

In August 1989, Donna took up what was intended to be a short-term contract with the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. Her exceptional professional skills, warm personality and good humour were immediately apparent. She

left at the expiry of that contract in January 1990 to undertake further travel, but returned in July 1990 for an 18 month stint. Shortly after her return, Donna was appointed as the Director of Litigation. It was a testament to Donna's obvious abilities that her appointment to the position after such a short time seemed a natural progression. Donna and Terry returned to Queensland in December 1991. They came back to Darwin six months later and stayed.

Donna's period as Director of Litigation with the Solicitor for the Northern Territory was marked by her immaculate work practices, an advanced understanding of the law, and her patience and effectiveness as a supervisor of junior practitioners. By example, she showed her charges the thought

*Continued page 8*



*Donna Dreier with her then colleague at Cridlands, Jacqueline Presbury*

and attention to detail required to operate properly as a lawyer and to meet professional benchmarks. For all her skills and abilities, Donna also displayed unfailing modesty and humility.

Donna left the Solicitor for the Northern Territory in 1998 and practised with Cridlands, taking up a partnership with the firm. She continued to lead in that role. She made close and enduring relationships with the people she worked with there.

Donna returned to the Solicitor for the Northern Territory as Executive Director of Legal Services in 2003. She was diagnosed with cancer the following year. She eventually succumbed to the disease following a brave fight, during which she never made complaint.

There were many practitioners starting out in their careers who Donna trained, assisted and encouraged over the years. Many were privileged to have Donna move their admissions. Some remain in Darwin, and the rest are spread through Australia and over-

*Below and right: Donna Dreier on a harbour cruise with her colleagues from Cridlands' litigation team, in 1999*



*Donna Dreier*

seas. None of them would have achieved what they have without Donna's early guidance and input.

Donna also had the respect of practitioners throughout the

profession. It was a mark of that respect that the Full Court of the Supreme Court deferred its sittings on the afternoon of her funeral.

She is survived by her mother Dulcie, her younger sister Lisa and her husband Terry.

*Note from Law Society Northern Territory Chief Executive Officer, Barbara Bradshaw*

Donna Dreier was a member of the Council of the Law Society for five years in the 1990s, including one year as Treasurer. Donna was a diligent Councillor who particularly brought her diligence and ability to bear in relation to disciplinary matters. She continued to contribute after resigning from Council, and I found her very helpful when I took on the position of Chief Executive Officer in 2003.

