

Territory Trailblazer

Her Honour the Honourable Sally Thomas AM, Administrator of the Northern Territory

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HER HONOUR THE HONOURABLE SALLY THOMAS AM WAS SWORN IN AS THE 20TH ADMINISTRATOR AND FIRST FEMALE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY BY HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC, GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA, IN THE CHAMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ON MONDAY 31 OCTOBER 2011.

Her Honour the Honourable Sally Thomas AM has had a remarkable and distinguished career, brimming with firsts during more than 30 years of distinguished service not only as a judicial officer, but also to the broader Northern Territory community.

Born in the English university city of Cambridge, Her Honour migrated to Sydney, with her parents in 1945 where she attended Hornsby Girls High School. Her Honour studied law and in 1963 was admitted as a legal practitioner to the Supreme Court of New South Wales and subsequently to the High Court of Australia.

Her Honour first came to the Northern Territory in 1978 from Sydney where she had been a

partner and solicitor in a legal firm, to take up an appointment as the Territory's first female Stipendiary Magistrate. In 1985 Her Honour became the first woman appointed as Acting Chief Magistrate and then the Territory's first female Chief Magistrate following the retirement of Mr Gerry Galvin CM in 1986; a position she held for seven years from 1986 to 1992.

Following six years as Chief Magistrate, on 30 July 1992 Her Honour was appointed as the first female Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. Her Honour held this position for almost 17 years until her retirement in July 2009; during which time she served three Chief Justices; the Hon. Austin Asche, the Hon. Brian F Martin, and the Hon. Brian Martin.

Her Honour was renowned for her great empathy and compassion and an unerring sense of and commitment to achieving justice in every case that she decided or presided over. An attentive listener, with courtesy and patience she successfully maintained the delicate balance between providing justice to victims of crime and their families, all the while ensuring scrupulously fair trials for accused people and just sentences for those found guilty. These traits were the hallmark of a long and distinguished career in the Territory's justice system.

Outside of the judicial system, Her Honour's strong interests in the law, arts, and education came to the fore with extensive involvement in the wider community, holding appointments as Deputy Chairman

Career Highlights:

1978:

First female Stipendiary Magistrate of the Northern Territory

1985:

First woman appointed as Acting Chief Magistrate of the Northern Territory

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of the Northern Territory College of Queensland University and then a Member of the then Northern Territory University Council from 1989 to 2003. In 2003 the Northern Territory University changed its name and became part of the expanded Charles Darwin University. Her Honour was appointed to the Council of Charles Darwin University and elected Deputy Chancellor, Her Honour was appointed Chancellor of the University on 1 January 2010, a position she still holds today.

Her Honour was Chair of the Legal Aid Commission from 1990 to 1996, Chair of the Northern Territory Winston Churchill Fellowship Committee from 1992 to 2004 and in 2004 she was appointed Deputy National Chair Fellowship, of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

In 1993 her Her Honour was appointed as an honorary Colonel in the Australian Army Cadet Corps, Northern Region, the first female not in a vice-regal position to hold such an appointment.

Her Honour has also been the patron of a number of charitable and other organisations too numerous to list, but particular mentions are deserving for Her Honour's work with the Northern Territory AIDS Council, the Northern Territory Women Lawyers' Association, the Cancer Council and the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Her Honour has also had a longstanding involvement in sport and the arts; having been a member of the board of the Darwin Theatre Company and a longstanding



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member and Territory President of Aussie Masters Swimming.

In June 2000 Her Honour was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her extensive service to the community,

particularly through the Northern Territory Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship Committee, to tertiary education, and to the law. Her Honour continues to hold an interest in these fields. ●

1986:

Appointed the Northern Territory's first female Chief Magistrate

1992

Appointed as the first female Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory

2011:

Sworn in as the 20th Administrator and first female Administrator of the Northern Territory