

## **Official Opening: Murray Chambers, Northern Territory**

**2 November 2018**

### **Honourable Chief Justice Michael Grant**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I have the honour and privilege of being invited to officially open the Northern Territory chapter of Murray Chambers, which also has chapters in South Australia and Western Australia.

There is some disputation as to where the name comes from, but I think the South Australian Chambers was established first, named after Sir George Murray, who was appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia in 1912. Sir George faded into obscurity, save for the fact that he was the first Judge appointed to that Court who held a law degree. All previous appointees had qualified for admission by attending sherry parties at Inns of Court, but after Sir George's appointment every member subsequently appointed to that Court did possess a law degree. This was a welcome development in South Australia.

Sir George never married. He lived in his childhood home until his death. With his sister. Who also never married. So, I suppose you could say that he was as socially well-adjusted as your average Supreme Court Judge.

**Interjection by Justice Hiley:** Only in South Australia.

There is a strong and long-standing connection between the Northern Territory legal profession and Murray Chambers, both in South Australia and Western Australia.

In South Australia, Murray Chambers has had many eminent members who have appeared in our Courts over the years, including Brian Hayes QC, Robyn Layton AO QC and Sashi Maharaj QC. Indeed, Brian Ross Martin AO QC, a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the

Northern Territory, was a member of Murray Chambers in South Australia for 15 years before his appointment to the Supreme Court of South Australia and subsequently to our Court.

The most direct and immediate connection to the Western Australian chambers is Raelene Webb QC, who is with us here today. Raelene is a former member of the Northern Territory Bar, a past President of our Bar Association, and the immediate past-President of the National Native Title Tribunal. Raelene has now joined the Bar in Western Australia with Murray Chambers, and I understand she has been instrumental in setting up this particular iteration of Murray Chambers here in Darwin.

Of course, the most direct connection with the Territory is the fact that we have these three very fine barristers as the foundation members of Murray Chambers in Darwin. They are all well known to you and to the Court.

Mary Chalmers was born in New Zealand but fortunately for her came to the Northern Territory at a young age and grew up in Nhulunbuy and Darwin. Mary is well known as a prosecutor in this jurisdiction. She is much admired by the members of the Supreme Court Bench for the quality of her submissions – both written and oral – and for her forensic skills. We are sure that she will become a leader of the private Bar. Mary has also worked in anti-corruption in the Solomon Islands and has post-graduate qualifications in Military Law. This possibly explains her special skill outside the law which is that she can disassemble and reassemble heavy weaponry while blindfolded.

Georgia McMaster was born and raised in Darwin. She is well known to all of us here and is a jill-of-all-trades in the law. Georgia has worked variously as a solicitor in private and government practice, as a university lecturer, and as a barrister since 2005. Georgia is well-recognised and admired by our Court for her work in jury trials – particularly in difficult sexual offence matters and from both sides of the Bar table. Her secret skill outside the law is that she

has been trained to hang upside down from a plane and throw emergency supplies to communities in flood. That will no doubt come in handy during long trials.

The other inaugural member of the Chambers is Tamzin Lee. Tamzin was also born and raised in Darwin. She is a member of a well-established and long-term Darwin family. Tamzin started her legal career as the Associate to the Chief Justice of the Australian Capital Territory. She has worked variously as a prosecutor in the Australian Capital Territory, with the Family Violence Legal Service here in the Northern Territory, as a defence lawyer with the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service in Alice Springs, and now at the Independent Bar. Tamzin is already known to our Bench as a very positive presence in the courtroom, and is admired for her sensible and practical approach to advocacy. When Tamzin comes into the courtroom a sense of Zen-like calm falls over the room. This is no doubt due to her secret skill outside the law, which is as a yoga instructor. I know that she was a much admired and respected member of William Forster Chambers and that her presence there is missed. She is no doubt a great catch for these new Chambers.

This is an all-female Chambers, which is pleasing as a sign of the times. I am told by Georgia – but not by the other two members I should note – that this is not necessarily by design. The Chambers are open to new members. The only criterion for acceptance, according to Georgia, is whether they like you or not. This seems like an adaptation of the “no dickhead” rule adopted by the Sydney Swans in recent years. In fact, I think that is exactly how Georgia put it.

I am sure these Chambers will be a great addition to the culture and the legal community in the Northern Territory, and we wish them every success.

I formally declare these Chambers open.

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