

SUPREME COURT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

STATE SQUARE, DARWIN

CEREMONIAL SITTING TO MARK THE RETIREMENT OF THE HONOURABLE
JUSTICE SONIA LEE BROWNHILL

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

COURTROOM 1, FRIDAY, 3 JULY 2026 AT 3:03 PM

PRESIDING JUDGES:

THE HON CHIEF JUSTICE MICHAEL GRANT AO
THE HON JUSTICE STEPHEN SOUTHWOOD
THE HON JUSTICE JUDITH KELLY AO
THE HON JUSTICE JENNY BLOKLAND AO
THE HON JUSTICE SONIA BROWNHILL
THE HON JUSTICE MEREDITH HUNTINGFORD
THE HON JUSTICE JOHN BURNS
THE HON JUSTICE PETER BARR
THE HON ACTING JUSTICE TREVOR RILEY AO
THE HON ACTING JUSTICE GRAHAM HILEY AM RFD
THE HON ACTING ASSOCIATE JUSTICE CRAIG SMYTH

Transcribed by:
EPIQ

GRANT CJ: On behalf of the Judges of the Supreme Court, I welcome everyone to this ceremonial sitting to mark the retirement of Justice Brownhill.

The Court acknowledges the presence of his Honour the Honourable David Connolly, Administrator of the Northern Territory. This is the first ceremonial sitting conducted since his Honour took office. We are honoured by the presence of the viceregal officer, and we thank his Honour for his support for our legal institutions.

We are also honoured by the presence on the Bench today of retired Chief Justice Trevor Riley and retired Justices Graham Hiley and Peter Barr. We are very fortunate that all three continue to act as Judges of this Court. In fact, it sometimes seems that Justice Barr has never left because he still has not yet cleaned out his Chambers.

We also acknowledge the presence here today of Ms Leonique Swart, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Attorney-General's Department, Deputy Commissioner Travis Wurst representing the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioner Kymberley McKay representing the Commissioner of Corrections, Mr Nikolai Christrup SC, Solicitor General for the Northern Territory, Mr Peter Shoyer, the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner and Professor Fiona Coulson, the Vice Chancellor of the Charles Darwin University.

Justice Brownhill was sworn in as a Justice of this Court on 2 November 2020. Prior to her appointment to this Court, her Honour held appointment as Solicitor-General and before that, she had a relatively brief but distinguished career at the Northern Territory private Bar.

Before she went to the private Bar, Justice Brownhill was Crown Counsel when I was Solicitor-General and ultimately followed me in the office of Solicitor-General. Given our long association, I propose to depart briefly from the usual custom of Chief Justices not saying more than welcome at ceremonial sittings of this nature.

While the speakers here today will have much more to say about Justice Brownhill's career, throughout that time she has been known for her sound judgement, her fine intellect and her capacity for hard work.

There is a story I told at Justice Brownhill's swearing-in which bears repeating because it demonstrates that her abilities were apparent to everybody from a very early stage in her legal career. When our former Chief Justice, Trevor Riley, was at the Bar - which was some time last century - he was Senior Counsel in a long-running matter that had a large coterie of instructing solicitors. He remarked to me one day that although Sonia was the most junior of those solicitors, she was by far the best of them. I would no doubt have appreciated his Honour's frank assessment far more had I not also been one of those solicitors.

Justice Brownhill has gone on to become a powerhouse as a Judge of this Court and a much-respected colleague. She has demonstrated the rare capacity to write

long judgments involving complex legal issues, with apparent ease. She will be a great loss to this Court for that, together with a whole lot of other reasons.

We are sad to farewell her, but her retirement is a well-deserved one after more than 30 years working at the coalface. I have to say that going to Tasmania sounds like a mistake to me, but Sonia and her partner, Al, are drawn by fond visions of drinking hot toddies in front of a roaring open fireplace. There will probably also be some sort of pottery or basket weaving involved.

Fortunately, Justice Brownhill has agreed to take appointment as an Additional Judge once they have settled in Tasmania and will continue sitting in this Court from time to time in that capacity.

Her Honour also remains tied to Darwin because one of her sons, Jack, is staying here in Darwin. I have always thought of Jack as a very sensible young man.

The members of this Court wish Sonia and Al all the best for their future.

Mr Solicitor. Do you move?

MR CHRISTRUP: Thank you, Chief Justice. May it please the Court. Your Honour the Administrator.

I acknowledge the Larrakia people as the traditional owners of this land. I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I rise to deliver this address in place of the Attorney-General, the Honourable Marie-Clare Boothby who, regretfully, is unable to attend today. I have been asked to convey her apologies.

Today, your Honour marks the end of a successful and illustrious career in the service of the administration of justice in the Northern Territory. At your swearing in on 6 November 2020, and with characteristic modesty, you proclaimed that your appointment to the Bench was a result of sheer good fortune and the influences of others.

As to the former, if your Honour was referring to the notion that "the harder I work, the luckier I get," then most would agree. As to the influences of others, well, that may also be true, but only in the sense that those other persons were fully aware of your towering intellect, your legal incisiveness and your uncompromising work ethic.

The "influences" was a bit like recommending to the coach that Lionel Messi would probably be a good pick for the team.

Before moving on to give a brief account of your Honour's stellar career, I should acknowledge that most of your associates join you today for this special occasion.

As to your career, after having spent the senior years of your schooling at Dripstone High School, you enrolled in a combined commerce and law degree at the University of Western Australia in 1988.

You completed your tertiary studies in 1993, and the Perth office of Mallesons Stephen Jaques was where you obtained your articles of clerkship and through which you obtained admission as legal practitioner and earned your stripes as a junior solicitor. This was followed by two years conducting research on behalf of the Northern Territory University and then a further couple of years in Queensland with their Law Society.

Your Honour then accepted a position as a lawyer within the Litigation Division of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, followed then by a lateral move to the Aboriginal Land Division. And it was in the performance of that role that you made an early impression on the then Solicitor-General the late Tom Pauling AO QC. An association that, over the years, was to develop into a close friendship.

The two of you made a formidable team. Most publicly, in respect of the many native title cases and Aboriginal land matters that you ran. But also, by the provision of countless opinions behind the scenes. You found the time to publish writings together, including the article on a topic close to both of your hearts: The Territories and Constitutional Change.

You have, on a prior occasion, described Tom as your “original mentor and dear friend” and remarked that his support, encouragement and friendship “was the bedrock on which your legal career is based”.

Your Honour formally left the Solicitor for the Northern Territory in June 2002 to move to the Solicitor-General's Chambers to work with Tom full-time. And four years later, he appointed you his Crown Counsel within those Chambers.

2007 saw Tom Pauling take up digs at Government House as the new Administrator and our current Chief Justice replacing him as the Solicitor-General. You appeared with Michael Grant QC in several important constitutional cases in the High Court before your Honour left the Solicitor-General Chambers in February of 2011, on what was to prove a strictly temporary arrangement, to join William Forster Chambers.

Your Honour, consistently with the expectations of everyone else, flourished at the Bar. Whilst public law remained a large part of your practice, you also made a name for yourself in respect of equity, commercial and contract law. A true all-rounder.

Whilst by no means unknown to the Bench and already highly respected, your move to the private Bar inevitably consolidated the high regard in which you were held by the judiciary and the Supreme Court, and it did not take long following your move that your Honour took silk.

And if I can be here allowed a personal reflection, I very much enjoyed having your Honour as my immediate neighbour on the FFF during our William Forster Chambers times. You were a friendly and affable Chamber colleague, entirely devoid of ego and always willing to share your knowledge and obvious love for the law.

Your Honour did not bother anyone and largely focussed on your work when you were at Chambers. And I learned first-hand that you are also a very, very funny person. You were missed by all when you left.

That takes me to 2016, when the office of Solicitor-General became vacant following the elevation of the incumbent in that office. Your Honour was the obvious and perfect choice for that position. You remained in that role until November 2020, arguing many important High Court cases as the Territory's second law officer.

I have been asked to convey on behalf of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and the Attorney-General's Department, as a whole, their gratitude for the careful and considered advice and guidance you gave them over the years.

That takes me to your Honour's time on the Bench. You brought a wealth of knowledge to your role as a Supreme Court judge. Your written reasons are clear, to the point and easily understood. Those who have appeared before you consistently report that your Honour is a courteous and pleasant judge who always approaches the case with an open mind.

The first written reasons you published was on 7 December 2020 as a member of the Court of Criminal Appeal in *Rowan v The Queen*. With you on the Bench were Southwood J and Riley AJ and the counsel were Abayasekara and Castor.

The case involved, whether by fixing a non-parole period rather than imposing a partially suspended sentence, the judge below had imposed a sentence that was manifestly excessive. You joined with the others in a unanimous decision to dismiss that appeal.

I will mention only two other cases from your time on the Bench. In *Rolfe v The Territory Coroner* you were called upon to review the origin and character of penalty privilege and its application to the *Coroners Act*.

And more recently, sitting with four other judges in *Fairweather v Harrison*, your Honour participated in a judgment which disagreed with a ruling from a 2006 Court of Appeal decision which had held that the *Dietrich* principle does not apply to summary prosecutions.

The joint judgment held that the principle is invoked when an accused is facing a charge for a serious offence and there is a real risk of actual imprisonment in summary proceedings.

Your Honour, there is no doubt that you will be missed on level 6. The reports I have received from persons who have worked with you in this building conveyed remarks such as "always very lovely", "friendly", "very generous with her time", "entirely down to earth" and "the smartest person in the world."

Your Honour is also partial to a Diet Coke and chocolate, and as to this, we have duly warned the proprietor of the snack vending machine on Level 4 that he needs to prepare for lean times as the afternoon run on KitKats is about to come to an abrupt end.

It is no secret that your Honour has a reputation for getting your judgments out quickly. Clients are often told outside Court following the reservation of a judgment, "this won't take long." But exactly how quick is she? That was a matter I decided to investigate closely in preparing for today's address.

For starters, of the great many written decisions your Honour published sitting as a single judge, none took more than six months to deliver. There was one judgment which required five months, being your Honour's findings and conclusions following the trial of a contractual dispute, but that was very much an outlier.

Over 90 percent were handed down within three months and 62 percent were published within a month. And in over 37 percent of cases, that is more than a third, did the parties receive your decision within 14 days. These numbers are impressive, to say the least.

You have done the litigants and the administration of justice a great service by getting your decisions out as quickly as you have. A remarkable achievement and one that is worthy of recognition.

And you will forgive me if the publication of these end-of-game stats results in persistent phone calls from various Chief Justices seeking to engage you as an acting judge.

So, you are heading for a well-deserved retirement. One you can enjoy, secure in the knowledge that you did your utmost, not only as a judge, but as Solicitor-General, as a barrister, as Crown Counsel and as a Solicitor with the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. A true daughter of the Territory.

As for the future, as has been foreshadowed, it is a poorly-kept secret that you intend to retire to Huon Valley in Southern Tasmania with your partner, Al. You acquired a block at Police Point some years ago, sight unseen, I believe. The two of you are in the process of building a house that you helped design, complete with a large veggie patch, the before-mentioned pottery studio, a chicken coop and, of course, stables for horses.

You will be joined by your dog, aptly named Twitch, who may generously be described as "energetic". The house will adjoin an existing building you have built during past holidays, just the usual major construction work that we all do in our

spare time. A big job, but your Honour will no doubt still find time to pursue one of your other great passions, early morning CrossFit exercise.

I hope you look back at your career with fondness and without any regrets. On behalf of the Attorney, the government and the Northern Territory as a whole, thank you Brownhill J and good luck. Enjoy the outdoors.

May it please the Court.

GRANT CJ: Yes. Thank you, Mr Solicitor.

Yes, Dr Ford.

DR FORD: May it please, your Honour. Thank you. The Bar Association also recognises and acknowledges the Larrakia people as the traditional owners of this land and the symbiotic relationship between them and the land. It is not unlike the symbiotic relationship we feel at the Bar with her Honour in particular, as well as other members of the Bench.

Your Honour, you will be pleased to be enjoying some relief today. We know that this day has been long awaited. It may have even been counted down on a desk calendar, we do not know.

Finally, your Honour is back in the position that, we know from your nature, you like best; back in the limelight again. That well-known self-aggrandising nature that likes to draw all attention to itself, best summed up in the classics by Look at me, look at me, look at me. Having to sit there in stoic silence while effusive praise that well-deserved nevertheless is heaped upon you with little chance but to nod and smile.

As well as that relief, your Honour, we know that there will be other relief, as has been long-awaited. No more will there be that shudder when the daily Court list comes out. No more that knot in the pit of the stomach when robing before going to Court. No more the churning and almost dry retching when the three knocks on the door are heard.

No more wondering what the case is really about when it is being opened. And when judgment is reserved, no more wondering what the judgment is going to say or what it is going to look like or when it might be delivered. So, if that is how we feel, we can only imagine how your Honour feels.

Your Honour has truly been a model judge. If I might borrow from Gilbert and Sullivan, the very model of a modern Supreme Court justice. I thought back of the judges of this Court that many of us knew in our younger days and of how your Honour embodies the fine characteristics of those judges.

There was Asche CJ and his regal bearing. I always felt that when your Honour entered the Court to cry of "Silence. All stand," it should have been "Silence. All

kneel," because that is what we felt like doing. Followed by "Fall on your sword now".

There is the incisiveness of Nader J. Nader J, once in the old Supreme Court, of his own motion, issued an injunction against building of the new Parliament House because it was obstructing his hearing of the criminal trial.

There is the beguiling nature of Kearney J, who would say, "So, Ms Smith, you would say 'such and such.'" "Yes, your Honour." "And then you would say 'such and such'" "Yes, your Honour." "Well, how do you deal with this?" And the trap snapped shut.

Then of course there is the affability of Rice J, and dare I say the love of curries that goes with it.

Your Honour has been a model of restraint on the Bench, but it has had one downside, in that we have not seen, I feel, the full aspects of your Honour's personality. Nor have we been able to see the full range of your Honour's advocacy skills.

There is one skill for which your Honour is famous. I missed seeing it myself, unfortunately, and perhaps many other here did. It was in a Royal Commission, apparently, after certain counsel's submissions, and it has become known as the Solicitor General's eyeroll. I am told that it was such a roll that the noise it made made it to the transcript.

Now, the incumbent today is but a lad and may not have had the experience of learning from your Honour what the Solicitor General's eyeroll entails. So I wondered if your Honour would indulge us by demonstrating, mainly for my learned friend's benefit, what is involved.

BROWNHILL J: Well, only because you asked, Doctor Ford. It goes like this.

DR FORD: Your Honour, perhaps the transcript could note that in her last act on the Bench, her Honour rolled her eyes directly at the Solicitor General in response to his submissions. And I am told he is used to it.

Not many would know of your Honour's stewardship of the Northern Territory Council of Law Reporting. That rambunctious rabble, rather like herding cats. Your Honour's immediate predecessor in that role became known as Justice Cuddles.

We wonder how things were going to go on the change from his Honour to your Honour, but we went from Justice Cuddles to - well - Justice No Cuddles. It would be going a little bit far, I think, to say, "The Iron Maiden," and it would convey the wrong impression altogether to say, "Madam Lash." But we are very content with Justice No Cuddles.

Your Honour carefully led us through all of the manifold crises that such a body faces. People have no idea the battles are fought, the blood that is let, the egos are damaged on a body such as that.

I cast my mind back to the line spacing scandal of 2020. There was the font size fiasco of 2021, topped by the Oxford comma controversy of 2023. And only recently, we had the split infinitive standoff. But your Honour led us very carefully and gently through all of those crises, gathered up the survivors, dispatched those that were beyond held and rallied us to fight the next battle.

Huntingford J, the day is too late. But we know we will rally behind your Honour just as we have behind her Honour.

Now, as to the future, your Honour is leaving what is known as the north island to go to Tasmania. And we know that is to enjoy a well-deserved solitude, anonymity, seclusion and freedom from pestering that you can enjoy down there at 3 Seaforth Place, S-E-A-F-O-R-T-H.

Your Honour might also have heard or seen that when you take a car permanently to Tasmania, the owner is given a choice, indicators or the radio. And most choose the radio. It is not unlike the Territory in that regard.

You will also maybe have to - I do not think it will be an upgrade to your wardrobe, but you will have to adapt to what is known as a Tassie tuxedo. And that is a black puffer jacket and Ugg boots.

BROWNHILL J: I already have that.

DR FORD: Your Honour, although you are able to wear that the 11 months of winter and it could even extend into the one or so days of summer. We have also, just for the fun of it, enrolled your Honour in the program Tasmanian-based Farmer Wants a Wife.

Now, it has been mentioned to your Honour that the Tasmanian Supreme Court advertised for anyone interested in being an acting judge. And a number of people suggested that your Honour might be interested and would be suitable.

I was slipped, anonymously, a document that was found on the judges' printer up there, and it is headed "Application for appointment for acting judge of the Supreme Court of Tasmania." I will not read the name of the applicant just for confidentiality reasons.

But the whole application under the heading, "What makes you think you would be a good judge," there are just three letters. "KMD." And I wondered what on earth that could mean. Maybe it is judicial code of some sort, that only judges can decipher. But I thought well, perhaps, considering the position that is applied for, and translating into Taswegian, maybe it means "Can make decisions." That would

be an admirable quality and as my learned friend has said, we know your Honour can well do that.

Perhaps it stands for "Can manage Darwin." If you can manage Darwin, you can certainly manage Hobart. Perhaps it stands - it was a cry for help. "Can't manage Darwin. Get me out of here." I rather expect that after six months of farming, it will stand for "Call me daily. Give me a job."

I had to ask the criminal lawyers what it really stood for, and they informed me that it was the High Court unanimously approving comments that your Honour had made at first instance. And the judgment I recall went something like this: "We feel no need to analyse the law or the facts because we have seen the name of the judge at first instance. We feel entirely confident that that outcome was right, and we have no hesitation in upholding that result." It was something along those lines.

Your Honour, I feel that the best way I can finish is by borrowing and adapting the words of Sir Robert Menzies on the Queen's first visit.

Now, Sir Robert said, rather sportingly and I think a little bit embarrassingly to her Majesty, and I do not intend to embarrass your Honour, of course, but he said, "We did but see her passing by." And now I am going paraphrase. "We'll ne'er forget her, even though we try." No, I mean "even though we cry, even though we cry."

Your Honour, the Bar does lament your leaving. We are very glad to hear that you may be back, and we wish you all the best.

BROWNHILL J: Thank you.

GRANT CJ: Thank you, Dr Ford.

Yes. Mr Henschke.

MR HENSCHKE: Thank you, your Honour. May it please the Court I rise to address the Court on behalf of the legal practitioners of the Northern Territory.

On the day that the Chief Justice welcomed you to the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice observed that your appointment was a reflection of your professional expertise, intellectual abilities and demonstrated capacity for sustained hard work and a reflection of your personal qualities of integrity, independence and sound temperament. And as usual, he nailed it.

Your time on the Supreme Court Bench has validated the Chief Justice's observations. We are very sorry that you leave the Supreme Court now. It has been a good time rather than a long time. Your contribution to the legal profession in the Northern Territory and the law has been most carefully addressed by the Solicitor-General of the Northern Territory and the President of the Northern Territory Bar

Association, so following the example that you have set for all of us, I will do my best to be expeditious.

I have a copy of a memorandum of advice that your Honour wrote many years ago. I still refer to that advice when it is necessary for me to write an advice. Your memorandum of advice is a model of clarity and precision. In that memorandum of advice, your Honour addressed, with finesse, a collision of the law of contract with statutory interpretation that was rearended by the *Planning Act*.

Sometime after that collision, you were appointed as Solicitor-General for the Northern Territory. And your appointment continued a very disturbing trend started by the Chief Justice.

I briefed your Honour as counsel in a particular matter, and I had informed my client that you were the perfect counsel. You were then appointed as Solicitor-General for the Northern Territory, and I had to inform my client there was more than one perfect counsel in the world.

Because the Chief Justice had preceded you as Solicitor-General, I had already developed a technique for reassuring my clients that I could always find another perfect counsel.

And then that technique that I developed from dealing with your appointment and the Chief Justice's appointment as Solicitor-General was again put into action when Nikolai Christrup was appointed as Solicitor-General for the Northern Territory. As they say, practice makes perfect.

So almost inevitably, because of your intellectual ability and demonstrated capacity for sustained hard work, integrity and independence and sound temperament, you were then appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court.

Because of the various roles that I have, from time to time I find myself on the top floor of this building. I have observed with interest the way Judges move about the top floor. The Chief Justice strides down the corridors and the red sea parts before him. You, on the other hand, whoosh down corridors.

The first time I discerned your Honour in Chambers on your way to Court, I asked, "What was that?" I was informed that it was your Honour on your way to Court, together with various persons caught up in your slipstream as they tried to keep up with you.

Your Honour, I understand that you intend to move to Tasmania to raise chickens and grow vegetables. It seems that the allure of the siren call of the island's chickens is more than you can resist. And for dramatic effect, this is Dr Ford's cue to let loose on one of his famous chicken impersonations.

On behalf of the legal practitioners of the Northern Territory, I wish you well and thank you for your highly esteemed contribution to the law. The Supreme Court has

been fortunate to have your skills to deploy in its work. You have, as the Chief Justice predicted when he welcomed you to the Bench, played a vital role in the administration of justice in the Northern Territory. Thank you.

GRANT CJ: Thank you, Mr Henschke.

Brownhill J, would you like to respond?

BROWNHILL J: Thank you, Chief Justice.

It is an honour to be joined on the Bench by the Chief Justice and Judges and former Judges of this Court. As the Chief Justice has done, I acknowledge also the presence today of the distinguished guests and everyone who has come to share this ceremony with me. Thank you all so much for coming.

Thank you, Mr Solicitor, Dr Ford and Mr Henschke for your kind words and good wishes. Once again, the speakers have outdone themselves in making a human being sound worthy of a position on this Court. I will leave it to you to work out whether the eyeroll I performed at Dr Ford's invitation was because I have missed doing it in my time on the Bench or because of his submissions today.

As is customary at these sittings, there are some people to thank and I do so not because it is expected, but because of my deep and sincere gratitude.

To my colleagues on the Bench, you are all extraordinary individuals. So learned in the law. So hard-working. So committed to the administration of justice. So fair-minded and understanding of the difficulties faced by all those who come before this Court.

At the same time, you are all humble, funny and kind. You have afforded me complete patience, support and collegiality. With that, you have helped me to be a better judge. I am so grateful, and I thank you all individually and collectively.

To my current and former associates, most of whom are here today, despite the tyrannies of distance. Like the metaphorical duck, I have glided smoothly and easily across the water, while your support, commitment and hard work has paddled furiously below the surface.

You have contributed to everything I have done in this role and your humour and good company have made our work thoroughly enjoyable. I am so proud of each of your personal achievements and I know we will keep in touch so I can marvel at your stellar careers in the law.

To my EA, Deb, who has looked after me so well for so many years and has organised today, and to all of the Court staff, thank you for assisting me to get things done and to be where I need to be when I need to be there, and for all the work you do, mostly behind the scenes. It does not go unnoticed.

To the members of the legal profession who have appeared before me and those who have instructed others to do so, I am grateful for your arguments, even those that I did not accept.

The considerable efforts you put into preparing and delivering them, your concessions, your dedication to the interests of your clients and your adherence to your duties to the Court. Your contributions are at the heart of the exercise of judicial power, which is something you should always bear in mind and be proud of.

To my partner, my family and my friends, your love, support and encouragement knows no bounds, and I treasure that. Thank you.

When my appointment to this Bench was announced, my mentor and dear friend, Tom Pauling, sent me an email expressing his joy. He told me that I would be a wise Jdge, a considered, consistent and fair Judge, who would not rush to judgment but would weigh the arguments carefully and then write judgments of such clarity that counsel would wonder why they could not collect their arguments in like fashion.

He said I would be unfailingly courteous, even to those who offend me, and that my dignity would never be haughty, but even-handed and unruffled. I am well aware that I have not always met those standards, but I have strived to live up to them. And there is nothing like the belief and encouragement of a mentor to drive you to be better. So, to Tom, I say thank you.

What I intend to do next is no mystery. I will be taking up a new role as a Tasmanian retiree, hobby farmer and artisan. As has been observed, my days will be filled learning new skills, like how to rear alpacas and chickens, how to grow vegetables and cold climate flowers, and how to throw and fire pottery in my kiln.

There will also be reading books by the fire, nature bathing, some kayaking and paddleboarding and knitting by the fire with alpaca wool, of course. This is a long-held dream but not a fantasy. The grass is actually greener down there.

To have served on this Court is an honour and a privilege. I have enjoyed it more than any other job I have had in the law or otherwise. The role is challenging and yet fulfilling. It is demanding and yet liberating. It is frustrating and yet encouraging.

It has not been easy. Imposing society's punishment on people who commit crimes and determining people's legal disputes weighs heavily, as it should. The importance of this institution and Courts generally in our legal system and way of life is obvious but cannot be overstated.

This Court has only six permanent judges, who all sit in criminal and civil matters at first instance and on appeals. The time for the appointment of a seventh permanent judge has been overdue for years. It would be beneficial to the

administration of justice in the Northern Territory and personally gratifying if I were to be replaced by two new judges rather than one.

My sense of obligation to the Court and the people of the Northern Territory has made my decision to retire well before the mandatory retirement age and, to move away from the Territory, a very difficult one. I have chosen, perhaps selfishly, to pursue a new version of personal satisfaction and happiness. My perspective is that life is short, and it is to be lived.

In some way or another, you have all contributed to the work I have done here. I am so very grateful. Thank you all for coming.

GRANT CJ: Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the formal part of the proceedings, but the Judges of the Court invite everybody here to join us in the Court's foyer at the close of proceedings for refreshments.

The Court will now adjourn.

ADJOURNED 3:44 PM ACCORDINGLY