

Admissions to the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory

Practitioner welcome by Hon Justice Trevor Riley

Tuesday 15 December 2009

The first thing I wish to do is to congratulate all the new admittees to the practice of practitioners of this honourable Court. Today you wear for the very first time the wig and gown which are symbols of your newly acquired office. Wear them with pride.

Present on the Bench with me as you will be aware are Southwood J and Kelly J. We welcome you as members of the legal profession. We do so as representatives of the whole of the Court and, indeed, of the legal profession.

Yours is a wonderful achievement and it follows years and years of study and years of putting other things on hold. Your admission reflects and rewards a commitment



Kathleen Connors



Sevasti Zaroufis

by you to attaining the knowledge necessary and the experience necessary to enable you to be admitted as practitioners of this Court. I hope the completion of the ceremony leaves you with a sense of fulfilment, a sense of satisfaction in having completed something very worthwhile.

I also want to congratulate those of you who have supported the applicants during the course of their journey to this point. Family, friends and professional colleagues have all been part of the effort that has made it possible for each of you to achieve as much as you have. Those close to you have had to bear some at least of the load either directly or indirectly as you have moved towards your goal. On some occasions they have had to put their own interests on hold, put their own interests aside to make it possible for you to be here today. All concerned should be especially pleased and justifiably proud on this important day.

In one sense today is the end of one stage in your life and the commencement of another. This ceremony is the public recognition that you have earned the right to join the profession and to practice in the law.

Whilst this is a day for celebration, it should also be a day when we acknowledge the responsibilities that each of you take on as legal practitioners. You must remember that the practice of the law is a true profession. It differs from other

callings in that it involves unique and onerous responsibilities. It has its rewards, both financial and intellectual, but it is not simply a business. It is not only a commercial enterprise.

It is different in that as a legal practitioner you are subject to a code of ethics and standards of professional conduct which govern the way in which you practice the law and in which the law is to be practised. You owe a duty to your clients and you also owe an overriding duty to the Court. The duty to the Court includes the duty of full disclosure of the relevant law, a duty not to mislead the Court, a duty to avoid any form of improper conduct, a duty not to improperly use the privileged position now bestowed upon you. No matter what path your career may follow, whilst you remain a legal practitioner your duty includes the obligation of acting with honesty and with integrity at all times.

Your duty may involve you in acting for people who are unpopular. It may involve you presenting arguments in relation to causes that are not popular. You are likely to need courage to represent an unpopular client or a client who espouses an unpopular cause. There are plenty of examples of occasions where lawyers have themselves become unpopular because they insist on using the law to uphold the rights of unpopular persons with unpopular causes. The rule of law is concerned to uphold the rights of all persons regardless of popularity.



Avril Vaughan

It is there to protect the weak and it is there to protect the friendless. It is there to protect all members of our society.

You should strive to uphold the finest traditions of your profession. You should maintain the highest standards in your professional lives and you should do nothing that would bring either yourself or your profession into disrepute.



Simon Wiese

The legal profession, along with other professions and institutions in our society today, is under increasing scrutiny and sometimes attack. Nevertheless, and despite the snide lawyer jokes that abound, I believe that we as a profession continue to be held in high esteem by the thinking community. It is important that you play your part in ensuring that that continues to be so.

The rule of law is vital to the continued existence of our fundamental freedoms. To ensure those freedoms continue for the protection of this generation and generations to come we must maintain and jealously guard the independence of the judiciary and we must maintain a strong and independent legal profession.

You have every right to be proud of your profession and you should do all that you can to ensure that you are able to remain proud of your own involvement in it.

As always in the case of ceremonies such as this, there is a wide and

divergent group of backgrounds amongst the applicants for admission to this honourable Court. I think Mr Storey referred to it as an extraordinary diversity and he is quite right in that.

Ms Conners, I have to say I am very pleased to see that you have Ms Forgie here to move your admission. Ms Forgie, as those of you who are about my age, which is not many, will remember as a respected officer of this Court and she has gone on to bigger and greater things on the national stage. It is a credit to you that she has journeyed to Darwin to share your achievement. Having heard your achievements, you did it the hard way and you have led an extraordinary life.

Ms Zaroufis, you too are a trail blazer, surviving the John Neil regime at Ward Keller. You are the first. Congratulations. I must say I love it when I hear of people who were born in the Northern Territory being admitted to practise in this Court and we have a few here today.

Ms Vaughan, you spent a year attached to our chambers or, at least, nearby, as an Associate to Reeves J. You are obviously well-known to the members of this Court. You appear to have survived the Reeves J experience unscathed and I think that the profession will be all downhill for you from here. You have climbed the mountain.

Mr Wiese, you are another Darwin-born person and I am very pleased



Donna Ward



Steven Ledek





Stephanie Lambert

to see you here representing those type of people who are achieving in our community. I trust however that there is some more gold in the practice than there is in your family gold mine.

Ms Ward, I understand that you already have strong connections within the profession. Indeed we heard confessions of an extraordinary kind here from the Bar table. As with many of us, you come from a background which was quite remote from the law and it is wonderful to see you transfer into the law. You are now a member of the profession of equal standing with those around you.



Kathleen Gray

Mr Ledek, it has been a long journey. Some would say a very long journey, but you have finally achieved the elusive goal. Your time as my Associate demonstrated to me that you have the capacity to do well and I wish you every success.

Ms Lambert, I read your papers and Ms Truman, unusually for her, missed out on something important and that was that you spent a bit of your childhood at Gunbalanya. I don't know whether you recall that but it is in the papers and of course at Adelaide River. You can claim to be a local product. I hope ultimately that we see you return from afar back to our community.



Naomi Gearon

Ms Gray, born in Darwin. Again, isn't it wonderful? You also left Darwin but you managed to make it back and you are to be congratulated for

succeeding in that so early in your life. And you are already a person who is putting much back into your community. I congratulate you.

Ms Gearon, I see you pronounce your name Gearon presumably to avoid comparison with Ms Gearin. You started your involvement in the community at a very young age and that is to your credit. I am sure it will continue as you move through our profession.

I hope each of you has an exciting and rewarding career ahead. Whether you choose to practise the law or pursue some other endeavour, I wish you well. I trust that this ceremony has been a thoroughly enjoyable occasion for you and that the memory of it will remain with you through to the ends of your lives.

On behalf of the Judges of the Court, I congratulate you and wish you well in whatever paths you may choose to follow. }

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