

SWEARING IN OF THE 20th ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Speech by Her Honour the Honourable Sally Thomas AM
Administrator of the Northern Territory

Parliament House, 31 October 2011

- Their Excellencies the Governor-General and Mr Bryce
- The Honourable Paul Henderson, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory,
- The Honourable Jane Aagaard, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
- The Honourable Chief Justice Trevor Riley, of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory
- Mr Terry Mills, Leader of the Opposition
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
- Former Administrators of the Northern Territory
- Distinguished guests all of you

I also wish to acknowledge the Larrakia people traditional owners of the lands on which we gather here today.

I arrived in Darwin in 1978. It was a life changing experience as I suspect such a move was for many of you here today.

As at 1978 my husband Ted Rowe and I had for many years been partners in a legal practice in the centre of the city of Sydney. I had heard quite a lot about Darwin because Ted had been stationed here in the army during World War Two. He was in Darwin Harbour on the 19th of February, 1942 the first bombing raid on Darwin and for the remainder of the War. In 1978 he was ready to retire from legal practice. I told him I had been offered a position as Magistrate in the Northern Territory. Ted visibly blanched. He told me that throughout the years he had been stationed in Darwin he was continuously planning his escape. Obviously he was not a very good escape artist. He completed his term of Army Service.

To my eternal gratitude he and our two young sons all came to Darwin. Ted became the first Executive Officer of the Law Society. Our two sons completed all their secondary education at Darwin High School. They have both gone on with their respective wives to make great lives for themselves. Ted adjusted easily to life in Darwin without a war. He came to love it till his death here in 1994.

Darwin is now a very different place to the Darwin of 1978. Then we were told we were isolated. Now I am convinced we are the centre of the future. The Northern Territory is a young vigorous and exciting place to live. My life as a Magistrate and then as a Judge travelling to many parts of the Territory has taught me a lot about some of the social problems and the challenges that exist. It has also taught me how many wonderful aspects there are and what amazing things Territorians have achieved.

I am most appreciative that my partner Duncan McNeill who has put up with me now for many years has agreed to join me in this next journey in our lives. We are both looking forward to meeting many more Territorians and to learning more about their achievements.

It is a great honour and a privilege to have been appointed the 20th Administrator of the Northern Territory. Thank you all for attending here today to share this moment.