



Murray Chambers SA team

## SA and NT barristers' chambers leading the way in pro bono

Earlier this year, a new milestone was reached with the first ever barristers' chambers signing up to the National Pro Bono Target.

Murray Chambers South Australia and Murray Chambers Northern Territory – two affiliated but independent chambers – have long been pro bono contributors but have now formalised that commitment through signing the Target. By doing so, they have agreed to use their best efforts

to ensure that each of their barrister members undertakes an average of a minimum of 35 hours of pro bono legal services each year.

This development follows an increase in individual barristers from South Australia becoming signatories, with half of new barrister signatories in the last financial year coming from that jurisdiction. The Centre is hopeful that this commendable initiative will be followed by barristers' chambers across the country.

In recognition of the leadership displayed by the first barristers' chambers signatories, we asked representatives of Murray Chambers South Australia and Murray Chambers Northern Territory to reflect on the 'what, why and how' of their respective pro bono practices.

In April 2022, Murray Chambers South Australia was proud to become the first barristers' chambers to sign the National Pro Bono Target. Gillian Walker SC and Sally Heidenreich discuss the benefits of this work (not only for the community, but also for lawyers) and highlight the importance of the Target in encouraging and monitoring pro bono work.

### **Murray Chambers SA**

**By Gillian Walker SC and Sally Heidenreich**

*Murray Chambers was established in 1984 in Adelaide and today has 17 members and three associate members. Notably, 40% of our members and two of our three silks are women.*

Murray Chambers SA



Signing up as a chambers to the Target was uncontroversial. A number of our members were already signatories to the individual Target, and we

share a commitment to access to justice. In addition to the pro bono and 'low bono' work performed by our members, as a chambers, we have for many years financially and practically supported JusticeNet – the South Australian pro bono service which amongst other things connects applicants for assistance with barristers and solicitors. The primary source of pro bono referrals is JusticeNet, but matters also come through the Federal Court and South Australian Supreme Court referral schemes, as well as ad hoc requests.

**“As more chambers sign the Target, more pro bono hours will be provided to benefit those who are struggling to manage in our legal system and better data will be available.”**

— Gillian Walker SC and Sally Heidenreich

The benefit of pro bono work is not one-sided; it offers barristers an opportunity to step outside their 'normal' areas or jurisdictions of practice, and it enables more junior barristers to take the lead of all aspects of a matter or have a speaking role at a hearing, which may not often arise in their day-to-day practice. The work is broad; our members have appeared in the Full Court on an appeal from the last of the de facto relationship disputes in the State jurisdiction, stepped into complex part-heard trials about real estate transactions (and ultimately assisted in reaching a resolution after an appeal was filed), and assisted clients to articulate and bring challenges to rejections of emergency welfare payment applications.

Many members of the South Australian Bar are active providers of pro bono services; however, this work is often done quietly, without self-promotion and without being recorded. As a result, our representative associations and those making policy decisions about

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the funding of community legal services do not have an accurate picture of just how much unremunerated work is done by the profession for those who need legal assistance but are shut out from the limited free or low-cost legal services available.

In addition to the Target's goal of delivered pro bono hours, the reporting mechanism will assist in measuring the work done and informing those important public policy decisions. As more chambers sign the Target, more pro bono hours will be provided to benefit those who are struggling to manage in our legal system and better data will be available.

We all know that barristers thrive on competition. Right now, it is a friendly game between Murray Chambers South Australia and Northern Territory. We encourage other chambers to join us. All participants will come away knowing they have made a meaningful difference to the lives of people who find themselves trying to navigate our complex legal system unassisted, often against represented opponents.

In September 2022, Murray Chambers Northern Territory became the second barristers' chambers to sign up to the Target in Australia, and the first in the Northern Territory. With the Northern Territory being home to some



**Gillian Walker SC** was called to the bar in 2010, and was appointed SC in 2022. She accepts briefs in most areas of civil and commercial law, including employment and industrial matters, insolvency and Corporations Act matters, construction disputes and regulatory proceedings. She regularly appears in all major courts and tribunals, including the Federal and Federal Circuit Courts, Supreme, District and Magistrates Courts, State and Commonwealth Industrial Courts, as well as the AAT and the Equal Opportunity Tribunal.



**Sally Heidenreich** is a barrister who accepts briefs in most areas of commercial and civil law, in both private and public contexts, and appears in all major State and Federal courts and tribunals. Prior to her legal career, Sally served as an Intelligence Officer for many years, during which time she was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. She was also formerly employed as a Japanese-English interpreter.



Murray Chambers NT

of Australia's most impactful community legal centres dealing with complex and systemic legal challenges, like the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and the Top End Women's Legal Service, the Centre welcomes barristers joining the pro bono effort. Mary Chalmers SC attests to the advantages of a diverse membership in serving a vulnerable community.

### Murray Chambers NT

By Mary Chalmers SC

*Murray Chambers Northern Territory was established in 2018 by Mary Chalmers, Georgia McMaster and Tamzin Lee and now has barristers in both Darwin and Alice Springs. Our chambers is closely connected with the Murray Chambers in WA and SA, particularly through Raelene Webb KC (WA, formerly of the NT Bar) and Kerry Clark SC in Adelaide.*

*Our barristers are all senior legal practitioners with diverse legal and life experience, including substantial experience in the Northern Territory Courts and Tribunals. We are therefore well placed to be able to give back to the community through pro bono work.*

*The Northern Territory faces unique challenges and is home to some of Australia's most vulnerable populations. All members of our chambers are acutely aware of this fact, and the critical importance of access to justice for affected persons and organisations. To date, most of the pro bono work of our members has been in the refugee and migration space, including advocacy in judicial review cases in the Federal Circuit Court and Family Court of Australia. We decided to sign up to the Target in order to consciously expand our pro bono footprint chambers-wide, in terms of number and variety of matters.*



Murray Chambers NT founding team

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***— Mary Chalmers SC***



**Mary Chalmers SC** is an expert trial lawyer with a reputation for hard work and effective advocacy. Mary accepts briefs in a diverse range of matters at advice, trial and appellate stages. She is a founding member of Murray Chambers Northern Territory and was appointed SC in 2021.

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