

History of excellence

Farewell to Dr Dewar

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A DRIVING force behind capturing the essence of the Territory's history has been remembered by family and friends.

Dr Mickey Dewar was a former senior curator Territory history at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory – one of many key roles she held during her career.

She died recently of motor neurone disease at the age of 61.

Her wake, held on Friday, was attended by friends, family and former colleagues and hosted by former ABC presenter Julia Christensen in the old Qantas hangar in Parap, one of a number of heritage sites Dr Dewar was responsible for over the years.

The museum's Cyclone Tracy Gallery is considered her lasting legacy.

Former chief minister Clare Martin said Dr Dewar set out to make sure the Territory's history was better valued.

"She was both a serious academic and a great storyteller, and made the Territory's social and political history better understood and valued, and importantly, come alive," Ms Martin said.

"She was a fine historian and the museum's Cyclone Tracy Gallery is truly a monument to the creative Mickey Dewar."

"As an exhibition it was ahead of its time, in the way that Mickey grounded it solidly in a social and architectural context."

"The exhibition's darkened small room with the eerie sounds of the cyclone mixed with midnight mass is still a feature to this day."

Ms Martin said Ms Dewar's storytelling ability was a combination of academic perspective and historical research, with a "regular dose of Dewar humour".

"As the senior curator Territory history at the museum and art gallery, one of the



Dr Mickey Dewar, pictured during her time as NT Library heritage co-ordinator – one of many key roles the respected historian held, was recently farewelled by friends and colleagues (inset), who celebrated her life and great contribution to Territory history

properties she was responsible for was Fannie Bay Gaol and she wrote its social history in 1999 in an excellent report called *Inside Out*," she said.

"In my early days as member for Fannie Bay, Mickey was determined that I wouldn't be a historically ig-

norant local member. She became my tour guide for that and other Fannie Bay history sites and I experienced firsthand the storytelling prowess of my dear friend."

Dr Dewar arrived in the Northern Territory in 1980 with husband David Ritchie,

who would go on to assume senior public service roles.

Three years later the first of their two children, Sam, arrived and two years after that Susannah was born.

Ms Christensen said Darwin and the Top End were where her heart was, where

she and David spent their entire married life, where their children Sam and Susannah were born and raised, and where she had such a huge professional impact.

"As a friend described her to me, 'an excellent specimen of humanity,'" she said.