



## MEDIA RELEASE

12 August 2014

### **Top End magistrates must be above party politics**

A Northern Territory magistrate, Mr Peter Maley, should terminate his apparent participation in Country Liberal Party affairs, immediately, before he does irreparable harm to public confidence in the independence of the local judiciary, according to the Australian Bar Association.

The ABA has also expressed dismay that Northern Territory Attorney-General John Elferink MLA has refused to hold an independent inquiry into the matter.

In two detailed letters to Mr Elferink, the Northern Territory Bar Association has set out its concerns in relation to Mr Maley's conduct since his appointment in September 2013, including his role as a director of Foundation 51 Pty Ltd, a CLP fundraising organisation, and through handing out how to vote cards at the recent Blain by-election.

'The established rules of judicial conduct require magistrates to cease involvement in politics after their appointment. It appears that Mr Maley has not done that,' said Fiona McLeod SC, Vice-President of the Australian Bar Association.

'The people of the Top End must have complete confidence in the independence of their magistrates. That confidence has been undermined by Mr Maley's apparent conduct which suggests an on-going and close connection between Mr Maley and the NT Government' she said. 'The Attorney General must ensure that Magistrate Maley has no continuing connection to the CLP'.

Ms McLeod said the need for an independent inquiry is reinforced by the Attorney's friendship with Mr Maley and the Attorney's public statements which appear to support Mr Maley's on-going close involvement in politics.

'The NT Bar Association is calling for an independent inquiry to help restore confidence and the Australian Bar Association supports that position,' she said.

**For the media:** The correspondence between the NT Bar Association and the Attorney is on the NTBA's website [www.ntba.asn.au](http://www.ntba.asn.au).

**Contact:** Fiona McLeod SC, The Australian Bar Association's Vice President on **0412 288 987**