

Reception for the Northern Territory Clinical School
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory
Government House – 21 January 2009

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Government House. I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

Having recently been incapacitated by a minor injury, it is tremendously reassuring to host so many doctors, of all disciplines, from psychiatry to geriatrics!

Congratulations to the James Cook and Flinders University medical students for success in their studies to date. As Administrator of the Northern Territory it gives me great pleasure to host you here today at the start of your participation in a program which I know benefits us all.

Your whistlestop “cultural tour” of Darwin is, for those of you born elsewhere, an introduction to a Territory full of experiences. But although I could extol the beauty of Arnhemland escarpments and central desert ranges, I know that it is your focus on a broader health education that has brought you here today.

There are several definitions of “career”. The word comes from the Medieval Latin *carraria* ‘road for vehicles’. It can mean to go at top speed and also the pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement in professional life. At periods during your rigorous medical training it must seem that your training is indeed of considerable momentum and intensity. However, challenges that present themselves at any stage of life should always be positively embraced.

I am a case in point. Happily concluding my legal career as Solicitor General of the Northern Territory, I was suddenly and unexpectedly invited to take this position. And instead of a relatively sedate retirement, I find myself representing the Governor-General of Australia, and the Monarch, and enjoying new experiences on a daily basis.

Many challenges abound in the Northern Territory, especially in the medical field. There must be new initiatives and innovations to tackle chronic diseases such as renal failure, diabetes, heart problems; partnerships to tackle unsatisfactory health issues of young children within our communities that lead to chronic diseases far too early in life. Questions to solve, such as why there has been a reported increase in anaemia rates east of Katherine for children under five from 32% to 55% in the last eighteen months?

Genuine understanding of bush medicine and traditional healing is helpful. And the latest technology must be also embraced, such as the era of e-health through the SkyConnect network.

I applaud the exemplary work of the Northern Territory Clinical School in partnership with Flinders University and James Cook University. The efforts you have made, since the first students commenced in 1998, ensure new generations of doctors are introduced to the opportunities in the north.

Let us hope that a rewarding experience leads to many of you making a long term commitment to the Northern Territory. Rest assured, you will be highly valued.