

Reception for the Australian Army Band Darwin
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory
Government House – 31 March 2009

Members of the Australian Army Band Darwin, welcome to Government House. I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

It is a great pleasure and also highly appropriate that I extend you hospitality this evening, as the Band has entertained here on many occasions. Over the period of history of Government House Darwin, musical support for our functions has been provided by a range of local musicians, including violinists and pianists, a saxophone quartet, and local bands including the Caledonian Pipe Band, St John Ambulance Cadet Band, Darwin City Brass Band and the Darwin Concert Band.

And one of our leading musical supporters, dating back to the era of the 13th Administrator, Commodore Eric Johnston, has been the local Army Reserve Band. Originally known as the Band of the 7th Military District, then Australian Army Band – Northern Command, you are now proudly known as the Australian Army Band Darwin.

The history of military music goes back a very long way. Flavius Vegetius Renatus, in his description of the Military Institutions of the Romans, written in 390 AD, notes: *The music of the legion consists of trumpets, cornets ... The trumpet sounds the charge and the retreat ... The cornets sound whenever the colours are to be struck or planted ... reason will convince us that what is necessary to be performed in the heat of action should constantly be practiced in the leisure of peace.*

During the time of the Ancient Greeks, the oars of their galleys kept time to the notes of the flute. In the story of Lysander's famous victory over the Athenians mention is made of his glorious return "*amidst the sound of flutes and songs of triumph*".

In the Pacific Ocean, it is not the trumpet or the cornet but rather the conch shell, or “Pu”, which is traditionally used to herald the arrival of important persons. This Triton or *Cassis cornuta* shell is played like a ceremonial fanfare trumpet.

One of the earliest military bands was established in 1299 to accompany the marching Ottoman Army into battle. Tourists visiting Turkey can still see a representation of the Mehter Takami Band, *mehter* meaning “military”, performing in Istanbul.

In 1763, Frederick the Great of Prussia defined the composition of the military band as comprising a pair of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons and corps of drums, to which were later added a flute, trumpets and a contrabassoon. But in Great Britain the Royal Artillery Band, formed in 1762, included musicians who had to be prolific on both wind and stringed instruments. An early tradition was to employ drummers of African descent who often sported tiger or leopard skin aprons. To this day, a Regimental Bass Drummer can be seen complete with leopard skin when in full ceremonial dress. Perhaps we should introduce something along the lines of a crocodile skin vest?

Nobody who has ever watched or, if fortunate enough, witnessed in person the Edinburgh Military Tattoo fails to be stirred by the talents of army bands, with or without drummers in leopard skin. I note that Sydney has beaten New York, Melbourne and Auckland to win the right to host the Edinburgh Military Tattoo for the second time. 1,500 performers, including massed pipes and drums and international military bands, will perform at Sydney Football Stadium in February 2010, when the event is held outside Scotland's Edinburgh Castle for only the third time ever. It is entitled *60 Years of Valour, Mateship and Glory*. and will of course feature the replica castle.

Here we don't need a replica – we have a very real and historic House. And we have an Army Band that has provided twenty-one years of *Music, Mateship and Service* which has rightfully earned all of you stature and standing within our community. Thank you.