

Dinner in honour of Charles Darwin University
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory
Government House – 13 May 2009

Distinguished guests, friends – it is a great pleasure for Tessa and I to have this opportunity to host you and it is appropriate that I say a few words of welcome to you and appropriately express the sense of pride that the Northern Territory has in Charles Darwin University. Universities are an enduring legacy of 12th century Europe. Salerno was renowned for its prestigious school of medicine. Bologna was notable for its teaching of canon and civil law, and in Paris there was the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (guild of masters and scholars).

In the English-speaking world, Oxford is the oldest university, having been founded nearly 850 years ago. The first Chancellors were agents of the bishops and I note that Cambridge has the sad record of five of its Chancellors losing their heads in the 16th Century. Richard Ryan, our current Chancellor, has a peaceful position in comparison!

As I mentioned in one of my very first speeches as the 19th Administrator of the Northern Territory, I attended the first university in Australasia. The University of Sydney was established on 1 October 1850 to promote useful knowledge and to encourage the residents of New South Wales to pursue a regular course of liberal education. Teaching began with a Faculty of Arts degree requiring three years' study of Greek, Latin, Maths and Science. From 1890, it became possible to enrol for degrees in Medicine, Law, and Science without first doing at least one year of Arts. Though, I know that to this day there are some who insist that our students would continue to benefit from learning classics, maths and science.

The first free university in the British Empire was the University of Western Australia which will celebrate its centenary in 2011. The founding Chancellor, Sir John Winthrop Hackett, was the proprietor and editor of *The West Australian*, and bequeathed more than £425,000 pounds (the equivalent of more than \$32 million today) to the University. At the time of the university's foundation, Perth's population was 121,000 and its economy relied on agricultural, pastoral and mining industries - very similar to the story here in the Top End today.

It has been heartening to witness the progress of our education institution over the past fifty years. From 1959 when post-secondary studies in the Northern Territory were first offered; through the days of the Darwin Community College; Darwin Institute of Technology; the Northern Territory University founded twenty years ago; to today's Charles Darwin University which includes campuses and education centres the length and breadth of the Territory.

Since 1993, the university's Foundation has encouraged donations and other contributions to promote the university's development. It is a personal pleasure to witness the evolution of the Indonesian Garden project and my sincere thanks to the Consul for the Republic of Indonesia for all his efforts.

My heart is also in the next item on the Foundation's agenda – the refurbishment of the theatre. I remember well being dragged in to direct a not very successful production of the Beggar's Opera there. The Director had walked out with only three weeks to go. I organised a great set, imported a scrim theatrical curtain to disappear the orchestra but - when all that was done – I didn't have time to rehearse the actors properly.

The history books recount how Oxford University's Sheldonian Theatre was designed in 1669 by Christopher Wren. It was funded by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chancellor of the university – being a Chancellor seems a risky business! But with the help of sponsors and supporters there is no doubt that this upgrade of our theatre will be another successful Foundation project that will also benefit the community at large.

I would like to conclude by welcoming the new Vice Chancellor, Professor Barney Glover, to the Northern Territory. It is excellent to see Barney here – he is one of the new generation of Vice Chancellors which include Peter Høj at the University of South Australia. However, I have been reassured that the passion of relative youth is, in the case of our Vice Chancellor, well balanced by the fact that he is a Volvo driver! I know that Charles Darwin University is in the very safe hands of the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and all your valued supporters. I would like to take this opportunity as Administrator of the Northern Territory to extend a wholehearted thank you to you all.