

Luncheon for the Governor-General of Australia  
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC  
Administrator of the Northern Territory  
Government House – 14 July 2009

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Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, welcome to Government House. Firstly, I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

The historians amongst us might, on previous occasions, have noticed the framed menu displayed in the Dining Room. It is a reminder of a visit by the then Governor-General of Australia, the Right Honourable William McKell sixty-one years ago tomorrow - on 15 July 1948. As an aside, my father had been his Personal Secretary when he was the Premier of New South Wales.

McKell was accompanied by his Aide-de-Camp, Lieutenant Dacre Smyth who remembered *spending a few pleasant days there in the midst of a busy tour of Queensland and the Territory. Mr McKell, despite the heat, still wore a dark suit and a homburg hat*".

In comparison, history records, Smyth wore Naval Whites, medals and aiguillettes; so impressive did he look that a small Darwin schoolgirl insisted, despite his gesticulations, on thrusting the posy meant for His Excellency into Smyth's hands.

Pre World War II, the wife of a young doctor in the Australian Imperial Force remembers: *you were bidden to the Residence .... You might be presented to a visiting Governor-General or VIP (with curtsy and the lot!) or you might simply be required to sip tea and chat with the charming Mrs Abbott. No-one relished the idea of "going to Government House". It meant putting on stockings and things and it was so damn hot!*

Serving in naval intelligence, (Sir) Zelman Cowen was posted to HMAS *Melville*, one of two naval shore stations in Darwin during World War Two, and served here for eight months from early October 1941. In November of that year, he visited Government House, and again on 19 February 1992 when he was a distinguished guest for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin,

having risen to the position of Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia in the intervening years. On the actual day of the first bombing, he was in his navy whites as the bombs began to fall. He jumped into a trench only to be thrown out as his white uniform might attract attention from the attacking aircraft. Our welcome to Your Excellencies is much more inclusive.

Each and every visit of a Governor-General to this historic House has marked a step in the history of the Northern Territory. And I am extremely pleased to welcome you today, to a Territory with a remarkable pioneering past and to Darwin, a city that without doubt promises a remarkable future as the most important and thriving capital of northern Australia. Thank you.