

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING AO QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**LUNCHEON FOR DUKE OF EDINBURGH
WILDERNESS TO WHARF PARTICIPANTS**

Government House, Darwin

11 September 2008

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to Darwin and to Government House and I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

It is excellent to see an initiative that brings Duke of Edinburgh Award students from Katherine to Darwin harbour and the Arafura Sea. This House has seen the coming and goings of many prestigious visitors over the years at “The House of Seven Gables” as this House was described in 1879 when it was pretty much as it is now.

There were Australian aviation heroes Ross and Keith Smith who were the first to fly from London to Australia in under thirty days, in just under twenty-eight days to be precise, ninety years ago next year.

And of course Her Majesty the Queen enjoyed a dinner party right here in 1963, visited in 1977 and stayed overnight in 1982.

The first Government Residency, as it was then known, was home to Captain William Douglas, his wife, two sons, five daughters and an Irish maid. It had the benefit of a flat roof and one of the daughters, Harriet (who subsequently wrote for the Sydney Morning Herald for many years), remembered sitting on the roof of their new home enjoying the scene across the harbour.

She and her siblings enjoyed a great view of the events of 7 November 1871, when the ships *Hibernia* and *Edinburgh* completed the laying of the telegraph cable from Java (Indonesia) to Darwin. The cable was brought ashore and taken up the cliff for connection to the line to southern Australia and reports of the historic day read: *The great cable was landed at 11am, great excitement with about 300 people present.*

It's difficult in a world of My Space and Facebook to imagine the incredible leap forward in communications that followed. Eleven repeater stations were built along the Overland Telegraph Line from Port Augusta to Darwin and then a couple of nine metre stone pylons had to be built in Katherine to prevent flood waters from the river interfering with the wires of the line.

Using the Morse key, operators at the stations were able to communicate with the world twenty-four hours a day; however it took seven hours to send a message from Adelaide to England!

Yes, Government House has seen great moments in history but equally our history is made up of individuals and their achievements. You are at the beginning of your endeavours. You are willing to learn from the challenge of this Wilderness to Wharf project and therefore I am sure that you too have the potential to contribute to the Northern Territory.

After the main course, I will in accordance with tradition, invite you to join me in a toast to the Queen and the people of Australia. There will be no other formalities and you should relax, enjoy your lunch and feel free to ask any questions or talk about anything you wish.