

Presentation of Churchill Fellowship Awards
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory
Government House – 15 September 2009

It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity to meet those of you who have been successful in your quest to be this year's Churchill Fellows. The variety of projects reflects the Northern Territory's extraordinary capabilities in the fields of front line health and exciting cultural connections and techniques. Indeed, we reflect an aspect of this year's round of applications which was the higher number of Fellowships being awarded in the area of the Arts.

Sally Thomas, Deputy National Chairman (Fellowship), has been kind enough to provide a few details from the National perspective. This year the Trust has awarded 106 fellowships nationally, amounting to a total cost of more than two and a half million dollars, which provides considerable scope as regards the places to which the Fellows can travel. A Churchill Fellowship continues to hold considerable prestige, even though many of the current recipients were born after the death of Churchill and some have no idea who he was! However, they have found that no matter what country they choose to go to in pursuit of their area of interest, they are always welcomed and provided with every assistance. For many, this Fellowship has added greatly to their own development and has opened many doors.

One of the criteria in the award of a Fellowship is the ability of the recipient to bring back his or her knowledge for the benefit of the community. The infusion of new methods and ideas is a great advantage for the Northern Territory. Earlier this month, I read a draft report written by Glenn Wightman, a 2008 Churchill Fellow, entitled *Passing it on, Traditional Aboriginal biological knowledge preservation and promotion*. Glenn enthuses that the tour he undertook to the US and UK was one of the best things he has ever done - *the fellowship was a truly exceptional experience*.

Glenn outlines that *the inter-generational transfer of traditional biological knowledge is a critical issue for many of the Indigenous people, scientists and naturalists I spoke to during the fellowship. Many mechanisms for biological knowledge transmission and promotion were discussed and observed, some of*

these had not been trialled in the NT and will almost certainly be extremely valuable. The fellowship has re-invigorated my desire to work with Aboriginal knowledge custodians in the NT to make sure we do the absolute best job we can to ensure plant and animal knowledge is available for future generations of Territorians. ... preservation and promotion of traditional biological knowledge is one of the most important bio-cultural heritage assets in the Territory.

I also received a memo from Eileen van Iersel who found the Churchill Fellowship very rewarding in that it allowed me the opportunity to travel outside Australia to compare different practices in health care services where there is a large number of minority groups that speak English as a second language. While the Northern Territory is a unique and diverse region, my travel overseas made me realise that no matter how far I travelled, there were many similarities in regards to communication and cultural barriers that exist within the minority groups, and while there are similarities, the Northern Territory is advanced in providing a Cultural Security Service's in health care practices.

I commend you all and wish you well as you set off on your own journeys. I would also like to thank those who continue to serve in a volunteer capacity for their dedication and hard work to ensure that the Northern Territory continues to see such a worthwhile program.