

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING AO QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**RECEPTION FOR ROTARY POLICE OFFICER
OF THE YEAR**

Government House, Darwin

18 September 2008

I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

In a story by Sidney Downer of the early Northern Territory Police Force called *Patrol Indefinite*, I came across the following excerpts: “In 1932, an Adelaide newspaper painted an over-romanticized picture which ... if regarded only as a recruiting aid had its merits.

The mounted policeman of the far North is a semi-cowboy. He wears a khaki open-necked shirt, khaki slacks, elastic-sided boots and a wide sombrero. His round may take him 300 or 400 miles from his station – three weeks’ hard riding. He sleeps under the stars ... to the shuffling of the horses and the stir of night life going on around him. He is the Pooh-Bah of the law – inspector of stock and brands, warden of goldfields, clerk of court, and postmaster. Usually he is the only man for miles with any knowledge of first aid

and he may be called upon to treat anything from toothache to snakebite.

In fact the forebear of one of my office staff joined the Police Force in 1906, serving in the Northern Territory as a Mounted Constable until 1915. William Johns rose through the ranks of the Force to become Commissioner of Police in South Australia. His successful career, however, very nearly came to a premature end when he almost drowned in a flooded Wilton River. In a renowned act of bravery an Aboriginal in chains for cattle stealing, rescued the unconscious officer.

Neighbour, as he was known, was awarded the Albert Medal and went on to become an excellent tracker.

Craig, my staff member, remembers tales that the family recounted of those earlier times when great-grandfather, together with his brother who was also with the police, travelled through the Territory on horseback, inspecting patrol posts along the way. The circle is complete as Craig works in the Office of the Administrator on the site that was once the Police headquarters and courtroom with cells and stables at the rear.

Even in the modern era, when satellite phones and modems, long range police vehicles and light aircraft are available, some things have not changed: members of our police force are still often

required to be Jack or Jill of all trades and have to prove adaptable throughout their careers.

An example of the extent of demands met by highly capable officers was evident at a recent Investiture here. I had the pleasure of awarding the Australian Police Medal for distinguished police service to Commander Kate Vanderlaan who has served the Northern Territory Police for almost thirty years in a range of significant roles.

The tradition of service runs in the family of the Police Officer we are recognising this evening: His father was a Magistrate for a period in Papua New Guinea and his brother, also a serving NT Police Officer, was a member of a secondment to Phuket during Australia's response to the Boxing Day tsunami disaster.

The police officer we are recognising tonight has only served a decade to date, but he has moved between Darwin and Alice, Katherine and Yulara.

I note that in his current position his superior officer is none other than Detective Sergeant Robert Jordan who is here tonight and who was the 2006/7 Rotary Police Officer of the Year.

The winner of this year's award worked for a period in Timor Leste with the Australian Federal Police. He noted in a subsequent interview *the wildlife that you encounter in the city of Dili, while*

conducting foot patrols, varies from dogs, cats and goats to monkeys, pigs, crocodiles and cows!

On a more serious note, The Rotary Police Officer for 2008 is in fact known to me as I appeared for the Northern Territory government in my former role as Solicitor General at the Inquest into three deaths at a remote community. And I second the sentiments of the Territory Coroner, Greg Cavanagh, in his Finding delivered in Alice Springs three years ago:

Constable Michael Deutrom, of Yulara police station, conducted the investigation into one of these deaths, and gave thoughtful evidence before me about the day to day realities of policing the remote community of Mutitjulu.

When at Mutitjulu I was able to observe the respectful yet appropriately friendly relationship between Constable Deutrom and community members, and vice versa. In my experience of nearly 25 years in the Northern Territory, this kind of relationship with NT police officers stationed in or near remote Aboriginal communities is not unusual and is to be commended.

I recall being personally impressed by his calm demeanour and I commend him to you as a worthy recipient of this prestigious award. He is excellent at community policing and no doubt other aspects of police work.