

ADDRESS BY  
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING QC  
**ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**RECEPTION TO MARK THE FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO  
ALICE SPRINGS**

Madigans, Alice Springs Desert Park

7 February 2008

I wish in the spirit of reconciliation to acknowledge that we are on the country of the Mbantua Arrente people and I am pleased to see here Mr Brian Stirling, Mr Noel Kruger and Ms Janet Turner representing Lhere Artepe, the Native Title Prescribed Body Corporate.

Some of you would know that as Solicitor-General I represented the Northern Territory in the Native Title proceedings over Alice Springs. From day one there was no contest that Native Title rights survived but only who held them and whether they were exclusive or non-exclusive.

I am certainly no stranger to Alice Springs in particular and Central Australia in general. Beginning in 1970, and well before the advent of legal aid, Martin and Partners, Paul Everingham and Peter Howard had me down here for the Supreme Court sittings. I appeared in personal injury cases, some spectacularly messy divorces and a lot of criminal cases where somehow airfares and accommodation were paid for but there were no fees, which didn't please my Darwin partners who thought I was on some sort of crusade. Ian Barker and I did a lot of cases together and helped formulate the rules about police interrogations of aboriginal suspects.

I have been on the ground in Lands Rights cases in the south east corner of the Territory; in the beautiful Simpson Desert; at Mt Allan when DD Smith was still managing it; at Ali Curang for a claim over McLaren Creek grazing license – the temperature was over 100°F day and night. I stayed in a tin shed at the Wauchope Hotel and nearly expired.

I have stood on top of the rocket shelter at Jervois where the Johansens climbed up to watch the Jindivik rockets sail overhead and have seen the remains of crashed rockets. I have sat here as magistrate and at Tennant Creek. A reminder of “the centre” is always present in the mighty mosaic of the *Milky Way Dreaming* in the Supreme Court in Darwin which is from a Warlpiri painting by Nora Napaltjari Nelson – now of Topsy Smith Hostel but then of Yuendumu.

I spent months at the Oasis Motel when there were more orange trees than rooms and where the kindly Mr Mullins tended the birds and Sunday was spent with Bern and Aileen Kilgariff on the tennis court.

I came to Alice Springs a great deal as Chairman of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and I am pleased to see Dr Peter Murray here. I have always admired the work done on the Alcoota megafauna fossils and the monograph on the *Dromornis Stirtoni* flightless ‘big bird’ of ancient times which would have weighed in at a massive 500 kilos and stood more than three metres high. I am also happy to see Krafty here tonight, who was Chairman of the Museum after me.

I was at Yulara for an eternity during the Native Title compensation Claim, having had a close association with Uluru during a controversial criminal case.

I have organised conferences at Kings Canyon and here in Alice Springs for lawyers and the horse racing fraternity. We visited Glen Helen when the famous restaurant Cloudys was going and went by helicopter to the top of Mt Sonder for sunset drinks followed by the hair raising descent from the summit.

All of that is to say that I don't subscribe to the Berrimah line theory and when Tessa and I get out and about we won't be wanting to keep Darwin Harbour in view at all times.

I expect during my term in office to visit from Kintore, Yuendumu, Papunya and Nyirripi right across to Lake Nash and most things in-between. We'll get to Harts Range and Haasts Bluff. As always we will be having fun in the Northern Territory.

Thank you.