

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING AO QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**RECEPTION FOR THE ROTARY CLUB OF
NORTH DARWIN SHINE ON AWARDS**

Government House, Darwin

24 June 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you here this evening and in doing so, I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

First presented in Brisbane in 1993, the Shine on Awards was an initiative of Mr Bernie Jacks. Four years later, Mr Jacks was made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to the community through programmes designed to recognise achievement. His work encouraging volunteers to disregard their own disability was seen as a valuable innovation.

It has been inspiring for me to learn more about those who manage, despite disabilities, to contribute to the community.

Over the past fifteen years of Shine on Awards, recipients have included a gentleman from Victoria, Dean Calder, who though legally blind was involved with Blind Cricket, Goal Ball and Table Tennis.

In Greater Bendigo, Graeme Gordon was honoured not only for his outstanding work in a voluntary capacity, but as a role model. Following a successful career in the armed forces, Graeme was injured in a motor vehicle accident which left him an incomplete quadriplegic.

Not to be beaten by this set back, he developed and co-ordinated the Wheelchair Education Program from 1992 to 2004, delivering it to schools and community groups across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. He also coached a Dragons Abreast team, represented Australia in Wheelchair Rugby and played a leading part in forming the Bendigo Wheelchair Braves basketball team.

A young University of Queensland student, Helena Rose, discovered she had bipolar disorder during her first University semester in 1996, after a lecturer recommended she visit a doctor.

Instead of letting the unexpected diagnosis defeat her, she advocated for students with disabilities and sought department funding to develop a disabilities web page for Australian tertiary students with disabilities so that they could share experiences.

A sixteen year old, Sam Byrne, was honoured with a Shine Award in the Youth Category. Born with retinoblastoma, Sam's achievements included representing his school in diving, involvement with Guide Dog and Braille music camps, as well as achieving high academic standards. He was also selected to participate in the Space Camp for Interested Vision Impaired Students held at the US Space and Rocket Centre in Alabama.

And there's our own Territorian Shine on awardees, including Tahnee Afuhaamango, who also won an NT Young Achievers Award for excellence in sport and then, this January, was awarded a Northern Territory Institute of Sport scholarship. Tahnee's remarkable achievement is that she holds six Down Syndrome International Swimming Organisation world records and is currently in training for the 2008 DSISO World Swimming Championships in Portugal.

What I would like to emphasise is that although it is excellent to receive this award today, don't let it be the last thing you achieve, but the start of a future pathway of putting others first and reaping the reward of sharing happiness in the wider community.

Well done to today's recipients.