

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
‘ACCOUNTING AT THE TOP 2008’ CONFERENCE
Holiday Inn Esplanade, Darwin
5 June 2008

Thank you for the warm introduction and welcome Steve.

In the Top End Steve might be welcoming at Charles Darwin University or at a Rugby Union match. Being multi skilled is a distinct advantage in a place this size.

I acknowledge Minister for Business and Economic Development the Honourable Kon Vatskalis MLA, guest speakers, international and interstate guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Larrakia people – and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

As Administrator of the Northern Territory I welcome you to the Accounting at the Top 2008 Conference; the Northern Territory’s premier finance, accounting and business event organised by CPA Australia.

I am honoured to ‘set the scene’ for this year’s conference and to later officially open the conference.

At this point of the introduction and on behalf of conference delegates, I commend the Accounting at the Top task force for their foresight in guiding the development of the 2008 program.

The taskforce in partnership with the Territory branch of CPA Australia has created the best atmosphere for stimulating and engaging discussions of the key issues in emerging financial and business trends relevant to our region.

This is the fifth Accounting at the Top conference to be held in Darwin; the Territory's capital and vibrant hub that services our economic development and growth.

The theme of your conference is *Building Business Success: Linking finance, strategy and organisations in our region*.

Our region is the Northern Territory and we make up about one per cent of Australia's population in one sixth of the land mass.

Just over two hundred thousand people call the Territory home and half of this population live in the Darwin region.

The other half of the population is sprinkled across regional and remote areas of the Territory. Some live in Alice Springs and love to hate an imaginary line south of Darwin called the Berrimah line as you may have noticed in yesterday's NT News.

The demographics of the Territory present particular challenges for the community in terms of service delivery to those Territorians that live in remote areas.

Territorians are a diverse bunch and we are well known for our innovation and ability to adapt to our unique environment.

The challenges we face in the Territory are sizeable, but the opportunities are unprecedented.

The latter part of this reflection is particularly true from a personal perspective.

I arrived in Darwin from Sydney in March 1970. I was simply fed-up with the traffic jams and frenetic lifestyle of a bustling city. It was by chance I spotted an ad in a New South Wales Law Society Journal for a lawyer to join Cridland and Bauer Darwin. It was in fact six months old, but heck it's the Territory and they hadn't filled the position.

I seized the opportunity, although I knew very little of Darwin other than it was hot and humid, there were lots of mosquitoes and the reptiles appeared to be of prehistoric size! It was a very small place in 1970 and enthusiasm was rewarded with further opportunities; a common theme in smaller communities.

The Territory's economy and infrastructure have grown in leaps and bounds since my arrival nearly forty years ago.

We are now firmly established on the world map for lots of good reasons!

We have a robust and steadily growing economy that is based on our rich natural mineral and energy resources, and our tourism, construction, transport, defence, pastoral and horticultural industries.

Major construction and resource projects have been a mainstay of growth and development for the Territory's economy. The Minister for Business and Economic Development will talk more about the infrastructure development in the Territory shortly.

Business opportunities for Territorians and investors abound across all industries. And Territorians can look forward to a bright future. We can look forward to a life full of giggles if helium from the new plant escapes!

You as business professionals are at the forefront of building business success for your organisation in exciting times. I am sure you will have ample opportunity in this forum to discuss the opportunities and challenges you face.

For my own part, accounting advice demonstrated that buying a small business I had my eye on was a foolish idea and I am wise and richer for the advice.

During the next two days, the conference will feature an illustrious group of speakers – all experts in their fields.

The conference will be interlaced with workshops, presentations, practical advice, personal accounts and social opportunities to strengthen your professional networks.

Enjoy all that is on offer.

I wish you all the very best for your conference, and thank you for inviting me to speak here today.

I officially declare the conference not only open but underway.

Thank you.