

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**RECEPTION TO LAUNCH THE OPEN GARDEN SCHEME
NT 2008**

Government House, Darwin

28 February 2008

As the Administrator of the Northern Territory, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Government House today.

Australia's Open Garden Scheme is now in its 21st year nationally and has well and truly come of age. The Scheme opens some 650 private gardens each year around the country and also conducts an increasing number of special events that are designed to inspire and to entertain.

Since the Scheme's inception in 1987, more than \$4 million has been raised for charities by the Scheme's garden owners. An additional \$870,000 has been returned to garden-related projects under the Scheme's Community Garden Grants.

In recent years, in the face of challenges such as drought and climate change, the Scheme has taken a positive view for the future of gardens and gardening. Many 'water-wise' and sustainable gardens now feature and a new focus this year will be "fostering children's interest in gardens to ensure a green future". Indeed, since we came to Government House in November last year, we have replaced a water hungry couch lawn with a native garden that does not require irrigation. It has worked a treat and attracts birds.

Here in the Northern Territory, a record number of 21 gardens or events will open this year. Since the first Territory gardens opened in 2000, more than 45,000 people have visited 143 Open Gardens. Last year around \$20,000 was raised for charity and Community Garden Grants were made to the National Trust and the Friends of the Darwin Hospice.

The Territory has the second highest average number of visitors at each garden opening in the country - only Victoria had more visitors per garden opening last year. We love our gardens! And so do our many visitors during the Dry!

This year we also have some special features: The Tropical Horticulture Group at Charles Darwin University will conduct 'Productive Gardening' workshops and talks in April; there will be a 'Gardening for Seniors' weekend at Kurringal Court seniors' units as part of the annual Seniors Month; Adelaide River Primary School will open in June; and the National Trust's O'Keeffe House in Katherine will open in August.

ABC Radio is an official supporter of the Open Garden Scheme around the country and I extend particular gratitude to ABC Radio 105.7 for their support, especially the informative Saturday morning Top End Talkback Gardener team.

Under relentless pressure from Sue Dibbs at the many Open Gardens I have visited over the past five years, we have personally agreed, or have been coerced into re-opening our own garden at 32 Philip Street, Fannie Bay. Last opened in 2002, we had 834 visitors during the weekend – a record which was not beaten until last year.

We were very happy with the Scheme. We had Red Cross on the gate and they received about \$1,500 and a lot of good will, and Cradle, which offers comfort and counselling to those who have lost children during pregnancy or after birth, put on coffee, tea and cakes and did very well.

Former Lord Mayor George Brown and the renowned Lily Ah Toy had only recently passed away. Lily, the year before, had occupied our gazebo for an afternoon, regally receiving old friends and as we had removed the gazebo we built a stony “Lily seat” in its place.

On a huge rock I left a bottle of red and a glass half full for George Brown’s ghost. I went to refresh it on the Saturday afternoon and found at least three different colours of lipstick on the rim of a now empty glass. The mind boggles.

I hereby officially launch the 2008 Northern Territory Open Garden Season and sincerely hope that it extends further opportunities for us to share the passion for our gardens. I also look forward to seeing you at either our Fannie Bay Open Garden or back here in the beautifully tended grounds of Government House at our Open Days at the last weekend of May and the 8th/9th August.

Thank you.