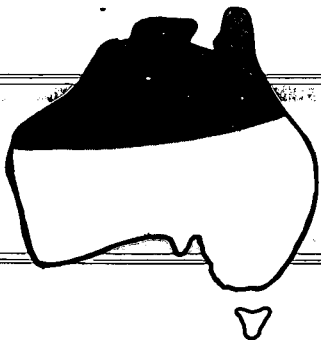


Alistair Heatley

**A City Grows:  
A History of the  
Darwin City Council  
1957-1984**



Australian National University North Australia Research Unit  
Monograph  
Darwin 1986



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## PREFACE

This study was commissioned by the Darwin City Council in mid-1983 to commemorate the first 25 years of the Council's post-war history to 1982. However, it seemed wise to go further in order to tell the story of developments and activities up to mid-1984. But even that truncates ongoing processes. The manuscript was completed in August 1984; where appropriate, footnotes are included to update the material to January 1986.

It is somewhat unusual for histories of local government authorities to be written after only a bare quarter-century of operation. Far more customary has been the commemoration of centenaries. Although the Council, in comparative institutional terms is still quite young, it was expected that a history would not only show Council's confidence in its record of past and present performance but also signify that the Council had finally come of age.

In granting the commission, the Council placed no restrictions whatsoever upon the author's freedom to write the history as he saw fit. Indeed, it freely offered every assistance at its disposal, including unrestricted access to the Council's records, a matchless source of detailed information. Other significant sources were the newspapers of the period, other government material, and extensive interviews.

When formulating an appropriate approach to the study, many options were considered. The easiest format would have been a straightforward chronological treatment but that was rejected because of the inherent difficulties it imposed on developing crucial themes adequately. In the event, a broadly thematic orientation was adopted although, within it, some chronological progression is incorporated. In order to condense a mass of detail, some generalising of material was inevitable, but much of the detail is preserved, enough to support the accuracy of generalisations.

The study is in places opinionated. But I trust that the interpretations put forward lie within acceptable scholarly bounds and are consistent with evidence presented. Unlike a common species of local government history, it is not eulogistic. Striking a proper balance is always difficult and must, in the end, be a matter of judgement. I hope I have reached a fair one although it may not satisfy

those who simply want to find congratulation or vindication. Nor is it like some other histories in being primarily anecdotal.

Some comment on terms used is necessary. Throughout, the word 'Council' has been employed despite the two changes to the Council's proper title. From 1957 to 26 January 1959 when Darwin was proclaimed a city, it was called the Darwin Municipal Council. Until 1981, it was 'The Corporation of the City of Darwin'. That title was allegedly taken to distinguish the Local Government body from the Legislative Council. Very few, however, described it as such preferring, as I have done, the simpler and more understandable term. Since 1981, it has been 'The Darwin City Council'. Although it proved untidy at times, the appropriate nomenclature has been given to elected members of Council. Before 1964, they were referred to as 'Councillors' and, after, 'Aldermen'. The term 'Mayor' has also been used throughout although, with the acceptance of Darwin as a capital city in 1979, the position was elevated to 'Lord Mayor'.

This book could not have been written without the considerable help I received from many willing people. There were too many to thank individually but several deserve special note. Of those who consented to be interviewed, Ted D'Ambrosio, Peter Spillett, Ella Stack and Cec Black were of particular assistance; they gave their time and their memories unstintingly. My sincere appreciation should be extended to Joan Grist and her staff in the Council's record office who unfailingly coped with my requests well, to Steven Tweedie, the Council's Executive Assistant and my prime contact point with the Council during this project and to Sue Plavins who undertook the typing of the initial manuscript.

Photographs were made available through the NT Government, the Darwin City Council and the State Reference Library. Cartoons were drawn by Tony Dean and are reproduced courtesy of the NT News. The Media Resources Centre of the Darwin Institute of Technology prepared the maps.

Alistair Heatley  
Darwin  
January 1986

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACIR	Advisory Council for Intergovernment Relations
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ALP	Australian Labor Party
BOMA	Business Owners' and Managers' Association
CBD	Central Business District
CCT	City Circle Traders
DNT	Department of the Northern Territory
DCC	Darwin City Council
DRC	Darwin Reconstruction Commission
JCNT	Joint Committee on the Northern Territory
MLC	Member Legislative Council
NAWU	North Australian Workers Union
NT	Northern Territory
NTA	Northern Territory Administration
NTLC	Northern Territory Legislative Council
PA	PA Management Consultants
PAC	Performing Arts Centre
TMB	Town Management Board





## Chapter One

### GROWTH OF THE CITY

Local government in Australia shows considerable diversity both between and within the states. Although the legislative and administrative constraints imposed by individual state governments do create broad and distinctive systems, it is still possible to discern the influence of locality within them. As Ruth Atkins has pointed out:

Each local authority is necessarily different from all others: different in area, location, elected personnel, staff, resources and in the social, economic and political characteristics of the local population (Atkins 1979, 11).

The evolution of a particular local government institution is a matter of human and material as well as constitutional and legal change and this essentially introductory chapter sketches the salient demographic, socio-economic and constitutional features of Darwin's development from 1946 to the present in order to provide a sufficient background to the advent and subsequent operations of the Council.

#### Population

To any public organisation providing services to people as well as to property, the size, growth and composition of the population are of prime importance. During much of the post-war period, Darwin has experienced strong and even at times startling population growth. Using census counts (and estimates for 1957, 1974 and 1985), the following figures illustrate that characteristic:

1947:	5,208	1971:	15,477
1954:	8,071	1974:	46,656
1957:	10,817	1976:	44,232
1961:	15,477	1981:	57,212
1966:	21,671	1985:	c. 65,000

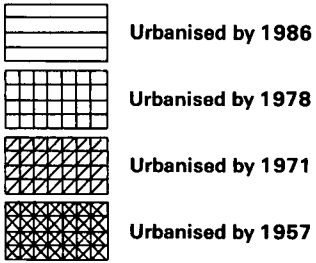
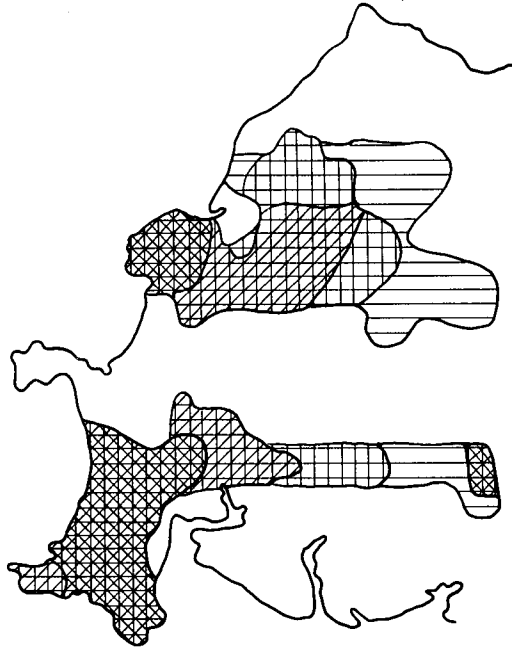
The statistics relate to the Greater Darwin region - the area compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth in 1946, the boundary of which is near Coonawarra East on the Stuart Highway ('the 10 mile') and so they never precisely give the population within the Council boundaries. However, despite the lag time between new residential or industrial development and the extension of the Council limits, at all times most residents were included in the Council's ambit. Growth rates after the post war recovery period (which did

not really end until the early 1950s) were consistently high until the destruction of Darwin by Cyclone Tracy in 1974 and in the late 1950s and between the mid-1960s and 1972 were reaching annual increases of 11 to 13 per cent. A perceptible lessening in the flood of incomers was occurring by 1974 and lower rates, although still considerable by comparative Australian standards, have prevailed since the post-Cyclone re-establishment period. For example, the 1976 to 1981 increase was just above 5 per cent, a figure which subsequently has declined even further to 3-4 per cent. Of course, the urban fringes and Palmerston, Darwin's satellite community, now provide areas of residence outside the Council boundaries for many people, thus reducing the rate of growth. Indeed, in 1984, as the final major residential suburbs are being completed and as in-fill construction proceeds, it is possible to see the end of an era in Darwin's urban expansion. What that will mean for the Council's future activities will be taken up in the concluding chapter. It does, however, deserve emphasis that all of the Council's history has taken place in a period of vibrant and fast-paced growth. Even with limited functions, the Council often had to run very fast to stay still.

Darwin's population since the influx began in the 1950s has been youthful compared to the national population; its age structure is atypical but it is similar to that of other Australian peripheral regions experiencing a rapid rise in population. Using broad NT figures for the non-Aboriginal population in 1981 as an example, nearly 80 per cent was below 40 years of age (as against 65 nationally). Peaks in the under ten and 20-35 age sets are consistent with the young family units so evident in the Darwin community. Obviously, there are implications for official policy and planning, not least for local government which provides some of the public resources for active and passive recreational activities, child care, libraries, welfare services and the like.

Of significance also is the degree of mobility and transience of the population. Periods of residence in Darwin have tended to be relatively short - averaging from two to four years. There was some indication that greater stability was developing in the early 1970s but Cyclone Tracy, which resulted in dispersal of the population, ushered in a further period of high mobility which again has begun to moderate in the 1980s (for more detail, see Jaensch and Loveday 1983, 7-8). Attachment to community and commitment to community affairs are weaker in a highly mobile population and reflected in indifference to local institutions, activities or facilities, all areas of concern to local government. Although it is difficult to find a well developed participatory spirit concerning municipal affairs elsewhere in Australia, even the rudiments are

**MAP 2 URBAN EXPANSION**  
**1957 - 86**



immature in Darwin. Mobility is not the sole factor but is nevertheless important. With the attractions of a salubrious 'dry' season climate, of a continuing reputation as an exotic place and, for some, of providing a convenient staging post for travel abroad, Darwin has hosted many transients. Besides making demands for camping and other services, their presence has at times caused the Council considerable inconvenience and cost.

### Urban Expansion

In 1977, Peter Warren, the first Town Clerk of the Council, revisited Darwin after an absence of nearly 20 years. He found the size of the city, in spite of the recent cyclone, 'staggering' (NT News, 6 July 1977). With the large increase in population, Darwin's area expanded greatly after World War 2. When civilians returned to a shattered town after the war, permanent non-military settlement, where available, was confined to the southern end of the Darwin peninsula and in Parap. The only other accommodation was in ex-military hut encampments scattered in what was then Darwin's hinterland - Nightcliff, Fannie Bay, Winnellie and Stuart Park. By 1984, urban development had engulfed those areas and much beyond increasing the size of the municipality from about 4,920 hectares in 1957 to about 12,000 hectares (with over 19,000 rateable properties) in 1984 (see map 2).

Substantial new development in Darwin was not undertaken until the early 1950s; in the immediate post war period, prolonged debate on town planning strategies combined with very short term tenancies effectively delayed reconstruction and expansion. The most contentious proposal - the eventual relocating of the Central Business District (CBD) away from the confined area at the end of the peninsula to a more accessible site around Daly Street - was largely scrapped in 1951. With the advantage of hindsight and in light of the problems later caused by the retention of the traditional CBD, the decision was unfortunate. Certainly, many of the parking and traffic difficulties faced by the Council in recent years could have been eased by relocation. In the 1950s, the Northern Territory Administration (NTA), despite a chronic shortage of financial resources, accelerated its housing and hostel programs in both the older settlement areas and in new subdivisions in Fannie Bay, Parap, Ludmilla and Nightcliff. Although always criticised as inadequate, assistance to the private accommodation sector was provided through site auctions and the establishment of a loan scheme (1953). A Housing Commission, constructing rental residences for the non-public service segment of the population, was set up in 1959. Even with the increased level of building, however,

development of publicly provided rental accommodation lagged far behind demand, creating as a by-product a growing need for temporary facilities, some part of which the Council sought to meet.

Until the early 1960s, town planning services in Darwin were rudimentary and Council was frequently dissatisfied with town planning policy or the lack of it. For example, the government's subdivisional policy was vigorously contested by Council. The size of the allotments and their road frontages were seen as over-generous, and contributing to excessive road length. While the government was responsible for construction to a specified standard, the Council was concerned at the later cost of maintenance. It was also critical of inadequate or delayed provision of access roads and the wide spread of residential development. Particular opposition was directed at the continuing expansion of the Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Millner subdivisions at the expense of concentrated development in the more central areas and along Bagot Road. That criticism was often reiterated during the 1960s and early 1970s. Council's dissatisfaction in its early years helps to explain why it repeatedly insisted that it wanted town planning powers transferred to it. With the appointment of a Regional Planning Officer in 1963 (Harcourt Long) and the enactment of updated town planning legislation in 1964, the problems arising from the inadequacy of the post war system were finally tackled.

In the 1960s inner city areas were filled in and Stuart Park, the Narrows and Kahlin were among those developed. But most growth took place in what were to become the outer northern suburbs which were incorporated in the Council by progressively extending its boundaries to the north and east. There, from 1965-6 to the Cyclone, a furious pace of construction was maintained and the suburbs of Alawa, Jingili, Moil, Wagaman, Nakara, Wanguri, Anula and Wulagi were planned and developed in rapid succession. Malak and Karama were also in the pipeline. Conceived by Harcourt Long and included in the 1965 Town Plan, the northern projects were designed along district and neighbourhood lines. From the Council's point of view, it was pleased with the smaller lots and the increased population density in the projects but it was critical of other features, such as small size of parks and fragmentation of parkland. The inadequacy of the arterial roads into the CBD continued to concern the Council and its views were vigorously put to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Public Works which met frequently to investigate projects in Darwin. At the end of the period, the Pak Poy report (prepared in 1971, released in 1973) on future urban development in the Darwin region was made public (for a summary see NT News, 4 April 1973). Based on the optimistic estimates of future population of

the time, it suggested a regional population of 100,000 in 1982. Most would be accommodated in satellite communities outside the Greater Darwin area except for proposed additional suburbs in Lee Point and Coonawarra.

Other noteworthy features of the pre-Cyclone period were the development of the Winnellie/Maranga industrial area and rapid upgrading of the CBD. After considerable debate, Council boundaries were extended in 1975 to cover the industrial area. In the CBD, a series of large projects - both government and private (primarily insurance companies) - commenced; they altered the CBD's skyline dramatically and exacerbated the parking problems.

Cyclone Tracy abruptly but temporarily dislocated Darwin's growth. Despite some vacuous discussion about whether Darwin should be rebuilt or not, the Commonwealth gave an early and strong commitment to reconstruction. Early proposals for post Cyclone planning by government authorities (see, for example, Cities Commission 1975a, 1975b) contained several radical plans for remodelling Darwin but, in the end, they were largely disregarded; Darwin's configuration was to remain fixed in the general pattern of post war development. One not so novel suggestion was to move the airport complex; its location in what had become the virtual centre of the city effectively separated the inner urban areas from the new northern suburbs. Although it would have made eminent town planning sense, the move was not seriously considered. Notwithstanding the Cyclone, growth continued in the northern areas. Anula and Wulagi, suburbs being settled in 1975, were almost completely filled with replacement houses nearly as quickly as they would have been even without Tracy. Later Malak, Karama, Leanyer and Brinkin were opened; they were the last suburbs to be provided in the north. In 1984, the latter three, all developed by private subdividers, were in varying stages of settlement. With the exception of Brinkin which was planned as a private project from its inception in the early 1970s, the new suburbs (Anula and Wulagi included) have been built on a larger scale and with different planning concepts. For example, most have continuous belts of parklands, an innovation which the Council prefers for ease of maintenance. Private developers have had to satisfy the strict infrastructure requirements before transferring them to Council.

Together with expansion, reconstruction of existing suburbs proceeded apace in the post Cyclone period. By the early 1980s, the scars of Tracy had almost been obliterated. In-fill operations have been undertaken in the longer settled areas. For example, in Coconut Grove, long the subject of Council demands for development, widespread subdivision is under way. One notable recent feature has

been the number of multi-unit dwellings constructed throughout Darwin, many occupied on the strata-title principle. Thus, the city generally is attaining a higher density of population, an advantageous process for the Council but also one with implications for future rating policy. In the CBD, large projects continue to be planned and built; their effects on Council responsibilities in the area have been substantial.

#### Economic and Social Factors

Without doubt, government has been the prime motive force of Darwin's expansion in the post war era, laying the city open to the criticism that its growth has been artificial (see for example, Bauer 1977). In the critics' opinion, Darwin's functions as an administrative and communications centre for the NT, as a defence base and a regional focus for economic activities of its hinterland may be legitimate (and there is some scepticism about that legitimacy), but the size and growth of the city have not been commensurate with function. Thus, they claim that Darwin is simply and unjustifiably too large. Whatever the force of that argument, there is, however, no disagreement about the basic and continuing reasons for expansion.

Nowhere can the influence of government be better exemplified than in the proportion of public servants in Darwin's population. Precise figures are difficult to calculate because of the variety in the categories of people paid directly from the public purse. In the period of Commonwealth control to 1978, NT employees employed under the Public Service Act ranged between 20-30 per cent of the Territory workforce. As Darwin was the prime administrative centre, its share would have been somewhat higher. To that must be added others employed in areas like defence, teaching, local government and statutory authorities; their inclusion would have raised the figure close to (or even over) 50 per cent of the workforce. Since self-government, the trend has been towards a slower proportional increase but, still at well over 30 per cent, it remains large. Except for Canberra (which is a special case), Darwin's public service component is proportionately larger than it is in other major administrative centres.

The influence of government is, of course, understated in the above figures. With the high number of government workers and Darwin's traditional dependence on large public expenditure, a substantial part of private sector employment and activity is indirectly sustained from official coffers. That is particularly the case in the service and construction industries, so important in Darwin's economy.

Some diversification has occurred in the industrial base since the 1970s but it is still narrow and fragile.

For the Darwin Council, the dominance of government within the workforce and the economy has had some important consequences. First, Council has had difficulty in establishing its identity in contrast to that of government. Many public servants have seen residence in Darwin as a short term proposition and, particularly in the early years of Council but even now, some of them exhibited a negative attitude, sometimes even hostility, towards the Council. Both factors have sapped the Council's credibility with the community. They have also limited the number of government employees who have been willing to put themselves up for election. As the public service, widely defined, contains a large measure of the better educated and trained in Darwin's population, their relative absence has deprived the Council of vital talent.

At a more specific level, the size of the government establishment has had a material impact on Council finances. Public service housing has constituted a sizeable part of the accommodation stock and there are extensive other areas of public buildings. Commonwealth-owned premises, where rateable, have always been exempt from loan rates, although general rates have applied. It has often been a moot point whether the full cost of rates has been reflected in rentals for government dwellings. However, the transfer of much of the stock to NT Government control after self-government and subsequently the introduction of loan rates on it have eased the problem.

Overall, the level of owner occupancy in Darwin is considerably lower (at 35 per cent in 1981) than the national average of 72 per cent. The proportion was much lower before self-government but it was increased by the generous home purchase schemes given priority after self-government. The high rental share, whether public service, Housing Commission or private, has understandably had a perceptible influence on civic pride and the urban environment, both long-established promotional objectives of the Council.

Within Darwin, the spatial distribution of public housing and the integration of private and government dwellings has limited the widespread development of separate socioeconomic groupings although there are several enclaves of predominant (or even exclusive) types. On the one hand, there are relatively affluent areas like Myilly Point, Kahlin and some parts of Nightcliff and Fannie Bay. On the other, suburbs like Millner and Malak have a generally below average socioeconomic rating. With the construction of private housing projects in recent years, such distinctions

are becoming more common. For the Council, which has been actively attempting to enter the community development and welfare functional areas since the late 1970s, the less well endowed communities have been seen as prime target areas. It was no surprise, therefore, that Malak was the suburb selected as the venue for a pilot social needs survey.

Despite its comparative affluence - the city has among the highest per capita income levels in Australia and a large proportion of two-income families - Darwin has a number of serious social ailments. The preponderance in the population of those age groups in which problems are generally most concentrated have given Darwin the unenviable reputation of the highest national incidence of marital breakdown, alcohol consumption, suicide, domestic violence and violent crime, among others. Their effect is the worse because of the relative lack of kinship and community support systems. Those who advocate that the Council should play a greater role in this field, either in cooperation with other levels of government and voluntary agencies or on its own, have become increasingly vocal in recent years.

#### The Political/Constitutional Context

The NT was controlled by the Commonwealth until July 1978. During the Council period, the departments responsible for the major part of Territory affairs were Territories (1953-68), Interior (1968-72), the NT (1972-75, 1975-8) and Northern Australia (1975). Local government activities were principally supervised by sections of the parent bodies. Until the creation of a separate department located in Darwin in 1972, the prime administrative agency locally was the NT Administration (NTA). Under the NTA, the relevant Branches were General Services (1957 to 1966) and Local Government and Community Services (1966-72) and under the Department of the NT (DNT - or DONT as its critics referred to it), the Local Government Services Branch of the Lands and Community Development Division (1972-6). (A separate Urban Development and Town Planning Branch was also created in 1972.) Responsibility for local government was transferred to local executive control in 1977. The Darwin Council was, of course, only one of the concerns of the Branches which were also responsible for direct services to other Territory communities, none of which had elected institutions until 1971 when Alice Springs gained an elected Council.

Throughout the Commonwealth period, the Council was always critical of the bureaucratic processes within its controlling organisations. It frequently railed at the alleged influence of 'lowly clerks' and was frustrated by the long hierarchical networks in government decision-

making. Not only was there a chain of command that stretched through clerks, directors, Assistant Administrator, Administrator (and later even more ranks in the DNT) within the Territory but there were also referrals to a similar process in Canberra. Moreover, other agencies, particularly the Treasury, with all their equivalent bureaucratic procedures, were often involved. Delay, confusion and, often, indecision, in the Council's view, usually stemmed as much from the bureaucratic system as they did from other more political causes. Frustrated, the Council's frequent tactic was to try to circumvent the system by approaching either the Administrator or the minister directly. Although it would be naive to accept the Council's view unreservedly, there was certainly a degree of validity in their complaints. As the Council itself had to adapt to new and strange conditions, so too did officialdom. There was some accuracy in the claims that many concerned with local government in the NTA and the DNT were unsympathetic to the principle of an elected authority. Being involved with more direct local government services and, for a long while, unfamiliar with less direct control, public servants tended not to recognise the need for different philosophies or treatment.

The development of local government in Darwin must be firmly placed in the context of wider constitutional debate about the Territory. It was consciously promoted by Canberra as a necessary prelude to the granting of responsible government or statehood. Up to 1972, all the Commonwealth Ministers responsible for the Territory affairs (Paul Hasluck, 'Ceb' Barnes, Peter Nixon and Ralph Hunt) continually emphasised the need both to prove the success of the Darwin experiment and to extend elected local government to other centres as a step on the road of constitutional development. That line of argument was never accepted by most advocates of constitutional advancement in the Territory. After 1972, with the election of a Labor federal government and a different approach to the constitutional reform question, it ceased to be a central consideration. It was, moreover, not resurrected with the return of the Coalition administration in 1975. In the final long process of negotiation from 1972 to 1978 leading to self-government, local government control was treated, except perhaps by some local government spokesmen themselves, as a wholly local concern eminently suited to early transfer to Territory executive authority.

Apart from the Council (and the Alice Springs Town Council after 1971), the only other political institution before self-government in the Territory with an elected component was the Legislative Council. Until 1974, when a 19-member fully elected Legislative Assembly was established, the Legislative Council was only partly elected:

six of 13 to 1960; eight of 17 from 1960 to 1968; and 11 of 17 from 1968 to 1974. Although good relations were usually maintained between the Council and the legislative bodies and there were only occasional heated exchanges, a degree of tension always existed between them. For its part, the Council, while supporting the campaign for constitutional reform, saw itself as an authentic, and even the senior, representative organisation in the Territory and was irritated at any demeaning of its status by the legislature. On the other hand, it treated local government as having merely a temporary preeminence arising from an historical accident. They always regarded the Council, in the traditional Australian mode, as an inferior administrative agency. (For a more detailed account of the process of constitutional change and the legislature in the era prior to self-government, see Heatley 1979.)

After self-government, inaugurated in July 1978, local government in the NT has been placed in the conventional role, so familiar with students of the Australian constitutional system. Rather than being controlled by a federal instrumentality, its activities are overseen by the Local Government Division of the NT Department of Community Development. Even though the Council had always been in reality a third level government organisation, that position had been camouflaged by the atypical constitutional situation in the NT. Its de jure relegation in 1978 was a bitter pill for many longer-term Council personnel and was one factor in the general campaign by local government bodies since then to augment their status and functions. In its treatment of local government demands and in its general policy, the new NT Government has been relatively accommodating but the fact of close administrative supervision, even if local, has continued to be galling to Council which sees many of the bureaucratic problems of the Commonwealth era being revisited. Moreover, the conjunction of two government levels in what is a small and intimate population centre and the existence of many joint activities have engendered considerable political conflict between them. But then that has been the pattern of inter-governmental relations since the establishment of the Council and it is really the normal situation elsewhere in Australia. Even the extravagance of the rhetoric from both sides is conventional in both the local and national context. For example, a recent fulmination against the NT Government by a senior Council staff member could well have been made by Bill Sullivan - a Town Clerk not noted for his caution - in the 1960s about the federal government. In a submission to an enquiry on local government in the Darwin urban fringe, Duncan Beggs, the City Engineer, commented tartly: 'The Northern Territory Government will utilise any local government body[,] particularly in the Darwin Area, as both a whipping horse and scapegoat' (letter included in

Darwin Rural Advisory Council, Report to Minister for Community Development, June 1984, Appendix E). Perhaps that can serve as an illustration of one important theme of this study - the strong element of continuity within a process of change and development.

## Chapter Two

### THE ADVENT OF THE COUNCIL

The establishment of the Darwin Municipal Council in July 1957 was not the first experience with local government in the Territory. In 1874, a scant five years after the founding of Palmerston (the pre-1911 designation of the township), a District Council was formed. It existed until 1915 when it was replaced by the Darwin Town Council which in turn lasted, under a variety of forms, until 1937 (for aspects of early local government see Heatley 1979, Lockwood 1968, Donovan 1981, Alcorta 1984, Payne and Fletcher 1937 and Leydin 1951). With its abolition, municipal services in Darwin, for which rates continued to be levied, were taken over by local administrative agencies of the Commonwealth government. Statutory authority for the municipal governance of Darwin was, through the Darwin Administration Ordinance 1937, vested in the Administrator who was empowered to make appropriate regulations.

This chapter examines the lengthy and complex process which preceded the inauguration of the Council in 1957. In it, the form of post war local government in Darwin is described and the questions of local participation and acceptance are addressed.

Proposals were made between 1937 and 1940 for the creation of a Town Planning Board but they were overtaken by the report of a Brisbane consultant, R A McInnis, appointed in 1939. It recommended a wholly official Town Management Board (TMB), to be advised however by an appointed Committee comprising representatives of leading civilian groups (McInnis 1940). In the event, only the former was set up.

[C]reated mainly for the purpose of developing the Town of Darwin along the lines set out in the Town Planner's report, it nevertheless, to a great extent, [was expected to] exercise the functions of a Municipal Council...' (Administrator to Chairman TMB, 8 September 1941, Archives 45/285).

After a few meetings, it adjourned indefinitely; its Chairman, Reginald Leydin, considered it impossible to work under the conditions set out by the Administrator (Annual Report, 8 October 1941, Archives 45/285). On the other hand, Administrator Abbott saw the Board as having no adequate authority and acting in an 'arbitrary and independent manner' (Administrator to Secretary, Department of Interior, n.d., Archives 47/337). At the same time,

there was some agitation by residents, led by the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and a newly formed Darwin Civic Welfare Movement, to restore a Town Council but the Administrator declined as he saw 'no acute feeling' but rather 'little enthusiasm' for the scheme (Administrator to Secretary, Department of Interior, 26 June 1941, Archives 41/237).

When civilian control of Darwin returned, after the wartime interruption between 1942 and 1946, the 1937 situation still prevailed with the exception, however, that no rates were collected. Community aspirations and activity in the immediate post-war period, largely channelled by the ALP, the North Australian Workers Union (NAWU, the dominant industrial organisation) and the Darwin Branch of NT Development League, were primarily directed to the establishment of a representative legislative council; there was at the time little demand for the restoration of municipal government. But, as part of the town planning schemes, so energetically pursued by federal authorities, it was decided to create a Darwin Town Advisory Committee with some non-official participation. Representatives from the NAWU, the Development League and the Chamber of Commerce joined four senior public servants on the Committee which met from June 1946 to mid-1947. Its role was to advise on the issuing of temporary residential and business leases. By 1947, it was decided that more formal statutory arrangements should be implemented with the function of preferential lease determination being handled by a reconstituted Town Management Board. As Administrator Driver noted, it would also 'in effect, become the Town Council of Darwin' (Administrator's Report 1947-48, 5). That body, consisting of three senior officials (the Chief Clerk, Administrative, NTA, the Chief Surveyor, NTA and the Principal Engineer, Department of Works and Housing) met in an interim capacity from June to October 1947 when the appropriate enabling ordinance was obtained. In September, its membership complement was completed with the invitation to the Darwin Civic Committee to suggest a panel of candidates from which a 'citizen' representative could be selected. A local solicitor, W H Coop, was subsequently appointed. As a legislative council was to be formed in late 1947, a more elaborate advisory structure for the Board was not deemed necessary.

The creation of the Darwin Civic Committee was not a spontaneous community decision although there was some prior discussion by political parties (the ALP and the Communist Party) and trade unions. It developed from a meeting of representatives from prominent groups brought together by the Administrator on 10 July 1947. Present were members of the leading trade unions, the Truck Owner's Association, the Chung Wah Society, the Society of Arts, the Returned Servicemen's League, the Country Women's Association,

sporting bodies (represented by Coop) and the Fannie Bay and Nightcliff residents' organisations. The meeting, despite some questioning of the need for an umbrella civic committee, accepted the Administrator's contention that it could 'be of invaluable assistance to the Darwin representatives on the Legislative Council, as well as to the Administration' (Northern Standard, 18 July 1947). After a poorly attended public meeting later in July, it was decided to form such a committee. There was considerable dispute both about its appropriate size and composition. Some favoured a small committee elected from the participants whilst others supported a larger and more representative body made up from delegates of involved organisations. The latter was finally adopted by a narrow margin (Northern Standard, 25 July 1947). Thus, the Committee comprised 15 members, three each from commercial interests and from communities beyond Parap, two each from the CWA, the RSL and the craft unions, and one each from the NAWU, the Society of Arts and sporting bodies. It met initially in September when it determined to convene monthly; its first President was Charles See Kee, later to become a Darwin City Councillor from 1960 to 1963.

During its accredited period, the Civic Committee was fairly active, tendering advice on a number of municipal functions like the establishment of golf links, street lighting, roads and footpaths, bus stops, shelters and routes, toilets, the Town Hall, the war memorial, the hospital board, drainage, garbage and traffic. Moreover, it concerned itself with wider community issues such as the housing crisis and the shortage of perishable foods. As a major project, it directly funded and organised the establishment of children's playgrounds. As an advisory body, its effectiveness was always limited but it did provide an avenue for articulation of grievances in addition to the ongoing activities of separate pressure groups and the occasional competing organisations (like the short lived trade union-inspired Citizens' Committee in 1949). In 1950, the Committee was replaced as the officially accepted representative of Darwin citizenry by a new system of district associations. It mounted a spirited defence of its continued existence, advocating in the process a fully elected town council, but, while it lingered on into 1951, it had ceased to be a viable organisation by late 1950.

Although the Town Management Board had only been functioning for a short time, its operations were being reviewed by the end of 1948. Leydin, the Government Secretary, began pressing for reform. In particular, he was concerned that, because of its comparatively low status, its composition and the lack of experience of its members, it was not undertaking its charter on municipal management and coordination (albeit it had competently handled its other

task of land allocation). Therefore, he recommended to the Administrator the urgency of amendment to its membership and role. In March, he secured Driver's agreement but the decision was not publicly announced until October to allow the incumbent Board to complete its allocation task. The amending ordinance (No. 20/1949) was commenced in May 1950 with the first meeting of the new Board taking place in June (for the relevant correspondence, see Archives 47/682, 49/682, 50/489). Even before then, however, the Board had, during 1949 and early 1950, been reorienting its activities more towards municipal affairs.

The membership of the new Board was increased to five (the Government Secretary as Chairman, the Director of Lands, the Principal Engineer and the Superintendent of Construction in the Department of Works, and a civilian representative). In addition, the Chief Clerk (Administrative) was the secretary. Although it continued to have a 'watching brief' over town planning, its functions were more specifically directed to 'the control, management, government or welfare of the Town'. Nevertheless, it continued to be an advisory body with the municipal services still being supplied by various agencies like the Departments of Works and Health and the NTA. At its first meeting, Leydin saw its major objective as the preparation 'in the not distant future, of a more normal form of Local Government' (Minutes, 28 June 1950, Archives 50/489). In order to gain maximum publicity, meetings were normally to be open to the press and public, a move which reversed previous Board policy.

Leydin saw one of the urgent initial tasks of the Board as the 'fostering of a civic consciousness'. To that end, it was decided to promote the formation of a number of district associations. Each would send two delegates to a Darwin Progress Association which would act as an advisory community adjunct to the Board. In Leydin's opinion, the Civil Committee was not 'truly representative' as its constitution 'allowed it to be comprised of bodies which did not exist for the primary purpose of representing the residents' interests in municipal government'. Moreover, it lacked wide support in the town and from 'the controlling authorities' (Northern Standard, 14 July 1950). The initial intention was to give the new system statutory backing, part of which would enable election of the base associations by adult franchise. Reactions to the proposal were cautious; some like the Editor of the Northern Standard saw it as paternalistic, others such as the Civic Committee deemed it too limited, while some (Coop was an example) disputed the lack of overt interest, suggesting that it had been deadened largely by the compulsory acquisition of property, the transience of many residents, and lack of direction.

Preparation for the new community network began immediately. A series of radio programs were broadcast on the subject and local government in general, consultations were held with leading citizens and groups and a small coordinating committee was formed. By September, agreement had been reached on the division of Darwin into five zones, on area organisers, and on the need for public meetings. In October, all districts had entered the scheme; in Temira, Port Darwin and Stuart, new committees were elected whilst, in Fannie Bay and Nightcliff, the existing Progress Associations participated. A somewhat later inclusion was the Maranga and Districts Association representing residents outside the town boundary along the Stuart Highway. Part of the alacrity of and enthusiasm for the process was no doubt attributable to the wholehearted support given by the Administrator and his circular memorandum to public servants: 'I hope that every officer and employee of the Administration will interest himself as a citizen in the move to form [the] Associations' (2 October 1950, Archives 50/648). In the event, many of the leading Darwin citizens - government and non-government - found themselves on the various committees.

The experience of the new system in the first year (1951) was not particularly edifying or salutary. Even before he was detached from normal duties in late 1950 to write a report on local government, Leydin criticised the conduct of the Board, noting its tendency to defer matters usually through the use of subcommittees and its reluctance to make decisions (Minute, October 1950, Archives 50/489). In his report, written in early 1951, he freely castigated the system of municipal government and the operations of the Board, the District Associations, the joint body (soon to be entitled the Central Council) and the Darwin community in general. He continued his criticism consistently after his return to duty. During the period, the citizen organisations in turn maintained a barrage of complaint against the Board, alleging autocratic behaviour and its failure to consult or heed suggestions. They (and the local press) were particularly incensed at the decision from May to June to hold meetings of the Board in camera. About the only concession acknowledged was the removal of Coop as the civilian representative on the Board and his replacement by a nominee (from a panel of four) of the Central Council. Ray Graffin, a business manager/accountant was selected; he took his place in May.

As a response to the closure of Board discussions, a special Central Council meeting in May decided to press for the abolition of the Board and the institution of an elected town council. The feeling of the meeting was summed up by one delegate who stated:

The Board has outlived its usefulness - if it ever was useful. Its high-handed action gives us the opportunity to do something to secure local government by a representative body. The time is ripe for such a move; the present system is most unwieldy and intolerable (Northern Standard, 25 May 1951).

In an attempt to counter the demand and in recognition that the Board was fulfilling little useful function, Leydin, at its June meeting, successfully moved for its abolition and the statutory recognition of the Central Council as an authoritative advisory organisation. That proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Central Council and most of its constituent Associations but only if such acceptance did not preclude them from negotiating for a fully elected municipal government. During August and September considerable effort was expended by the Central Council and the Associations in preparing a draft ordinance dealing with the composition and functions of the Municipal Advisory Council. But, in the end, the proposed changes proved nugatory as neither Territories Minister Hasluck or the new Administrator, Wise, particularly favoured them. Leydin, cognisant of the work which he had recently undertaken on municipal administration, considered that if an early decision on his recommendations was taken, he saw little advantage in pursuing the advisory council notion. However, at the same time, he admitted that there was scant prospect of local self-government within two years and, therefore, it might be desirable to continue (Leydin to Administrator, 8 November 1951, Archives 51/1085). Wise, on the other hand, refused to proceed. His view was clear: '...I favour an elected local government authority and intend to recommend to the Minister Government approval of the setting up of such an authority' (Minute, 28 February 1952, Archives 51/1085). The Town Management Board, therefore, remained in operation; a motion to disband it in November was lost on Leydin's casting vote.

From 1952 to 1954, debate on the Leydin Report and on the subsequent passage of the Local Government Bill through the Legislative Council was a major preoccupation of those concerned with the development of municipal administration. After early consideration in Canberra, some aspects of the report became available in Darwin in early 1952. Its commissioning in late 1950 was clear evidence that the Commonwealth was looking seriously at the possibility of devolving control of municipal activities to local communities in the Territory - particularly Darwin and Alice Springs. Not the least consideration was the prospect of ensuring that some part of the expense of providing municipal facilities and improvements was borne by the residents. Moreover, devolution of local government

functions, however circumscribed, was seen as a first step towards full self-government for the NT. Five broad reasons were given by Leydin for his enquiry: the existence of well established Territory communities; the tradition of local government in Australia; public criticism of the existing arrangements and growing demands for change; 'the increasing preoccupations of central government with local domestic affairs'; and the need to provide opportunities for the development of civic responsibility and 'a spirit of local patriotism' (Leydin 1951, 4-12). Leydin recommended that an appropriate ordinance, based on state acts, be drafted and passed as soon as possible. Further, he suggested that 'local self-government authorities be established at Darwin and Alice Springs not later than 1st July, 1953' (Leydin 1951, 50-2). Other sections of the report dealt with the history of Territory local government, the existing municipal situation and the financial arrangements, structure and functions of the proposed authorities.

Community reaction to the report, despite some earlier comments on the relevance of the outdated financial figures, was not significant until after August 1952 when Minister Hasluck announced his intention to give an opportunity to the people of Darwin and Alice Springs to decide whether they wanted local government (NT News, 14 August 1952). Alice Springs rejected local government categorically in December 1952 and again in February 1954. As the enabling legislation was to be based on the report, it was closely scrutinised by the media, the Central Council and the Associations. Although some sections - particularly the financial aspects - were queried, by February 1953, most members had accepted the principles in the report. The one Association which had major reservations was the Maranga and Districts which was incensed by Leydin's proposal to exclude the area from the proposed municipality. The agreement was based on the three essential points laid down by Hasluck (in Darwin in February 1953): some form of rating; some form of government assistance; and full election. For its part, the Central Council insisted on the participation of other community groups (like the Trades and Labour Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association) with itself and the Associations when working out specific arrangements for Darwin.

After that acceptance, attention switched to the legislation which was introduced in the Legislative Council in September 1953. Except for a detailed submission by the Chamber of Commerce (suggesting, among other things, a rate-payer franchise, restricted boundaries, and the meeting by the Commonwealth of any deficit for five years), other organisations preferred to leave consideration until after the presentation of the bill. When they met in December, several amendments (including the need for a petition by

residents before a local government body could be established, abolished or altered, deletion of the Minister's power to appoint the first council, reduction of residential qualifications for Mayor and Councillors, an increase in the mayoral allowance, and the inclusion of all vacant Crown Land as rateable land) were put forward. Concurrently, there was continuing debate throughout 1954 on the imminence of local government for Darwin and the necessity for adequate financial conditions. Among those involved in the discussions, support for the principle remained high although there also seemed a sense of resignation that local government would be imposed even if the residents opposed it. A public meeting, sponsored by the trade unions and attended reportedly by nearly 200 people once again endorsed the concept in April 1954 and, in November, an NT News street poll found that most residents were in favour of local government; many, however, did not agree with aspects of the legislation (NT News, 18 November 1954).

In the Legislative Council the bill completed the second reading stage in March 1954. Despite some requests for amendments, the elected members all supported the measure. Matt Luke, a Darwin representative, commented that he knew 'the majority of the people of Darwin support it in principle wholeheartedly' (NTLC Debates, 7, 21 September 1953, 40). His colleague, Eric Izod, was somewhat less sanguine, acknowledging the views of some residents that it was 'too early for us to consider such a Bill...' (NTLC Debates, 7, 21 September 1953, 47). On behalf of the government, Leydin agreed to accept some changes. Moreover, in his speech in reply and in a separate statement, he endeavoured to assuage the fears on the financial arrangements (NTLC Debates, 8, 22-23 March 1954, 4-9, 14-15). The bill's passage was interrupted by the 1954 election but, when a redrafted edition was debated again in November 1954, conflict between the elected and the official members of the Council arose. While again expressing support in principle, the former group demanded that a select committee should study all aspects of the proposed measure and particularly the financial ramifications and the method of introducing local government into communities. After that proposal was lost (on the President's casting vote because one official member absented himself), they attempted to secure a provision for a referendum before the introduction of local government into any locality rather than by a single declaration by the Minister. When that device failed, they walked out of the Council whereupon the bill was swiftly passed. The debate was notable because of the intervention of the President (Administrator Wise) in the dispute to 'strenuously resist' delay with the bill (NT News, 9 November 1954). In doing so, he broke a developing convention that the Administrator (as Chairman and later

President of the Legislative Council) should not participate in debate. However, that was to be the last recorded intervention.

The Local Government Ordinance, like similar acts in the states, was a long (110 pages), prescriptive and complex document; it contained 422 sections. As many of its sections are discussed later in this study, no attempt to analyse it is made here. Although loosely based upon the Leydin report, it owed much of its inspiration to practices elsewhere in Australia suitably adapted to what its drafters saw as contemporary Territory needs. In some cases, it departed from Leydin's recommendations. For example, Leydin, when dealing with functions, had excluded fire service, library facilities, sewerage undertakings and the provision of primary water supply installations but he had included electricity, other water supply activities and the licensing of motor vehicles. Only library services were specifically mentioned in the ordinance. It should also be noted that the ordinance was designed for general implementation in the Territory; it was not specifically created for Darwin. Basic guidelines were set but, before any locality received local government, a further round of detailed negotiations would have to be undertaken. Final assent to the Ordinance was given in November 1955.

Relations between government and community on municipal administration from 1952 until the installation of the Darwin Municipal Council in 1957 continued to be strained. The by then familiar conflict between the Town Management Board and the Central Council was maintained at least until 1955. Early in 1952, the Central Council discussed its own abolition because of its perceived ineffectiveness and several delegates argued strongly instead for an expansion of the citizen component of the Board. That latter idea was firmly quashed by the Administrator. Throughout 1952, attacks on the Board and its alleged penchant for ignoring Central Council's recommendations were frequent. One diverting episode was the resignation of Graffin (in June) who considered that his participation was 'a waste of time' and that the Board should be abolished. The Central Council refused to submit nominations for the replacement and later trenchantly criticised Ted D'Ambrosio, a Darwin businessman, for accepting the position. D'Ambrosio was to remain on the Board for the rest of its incumbency. With the absence of Leydin, in early 1953, it was forced to go into recess for four months; the legal requirement that the Government Secretary must be Chairman forced a change to the Board's membership whereupon the Director of General Services was appointed Chairman. At the same time, the Municipal Officer joined it in the place of the Director of Lands and in 1956 the recently created Assistant Administrator became Chairman. On the invitation of some members themselves, in

mid-1953, the Board proposed a reform of its composition with the addition of more civilians but again it was opposed by Wise. The pattern of conflict, characterised by inter-institutional wrangling and threats by the Central Council to disband, continued in 1954, albeit with less frequency. After 1955 dispute died away largely because the two bodies became increasingly irrelevant to the changing circumstances of the local government debate. Another contributing factor was the failure of the Board to meet from October 1954 to November 1955.

Any evaluation of the Board's 10 years of operation in Darwin must concede its ineffectiveness in municipal administration. Criticism of its role came not only from citizen bodies but also from government officials and from its own ranks. Long serving members like Leydin, King and Stahl, at the time or in retrospect, freely acknowledged its shortcomings. Most related to the absence of executive or financial authority, departmental rivalry and unwillingness to cooperate, inadequate coordination and sanctions, and often the lack of commitment (see Leydin 1951, 2-4, NT News, 4 June 1953 and the typescript of an interview with Reg Stahl 1981, 119). Stahl concluded that '...generally it was a God-send that we could pass such a responsibility over to a fully-elected Town Council'. Considering the critique of the Board's overall performance, there was a nice twist of irony in the Administrator's admonition in mid-1956 that he deemed its 'ambit of operations [was] extending far wider than ever contemplated' and was embarrassing himself and the government (Administrator to A/Government Secretary, 17 May 1956, Archives 54/939). The Town Management Board model was subsequently widely used in other Territory centres and was subjected to many of the same criticisms as the Darwin predecessor (see Heatley 1979, 125-7).

The period between mid-1955 and early 1957 was dominated by negotiations for the implementation of municipal government. Since mid-1954 demands or agitation for an elected Council had dissipated. They were revived in mid-1955 by statements by Hasluck and Wise on the willingness of the government to entertain concrete proposals (NT News, 21 and 28 July 1955). Although they reiterated their reluctance to force local government on Darwin, they obviously were intent in revivifying the development process. Their tactic succeeded in convincing some community leaders (notably Aub Callinan, MLC) that consultation with government was desirable. Thus, a conference was arranged with Acting Government Secretary Marsh in September. Community representation included delegates from the Central Council, the Country Women's Association, the ALP and the Chamber of Commerce. Agreement was reached on the majority of proposals: a reasonable rate, initial functions, provision of necessary equipment

and housing, funding for developmental work and completion of work in hand, payment of rates on all revenue-producing government properties, rate equivalents to be paid by all public servant occupiers, suitable council premises and a town hall, town boundaries to be established by consultation, and the exclusion of other general services like electricity and water supply from Council control 'for the time being'. The only major dispute was on the subsidy arrangements; whereas the delegates claimed that the full cost of municipal services in the year before the changeover should constitute the subsidy, the government view was that the amount of rates forthcoming should be deducted (NT News, 8 September 1955). Finally, it was resolved to refer the outcome to a public meeting.

It was duly convened on 12 October and attended ultimately by about 80 people. 'Almost unanimously', they accepted the principles of local government but again there was disquiet about the cost. In order to clarify the situation, a five man committee (J McKechnie, President of the Central Council; Callinan and F Drysdale, MLCs; and J W Kelly and J Bowditch, reporter and editor of the NT News) were elected to confer further with government. A motion which would have required a referendum after full disclosure of costs was defeated. A fortnight later, the committee reported back to another meeting (attended by about 70 people). It submitted firm proposals on functions, government assistance and financial considerations. Responsibilities to be transferred initially were construction and maintenance of roads, footpaths and drainage, street cleaning and other public sanitary and garbage services, improvement and care of parks, reserves, playing fields, cemeteries, mosquito prevention and street lighting. When the Council had established its competence, the government would consider transferring health inspection, sewerage, fire brigades, library services, electricity and water supply. However, the meeting resolved to demand that all functions (including operation of buses) should be handed over. On financial matters, it was decided to hold out for the full subsidy option and to insist that the subsidy in the second year of operation should be stabilised on the basis of the first year's expenditure and revenue, that further subsidies should be geared to new responsibilities and variations in rate revenue, and that no interest or capital charges should be levied. Other provisions, similar to the September proposals, were also endorsed. All were sent to the Administrator for transmission to Canberra.

Almost a year elapsed before the government's response was made public, a surprisingly long period considering the urgency which had been accorded the policy of devolution earlier. Hasluck's explanation of the delay was that,

because of the length of departmental consideration, the submission had not reached him until June, after which he ordered that it be treated as a matter of urgency. Released on 3 September, the reply largely accepted the 1955 proposals. The major variations were that electricity and water services should not be transferred 'for the time being', that, although the handover of the bus system was approved in principle, further discussion should take place in the light of its fiscal position, that subsidies would be reviewed every five years, and that only a 50 per cent increase (or decrease) in subsidy for variations in rate revenue would be allowed. Finally, no provision was made for a plebiscite on the issue. The response was submitted to a public meeting on 18 September at which about 200 people were present. The government's offer, widely seen as generous, was accepted by a large majority (only 15 dissenters were reported). To facilitate decisions on boundaries, divisions, electoral matters, valuations and contingent legal aspects, an elected nine man committee was instructed to liaise with the Administrator. On the committee were Bowditch, Callinan, D'Ambrosio, Izod, Kelly, McKechnie, W Lea (President of the Chamber of Commerce), J McDonald (a former union official) and D Newport (union member) - all long term permanent residents. The necessary arrangements were quickly and amicably settled and in late February, the date of election was set for 29 June with the new Council - the first for 20 years - to take office on 1 July 1957.

Without benefit of a referendum on the issue, the extent of community support for the introduction of elected local government in Darwin is difficult to gauge. Many contemporaries, looking back on the period (and perhaps with the advantage of hindsight), emphasise the general lack of enthusiasm for the measure. Stahl reflected that view when he commented:

[p]aradoxically, residents who had been most vociferous [sic] in their criticisms of government control of municipal services were reluctant to assume responsibility for the operation of Local government' (transcript of interview, 1981, Archives, 115; see also Leydin 1951, 10).

Two associated interpretations are also widely held. In evidence to a federal parliamentary committee in 1974, D'Ambrosio articulated them when he argued that local government had been 'foisted' on Darwin in order to reduce government expenditure and that reasonable powers and finance had been denied the council (transcript of evidence, Joint Committee on the Northern Territory (JCNT), 2062, 2081; also interview, Darwin 1983).

The direct involvement of the local citizenry in the debate on local government was never numerically great; certainly only a minority of potential voters (based on any reasonable qualification criteria) were active. Membership of District Progress Associations was comparatively meagre and fluctuating. Only the Nightcliff and Maranga and Districts groups (significantly because they represented residents outside the town area and were, in terms of municipal services, relatively disadvantaged) were continuously in viable operation. The attendance at public meetings, 200 at most, represented but a fraction of eligible electors, if judged by the number on the municipal roll in 1957 (about 1250) or the Commonwealth roll (over 3000). With the size of the public service component (much of it short term) and other transients in Darwin's population, however, that level of participation was, in its context, quite high and claims were always made that a representative cross-section of the community was present, public servants included, and that the wider membership of organisations was involved through the attendance of their leaders or spokesmen. Thus, the evidence suggests that, once the fears over the financial implications were mitigated, there was a considerable level of support. Overt opposition was expressed at meetings and through the media but it was limited. For its part, the local print organisation editorially gave full support to the measure, again subject to the proviso that satisfactory arrangements could be struck (see, for example, Northern Standard, 3 October 1952; NT News, 4 April 1952, 13 September 1956 and 11 November 1955).

Throughout the period, there was little doubt about the intentions of the government despite the occasional rhetoric on community self-determination and the Alice Springs situation to the contrary. And it must be acknowledged that the recognition of that factor played a major role in convincing local residents about the inevitability of the process of devolution and in their final compliance. Important also was the fear that a rating system would be reintroduced even if local opinion rejected reform. If rates were to be levied, it was seen as necessary to have some measure of citizen control in the form of an elected institution.

D'Ambrosio's later comments and the like notwithstanding, the 1956 offer by the government was deemed by both residents and officials as generous. That feeling was summed up by McKechnie in February 1956: 'It [local government] is being served up to us on a plate' (NT News, 28 February 1956). In the end, the perception of generosity overcame resistance in all but the most hardened or detached opponents.

## Chapter Three

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Intergovernment conflict is a salient characteristic of Australian politics. Where political power is divided a fertile area for dispute over legal competence is usually created. One dimension of conflict, perhaps endemic in federal systems, is the rivalry between the Commonwealth and state governments. A second area is in the relationship between state and local governments.

In the Australian context, local government constitutes the third tier (or sphere) in the federal trinity and has been traditionally depicted as 'the poor relation'. As it derives its authority essentially from legislative and regulatory enactments of other governments, it has both a subordinate role and status. Constitutionally, the states hold the responsibility of local government; their close supervision of that function has led most commentators to conclude that local government has been 'the creature' of state administrations. In the Territory from 1915, control was vested in the Commonwealth but, in 1977 as part of the first stage of self-government process, it was transferred to the Territory Executive, thus making the Territory situation more analogous to the traditional Australian pattern.

As elsewhere, the major disputes between the Darwin Council and its controlling agency largely concerned finance, allocation of powers, administration of the Local Government Ordinance (Act) and the degree of independence of action given to the local authority. Financial questions were of particular importance as most of the Council's funds came from other levels of government. Although tension existed throughout the period and rancorous dispute was sometimes evident, a readiness to compromise and cooperate and a reasonable amount of goodwill could usually be found to moderate the conflict. In these respects, Darwin was not markedly different from local government elsewhere.

There were, however, certain features of the Darwin situation which were unusual. In the first place, it was a Commonwealth agency and not a state which constituted the controlling authority, either directly or indirectly until 1977. Its involvement with conventional local government institutions was confined to the Territory and, to 1971 when Alice Springs accepted devolution, it was concerned solely with Darwin. It could be argued that, for a time at least, all participants in local government were inexperienced, a factor contributing to early strained relationships. Both

sides had to learn to adapt, sometimes painfully, to a new regime. On the other hand, there was one significant advantage in that the financial resources of the Commonwealth, if they could be tapped, were greater than its state equivalents. By the 1970s, the Territory system of local government administration was operating, if not extremely smoothly, as well (or as badly, depending on the point of view) as its state counterparts. The necessity to fashion a workable intergovernmental arrangement had to be repeated after 1977. Again, the process of adjustment (which is continuing) is proving vexatious.

A second distinguishing feature is the large government presence in Darwin both in terms of its workforce and its ownership of property. Given the relative smallness of the town/city, the coexistence of two governmental and administrative structures often caused confusion, tension and confrontation. The problem, always acute in the Commonwealth period, was exacerbated by the establishment of the NT Government and its subsequent interventionist and developmental policies. Using both cost effectiveness and efficiency arguments, critics argue that, in the present demographic circumstances, separate local government should be abolished.

In addition to the central government agencies and the Council, between 1957 and 1974 there was the Legislative Council (after 1974, the Legislative Assembly) which contributed to the debate on local government issues and development. The elected members of those institutions consistently agitated for constitutional reform, seeing themselves as the authentic spokesmen for Territory interests (Heatley 1979, 31-41). Although they were usually supportive of the claims of the Darwin Council, they sometimes were eloquent and forceful critics of municipal activities and policies. As legislators and investigators, they played an important role in the evolution of local government. Elected members also performed a role of community advocacy and commonly received representations from residents on what were strictly municipal responsibilities. Occasionally, members of the Darwin Council became incensed at what they saw as unwarranted intrusion into their affairs. Comment and involvement increased as the number of Darwin-based elected representatives grew. (Until 1960 there were two; from 1960 to 1968, four; from 1968-74, five; from 1974-84, nine; and from 1984, 12.)

This chapter will focus upon the general relationships of the Darwin Council with the Commonwealth and its Territory agencies, with the NT Government and with the legislature. Although there were a number of interconnecting themes and developments, a broadly chronological approach will be employed. Periods used will be: the early

years (1957 to 1967), the middle years (1968-76) and the self-government years (1977-84).

During the first period, conflict with government was regular and, at times, intense. Both Council and government had to adapt to novel conditions, define their appropriate roles, overcome basic inexperience and grapple with problems - clearly perceived or newly emergent - arising through the dynamics of a new institutional relationship. It should be remembered that the birth and infancy of most organisations are attended by growing pains. There was also another factor operating which again is a common and understandable characteristic of recently established institutions. Dissatisfied at what it interpreted as a narrow and constrained area of competence and low status, the Council consistently agitated for greater powers and functions, a campaign which did not fit with the government's declared intention of an orderly and phased development. Under the circumstances, conflict was inevitable. The main areas of intergovernmental dispute concerned the implementation of the terms of the 1956 agreement, the alleged inadequacy of the Ordinance and the claim by the Council for enhanced responsibility. Resolution of many aspects of conflict was achieved through consultation, by investigation, and by the effluxion of time tempered by experience. Despite some high-flown rhetoric by Mayors and Councillors and occasional threats of resignation or disbandment, the process of adaptation and reform was accomplished reasonably smoothly. Looking back on the period from an official point of view, Reg Stahl, the Director of General Services (the unit most involved with municipal affairs) and an Inspector of Local Government Accounts, remembers that the relationship with Council was generally 'amicable'. In his view, there was a 'love-hate' attitude exhibited by the Council (transcript of interview, 1984, 131). Ron Withnall, a long-term member of the Legislative Council, likewise perceived 'no real antagonism' (interview, 1983).

Criticism of the implementation of the 1956 agreement was sustained throughout the period (and in some aspects, like subsidy arrangements, much later). As early as September/October 1957, the Council lambasted the government for the shoddy equipment (especially the truck fleet) handed over and the slow and piecemeal payment of the subsidy (Minutes, 4 September 1957, NT News, 16 October 1957). Failure to provide adequate financial support, inadequate payment schedules and the non-provision of reasonable facilities (accommodation for staff, plant, depot, civic centre), continued to be the major complaints in later debate. A full statement of the Council's early grievances was set out in May 1960 and submitted to the Done inquiry (see Done Report, 26-35). Of particular significance was the different interpretation placed on the 1956 agreement by

Council and by government. To the former it represented broad guidelines and not a definitive binding pact. Thus, it was their view that a 'true financial agreement...does not exist' (Town Clerk to Administrator, 11 May 1960 in Done Report, 26). The Administrator tended to view the agreement in strictly literal terms.

Dissatisfaction with the Local Government Ordinance also emerged at an early stage. For example, at a Special Council meeting in November 1957 proposals for changes to the electoral process were advocated (Minutes, 25 November 1957). At frequent later intervals, reforms such as an improved rating system, the liability of public servants to pay charges, the need for a local government branch and effective by-law making and enforcement provisions were put forward strongly. A continual refrain was the urgency of informed and dispassionate review of the Ordinance's alleged deficiencies.

On the question of functions, the Council's record of argument was confused and inconsistent. There was a generally held view that its role was unnecessarily narrow but, except perhaps for an input into the town planning and building areas, there was no ongoing consensus about desired functional increments. Other responsibilities, including electricity and water supply facilities, bus services and libraries, were often discussed; at varying times opinion fluctuated between approval or rejection. Moreover, there were several instances of the Council's threatening to hand existing functions - mosquito eradication, street lighting, health inspection were examples - back to government because of the cost or administrative difficulties involved and the insufficiency of Council's resources. On activities then undertaken by Council, government parsimony, delay and procrastination were frequently alleged to be circumscribing the ability to operate effectively.

Outside the ambit of strictly local government matters, the Council was often a strident critic of government policy and administration affecting Darwin. Councillors and Mayors saw themselves as representatives and articulators of Darwin interests. They were vocal on such matters as industrial development, the cost of water and electricity, freeholding of land, taxation, price control, sewerage schemes and free port status for Darwin. Their propensity to criticise and the extravagance of some of their comments proved irritating at times to officialdom.

Prompted directly or indirectly by Council complaints, three major reviews of local government in Darwin were undertaken during the period. In 1959 A G Behan, the President of the Local Government Association of Queensland, and J A Sewell, the Director of Local Government in the same

state, were commissioned to prepare a report; in 1960, C G A Done, former Town Clerk of Toowoomba and a prominent member of the Australian Local Government Association, was appointed as an Inspector of Accounts to make further enquiries; and in 1961 a select committee was established by the Legislative Council to continue the investigations.

Behan and Sewell visited Darwin in January 1959 where they interviewed the Council, government officials, other bodies (Chamber of Commerce, North Australian Workers' Union, Darwin Ratepayers' Association) and some individuals. Their report, submitted in March, was relatively brief (29 pages) but it set out a number of suggestions for change to the ordinance (especially on the electoral system) and views and recommendations relating to organisational procedures, financial structure and functions. Most of the specific points of the report are discussed in subsequent chapters and do not require detailing here. However, one comment is necessary. In the section on financial structure, the report pointed out that rating in Darwin was relatively low, that spending per capita in Darwin was comparatively high and that 'no Local Authority in Queensland (or for that matter in any other State) would be receiving anything like the financial assistance which the Council receives' (Report, 23). Despite that view, after discussion in the Council, almost all of the recommendations were endorsed (Minutes, Special Meetings, 1 and 17 April 1959). Nothing concrete came of the report; Sewell offered to draft an amended ordinance giving effect to some of the matters covered in the report but, because of alleged delay by the Council in expressing its precise wishes and, later, Sewell's inability to undertake the task because of work commitments, no action was forthcoming.

In April 1960, the Council, impatient with delay, resolved to approach members of the Legislative Council to move immediately for a select committee to inquire into subsidies and road construction grants, to investigate any anomalies in the ordinance and to deal with the Behan-Sewell recommendations (Minutes, 13 April 1960). A motion to that effect was introduced by Dick Ward (Port Darwin) who, in his usual eloquent style, expounded the Council's grievances and supported a number of the Behan-Sewell suggestions for reform (NTLC Debates, 14 April 1960, 165-74). However, an amendment was introduced by Bill Richardson (Larrakeyah), a former Darwin Mayor, to substitute the appointment of an Inspector of Local Government Accounts (under S.289 and S.290 of the ordinance). In his speech, Richardson asserted that 'the cause of the Council's trouble is plain, unadulterated maladministration' and that what was required was a thorough expert analysis of the malaise (NTLC Debates, 14 April 1960, 176-8). As additional terms of reference, the Inspector was asked to consider the matters referred to

in Ward's earlier motion. After a spirited defence by the Assistant Administrator, Reg Marsh, of the government's financial treatment of the Council (NTLC Debates, 14 April 1960, 179-184), the amendment was passed.

The brief finally accepted by Done differed from the Legislative Council's terms of reference. Done deemed himself unqualified to comment upon the 'justice and adequacy' of the subsidy and road construction grants. Moreover, he was not specifically or formally requested to comment upon the anomalies of the ordinance or the desirability of effecting the Behan-Sewell proposals. The latter, however, were broadly encompassed in his revised references: to advise on draft ordinances, financial regulations and by-laws; to advise on the administration, procedures and organisation of the Council; and to advise on prescribed matters under S.289. After spending a month in Darwin in June-July 1960, he submitted his findings in a series of papers from June to September. His consolidated report was long and detailed; in its final form, it included a second volume, compiled by local government and Council officials, which brought together all of Done's recommendations for amendments to the ordinance.

As Done understood that the recommendations of the Behan-Sewell Report were generally acceptable to the NT Administration, he based 'many of [his] proposed amendments...in accordance' (Done Report, 5). After close examination of the ordinance, Done decided that it was 'impractical to attempt to amend it'. Thus, he strongly urged the drafting of 'a complete new Ordinance' based, as Behan-Sewell had suggested (Behan-Sewell Report, 16-17), on the Queensland Act (Done Report, 5). He was particularly critical of the deficiencies in the existing by-law making provisions. In other sections, Done produced a wealth of material on the Council's operations and activities and presented numerous reform measures.

Done's report was not tabled either in the Legislative Council or the Darwin Council until March 1961 and in neither body was it debated formally and then, before it had been discussed in the Legislative Council, the report was overtaken by the appointment of a Select Committee on 15 June.

Ward was once more a prime instigator and he secured the Council's approval for the action. Supporting his move, he stressed the failure of Done to address a number of salient Council grievances and contemporary political problems concerning demarcation of intergovernmental responsibility and the validity of by-laws. Despite some reservations by some official members on the need for a select committee, its competence and its role, the motion was

accepted. Its terms of reference were the consideration of legislative change and 'such other aspects of local government which may appear to the committee to have any effect on the efficient operation of the Darwin City Council' (the debate is in NTLC Debates, 15 June 1961, 1991-2004).

An interim report, dealing exclusively with electoral matters, was submitted in August 1961. Reconstituted after the 1962 election, the Committee presented its final statement in October. Altogether, it interviewed only 15 witnesses, nearly all Councillors, a turnout and composition which were noted with surprise and seen as indicative of a lack of community interest or awareness of municipal affairs.

Both in the October report and the Legislative Council debate which preceded it (NTLC Debates, 30 October 1962, 3623-33; 31 October 1962, 3658-61), the Council's record and its complaints were subjected to scathing criticism. Two major areas of grievance were identified: insufficient power and inadequate subsidy. On both counts, the Committee rejected the claims contending that the Council had not exercised its existing functions fully and that lack of funds had not prevented or hindered Council activities. Rather, the problem arose from 'the approach of the Councillors to their function and their failure as a body to appreciate all the implications of the task of local government'. Contributory reasons were the system of annual elections and the lack of 'any combination or party of persons strong enough to be able to formulate a policy and see the policy through'. Thus 'disjointed administration' had resulted from excessive individualism which also bred 'frequent revision and rescission of proposals', 'uncertainty', 'personal disagreement and enmity' and 'an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion' (Report, 4). In the Committee's view, legislative change alone could not effect improvement.

The Committee did, however, recommend a large number of changes to the existing ordinance but it opposed totally the proposals of Behan/Sewell and Done to recast it thoroughly on the Queensland model. Citing the different political and constitutional environment in NT, the report observed:

The Commonwealth Government obtrudes into the life and organization of the Community to an extent not known in the States...the Northern Territory is at an experimental stage; it has not a settled place in the community of States and Commonwealth but is still in the stage of determining what its place will be. This political restlessness is felt in local government as elsewhere (Report, 3).

In that situation, improvement of prevailing legislation would be more effective and less time consuming. Valuable prior experience would not be lost nor would a process of complete re-education be required. Still, major reforms relating to elections, financial management, valuation and by-laws were advocated. Some were reflected in legislation introduced between 1962 and 1967; others, however, were not forthcoming till well after the end of the first period.

Agitation by the Council was scarcely diminished in the aftermath of the Select Committee. Part of the continuing campaign was aimed at the slowness of the implementation of the 1962 recommendations. In fact, elected members in the Legislative Council (particularly Harry Chan, then also a Councillor), rather than the official component, were responsible for expediting some of them. Even then, the government used its powers of assent (including the insistence on certain amendments) to achieve its desired objectives. Aldermen persisted in demanding both clarification and expansion of function and dispute continued over government financial assistance, the payment of garbage charges by public servant lessees, and the debate over road reconstruction grants.

By early 1965, the Council decided to consolidate its grievances in yet another position-document; it became known as 'the 19-Point Programme' (its formal title was 'A Case for Improvement in the Field of Local Government in the Northern Territory of Australia'). Although badly written, dogmatic and tendentious, the paper did forcefully set out the Council's by then familiar objectives. It included requests for the appointment of a Director of Local Government, a 'satisfactory' ordinance, Council input and consideration of any proposed government action affecting Council's operation and claims for further powers (distribution of electricity and water supplies, town planning, control of buildings, nomenclature in Darwin, full control of traffic and municipal aspects of public health). Reference was also made to financial questions and the 1956 agreement. The program achieved some public prominence during the proceedings of a further Select Committee investigation in 1965.

During the early 1960s, Legislative Council proposals for constitutional reform were consistently rebuffed by the Commonwealth with the argument that, before they could be countenanced, municipal government should be extended and improved throughout the Territory. Spurred by that contention, the Legislative Council in August 1964, established a Select Committee to study 'the desirability of extending local government in the NT'. One element of its terms of reference was 'whether any amendment [was] required

to...legislation relating to local government'. Most of the committee's work concerned communities other than Darwin, but the Council did provide information. In fact, the Town Clerk (Bill Sullivan), after direction from the Council not to attend, was summoned to appear and bring with him the 19-point program. His evidence was a typically acerbic attack on the alleged perfidy of government in its treatment of the Council (transcript of evidence, Council Archives). In its report, the Committee supported fully the contentions of the Council on extension of function into the field of tender and gazette procedures, town planning, building standards, nomenclature, health regulations, weights and measures, subdivision, traffic and boundary extensions. Further, it recommended a Local Government Branch, headed by a Director 'to provide a link between the Commonwealth and local government authorities' and to undertake as a first priority a complete review of legislation. Pending that, the 1962 amendments should be implemented forthwith (Report, 6). The Council was well pleased with the vindication of part of their campaign albeit it remained unconvinced of the government's willingness to accept all its recommendations or to move quickly on any.

Three other disputes - over garbage charges, road reconstruction and the Parap Theatre issue - should be noted. In 1964, to overcome legal problems, an amendment was passed, over some opposition from elected members in the Legislative Council, to place the onus for the payment of garbage charges on individual public servant occupiers rather than on the Commonwealth as landlord. Subsequently, after complaints by Council about the difficulties of administration and collection and about the contrast with the rates arrangement (wherein the Commonwealth not its lessee was responsible), three bills were passed (between 1964 and 1966), this time over official objections, to reverse the situation. Assent was not given to the first two but, after continuing protest, the Commonwealth reluctantly allowed the third to become effective. The second conflict concerned an issue which had been contested since 1957 but which became particularly heated in the mid-1960s. As part of the 1956 agreement, a commitment to reconstruct all substandard roads was accepted by government and later a monetary figure was established as a Commonwealth liability. Differences of opinion over the roads involved and the associated costs led to frequent demands for renegotiation, a process finally conceded by the Commonwealth in 1966. Resolution was reached in October 1967, not however without some reservation on the part of some Aldermen (see chapter four for further discussion of the question). In the Parap Theatre case, which became something of a cause celebre between 1961 and 1963, there was considerable friction both in Council itself and between Council and the NT Administration. Built for Nick Paspalis, the theatre was an

open air structure. Although meeting the approval of the Building Board and the Health Department, the Council refused for a long period to issue a permanent licence under the Places of Entertainment Ordinance because it was not satisfied with the construction of its walls and the projection box, the adequacy of the emergency exits or the toilet facilities. Peter Spillett, the Chairman of Building and Health Committee and a determined and consistent critic, deemed the latter reminiscent of 'clochmerle' and 'a Parisian pisseoire'. The facility was, however, opened by the Administrator in April 1961, which some Council members saw as a gross contempt of the Council and the law. The issue continued for another 18 months with the Council, despite internal dissent, proceeding to prosecution. In September 1963 the Council was found to have no powers to control building and thus it lost its case. In the process, the Council was often bitterly divided over the need to continue; at one stage, debate degenerated into '[s]houting, name-calling, personal abuse and accusations....' (NT News, 22 November 1962; the newspaper was usually opposed to the Council's actions). Looking back on the case, Spillett saw it as: '...really a matter of how government in the form of the Administrator and the NTA didn't take the Council seriously....' (interview, 1983).

Despite a number of outstanding issues, by the end of 1967 the travail of the first decade was perceptibly diminishing. As the creation of a Local Government Branch in the NT Administration in 1966, the successful conclusion of the garbage rates and road reconstruction disputes and the government's willingness to concede legislative reform indicate, intergovernmental relations were improving with a concurrent development of mutual respect and tolerance. Although the delineation of the end of the establishment period in 1967 is somewhat arbitrary, the direction of interinstitutional rivalry of the succeeding years, at least until Cyclone Tracy, was towards the more 'normal' state of tension characteristic of equivalent municipal-state relationships in Australia. One observer has referred to the late 1960s and early 1970s as 'the stodgy years' (Withnall, interview, 1983); in terms of conflict with government, that was a reasonable assessment.

Dispute, however, did not disappear. It continued over function, finance, extension of boundaries, government control of Council activities, bureaucratic attitudes and general policies relating to Darwin. Although Aldermen of the time differ in their estimation of its level (for example, in interviews with Tambling, Stack, Barden and D'Ambrosio, 1983-4), their views indicate that the salience and form of conflict had changed.

Between 1968 and 1976, extension of function was

limited. Of the accretions, power to regulate creches, swimming pools, parking meters and machines and the encouragement of cultural activities were all relatively minor. A more important area - control of building - was legislated for in 1968 but it was not implemented because of the opposition of the Building Board, the difficulty of determining appropriate by-laws, and the reluctance of government to proceed. The lack of authority over building and over town planning and subdivisions - for which the Council continued to demand devolution - created significant areas of tension with officialdom.

On the other hand, the government did show itself more sympathetic to Council requests to relax restrictive provisions of the Ordinance and to heed resident's problems (as with the pegging of valuation in 1969 and 1971). Belatedly, most of the 1962 recommendations were effected. For example, in 1969, a package of amendments was introduced, between 1972 and 1974, provisions were made for sub-leasing of Council land, and, in 1974 and 1976, changes to S353, dealing with the legality of by-laws - a long-running area of dispute - were sanctioned. However, the drafting of model by-laws, the absence of which had been noted caustically in 1962 (and on frequent occasions later) was still opposed, largely on the grounds of the cost and time involved in preparing them.

Effective control of land vested in the Council, the status of vacant Crown land within the city, camping areas, parking facilities in the CBD, foreshores, roads and the future of Town Hall were important subjects of claim and counterclaim. So also were general developmental policies like access, siting and facilities in new suburbs, sewerage proposals and the Palmerston Freeway. Views from Council as a whole or from individual Aldermen (or Mayors) speaking as community advocates, were strongly put to government, federal parliamentarians (especially through the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Public Works) and many interstate or local organisations. Extension of Council boundaries, notably into Winnellie, was also a fruitful area of controversy between 1969 and 1974.

At times during the period, Council's relationship with senior government officials - particularly those in charge of finance and local government administration - and elected members of the Legislative Council were stormy. The former were assailed largely because of their constitutional association with and control over Council functions. Particularly attacked was Assistant Administrator, Frank Dwyer, who was seen as the epitome of government control. (He was alleged, in January 1975, to have tried to get rid of the Council!) The latter attracted censure for their criticism of Council activities or lack of activity. In

early 1976, the Council in a submission to the Minister for the Northern Territory, commented: 'Over a number of years interference in the affairs of the Corporation by members of the Legislative Assembly has occurred from time to time quite unjustly and without forethought' (Submission to the Hon. Mr E Adermann MP from the Mayor and Chairmen of Committees of the Corporation of the City of Darwin, 2 January 1976).

A notable development occurred in 1974 with the establishment of the NT Local Government Association (NTLGA). After the inauguration of the Alice Springs Town Council in 1971, the Darwin Council pressed urgently for a joint body to perform, as one of its functions, the role of major negotiator with government instrumentalities on legislative, financial and other matters of general concern to local government. With its creation, the Territory was able to participate formally in the wider community of Local Government Associations in Australia and its involvement in the process of constitutional debate after 1973. One of the Association's first responsibilities was to represent local government opinion in the investigation into constitutional development of the NT which took place between 1973 and 1978. Owing to its seniority and longer experience, the Darwin Council, for its first years, effectively dominated the Association.

In its approach to constitutional development in the NT, the Association presented a curious but understandable case. Put briefly, it contended that, while legislative and administrative control of local government should be vested in 'a reformed legislative body', 'existing financial links with the Commonwealth should be maintained on the existing direct basis'. The basis of its argument lay in the fear that 'funds earmarked...for on-going subsidies and grants may be diverted (away from) Local Government authorities' (transcript of evidence, Joint Committee on the Northern Territory) (JCNT), 27 March 1974, 2055). Asked if he represented the views of the Darwin Council, D'Ambrosio, the Deputy Mayor, and co-presenter of the submission, maintained that he had its entire support (transcript of evidence, JCNT, 2065). In other evidence, the same line was enthusiastically espoused by the ex-Town Clerk, Bill Sullivan (transcript of evidence, JCNT, 12 September 1974, 2844) but the Mayor, 'Tiger' Brennan, was more equivocal about funding arrangements. He saw certain moneys coming from local sources but he also wished to preserve an uncluttered line to the federal coffers (transcript of evidence, JCNT, 28 March 1974, 2285, 2295). Perhaps as a former long-term Legislative Councillor himself and a leader of the campaign for constitutional advancement, he suffered from divided loyalties. On the other hand, Alderman Grant Tambling was adamant that entire responsi-

bility should be handled locally (transcript of evidence, JCNT, 28 March 1974, 2243). Later in the process of negotiation, the Council, still with obvious concern at the ramifications of devolution, demanded that 'the transfer of local government responsibilities must not take place until there has been a full and satisfactory definition of [its] role as a third tier of government' (Submission to the Hon. Mr E Adermann MP - from the Mayor and Chairmen of Committees, 2 January 1976). Irrespective, however, of the constitutional position taken, the familiar refrain of criticism on function, legislation, administration and finance was heard loudly in the twilight of the Commonwealth era.

Other areas of Commonwealth local government policy also raised the Council's ire. Although, as elsewhere, the Whitlam government's objectives to strengthen the sphere of local government met with approval, its funding of a local Regional Council of Social Development (under the Australian Assistance Plan) was viewed with suspicion and sometimes hostility. While ultimately short-lived, it was seen as unrepresentative and directly competitive with the legitimate functions and aspirations of Council. In a submission to a Legislative Assembly committee on the future role of Regional Councils in 1977, the Council strongly argued that local government authorities be given a greater role in the community development field (submission, 24 January 1977). The Aboriginal affairs policies of both the Whitlam and Fraser governments also caused disquiet. Particularly irksome, in the Council's opinion, was the prospect of land claims within the city and the special treatment proposed for local government in Aboriginal communities.

The last two years of the period were dominated by the effects of Cyclone Tracy and the presence of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission. Relations between the Commission and the Council in the early stages were severely strained. During 1975, the Mayors (Brennan and Stack), who ex officio held positions on the DRC, were both highly censorious of the Commission's activities. For example, in September, Stack saw 'the ideal, the image and the reality' of the DRC as being 'poles apart'. She continued:

My short term of appointment to the [DRC], plus its complicated administrative structure, left me in complete ignorance of the many facts that we now have been made aware of, but as a Commissioner, I am [partly] responsible...for the odium of improbity, laxity, complicity and plain skullduggery that now surrounds the Commission and the Consultant(s) rip-offs (Stack to Patterson, Minister for Northern Australia, 10 September 1975).

By mid-1976, however, the Council had come to see the DRC in a better light and supported its retention 'until its job [was] completed'. In a covering letter to the formal resolution, the Mayor wrote:

In the early days of the [Darwin Reconstruction Commission] this Corporation was highly critical because of the lack of co-operation, and what seemed to us undue extravagance. However, the scene is now vastly changed. The co-operation between the [DRC] and the Corporation could not be better or more productive (Stack to Adermann, Minister for the NT 14 April 1976).

Even if relations between the two institutions themselves improved, tension remained throughout the Commission's life between the Council and the Citizen's Council. Stack once referred to the group as 'a motley crew which does not relate to the people in any way and only serves to annoy everyone' (NT News 11 September 1975). The Council's attitude was another example of its sensitivity to competing claims to represent Darwin's corporate identity and its long standing concern with its own credibility and image.

In the third major period - 1977-84, the Council had to adapt itself to a new constitutional order. As the first step in the introduction of self-government, control of local government was transferred to the Legislative Assembly in January 1977. The new interinstitutional (and, after mid-1978, intergovernmental) nexus has proved to be, in terms of conflict, as stormy as that of the Commonwealth era; many of the issues involved before 1977 - disputes over finance, function, administration - being integral parts of the normal dynamic relationship between a local government authority and its supervising government, continued as pressure points. But, despite the often tempestuous atmosphere, all parties (the Council, the Local Government Association and the NT Government) have cooperated in an attempt to forge an expanded role for local government in the Territory. Progress has been slow and often halting but it has nevertheless occurred. Two of the Mayors of the time - Stack and Black - depicted the prevailing mood as a 'love-hate' relationship between institutions struggling to come to terms with new conditions and responsibilities (interviews, Darwin, 1983-4).

The period began inauspiciously. Up to mid-1978, the Council became frustrated at the failure of the Assembly to aid with legislative change. Writing to the Minister for the NT at the end of 1977, Stack commented:

I am still concerned at the total inadequacy of the Local Government Ordinance and by-laws....we are just as far behind [as in 1975]. Practically all our by-laws are invalid and this Corporation gets by with sheer bluff....[T]here is no help forthcoming from the Legislative Assembly' (Stack to Adermann, 30 November 1977).

However, in mid-1978, the Council was mollified by assurances that deficiencies would be addressed as a matter of urgency by the NT Government and that in 'line with [Country-Liberal Party] policy...Cabinet [had] recently approved in principle proposals for the devolution...of certain additional functions...' (J Robertson, Cabinet Member for Community and Social Development to Stack, 28 June 1978). Later, the decision to include NT-owned houses in the loan rate (December 1978), to transfer library services (1980), to embark on a full-scale review of the Act (1979) and to draw up model by-laws (early 1980) were seen by Council as further evidence of commitment to reform and alleviation of municipal problems.

Review of the Local Government Act has proceeded slowly. The Local Government Bill was passed in June 1985 with a commencement date in July 1986 but there were several preceding amendments. Perhaps the most significant was the 1982 recasting of municipal functions which, both in potential and in current practice, increased the range of permissible activities and gave statutory recognition to the Council's initiatives in the social welfare and community development fields. Four discussion papers were published by the review team (the Solicitor-General and the Director of the Local Government Division) in 1983. Some proposals, particularly the powers of the Minister of Community Development to dismiss councils and appoint administrators, were strongly opposed by Council. Both the NT Government and the Council have commissioned consultants to investigate future directions of local government reform and boundary extension (Goodchild, 1981 and 1981a, McPhail 1980). However, the government continued to oppose demands from the Council and the Local Government Association for the transfer of town planning and building control powers and refused requests for extension of Council's boundaries beyond Berrimah (extension to Berrimah was granted in 1983) and to participate directly in the enquiry into future local government options in the Darwin rural fringe. Nor did it expedite measures designed to allow the Council to change the basis of its rating system. However, legislation in 1985 enables the Council after mid-1986 to change its rating system. Indications are that a majority of the Council favours the Improved Capital basis. Reliance on the unimproved capital valuation and its purported inequity upon residents in different parts of the city has attracted

steady criticism, especially in the early 1980s and was a salient issue in the 1984 election. Although the Council has often complained at its financial treatment (over road grants and its share of the tax-sharing fund for local government in particular), it has not, according to most observers, been harshly treated. To the contrary, funds have been liberally made available for Council projects. Even such an authoritative body as the Grants Commission has commented upon the greater than standard financing of local government in the Territory. On the whole, the Council's experience with the NT Government has been reasonably salutary in formal institutional terms. But the public image of intergovernmental relations in recent years has been largely one of almost incessant conflict.

Since 1980, the tempo of dispute has increased. With Stack's departure from the Mayoralty, the civil tone of dispute degenerated quickly into often savage public exchanges. There has been no lack of issues during the first three years of NT Government control of local government - debate over the initial stages of the planning for the Arts Centre and the carpark building, casino development, Tracy Village and community government were examples of areas outside the more conventional areas of argument. But personal or institutional animosity seldom surfaced.

There were a number of contributing factors to the change of attitudinal climate. The NT Government became increasingly irritated by the Council's (and the Local Government Association's) assertiveness in presenting its claims and its alleged propensity to seek conflict with government. Over issues such as the two kilometre drinking ban legislation, car parking strategies, the sporting complex and the Performing Arts Centre, dispute was common and often acrimonious. Institutional and personal relationships between the Council (but particularly the Mayor) and government Ministers deteriorated to the point where patent hostility was evident. Among some Ministers, there was a barely veiled contempt for the Council's performance; opinions about its policy disarray (as in the vacillations on swimming pool control and in funding arrangements for the car park building and the Performing Arts Centre), its voracious appetite for additional finance, its burgeoning bureaucracy, and maladministration were frequently aired. At one stage, it was rumoured that the government was contemplating placing municipal affairs in the hands of an administrator. In August 1983, the question of Council/Government relationship was the subject of a heated debate in the Legislative Assembly which manifestly exposed both the level of hostility and the range of disputed areas (Parliamentary Record 14, 31 August 1983, 926-949).

Exacerbating the situation have been comments by Ministers about the state of local government in the NT. One example was a reference to Territory authorities as 'little more than garbage collectors and lawn manicurists' (Ian Tuxworth, reported in NT News, 3 June 1983). But the attack which thoroughly aroused the ire of Darwin's Mayor and Aldermen was the Chief Minister's address to the Australian Council of Local Government Associations in November 1982 (the speech was presented in full in the NT News, 9 November 1982). Responding to a recent claim by the Local Government Association that local government should be entrenched in any future NT constitution, Everingham queried the need and utility of local government institutions under prevailing conditions in the Territory. In his view, municipal affairs could be more effectively and economically served by the NT Government and the members of the Assembly, the latter being better city representatives than the part-time Aldermen. He also asserted that local government was not seriously regarded by the Territory public, that it did not promote 'participatory democracy' and that its performance, best exemplified by its obsession with 'petty regulations', was thoroughly inadequate. Even if he may have been speaking tongue-in-cheek and 'without prejudice', he articulated a widely held ministerial and even community viewpoint.

What the levels of intergovernmental tension will be in the future must be purely speculative. But, given the history of relationships in Darwin and the traditional climate in Australia, conflict is likely to be an enduring characteristic. However much it may be deprecated, it certainly adds spice to an otherwise largely prosaic subject.

## Chapter Four

### POWERS AND FUNCTIONS

Over the years, the Council's appetite for additional powers and functions has remained healthy as we have seen. This is amply demonstrated by the debate over appropriate functions in the 'corporate planning' process begun in 1982, the 1984 Council elections and in recent NT Local Government Association submissions. The endorsement in 1984 of a development report can be cited as an up-to-date example (DCC, A Corporate Plan for Darwin City Council 1984). Of the list proposed in the recent review of the Local Government Act, all but six activities were seen as desirable extensions while 60 others were 'worthy of later consideration'.\* The campaign has always been characterised by extravagant claims but, in the 1970s and 1980s, it has been conducted in a more outwardly reasoned and less abrasive manner.

For much of the debate on powers and functions, there has been a narrow range of participants. Although pressure groups and political parties have been intermittent actors, the dominant characters have been Council and government. Only in the 1980s has the community at large been invited to join the dialogue but that experiment has been tentative, patchy and often trivialised; nor does it seem likely to be consistently pursued as a strategy.

In the original Local Government Ordinance, under Ss303-341 (but especially S305), an extensive group of 'general powers and duties' were set out. Moreover, the range of potential activity was greatly augmented in S349 which listed 104 areas in which by-laws could be made and several implied powers arose in the section on 'General Offences and Penalties' (Ss357-397). Most of the then conventional functions of Australian municipal practice were included. They were, however, permissive not mandatory and the Minister could determine the type and number to be delegated to a particular council. Only a narrow range was allowed in 1957.

The promulgation of by-laws was subject to a number of additional controls. They had to be 'within power' and 'not inconsistent' with other aspects of the Ordinance and they could only be adopted if at least two-thirds of the Council

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\*In Schedule 2 of the Local Government Act (1985), a revised and consolidated list of 52 functions is enumerated.



'then in office' and the Minister (after 1959, the Administrator-in-Council) approved (Ss350, 352). Where a by-law and another law, 'in existence at the date when [the] Ordinance [came] into operation' conflicted, the by-law prevailed (S353). As a measure apparently adopted to assist Councils with the difficult task of producing by-laws, S348 provided that a model code might be prepared by government.

Both the Behan/Sewell and Done reports commented unfavourably on the provisions of the Ordinance relating to broad powers and by-laws. In the former, demarcation problems, deficiencies in by-law making powers, inadequacies in existing by-laws and inappropriateness in the placing of certain powers within the Ordinance were noted (Behan/Sewell Report, 15-6). The latter strongly urged the reform of the by-law provisions, contending that

If the present restrictive provisions are to be allowed to remain...they will become fruitful grounds for legal arguments in the Courts as to whether the Council's By-laws are ultra vires with the Ordinance (Done Report, 6).

Similar, albeit less sweeping, criticisms were contained in the 1962 Select Committee Report. Particular note was given to the need to revise S353 which, because by-laws must 'yield to any law...enacted after [the commencement of the Ordinance in 1957]...can and does lead to absurdity and to uncertainty as to which law prevails'. To overcome that, by-laws should 'prevail over existing and future laws...' (Report, 5). In the Committee's view, S349 required considerable attention to remove duplications, to group various powers in proper order, to reduce its length and to make it 'clearer and simpler' (Report, 10). Finally, it recommended that model by-laws should be prepared as a matter of urgency.

During its early years, the Council, along with its demand for greater power and legislative change, frequently expressed its concern with the inadequacy of its by-laws as exposed by court actions, expert opinion and experiences like the Parap Theatre saga (see above). In 1960-61 and 1963, it approached an eminent local government authority, K H Gifford, to comment on questions of applicability and validity; on both counts, he reached condemnatory conclusions. Ron Withnall, commissioned in mid-1965 to review the by-laws once again, echoed Gifford's views. He found that many sections containing power were not exercised at all or in full, that several existing by-laws were invalid and that the form of the by-laws was unsatisfactory in that they contained archaic provisions and rank inconsistencies. Important areas, especially in public health and traffic control, were, in his view, not covered in the by-laws.

Finally, Withnall trenchantly criticised the lack of enforcement whether because of legal difficulty or non-appointment of inspectors. As remedies, he recommended redrafting of S349, amendment to S353 and the employment of 'law enforcement officers so that the by-laws did not remain a dead letter' (Withnall to Town Clerk, 27 May 1965, DCC Archives).

The task of addressing the by-law problems was tackled through legislative change (see below), by appointment of municipal inspectors and by revision of existing regulations. But the difficulties were not easily overcome. Without a set of model by-laws, the compilation of which the government (until the late 1970s) refused to assist, the Council continued to meet legal objection. For example, the validity of parking by-laws was successfully challenged in 1972; the result of that litigation, mounted interestingly enough by Withnall, meant that all Council parking tickets issued since 1965 were found to be illegal. Again in 1978, with respect to by-laws purporting to regulate the parking of vehicles on public roads (and the removal therefrom), the court ruled that no such power existed. Another challenge to be faced was the need to seek approval of by-laws and occasionally they were rejected. One such instance occurred in 1976 when the Legislative Assembly disallowed parking offences on the grounds that penalties were over-severe. Dissatisfaction with the state of by-laws continued to be a sore point with the Council, at least to the end of the 1970s; in 1977, the Mayor, Ella Stack, albeit with some exaggeration, commented that: 'ultra vires and all other Northern Territory Ordinances and their regulations over-ride them' (submission to a Seminar on Federalism, 11 February 1977).

Although there were many amendments to the legislative provisions relating to general powers and by-laws particularly after 1966, they did not in effect endow the Council with significantly greater powers than the Ordinance already allowed. Additions to the former included the ability to deal with parking spaces and meters (1970), creches and the promotion of cultural activities (1973) and subleasing of vested land (1974 and 1979). Until 1965, the only changes to the by-laws concerned the control of dogs, the stabling of horses and parking offences. Several of the 1962 Select Committee recommendations were introduced in 1966 - a re-writing of S349 which reduced the sections to 94, rearranged them in coherent groups (administration and finance, building, public health, nuisances, roads and traffic, reserves and public places, and trading) and extended both building and public health provisions. Section 353 was broadened to ensure the precedence of by-laws over all applicable Ordinances (but not Acts of the Commonwealth) and, later in 1968, over all subordinate legislation (regulations, rules,

by-laws) relating to ordinances. An additional section (S354A) which regulated parking offences was included. Between 1966 and 1982, when the provisions were comprehensively altered, there were several other amendments to the same sections. For example, S349 was expanded or modified to include cemeteries (1968), swimming pools (1972), dumping of material (1978), the standing or admission of vehicles and animals in public places (1978) and pedestrian malls (1979). The vexed question of S353 also produced changes in 1974 and 1977 in an effort to cover all possible inconsistencies.

The long and complex history of functions and by-laws under the original legislative system was ended by the passage of the Local Government Amendment Act (No. 3/1982) which repealed S305 and Ss348-351 and substituted new provisions. Under the rewritten S305, permitted functions and their associated specific activities (both of which can be varied or extended) are listed in a Schedule to the Act. Rather than being rigidly prescribed, by-laws can be made 'for the peace, order and good government' of the municipality, for 'the direction, administration and control' of the operation of government and for 'the effective carrying out of the functions...from time to time granted to it' (S305 [5]). Far more discretion was given to councils over the form and content of the by-laws although they still had to be consistent with the Act and subject to disallowance by the Legislative Assembly (first introduced in 1969). The problem of ultra vires, so often a problem for the Council, was largely circumvented in that by-laws did not have to be 'within the express powers conferred'.

The new Act also empowered a council to undertake 'a duty or function imposed or conferred upon it by any other Act'. But that was no new experience for the Darwin Council as, for varying periods during its incumbency, it had been required to administer provisions of ordinances/acts dealing with places of entertainment, dogs, traffic control of roads, pounds and litter.

Recent developments and questioning of the Council's role notwithstanding, it should by this stage be evident that lack of function has been a constant refrain by critics within and outside the Council. In 1961, one Councillor referred to the Council as 'half-baked' (D'Ambrosio, reported in NT News, 19 January 1961) and most of his colleagues over the years have tended to agree with that view of deprivation. From outside, the judgement made by Paul Everingham in 1976 has wide community credence. He quipped:

Local Government in the Northern Territory is a very emasculated beast and has little to do other than rate, repair a few roads and open and close

the rubbish dump by and large...[it] is just a shadow, a paper tiger (Parliamentary Record 2A [11 August 1976] 450).

Are these perceptions justified?

The literature on local authorities elsewhere in Australia almost without exception emphasises its distinctly minor governmental role, the tight control exercised by the states, financial stringency and the high level of discontent in local government circles at their fettered condition. There is little to suggest that, in broad comparative experience, the Darwin situation was markedly different. Although adapted to local circumstance, the Darwin complaints have been largely the grievances of Australian local government per se. In terms of function, generalised comparison is difficult because, as Bowman has remarked:

Local government authorities vary widely in area, population, revenue, organisation and activities, most markedly between, but also with States....There is no Australian local government: there is local government in each of the Australian states (Bowman 1976, 16, 66).

And, one could add, the NT provides yet another example of diversity. Yet, it is natural that local advocates for extension of function should use what they see as Australian practice, rather than regional difference, as the standard for comparison. Moreover, it has proved often convenient in their criticism of the Darwin situation to blur the distinction between potential and performed functions. With respect to the former category, it is at least arguable that, both historically and present-day, the plenum of local government functions in the appropriate Territory legislation was similar to that elsewhere. There are gaps in the field of performed activities in Darwin - notably in town planning, building control, municipal trading and health and welfare services - but the contrast is usually made with carefully selected interstate cases and without regard for the particular political, social and economic circumstances in the Territory.

Perceptions of the local position, therefore, should be treated with caution. Much of the comment has come from active participants in municipal affairs whose motives are often situational; their close association with the subject tends to concentrate their attention on limitations and problems and breeds feelings like frustration, ambition and powerlessness. Sadly, rhetoric and simple ignorance are also significant contributory factors. Given the sources, content and frequency of criticism, it is small wonder that

community opinion of the Council has echoed the sentiments expressed.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the Council's record in implementing its functions. The functional classification now in general use (see, for example, Bowman 1976 and ACIR 1981) has 11 major categories (public works and services, recreation facilities, council properties, traffic and car parking, health and welfare, fire prevention, town planning, municipal trading, inspection/licencing, regulatory powers, and promotional activities) each with a number of subdivisions. Within several of them, the scope of Council's activity was wide and complex and each project, no matter how minor, has its own involved history. To cover all in detail, therefore, is clearly impossible and, for the most part, a generalised approach will be adopted and only the more significant functions will be included.

Like local government authorities elsewhere, the provision of public works and services (roads, bridges, footpaths, street lighting, drainage) is a prime responsibility of the Council and one which absorbs a significant portion of its income. It has been a continuous Council activity in that it was included in the original package of transferred functions (albeit not undertaken officially until October 1957). As it is a highly visible function which affects most residents, especially when car ownership and intra-urban mobility are as high as in Darwin, the condition of public infrastructure - particularly roads - can be a very sensitive community issue. Often it is the most important standard by which the record of a Council is evaluated by the public. Complaints about the Council's performance have been a common occurrence but they have become less frequent in recent years as the road system has been substantially improved. It is a proud boast, but one with considerable validity, that Darwin, in the early 1980s, had 'one of the best inventories of roads in any Municipality in Australia' (A Corporate Plan for Darwin City Council, Interim Report, 25 January 1984, 75). A second dimension of conflict has been between Council and government largely over financial questions. Although it has been an ongoing area of dispute, again it diminished appreciably after the 1960s.

In 1957, with the possible exception of the new subdivision in Fannie Bay, the state of the Darwin road system was, to say the least, poor. In acknowledgement of that condition, the government accepted a liability of \$656,000 for reconstruction of existing roads to bring them to a reasonable standard. The initial intention was to complete the program in five years. Where it developed additional housing or industrial estates, the government

undertook to complete a satisfactory transport network before transfer of the areas to the Council. Both undertakings, but particularly the reconstruction arrangements, gave rise to considerable intergovernmental conflict during the Council's early years. In the case of the commitment on new development, the major problems were centred on the quality of roadworks and drainage - the standards of construction and acceptable width. By and large they had been resolved in principle by 1964-65. There was also some disagreement about the liabilities of projected private subdivisions in Nightcliff and Coconut Grove; the Council insisted that the regulations for infrastructure be rigorously policed.

The road reconstruction program was a constant source of irritation to Council and government alike until a revised agreement was reached in late 1967. From Council's point of view, the government's control over tender conditions, construction priorities, and provision of finance unfairly limited its scope of activity and performance. There was also frequent censure at the constraints imposed by the budgetary cycle which was not attuned to the climatic regime in Darwin. But the major grievance was the amount of total funds allocated; the initial offer was seen to be woefully inadequate. For example, in mid-1959, the Council Engineer concluded that over \$2 million was necessary for the program (NT News, 17 July 1959). At the end of 1964, a similar calculation put the cost at \$6.6 million and, at the current rate of progress, roads and drainage would not be up to reasonable standard by the year 2001 (NT News, 8 December 1964). Because of the slow rate of reconstruction, the maintenance of the old road system was extremely costly particularly in the 'wet' season. The state of the roads gave frequent rise to irate comments by residents, community groups and the press as well as occasional condemnatory statements from the judiciary. For its part, the government maintained that much of the problem lay in Council's decision-making and management deficiencies and the inability of the Council to spend its financial allocations in proper time. During the period, there were several heated exchanges on particular projects: the most acrimonious concerned Ross Smith Avenue, the roadworks at the Fannie Bay and Parap Shopping Centres, Daly Street and Bagot Road. The length of the road network under Council control by the mid-1960s was about 50 miles (almost all under varying conditions of seal and the rest as unsealed rural roads). Although the Council's early record was not outstanding at least a start had been made on rehabilitation of Darwin's road assets, beginning with Parap Road - 'the worst road in Darwin' - in 1958-59. Whether it would have progressed more quickly and more extensively under government auspices is a moot question.

By 1965, the dispute on reconstruction had attained crisis proportions. Debate centred on the '1957 list' (the roads included in early agreement), the amount of funds allocated, the planning and approval system, and the respective commitments of Council and government. In the latter area, a contentious issue was the insistence that the Council should contribute to the cost of reconstruction if superior design standards were involved. In fact, the Council did initially consent to some liability but later reversed its stand. After a long series of negotiations, a generally satisfactory scheme was conceded by the government in October 1967. It entailed the expenditure of nearly \$4 million on about 80 roads to 'give Darwin a network of high quality roads' by the early 1970s. The Commonwealth (and the NT Administration) undertook to pay 83 per cent and the Council 17 per cent of the cost. Roads admitted to the new program were the remainder of the original '1957 list' and others requiring considerable attention in Fannie Bay, Stuart Park and the city area. An additional feature was the designation of certain arterial roads (Bagot Road, McMinn Street, the Stuart Highway and McMillans Road) in a special category (S307 roads). The Commonwealth accepted full responsibility for their construction with maintenance after completion shared on an 80:20 basis by it and the Council (full details of the concordat and Council comment can be found in NT News, 24 October 1967).

With that agreement, dispute over roads diminished markedly in salience in the area, but arguments over financing and responsibility continued. In recent years, there has been wrangling over the allocation of Commonwealth road grants with the Council claiming that, given Darwin's population and traffic densities, it receives less than its fair share of funding. From time to time, problems over arterial routes arose but they usually have been resolved by the Council's willingness to hand their major responsibility back to government. By 1984, S307 roads was augmented by the addition of Trower Road (to Vanderlin Drive), Vanderlin Drive, Dick Ward Drive and the Frances Bay Arterial among others. Council dissatisfaction has also been expressed on road standards on governmental and private subdivisions. Yet, despite the difficulties associated with construction and maintenance, the Council has proved itself as a competent, if largely unrecognised, partner in the provision of an above standard road network which, in 1984, is about 330 kms in length. Its ongoing roadsealing and reconstruction activities play an important part in preserving that condition.

Other road related functions are the cleaning of streets, the construction of footpaths and driveways, beautification and the provision of street lights and other furnishings. Either from its own resources or in

association with other authorities or community groups, the Council has maintained in recent years a comparatively high standard of ancillary services even in those other areas of the city where strict subdivision development regulations were not required. There, the provision of services was retarded by the slow pace of road reconstruction. A common grievance in the early periods of Council was the woefully inadequate street lighting installed, a deficiency only addressed in the 1970s. Of course, note should also be made of the contribution of Cyclone Tracy; the reconstruction of Darwin did include the virtual donation of extensive new road furniture.

The second functional category concerns recreational facilities. Here also significant projects were involved; some - the swimming pools and the Performing Arts Centre - will be discussed separately. In the recreational area, the range of activities in which local government can operate either by way of direct provision of amenities or by subsidy, is constitutionally large; the basic limitation on expansion or the degree of involvement is financial although other considerations have been the availability of land, the provision of competing facilities by other levels of government or by private enterprise and the level of need in a particular community. Under its original charter, the Darwin Council was empowered to

provide public baths, dressing sheds, recreation grounds, parks, gardens, play-grounds, and other places of public resort or recreation and construct, purchase and conduct museums and libraries (Ss305 [j] and [k]).

Although the second section provoked some rhetorical attention, expansion into that area was not accomplished until the transfer of three community libraries to Council responsibility in 1980 (centralised control over the book stock was, however, retained by the NT Library Service). Their subsequent operation has been widely accepted within the community as one of the more successful Council activities. Another section (S305 [ka]) pertaining to cultural activities was added in 1972. Under the new description of functions in 1982, specificity of many areas was retained but there was a widening of the general area to include 'the provision of and assistance to community recreation programmes [and] provision of recreation facilities'.

With a young and highly active community, Darwin has traditionally been a sport conscious centre. The provision of adequate sporting venues has always been given some priority by the Council although its resources have often been stretched in keeping up with demand. In 1957, both the



Plate 1: Casuarina Library.

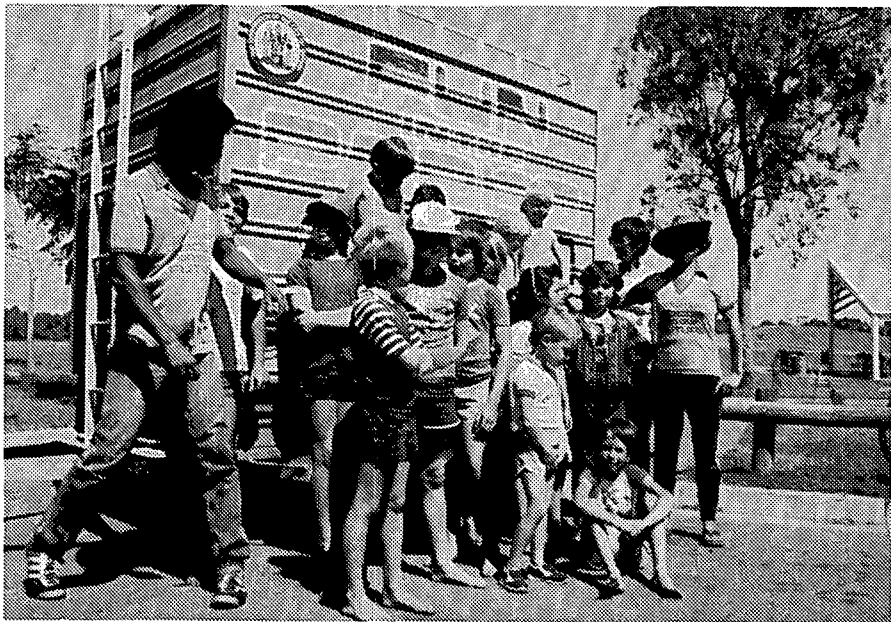


Plate 2: Fun in the Parks.

lack of facilities and the poor condition of those in existence were seen as two of the most glaring indictments of previous municipal policy. The Council moved vigorously, at an early stage, to provide a swimming pool, tennis and basketball courts and playing ovals with associated amenities. Its subsequent development of the three swimming pools, court complexes in the City, Parap and Nightcliff, a municipal golf links and ovals throughout the residential area (particularly the two Gardens Ovals) were creditable achievements, accomplished often in the context of dispute with government over control of land and finances and with sporting bodies over allocation, charges and administration. In order to reduce costs on an expanding network of facilities, the Council, especially in latter years, has sought to devolve some responsibility for care and development to many sporting organisations themselves either as single codes or in combination. Another dimension of assistance to sport, albeit not extensively employed, has been the granting of capital or subsidy funds to sponsored projects on vested land. An example, and one which embroiled the Council subsequently in considerable conflict with residents, was the speedway fronting on Bagot Road. Perhaps the notable failure of the Council in the area concerned the Marrara sporting complex. Originally conceived in the town planning process in the mid-1960s, the project languished until the late 1970s. Several factors delayed its development - Council's priorities, problems with the vesting of the land, insufficient interest by sporting bodies, lack of finance, Cyclone Tracy among them. Although the Council could (and did) argue with some validity that delay was influenced by considerations beyond its control, its record since the decision to proceed was not good. In the end, the Council was forced to admit that it did not have the resources to develop such a major undertaking and, in 1984, it passed control over to the NT Government. Its rationale was that, rather than be involved in the development of 'headquarters' projects (the major function of Marrara), it would concentrate on multi-purpose facilities designed to meet the needs of the wider community. If it was to be involved in the former area, it would only be on the basis of a fully paid agent. Despite the Marrara experience, however, the overall contribution by Council in providing sporting facilities of a reasonably high standard and variety has been significant.

Maintenance and development of parks, playgrounds, gardens and reserves, seemingly a mundane and routine function, also brought the Council many problems. Without control of subdivisional work or town planning, it could not have a major influence on the number or size of land dedicated to such purposes. At times, therefore, it complained about the lack of facilities (especially in the city area) and at others, about their extensiveness and/or

fragmentation (as in the older northern suburbs). The cost of tending its recreational estate has always been high; it has been considerably increased by Darwin's climatic regime. The growth period of the 'wet' necessitates more frequent servicing and the 'dry' demands large quantities of water, the charging of which at non-concessional rates has often been attacked by Council. In the period before Cyclone Tracy, the Council was consistently criticised for its failure to maintain its recreational areas adequately and, partly through its neglect, for preserving the generally unkempt urban environment of Darwin. However, critics usually overlooked the difficulties associated with the function and did not recognise that the Council lacked the necessary resources. Councillors and staff were acutely aware of its shortcomings and impatient with government for allegedly denying finance. Since 1975, however, the situation has improved considerably; Council resources have increased which, with the rate of expansion of recreational areas diminishing, allowed greater concentration to be given to Council land. But of more significance was the role played by the Darwin Reconstruction Commission and later the Conservation Commission in beautification and recreation projects in Darwin, the willingness of both to fund the Council more generously, and the return by Council of certain areas (like the Rapid Creek foreshore and Casuarina Beach) to government authority.

As with sporting areas, one long running problem was over control of land. Most affected were the foreshore areas. Even in sections (Mindil Beach was the best example) purportedly placed in Council control, errors in the vesting instruments led to confusion in their status which was not cleared up until the early 1970s. Although Council had argued for many years for the transfer of Lameroo Beach and East Point Reserve, the former was only handed across completely in 1974 and the latter in 1984. A major reason for delay, however, was the Council's demand that control would only be accepted if suitable rehabilitation work was completed and/or satisfactory financial arrangements were struck.

The foreshore reserves have provided some of the most newsworthy episodes in Council's history. Usually they concerned illegal camping; Vestey's and Mindil Beach in the 1960s and Lameroo Beach and the Esplanade in the early 1970s were favoured locations. Lameroo in particular attained prominence for its 'Royal Beach Hotel' with its elaborate structures and its determined inhabitants. In areas under its authority, Council pursued, albeit sometimes irregularly, a policy of eviction which often was strenuously resisted. The confrontation between Council employees and squatters sometimes almost attained comic opera proportions; at other times, real violence ensued. Although the problem

- with the added dimension of Aboriginal campers - continued after 1975, its incidence has been lower and less publicised.

Development of the Council's non-sporting recreational resources, after a slow and halting start, accelerated in the 1960s and early 1970s. Many sites were improved by the provision of amenities like toilets, shelters, seating, cooking facilities, parking areas, ramps and playing equipment and made physically more attractive with tree planting and landscaping (all, however, had to withstand the frequent ravages of vandals, common in Darwin). But, as with many other Council activities, the pace of development quickened dramatically in the late 1970s. The Botanic Gardens, always regarded as a leading recreational and educational asset, is an example. Considerable effort was expended over 20 years in expanding - its size was augmented by reclamation projects - and improving its facilities, but its progress was constrained by the usual lack of resources. Indeed, on several occasions, the Council approached government to take over either part or all of its responsibility on the basis that the Gardens fulfilled, in its experimental botanical capacity, essentially 'state-type' services. In 1980, a report recommended the transfer of the Gardens (A E White, Darwin Botanic Gardens - Possible Future Development, Department of Community Development, March 1980) and that policy is currently (1984) under Council consideration. After the Cyclone, which demolished much of the Gardens, a new era of interinstitutional cooperation replaced the largely isolated Council endeavours. Through major joint projects (both private and public) buttressed by liberal funding, a considerable development both in size and the range and quality of facilities is taking place.

A notable early project was the Sound Shell in the Gardens amphitheatre. Although a final decision to construct was not taken until 1964, it had been discussed in the Council since 1958-59 and won the support of Darwin cultural groups like the Society of Arts and the Eisteddfod Council. The delay, once again, was caused by financial constraint and negotiations with government for assistance. Several early proposals were brought forward but they were either rejected by Council or by the NT Administration. More than anyone else, the driving force for the project was Mayor Cooper who, incidentally, used his casting vote in May 1962 to secure Council's commitment. In the end, a less than desired facility costing \$42,000 (including an \$18,000 government grant) was built. Opened in January 1965 with impressive ceremony, the Sound Shell (with later improvements to its structure and its surrounds) has served Darwin's cultural life handsomely. At the time and later, the Council's vision and persistence with the project won it many friends. However, its operation, especially in the

area of 'pop' concerts, subsequently caused the Council some difficulties as did the proposal in the 1980s to construct overlooking dwellings.

Other aspects of the Council's recreational involvement over time have included subsidisation of a variety of community groups (the Municipal Band [when operating], Brown's Mart and the Historical Society were examples), the provision of public halls/centres and the appointment of a Community Recreation Officer in 1978. For a long time, the Town Hall in Mitchell Street was the only Council facility available; its later history, particularly its period in 1973-74 as a 'doss house' which led to antagonism between the Council and the 'boarders' (and their sponsoring organisations - especially the union movement), was studded with controversy. More recent acquisitions are halls in Nightcliff, Alawa and Wagaman with another proposed for Malak. The responsibility of the Community Recreation Officer is the development, organisation and coordination of recreational activities. One notable and successful innovation has been the 'Fun in the Parks' school holiday recreation program begun in 1979.

The third functional category - Council properties - can be treated less extensively. Over the years, Council has accumulated - whether by its own construction or by transfer from other agencies - large capital assets, many of which are noted elsewhere. Under the Bowman classification, income-producing 'properties' relevant to the Darwin context, include cemeteries, pounds, employee residences, camping sites and caravan parks. Only the latter two will be covered in more than a cursory fashion. Council maintains two historical cemeteries and runs the Darwin General Cemetery in McMillans Road. Of all its activities, the cemetery function has been relatively conflict free but there was debate (almost inevitably) in the 1960s on the Council's control and maintenance of the two older sites. A permanent animal pound has never been operated by Council although some facilities were built in the early 1960s. When the Council exercised its authority - even if seldom applied effectively or consistently - over animals (particularly dogs), it has used pounds of other agencies. In respect of employee accommodation, Council has acquired or constructed a number of houses for senior staff and flats for other personnel. Its purchase of a complex in Woods Street in 1976 caused some embarrassment for Council in removing incumbent residents and later in standard of maintenance.

Sensitive to the need for caravan facilities in Darwin, Council in its early years urged the NT Administration to construct a park (one was eventually established at Maranga) and prepared to set up its own facility. In 1959, a camping

site was proclaimed at Mindil Beach but it soon became a shanty town which the Council worked strenuously to dismantle. A year later, it won approval for a caravan park which was finally opened in 1962-63 with twelve sites. Its location and its standards of amenities made it very popular; by 1979, when the land was acquired for the Casino development, it had grown to 120 sites. Although there were occasional problems with the Department of Health, caretaking and overstaying residents and one tragedy involving a sand dune collapse, the facility was relatively trouble free and, despite a large compensatory payment from the Casino operators (\$700,000), the Council was reluctant to vacate a property which, unlike so many others, was a profitable business. As an alternative, the Council was offered, and finally accepted, part of Tracy Village, the contractors' camp during the initial rebuilding of Darwin, as a low cost caravan and camping tourist park. After developing its facilities, the Council decided in 1982 to lease the park, a practice which was becoming common in other municipal enterprises. The park has proved a successful venture although complaints from nearby residents in Wanguri and the lessee's non-compliance with contractual obligations has caused some difficulties. Strident complaints also were a feature of another Council experience with camping. For some months in 1976, an area on East Point Reserve was allocated to Council for expedient accommodation during the housing crisis after Cyclone Tracy. It met with incessant criticism from the trustees, the Citizens' Council and local residents.

Between 1968 and 1976, Council tried without success to establish a transient's camping area. Its efforts were frustrated by a combination of factors: the offering of unsuitable (or already committed) land by the NT Administration, opposition by residents, the intervention by other groups (like the Baptist Homes Trust), Aboriginal claims and government indecision and delay. Nothing eventuated until well after the Cyclone and then it was in the form of the temporary site on East Point and later Tracy Village.

Traffic and car parking constitute the fourth functional area. All roads within the municipal boundaries excluding those designated under S307 'are vested in and are under the control and management' of the Council. Included under that heading, and detailed in the permitted range of by-laws in S349 (until 1982), were powers to control vehicular, pedestrian and other traffic. That authority was also effective in parks, reserves and other areas stipulated in legislation and, to a limited degree, to S307 roads. In broad terms, the Council's role was to ensure that traffic ways were used in a manner safe and effective to all. Part of that responsibility, of course, was the provision and

maintenance of adequate roads and services, the politics of which have been discussed above. Other areas included allowable weights, types of vehicles, speeds, entrances, standing requirements and control of intersections and crossings. A further series related to parking conditions. Council powers over traffic and parking in the Local Government Ordinance (Act) and by-laws had to operate in the context of other legislation relating to motor vehicles, traffic and control of roads which in some cases expanded and in others limited its discretion. Many government bodies, road user organisations and commercial and residents' pressure groups were involved in the area, thus rendering it politically sensitive. As one of the major actors, Council inevitably was drawn into disputes.

The two subcategories of traffic control and parking were more often than not interconnected and were usually treated by Council as integral parts of an overall policy. However, parking, especially in the Central Business District, undoubtedly contributed more than its share of difficulty to the Council. As the history of parking problems in the CBD forms a necessary context to the carpark building project, it will be treated in Chapter Six.

Although there was some consideration of traffic and parking problems in the Council's early years, they did not become major preoccupations until the mid-1960s. The rapidly expanding flow of traffic throughout the city but especially into the city area concentrated the Council's attention on the need to facilitate traffic movement and secure road safety. During the 1960s and early 1970s, several Council committees were set up to study such matters. Constant pressure was placed upon government to provide better and more arterial routes, particularly after 1967 when the number of S307 roads were increased. On roads under its own control, Council progressively developed measures (crossing lights and markings) to enhance pedestrian security. Council was prominent in the agitation for an overpass over Bagot Road to Ludmilla School; originally raised by the Council in 1965, the overpass, after being considered by a Legislative Council Select Committee, was finally constructed in 1972. In concert with government, a system of automatic traffic lights was installed at critical intersections along arterial routes; the first Council lights were placed in Daly Street in 1974. Since then more have been erected, mainly in the CBD.

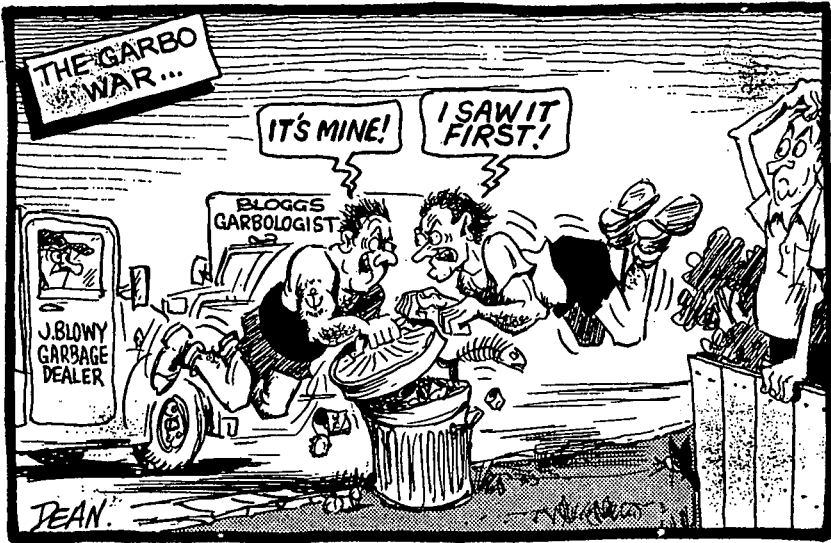
Overall, however, in its traffic control function, Council has performed a distinctly minor and subsidiary role. While it sometimes exerted influence on policy, it seldom was more than an administrative agent for government planners and decision-makers. That status has become more pronounced in recent years. But of course that has been the

fate of all local government authorities in cities elsewhere in Australia.

In the fifth category - health and welfare - the Council has traditionally had limited input. Garbage collection and disposal has been the sole major activity in the sanitary services subcategory. None have been undertaken in the area of medical services. However, in health and welfare services, an expanding role has been fashioned in recent years. The history of the Council's experiences with garbage - or as it is more delicately labelled in modern parlance - 'waste management' - has been spiced with numerous incidents. Conflict with government over charging policy for public servants, with Council employees, with contractors, with official agencies controlling health and civil aviation (and the RAAF) and, not least, with residents over the siting and operation of dumps (or 'waste disposal areas'!) has been a feature of the administration of what superficially seems a routine and uncomplicated function.

However well maintained, dumps sometimes smell and become offensive. When they do, nearby residents or their spokesmen are sure to complain; that has been a frequent problem for the Council. When the major dumps were located in the Mindil Beach hinterland, as they were up to 1962 (and again in the late 1960s), there was little resident resistance because of their distance from significant population concentrations. In fact, the areas filled by garbage did remove significant mosquito breeding areas and provided land for recreational and sporting activities and extensions to the Botanic gardens. The succeeding locations in the Sadgroves Creek area, along Frances Bay and on the fringes of the Ludmilla swamplands, however, caused considerable resident animosity. Particularly heated exchanges came from groups in Stuart Park in 1969-70 and Ludmilla between 1970 and 1974. The problem died down after the Cyclone with the moving of the whole dumping operation to Leanyer but subdivisional expansion had rekindled it by the late 1970s. In 1984-85, planning was proceeding for another move further away from the city boundaries.

At first, garbage collection was carried out by Council staff but that proved a costly exercise and in 1959 it was contracted out. A contributing factor in the Council's decision was the lengthy day labour strike in 1959 which demonstrated the need for a more reliable service. During the strike, collection was done by the Mayor, Councillors and senior staff. By all accounts they performed the service, if not enthusiastically, fairly efficiently! Three contractors have been used by Council. Barney Lyons between 1959 and 1966, Hannons from 1966 to 1974 and again from 1978 and Berkeleys (an interstate company) from 1974 to 1978.



The system has generally been successful although there have been several disputes over matters like the maintenance of dumps (when controlled by the contractors), rise and fall contracts, the timing of collection (whether day time, night time or early morning) and the standard of service. On two occasions, the Council has attracted criticism about its awarding of contracts; in 1959, it was accused of not accepting the lowest tender and, in 1974, Hannons demanded an enquiry into its loss of the contract. Subsequently, Council's action was approved.

In the welfare field, Council's role is relatively small and recent. Some consideration was given in the 1960s to the provision of old people's accommodation but, except for playing a minor part in the launching of the Harry Chan memorial collection, nothing was directly achieved. Liaison with voluntary welfare agencies was fitful and generally small-scale and unproductive. Before different arrangements were made for civil defence procedures (defined here as a welfare measure), the Council did participate in an earlier scheme. But the concern for expanding the welfare role really dates from the late 1970s since when Council has devoted considerable effort and resources in attempting to define and expand its position.

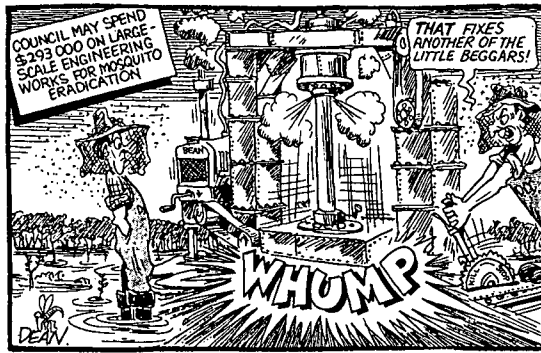
In a number of submissions, the Council strongly presented a case for major involvement in welfare and social planning. Three of the more forceful were made to inquiries on the future role of Regional Councils for Social Development, on welfare needs in the NT and to the Advisory Council for Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) (see submission to Board of Inquiry into Welfare needs in the NT, 18 September 1978. Also see the Council submission to Advisory Council for Intergovernment Relations relating to the Study: Local Government: Prospects for the Future, 11 August 1979). After a tentative and abortive scheme before the Cyclone, since 1978 the Council has established, with Commonwealth and NT funding, seven child care neighbourhood centres, each leased to community organisations. Whether under such conditions the Council could be said to be blazing a new direction is arguable! For a short period until 1982, a Citizen's Advice Bureau, organised by the City Social Worker assisted by a small group of volunteers, operated in the northern suburbs. As it duplicated many existing and developing services provided by the NT Government, it ceased, after the initial needs of the immediate post-cyclone period, to be a viable scheme. Many residents saw it as merely a symbol.

The Council's ambitions to participate in the welfare field were given additional impetus by the NT Government's acceptance that an area of community development, before 1982 a largely non-statutory function, was an appropriate

local government role. Thus, in the new description of permissible functions, 'community development' was defined as '[P]articipation with, and assistance to community bodies in joint undertakings', '[P]rovision of facilities and programmes for young persons, aged persons, disabled and handicapped persons' and '[S]ocial planning'. As devices to define new policy directions, a Youth Affairs Officer was appointed, after a youth needs study, in 1982-83, and a consultant was engaged to conduct a pilot project in a suburban community (Malak) and make recommendations on community development initiatives. Part of the so-called 'corporate planning' strategy in 1983-84 which included liaison with some residents and groups was used for similar purposes. Whether of course that limited discourse with Darwin citizens, the results of which have never been openly publicised, or the banal and generalised election manifestos of candidates in 1981 and 1984 constitute a mandate from the Darwin citizenry to embark on new, and potentially costly, expeditions into community development programs is a matter of contention.

Mosquito control was an original Council function. Given Darwin's climate and environs, the task was formidable. For many years the Council, beset regularly by complaints from residents, struggled to meet the community demands with inadequate resources. Its major weapons were spraying, clearing breeding grounds and reclamation projects. Recognising its deficiencies, it strove to convince the NT Administration on many occasions to take back the function or, at least, to enter joint programs and management. The later strategy in the 1970s proved successful with government agencies undertaking many of the longer term eradication measures. Spraying within residential and breeding areas has continued as the front-line Council tactic but the former has come under increasing criticism for its toxic effects; its recent use has been severely curtailed.

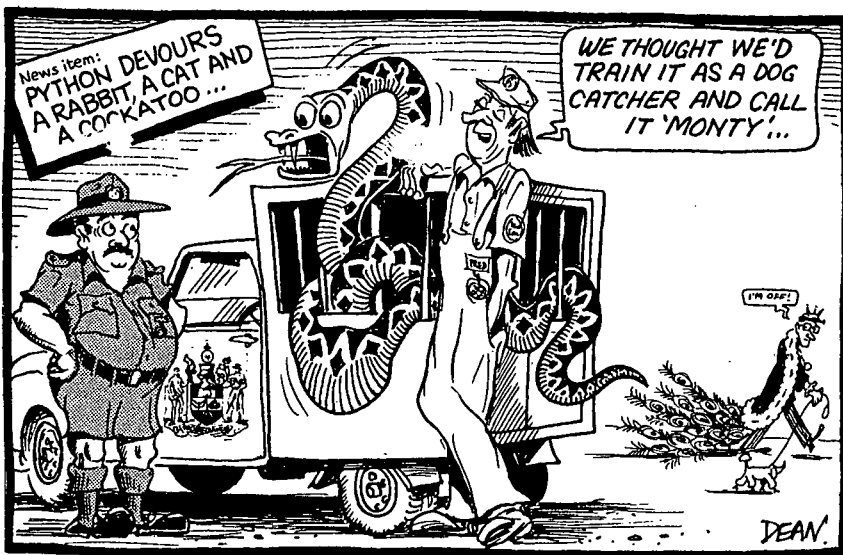
Little needs to be said of the next three categories. Fire prevention has never been an important Council function although fire safety certificates are sometimes issued. Municipal trading, even though a range of revenue-producing projects (like hotels and abattoirs) have been proposed from time to time, has not been pursued. It has been confined to more standard activities like the leasing of office space in the Civic Centre and leasing of Council facilities rather than direct management. The Tracy Village Tourist Complex and Holtze Cottage, a restaurant in the Botanic Gardens, are two examples. Much has already been written on the lack of town planning and associated functions. The Council had a long standing representation on town planning authorities such as two members on the Town Planning Advisory Committee to 1964 and afterwards one on the Town Planning Board. In



1980, under the Planning Act, the Council was given four representatives on the new Authority when it dealt with Darwin matters; that constituted a majority. Moreover, as large-scale residential development in the Council area has almost been completed, much of the subdivisional emphasis in the future will be 'infill type operations'. The Council itself admits that 'it has been given more authority in [that] area and is able to exercise a lot more influence over the actual sub-division layout as well as to control the engineering works...' (First Interim Report 1984, 92). Thus, its continuing claim for full town planning authority has been met in part. Major control over buildings is still, however, denied.

Council involvement in the inspection, licensing and regulative categories has also been historically limited. Not only did it lack many of the conventional powers for control but it made little effort before the 1970s to seek them. Even then interest in extension, whilst articulated in the general push for function expansion, has never been pursued with the same diligence as, for example, town planning and building control. However, the range of activities in which the Council could operate was extended in 1982; in the interim report on the corporate plan, the Council deemed many of them (particularly in the sections on 'environment' and 'public health and safety') 'worthy of later consideration'. It is expected that the Council will accept a greater role in public health in 1985 or 1986. Nevertheless Council authority has been exercised on some matters. Some, like animals, dogs, places of public entertainment, cemeteries and mosquito control, have a long history; others, over swimming pools, litter, pedlars and hawkers are more recent acquisitions. Although many activities in these areas are revenue producing, they also have proved, both to the Council in its limited arena and local government elsewhere, to be time-consuming, labour intensive and expensive to supervise adequately. They are also, by their nature, difficult to police and fraught with problems of compliance and acceptance. The council's experience with the regulation of swimming pools and dog control provide excellent examples of such difficulties.

In the final category of city promotion, Council has played a generally minor and support role to the tourism initiatives of its senior government agencies. However, before self-government when development of the tourist industry was given a lower emphasis by government, its involvement in the field, even if small, was more obvious than it was later on. The energetic promotional activities of recent Mayors, particularly Ella Stack, were largely adjuncts to government policy rather than dictated by Council priority. During the 1960s, through its encouragement of local tourist groups and operators and its



assistance to events like the Darwin Festival, the Council was more easily identified as an initiator rather than a follower. Another associated area has been the preservation and provision of monuments to Darwin's historical past (such as the War Memorial - moved to its present site in Civic Square in 1971 - the first survey peg and the Goyder and Stuart memorials). Notable also was the assistance given to Douglas Lockwood in 1967-68 in the preparation and publication of Darwin's centenary history, The Front Door. As local government bodies elsewhere, the Council actively pursues a protocol and entertainment role both for Darwin's citizenry and for visitors - dignitaries or otherwise. Receptions, conferring of the freedom of the city, the Mayoral Balls and naturalisation ceremonies are some aspects of that traditional activity.

This catalogue of performed functions, although its range might appear impressive, should be carefully placed in a wider comparative context. When that is done, the Council's record, albeit creditable in some aspects, loses some of its lustre. Moreover, in this account, little attention has been given to the question of economic efficiency and effectiveness, critical considerations in measuring function accomplishment. They will be addressed in Chapter Six.

## Chapter Five

## SOME MAJOR PROJECTS

Young institutions usually attempt to establish an identity, recognition and respect. Although it may be an uncharitable observation, Council's fascination with large-scale and hopefully prestigious projects throughout its short history has been partly rooted in such motives. Overshadowed in Darwin by other government bodies and conscious of its minor role and the need for public acceptance, the Council has sought to elevate its status by sometimes conspicuous expenditure. In its publicity, most evident in its fledgling years but still apparent in the 1980s, it has placed considerable emphasis in its record of project achievement. Over the years there has been no shortage of cynics who have labelled the Council's attitude as 'empire-building' or 'a monument mentality'; the tide of such criticism has run strongly in recent years in reaction to Council's involvement with the parking building and the Performing Arts Centre.

Yet it has been argued (often with equal plausibility) that the Council has only undertaken projects for which there has been a definite community need and which other levels of government have been loath, for financial or other reasons, to tackle. Moreover, that school of thought, articulated particularly by those associated with the Council, contends that, for the proper fulfilment of certain functions, extensive capital investment is sometimes legitimate and necessary. The problem with that approach, however, has been its elitist character; except in the recent community development exercise and perhaps the swimming pools, no formalised attempt has been made to establish broad community opinion on the desirability of projects. Although their virtue has been occasionally debated, no plebiscites have been held and Council elections are too crude a device to measure support for particular spending. Justification, therefore, has been usually based upon the uncertain notion that councillors/aldermen or staff understand residents' wishes.

In the five projects discussed in this chapter - the Civic Centre, the swimming pools, the Smith Street Mall, the West Lane parking building and the Performing Arts Centre - motivation came from both sources although the mix varied among them. The reasons for selecting the case studies lie in the comparatively high unit cost of the projects and the element of discretion available to Council either in determining their format or in deciding to proceed. Each has an intrinsically interesting history and they again demonstrate

in part the central theme of conflict so significant in Council's development. They also provide some insight into the quality of Council decision making processes over the years.

### The Civic Centre

Even before the installation of the Council in 1957, there was discussion about the future need for an appropriate civic centre. Part of the 1957 agreement was a government commitment to provide office and workshop accommodation. There was a further clear understanding that financial support would be given to Council when it decided its requirements for permanent buildings. As a bridging arrangement, two houses in Cavenagh Street were allocated to the Council for its administration headquarters. They soon proved to be inadequate - their small size led to uncomfortably cramped conditions and their relative remoteness from the city centre was seen as a distinct disadvantage in dealing with government and public. Some relief was obtained in 1959-60 with the turning over of the old and dilapidated Works Department premises in Mitchell Street to Council use but, even with that extension, the office situation remained critical. The Town Hall in Mitchell Street was also transferred to Council control in 1957. Constructed for the NT Administration in 1955, its facilities included an auditorium (seating about 500), a supper room, an equipped stage, projection room, foyer, annexes and a commodious verandah. However, the Council was not enthusiastic about its asset; Mayor Richardson curtly dismissed it as 'an oversized Sidney Williams hut' (NT News, 5 September 1957). Until its demise (what remained after the Cyclone was demolished to make way for the Performing Arts Centre), the Council treated it largely as a liability; certainly it was never seen as a substitute for an appropriate civic centre. It was, however, used for a number of Council functions and provided the major venue for meetings of Council and its committees in the 1950s and 1960s.

Debate on proposals for the siting and nature of the civic centre began soon after the first Council met. In October and November 1957, the appropriate location was discussed; after considering and rejecting a three acre plot in the Smith-Bennett Street area (interestingly enough close to the present Civic Centre site), a decision was reached to use the site, originally allocated in the 1940s town plan, bounded by the Esplanade, Daly Street, Mitchell Street and McLachlan Street (Town Clerk to Assistant Administrator, 8 December 1958, DCC Archives). The cost of the entire project was expected to be about \$0.5 million, a not inconsiderable sum by contemporary standards. Buoyed by youthful optimism, the Council confidently felt that early agreement

with the government could be obtained and that planning and construction would proceed expeditiously. That confidence was expressed in the 1957-58 Municipal Year Book:

Council proposes in the near future to have erected a suitable office which will form the initial step towards the establishment of a complete civic centre...' (Year Book, 20).

Subsequent experience with the processes of government shattered that expectation.

Although bureaucratic procedures were an important factor, the Council itself also contributed to delay. Rather than persevering with a phased operation, by 1959 it had determined to press for a multipurpose 'grand design' project. Although possibly economically justified in the longer term, its scale introduced greater planning and financial problems and the certainty of more rigorous review by officialdom. Moreover, in 1960, a proposal to run an Australia-wide design competition, although short lived as it was opposed by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, further interrupted development of concrete plans. As an alternative, the Council commissioned a local architect (and a former Director of Housing and Construction in Darwin), Ron Taylor, early in 1961 to prepare preliminary documentation; at the same time the government was requested to allocate funds in its 1961-62 budget. But owing to the immediate unavailability of certain sections of the chosen site and the continuing insistence by Council for a comprehensive centre, consideration was given to a change of location. In October 1962, a formal request was made for the old Darwin Oval (opposite the Hotel Darwin) but, after several approaches, the government rejected the application in April 1963. In the meantime, Taylor had drawn up elaborate plans for a new building, but with the site decision, his efforts proved a waste of time and money. Negotiations began again and the question of location was only finally settled in December 1963 with the allocation of the Cavenagh/Bennett/Smith/Esplanade area. Detailed planning (by Middleton and Talbot) commenced in 1964; at that stage, a project of about \$0.5 million was still contemplated although the Council's vision of ultimate development now included areas for commercial use, an exhibition hall, cultural facilities (library, art gallery, museum) and extensive car parking. As originally conceived, a high rise structure (of six storeys) was to be the centre-piece; subsequent costing was, however, about \$1 million. Negotiations on financial assistance were long (nearly three years) and tortuous with the Council often accusing the government of procrastination (deliberate or otherwise). The course, slow as it was, was almost upset in late 1966 with a suggestion that the site should again be changed. To

alleviate possible traffic congestion problems and to provide a better scenic position and outlook, an area overlooking the Botanic Gardens was put forward. The proposal was lost only on the casting vote of the Mayor (NT News, 28 September 1966). However, a firm government offer was received in November 1966; it involved a direct grant of \$240,000 plus an additional amount of up to \$14,000 on a dollar for dollar basis in fulfilment of obligations to provide municipal offices. A further grant of \$11,000 for design and supervision purposes was also made. After some later minor negotiations, the Council accepted the offer.

Plans for the high rise development were scrapped in 1967 and replaced by a lower set two-storey building (designed by Associated Consultants Ltd). In terms of floor space, they were roughly similar but the second plan was some \$80,000 less expensive. The estimated cost was \$920,000, almost twice that of the original expectation. However, part of the increase was attributable to the Council's decision to incorporate letting space as a method of defraying future repayments. The design enabled the 'Tree of Knowledge', a historical landmark, to be retained. Of the 4,426 sq. m of space, about a third (1,394 sq. m) was allotted for that purpose. In August 1968 after a loan had been secured from the AMP, the contract was awarded to the lowest of 10 tenderers, Nichols Henderson, at a cost of nearly \$1 million; completion date was to be September 1969. A further \$255,000 was needed for electricity and airconditioning services. While the planning for the building was being undertaken, attention was given to the surrounds; a scheme developed by the Regional Planning Officer, Harcourt Long, was adopted for what was to become the Civic Square (the title 'Goyder Square' as an alternative was rejected). The first of the celebratory events took place on 20 December 1968 when the Mayor, Harry Chan, unveiled a memorial in the face of the partly erected building.

A second 'opening' occurred in August 1969 with the Duke of Kent officiating. He noted, goodhumouredly, that he had seldom opened a building which was literally so open! By that time the prime contractors were in deep financial trouble and in September they went into liquidation; their contract was terminated. The building was completed by Council Staff and subcontractors under the watchful eye of Town Clerk Sullivan. In April staff moved into the building which was finally completed in June. It was officially opened by the Governor General on 24 July 1970. Partly because of additions to the original specifications, the contractor's collapse and the attendant delay, the cost of the complex (with the carpark, the courtyard and the surrounds) exceeded total estimates by over \$160,000. During the Cyclone the building was badly affected with its

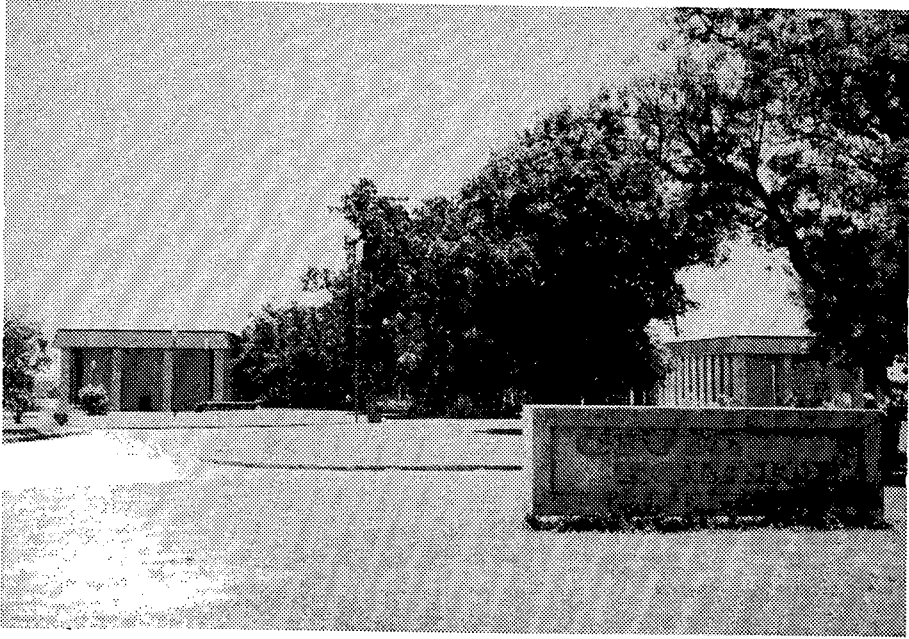


Plate 3: Civic Square, with general view of Council buildings.

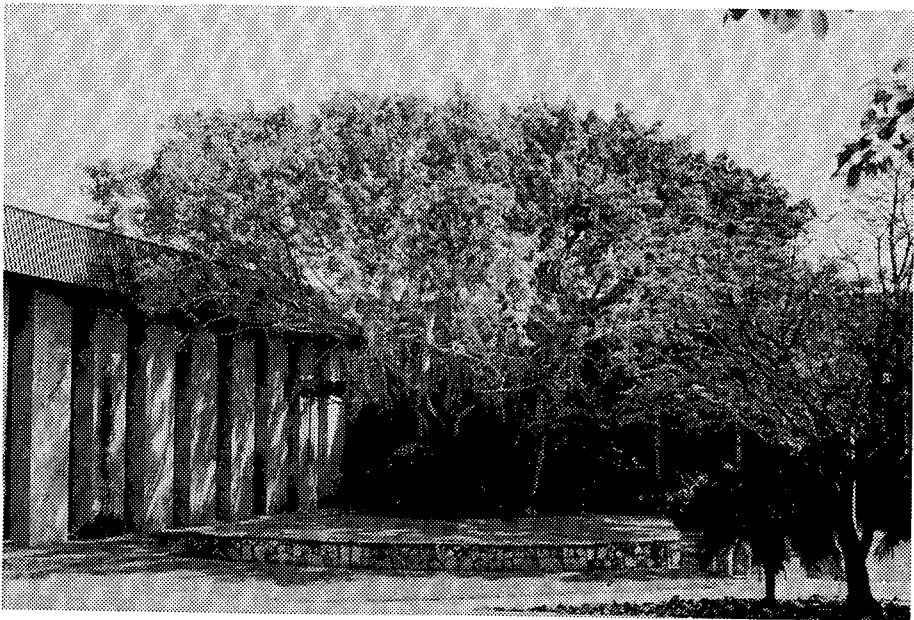


Plate 4: 'Tree of Knowledge' (Banyan) in Square outside Darwin's civic centre.

roof comprehensively damaged; the insurance payout was over \$1 million. It was, however, speedily restored. Although there were several schemes for major extensions, only minor improvements have been added. Basically the Centre is, in 1984, the same as was built in 1970. Even so it retains a fairly modern and, from some angles at least, a pleasant appearance. Why it was sited with its more imposing facade away from Harry Chan Avenue still puzzles many observers! On the other hand, with the expansion of Council's staff, the space in the Centre is already proving inadequate; the utilitarian aspect of the building, so generous in 1970, has diminished appreciably. In fact, the rented areas have been progressively reduced; the last is to be terminated in 1986.

### The Swimming Pools

The lack of a public freshwater swimming pool was a major grievance of Darwin residents during the post-war decade. Both the Town Management Board and citizen groups lobbied government to provide the amenity but they were frustrated by the NT Administration's unwillingness to divert funds away from allegedly more essential rebuilding projects. Given the dilapidated and unusable state of the Lameroo salt water baths and the restriction on the use of the Qantas and Larrakeyah pools, the bulk of Darwin's population were deprived of convenient swimming facilities during the 'sea wasp' season. In fact, most candidates in 1957 gave high priority to the provision of a pool and the community expectation that a new Council could expedite its construction was a factor in producing support for local government.

As the first major project undertaken by Council, the construction of the Darwin Olympic Pool (or 'Parap' Pool as it became known) was not a particularly smooth operation. The most serious aspect was delay; the Council decided to proceed in October 1957 but the pool did not open until May 1960. Many factors contributed, some the responsibility of council and others outside its direct control.

Funding was a major problem. Originally, the government had offered a grant of \$40,000 but when estimates were prepared, a sum of not less than \$110,000 for the complex was indicated. After pressure from the Council, the grant was raised to \$55,000. The first tenders, however, were in the region of \$170,000. After adopting an 'austerity' model, a contract was finally let (to Fortiades & Nickolakis) for about \$130,000. In the end, the government, after much pleading, conceded another \$20,000. The rest of the project was funded from loan funds secured, again after some initial difficulty, from the Bank of New South Wales. By the completion of the project, expenditure

had risen to over \$190,000 and the Council was forced to raise another loan in 1961.

Difficulties experienced with the contractors who consistently fell behind schedule and were often reprimanded by Council and its consultants for substandard workmanship were primary reasons for delay and increased costs. The most serious problem occurred in January 1960 when subsidence was found around the major pool which in part had to be rectified by the use of Council labour. Subsequently, there were long drawn out legal proceedings over liquidated damages and cost sharing. But of perhaps greater significance was the Council's decision to depart from its 'austerity' program and add further facilities - public address systems, concourses, a kiosk, a manager's flat, clocks, a dance floor among others. Although many of them could be seen as necessary in the long term, desire to have them available immediately had a major impact on cost. Dissatisfaction, both inside Council and from outside, on the issue of rising expenditure was often expressed.

Altogether the Council's early incapacity for coherent and disciplined decision-making was demonstrated starkly over the Parap Pool. Over nearly every aspect of planning and implementation, much argument and indecision ensued. The Council lurched from one crisis to another with seemingly little consideration of the cost ramifications of its fractured actions. Debate on questions of siting (there were several locations put forward - Vestey's Beach, Mindil Beach, Daly Street, the Belsen area and the Esplanade - before the old Department of Civil Aviation Oval was chosen), of construction (whether by day labour, contract or a mix), of desired facilities and of supervision and future management all contributed to delay and confusion. Another area - the policy to be adopted on the use of the pool by Aborigines - caused heated discussion but, to the credit of most Councillors, it was decided that no restrictions would be countenanced.

Owing to design faults and faulty workmanship the Parap Pool had to close for seven months in 1964. Pipes in the filtration system were severely rusted and had to be replaced. The cost of repair was about \$25,000. However, since then, it has had no major problems and has proved a valuable public resource in the inner city. Its age in the 1980s will necessitate considerable rehabilitation costs but additional amenities like the recently installed privately operated water slide may increase the pool's popularity in a period of declining general use.

By way of contrast, the construction of the two other Council pools were relatively incident free although both were opened well behind schedule. The Nightcliff amenity,

planned in 1963-64 was not operating until August 1967 but much of the delay was attributable to the need to satisfy government authorities on design and costs. A particular issue was the arrangement of scum gutters. Unlike Parap, the pool was built within budget; it cost \$154,500. With the increase in the population of the northern suburbs, the Council during the early 1970s, argued strenuously for a third pool. Approval was finally granted in late 1974 but plans were interrupted by Cyclone Tracy. Requests for funds were resumed in 1975-76. Tenders were called in March 1976 but the project was again placed in jeopardy by the withdrawal of part of the government subsidy in May. However, sufficient funds were made available later in the year to commence construction without the Council having to borrow expensive carry-on finance. Much of the credit for removing the financial crisis has been attributed to the incessant efforts of Mayor Stack who was able, during Prime Minister Fraser's bout with influenza in Darwin, to administer not only medical advice but also some effective lobbying. For the estimated \$900,000 project, one third each was contributed by the Council, the DNT and the Department for the Environment, Housing and Community Development. The Casuarina Pool was finally opened in February 1978 but at a cost of \$1.25 million. Since then other phased development of the complex has taken place.

The provision of three relatively high standard swimming pools, whatever the circumstances of cost and delay, has been clearly a major contribution by the Council to Darwin's recreational resources.\* Despite the consistent losses sustained through their operation, problems with management and recent disputes over coaching rights, judged by standards elsewhere, the Council has discharged its administrative functions adequately. Yet attributing too much importance to Council in securing the pools would be a mistake. It is likely that they would have been secured, although in the first instance not as quickly, even without local government involvement. Perhaps also the cost to Darwin residents may have been less. But that was part of the price for local democracy!

#### The Smith Street Mall

By the early 1970s, the CBD's status as Darwin major commercial focus and the economic viability of some of its business establishment were under serious threat. Although the CBD remained the most important employment area, the development of retail outlets in the rapidly growing residential precincts in the northern suburbs was eroding

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\*A fourth is proposed for Malak/Karama at a later stage.



Plates 5 and 6: Smith Street Darwin - before Cyclone Tracy (above) and after Cyclone Tracy (below).



Plates 7 and 8: Smith Street Mall - under construction (above) and completed (below).

its share of trade. Stiff competition was being provided by the proliferation of small suburban shopping centres and, more significantly, by the Casuarina Centre (opened in May 1973). With their proximity and their parking convenience, their advantages were proving difficult to counter. A prominent strategy around Australia in promoting CBD business activity, and even survival, was the creation of attractive pedestrian malls. In Darwin, both the traders and the Council had come to the same conclusion by 1973.

Mall proposals for Smith Street were not new. In 1961 Mayor Cooper had mooted closing the thoroughfare on Friday nights. Similar suggestions had been made in 1964, 1965, 1969 and 1972. Although they were to be planned experiments, the business proprietors resolutely opposed them, fearing that even such a limited closure would harm trading. However in 1973 the Chamber of Commerce, recognising the increasing threat from the northern suburbs, began pressing for a staged development of a mall. Responding to the requests but also sensitive to the declining fortunes of the CBD, the Council decided to seek submissions about current proposals. A subcommittee was appointed to sift the responses. Its work, however, was cut short by the Cyclone.

Interest was revived in 1976. While the Council favoured a more cautious survey approach, the Darwin Reconstruction Commission (DRC), especially Clem Jones, enthusiastically promoted the mall's cause. In November the Council undertook to study the Commission's proposal (DRC, Pedestrian Mall Study, 1976). To that end, a Pedestrian Mall Coordination Committee was established. Its Chairman, Cec Black, and the project coordinator, Gary Hunt, proceeded in early 1977 on an interstate tour to investigate malls in other cities. Based on their report and spurred by confidence in both the necessity and ultimate success of the project, the Committee decided to push ahead. Even at that stage, it was accepted that provision of adequate off street parking was of utmost importance. Once preliminary planning was complete, it was proposed that a design competition (costing \$10,000) should be held. However, by 1978, that option had been dispensed with and the Council determined to design and construct itself, with the assistance of consultants and citizen advice. The City Engineer's Department was requested to prepare a design document.

In the report (DCC, Smith Street Mall Design Report, June 1978) - a series of recommendations on design features, access, management, legislation and promotion - a particular feature was the emphasis placed upon necessary car parking facilities, seen as an essential ingredient to the mall's success. By and large the Report was a sober appraisal of the project; in many places, it warned against unwarranted

expectations that the mall alone could revive the CBD. For example, commenting on the support given in principle by the local business community, it stressed that the 'design team views with concern the possibly unexpressed faith that the Smith Street traders have in the ability of the pedestrian mall to salvage their operations from Casuarina' (Report, 14).

After its receipt, the Council quickly adopted the proposal. So also did the traders, the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Industries. The cost was expected to be between \$0.25 and \$0.75 million. Negotiations with the government were successful in obtaining a dollar for dollar subsidy (the payment was \$400,000). However, the mall design did arouse considerable opposition from some aldermen, local nurserymen and architects and Project Garden City about deficiencies in layout and shade provision, problems later rectified. In June 1979 a manager was appointed; his role, seen as vital by the design team, was to promote the facility. To fund the management and promotional activities, the local traders consented to the imposition of a special levy. Construction began in April 1979 and was completed by November.

The Smith Street Mall was, for the Council, a project completed relatively quickly and harmoniously. It provided the CBD with a facility admired widely by residents and visitors alike. But its post-construction history has not been without conflict. Associated intimately with the problem of inner city parking, the Council has been often accused by traders of poor planning in respect of the Mall. Moreover, there has been ongoing criticism of its cost of operation; Council was attacked for allegedly relying too heavily on business contributions. In rebuttal, it has been argued that over half the expenses (maintenance and promotion combined) come from Council's general revenue. Nor has the Mall, as the Council planners prophesied, been instrumental in dramatically reversing the CBD's long-term commercial decline but, at least, it can claim that it has played a significant part in arresting the rate of decline.

Suggestions for extension of the Mall have been sometimes advocated since 1981. However, the Council, in the face of trader objections, traffic difficulties and the need to consider the effects of continuing construction projects, have rejected the proposals. Still, there remains a strong expectation that expansion will occur in due course (see DCC, Report into Feasibility of Extension of the Mall, April 1983).

Council's concern for the future of the CBD has, in recent years, been consistently and amply demonstrated. Its latest adventure into rejuvenation has been the proposal for

a re-creation of a Chinatown environment in Cavenagh Street employing a sort of quasi-mall arrangement. Whether its efforts will assist in achieving its desired end must remain to be seen. However, there is no doubt that the costs of such a commitment will be large indeed.

### The West Lane Car Park

Almost from the time of its establishment, the Council has been confronted with parking problems in the CBD. Discussion of meters as a device to control and facilitate parking first arose in 1960 and continued to be a central issue to the 1980s. Other strategies - adequate off-street parking areas, tighter parking restrictions, more rigorous supervision and the provision of multi-storey car parks - have also been long standing features of Council's parking policies.

During the 1960s, the installation of meters was often recommended but always opposed by residents, shopkeepers and the NT News. Owing to lack of finance and the reluctance of government to pay for them, Council, usually divided within itself, could not act. After the Police had objected to being expected to supervise parking, a municipal inspector was appointed in 1965 to oversee by-laws reintroduced in that year. His job was an unenviable one and there was a large turnover of incumbents until Judy Howard - 'the Green Ant' - held the job from 1966 to 1969. By all accounts she was an effective and diligent ticketer. Off-street parks were difficult to acquire because of what the Council condemned as 'hoarding' of land by government. By 1970, however, the Cavenagh Street site of the old High School was made available to Council. Multi-storey car parks, argued particularly vigorously by Roy Barden, prominent businessman and later alderman (1972-75), were sometimes advocated but they were basically seen as unwarranted and extravagant. In 1969 the Council commissioned Pak Poy as consultants on traffic and parking problems in the CBD (the cost was \$65,000). Although there had been numerous in-house committee reports by both government and Council, the Pak Poy exercise was the first major external investigation of what was rapidly becoming a serious situation in the context of booming CBD development, and increasing population and traffic density.

As the parking problems worsened in the pre-Cyclone period, the Council found it increasingly difficult to cope. The Pak Poy Report, published in 1970 and debated extensively in the Council between 1970 and 1974, produced figures on current and projected parking needs which graphically exposed the situation's gravity (for a review of the Report, see NT News, 8 May 1970). Its recommendations,

relevant to parking, most of which were accepted by Council, included the installation of about 700 meters, street widening, toll machines in off-street parks, greater time restrictions and more off-street parking areas. Also proposed was a multi-storey park in Cavenagh Street and, in the longer term, one in Austin Lane. Despite many expressions of support by Council as a whole (and inevitably opposition both within and outside), no meters eventuated. There was expansion in off-street parking, however, notably in the Cavenagh, Bennett, Civic Centre and Esplanade areas. Further efforts were made to police parking restrictions more thoroughly and, increasingly, the necessity of parking buildings, usually in Cavenagh Street on the Town Hall site, was being accepted by aldermen. Finally, there was growing urgency and abrasiveness in Council's criticism of the town planning policy tolerated by government which, because of its failure to enforce sufficient parking requirements for the new construction proceeding apace, was compounding CBD parking difficulties.

The Cyclone provided a brief respite, but by 1976-77 the problems were reasserting themselves. As part of its reconstruction task, the DRC undertook or commissioned a number of studies of development strategies for the CBD (see, for example, DRC, CBD Development Plan Report, June 1977 and Department of Construction Parking and Traffic Management Study, February 1978). For the Council's part, the by then familiar debate on meters continued; in May 1977 it was anticipated that a decision to install about 800 would be made 'soon'. Moves were also made to introduce fees for off-street parking. And with the planning for the Smith Street Mall under way, greater emphasis was being given to the provision of a parking building.

In the Mall Design Report of June 1978, the provision of such a facility was seen as imperative to the long-term success of the Mall: 'It is considered important that the Corporation announce definite plans to build [a] car park complex at the same time as it unveils plans for the Smith Street Mall' (Report, 59). The preferred location was in West Lane where land, although construction was not planned until a later stage, should be acquired (and used for ground level parking) as soon as possible. Of the various options for development, the Report favoured the Council constructing and managing the park itself. The cost of a 560-bay complex was expected to be about \$2.25 million with total operating expenses of about \$300,000. As it was inevitable that it would be under-utilised in its initial period, the shortfall would be covered by revenue from other parking strategies and a special levy on areas directly benefitted. Particular stress was given to the need to provide meters for on-street parking; anticipated revenue when the system was fully operational was nearly \$200,000

which would meet a substantial part of the car park's initial deficit.

A further report was compiled by the City Engineer's Department in January 1979 (DCC, Further Report on Car Parking & Traffic Matters, January 1979). Written in the context of the new Town Plan, big construction projects in the Mall area and increasing concern by CBD traders, the report, after analysing the relative merits of five possible sites, concluded that a location on Cavenagh Street (the 'Workers Club') was best. West Lane was ranked fourth. For funding, the option of providing 'off-street parking with charging for both on/off street parking and subsidising the purchase cost with special rate revenue' was favoured (Report, 5.0). Again, it was envisioned that the area would first only be used for ground level parking; a multi-level facility should only be considered when economically viable and self-supporting.

Shortly afterwards, the Council approached the government with its proposals and strategies to meet the CBD parking problems. It sought funding and a joint program. As justification, it strongly contended that recent government policy had exacerbated the situation. Particularly emphasised was the waiving of parking requirements for new developments stipulated in the 1979 Town Plan in order to stimulate construction. By February 1980, Council secured approval for a 'package to solve the current car-parking problems' (Perron to Stack, 8 February 1980). It included a car park building and other off-street ground level car parks, providing 900 new spaces. As its financial contribution, the government offered a lump sum grant of \$1.7 million together with land worth \$510,000. It considered the offer 'adequate to allow firm decisions to be made to alleviate the parking problems without excessive contributions by other sectors of the community'. Despite claims by the Council for further assistance if circumstances required it, the government refused to concede any more financial backing. While negotiations were proceeding in 1979, the Council had been offered and rejected a proposal by a local company, Redco, to provide a parking building in West Lane.

The decision to construct the car park building was made in 1980. After failing to reach agreement on the Cavenagh Street site, the West Lane property was bought for \$315,000, a loan of \$4 million was granted by the government, tenders were called in September and building (by Watkins) commenced in November. During the year a fierce campaign developed against the introduction of meters; opposition was expressed by the City Circle Traders (CCT), the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, Project Garden City and the NT News among others. There was also a petition signed



by 2,100 residents (including eight aldermen). Four economic appraisals of the project, by Council staff and consultants, were undertaken in 1979-80 (Goodchild and Associates, Preliminary Economic/Financial Appraisal of Five-Storey West Lane Car Park, September 1979; Goodchild/City Engineers Department (CED), Proposed Car Parking Fund (Final Report), September 1980; CED, West Lane Carpark, October 1980; and CED, Establishment of Carparking Fund, December 1980). All reiterated the necessity for on-street charging. For example, the first Goodchild report commented:

[the car park] of itself has no economic viability and the overall operation only becomes even worthy of consideration as an economic proposition if the high estimated returns on investment in on-street meters are pooled with other resources (Goodchild, 2).

Later reports, however, favoured a voucher system of charges rather than meters.

Although the Council in February 1981 agreed to phase in vouchers with payment to begin in October, it scrapped the scheme a month later. Thus Council was left with no comprehensive funding policy for the car park. Throughout 1981, as the car park's construction was proceeding, there was little public conflict except for complaints by some CBD traders about the retail complex included on the ground floor and some comment on the scale of fees set and hours to be open. In December, somewhat behind schedule and \$200,000 over estimate (\$4.2 million), the facility, which included 440 bays on six levels, opened.

The funding issue exploded in 1982. Council consistently refused to implement any on-street parking charging, an attitude which was witheringly attacked by government spokesmen. For example, Jim Robertson, in the debate on a bill enabling Council to create a special fund for parking in the Central Business District, commented that it was 'rather impossible to ask people to pay to use a multi-million dollar car park when they can park in the street for nothing' (Parliamentary Record, [16 March 1983], 2105). But the most contentious aspect was the levy to be paid by developers and businessmen. The pressure groups representing their interests, the City Circle Traders (CCT) and the Business Owners' and Managers' Association (BOMA), supported by the NT News, hoteliers and certain aldermen, attacked the level as discriminatory and detrimental to further development. They proposed other funding strategies which would spread the payment onus more widely (see CED, Report and Submission to Council prepared by BOMA, 15 April 1982). Many of their suggestions were rejected although, in

May, a request was made to, and peremptorily refused by, the government for half the loan to be written off. On the other hand, a supplication for repayments on the loan to be deferred for six months was conceded. Thus, the need to strike a levy for 1981-82 was averted. When a rate was set for 1982-83, the conflict continued but, in the end, BOMA decided to pay under protest. Opposition, but at a less frenetic level, continued in 1983 and 1984 and the levy issue has remained a controversial topic within Council. In its attempts to raise alternative parking revenue and reduce the drain on general rates (\$60,000 in 1982-83, \$130,000 in 1983-84), Council introduced charges for other off-street parking areas (subsequently raised both there and in West Lane), increased fines and tried various schemes to make West Lane more attractive to users. Patronage of and revenue from the facility has, however, failed to meet the expectations of its planners.

Reflecting on the development of the parking building, Cec Black lamented that 'everything that could go wrong with a project went wrong' (interview, 1983). For the most part the Council had itself to blame for that situation. It could be argued persuasively that the decision to construct was taken too precipitously without proper investigation of other parking options or sufficient understanding and attention to the financial ramifications. Critics have also seen the fundamental reliance on in-house economic feasibility advice from Council's Engineering Department as a salient weakness in the investigatory process. At the funding level, the decision to rely exclusively on loan money for the project has been judged unfortunate but, above all, the Council's stubborn refusal to countenance on-street parking charges was a serious flaw. The internecine brawling in the Council on the issue of funding fostered a public impression of confusion and ineptitude, a state of affairs trenchantly highlighted by the media. Some blame has been attributed to the government's readiness to concede the loan without an adequate testing of Council's financial position or strategy to repay. Overall, however, that was of minor significance in explaining Council's subsequent actions. Council, of course, has pointed to government deficiencies as contributing factors - particularly the waiver policy and the legislative delay in agreeing to alternative funding mechanisms (see DCC, History of Council's Application for Legislation to Introduce Car Parking Rating System, May 1982) but they cannot disguise Council's dominant role in mismanagement. The handling of the West Lane Car Park project was certainly not the Council's most auspicious hour!\*

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\*Another enquiry into parking and traffic in the CBD was commissioned in May 1985. Jointly funded by the Council and the Department of Lands, it was undertaken by Pak Poy and

Kneebone. The report became available in January 1986. It recommended steep rises in fees for the car park as one way of addressing the facility's parlous financial position.

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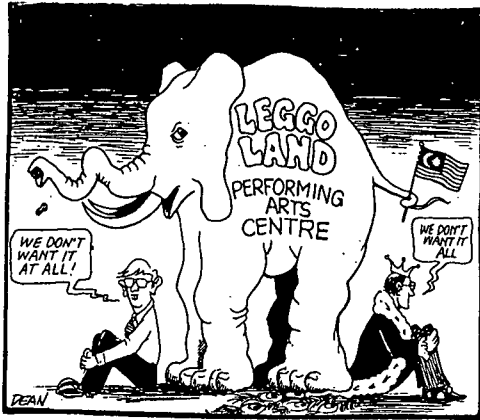
### The Performing Arts Centre (PAC)

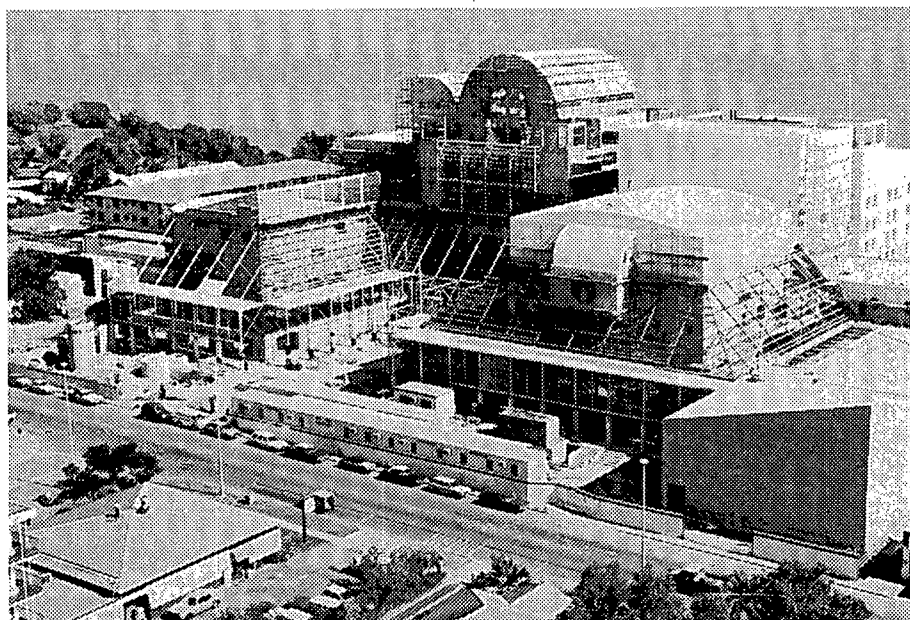
Council's ambition to furnish Darwin with a suitable major venue for performing arts was, like so many other projects, developed early in its career. Before 1970, however, it was only fitfully pursued. Comment on the need for such a facility usually arose in connection with planning for the Civic Centre, complaints about the inadequacy of the Town Hall and lobbying by cultural groups. But, because of its cost, it ranked low in Council's priorities. Community pressure and Council interest rose appreciably in the early 1970s. In 1973 a Darwin PAC Committee, sponsored by the Arts' Council, was formed to spearhead a concerted campaign on Council and government. Despite its efforts and the support given by some in the Council, nothing had been achieved by the time of Cyclone Tracy.

Inspired by Mayor Stack and assisted materially by the largesse of the Australian people after Cyclone Tracy, the project was resurrected in 1975-76. In March 1976, Stack presented a submission to the Darwin Reconstruction Commission which advocated the construction of a PAC financed by the money then available from relief contributions (about \$600,000, much of which had been earmarked by donors for community purposes) in the Mayoral Cyclone Relief Trust Account. With the then applicable four to one subsidy arrangements from the Commonwealth a total of \$3 million was potentially available. Her proposal was endorsed by several community groups although there was fierce opposition from some quarters to the use of relief gifts for such a purpose. Supported by the Commission, the Council decided, in late 1976, to proceed with the project. As a first step, assistance from the Commonwealth was to be sought. However, during 1977, the scheme, beset with continuing dissent about the appropriateness of using the trust moneys and problems of obtaining sufficient land (the site chosen was the area around the Town Hall); made little progress. By mid-1978, with the Council's purchase (for \$120,000) of an adjoining plot of land, the Council was able to announce the projected construction of a \$3.5 million complex including an auditorium, library facilities, meeting and convention space, offices, shops and a restaurant. The announcement of the Council's plans led to complaints by the NT Executive that it implied commitment of funds by the soon to be established NT Government. As no formal approach had been made by Council, the Executive claimed that it had been embarrassed (Everingham to Stack, 15 June 1978). Further

conflict was averted by the decision of the NT Government in August to enter negotiations with the Council with a view to providing more comprehensive facilities (press release, Minister for Community Development, 15 August 1978). Initially, the Council opted for a nationwide design competition but, in the event, the early development of a functional brief was undertaken by the Department of Transport and Works. Later, in mid-1979, Tom Brown and Associates and Hassell and Partners, respected consultants in the performing arts field, were commissioned to prepare a detailed technical analysis. Their report, based on extensive discussion with potential user groups both locally and interstate, was made public in May 1980 accompanied by an announcement of the proposed facilities - principally a 1,200-capacity auditorium, a smaller theatre catering for 250 and a convention centre (see Brown & Hassell, PAC Feasibility Study, March 1980). The projected cost was in the region of \$8 million and the anticipated annual deficit was \$45,000. Intergovernmental discussions on funding were commenced in August 1980. In succeeding months, there was considerable criticism of the delay apparently being taken in expediting arrangements.

From what transpired later, the delay was attributable to a fundamental change in the nature of the project. As Black remembers it, the decision to change direction was largely due to his fear that the project 'would never get...up and running' (interview, 1983) and subsequent discussions with the Chairman of NT Development Corporation. 'We then got the government involved.' From October 1980 the government and the Council had entered into negotiations with private Sabah interests to incorporate the PAC into a much larger hotel development costing about \$40 million. Details of the scheme were released in March 1981 in a storm of criticism about the allegedly furtive proceedings. The NT News referred to them as 'a conspiracy of silence' (NT News, 27 March 1981). Only the Council members of the negotiating team knew of the new deal with the consequence that many aldermen were very annoyed about the secrecy involved. As the original arrangements excluded the smaller theatre and provided a 1,000-seat (rather than 1,200) capacity for the major facility, some opposition was expressed from the cultural community. Their criticism was overcome by later changes to specifications and Tom Brown declared the amended project to be fully in line with the May 1980 recommendations. The new deal committed the Council to a contribution of \$2.17 million, \$1.7 million to be covered by a loan from the NT Government and the remainder by the \$470,000 in the trust account. Also implicated was a transfer of title of the two Council-owned properties to the development company. For its part, the Government was to pay \$7.34 million and provide additional land.





Plates 9 and 10: Aerial view of the Performing Arts Centre under construction (above) and the PAC nearing completion (below).

Council's attitude to the new arrangements was mixed. By a narrow margin, aldermen accepted the deal in mid-April. Attempts to rescind the decision were made in April, May and July were closely contested but failed. While not opposing the PAC outright, the dissenting aldermen claimed that the terms should be renegotiated in order that the effects upon rates (calculated to be at least over 5 per cent in three years) could be mitigated. Opposition to aspects of the funding deal and design was also forthcoming from the community and the media (see, for example, the editorial in the NT News, 26 May 1981, which blasted what it deemed as 'an ill-considered project'). The proximity of the dispute to the 1982 Council elections meant that the issue was featured prominently in the campaign, particularly for the Mayor. Cec Black freely conceded that his part in and later defence of the negotiations was an important factor in reducing his appeal (interview, 1983). He commented that the whole development 'was really an exercise in how not to do [things]; everything went wrong' (interview, 1983).

Throughout 1982, opposition within the Council continued. Further moves in April and June to either quit the project entirely or to delay approval until agreement was reached on an acceptable management structure and procedure for sharing the financial burden of operational deficits were again narrowly defeated. Disputes between the government and the Council over the same issues flared occasionally; in June/July, there was a particularly acrimonious exchange between the Mayor and the Minister for Community Development (see NT News, 16 June and 2 July 1982). However, in the meantime, construction of the complex commenced in April, the Council received a first instalment of its loan in March, and a Manager was appointed in November.

The issues of cost sharing and management were again conflict points in 1983 and 1984. On the former, the Council's position eased from expecting the government to cover all costs for two years (mid-1982) to a 20 per cent Council contribution (August 1983). The government countered with an offer of 40 per cent up to \$280,000 (the revised estimates of operating losses!) leaving the Council to cover the remainder. Dispute over funding, often rancorous, continued with both sides softening their positions gradually. By October 1983, the government was prepared to concede a grant of \$50,000 to assist the development of management plans but it refused to budge from a figure of \$120,000 (subsequently in May 1984 subject to indexing to take account of inflation). For its part, the Council offered \$90,000 in October and finally agreed to a 50 per cent share of losses to upper limit of \$120,000 in March 1984. On the management issue, Council's preferred structure to replace the interim committee in mid-1983 with

a statutory authority (earlier it had suggested either a trust or an independent company) with four Council and three government appointees; one of the latter was to be a representative from the community. It was argued that it would allow management flexibility and ensure an acceptable status. However, the government refused to consider such an arrangement forcing the Council in September to agree to the establishment of a limited guarantee company. Five of its directors were appointed, after advertisement, in December and about 100 'share-holders' (contributing \$10 per share) had joined by May 1984. The final composition of the directorate and the company's constitution were, however, still unresolved.

As a case study of Council decision making, the PAC demonstrated the essentially elitist behaviour of those intimately involved (the Mayor and senior staff) and the difficulties which that can cause in an unstructured - even at times anarchic - representative institution. The elements of secrecy and the imposition of a fait accompli were repugnant to aldermen, even those in sympathy with the arrangements. Moreover, the failure to take account of the management and funding implications before agreeing to participation was an indictment on Council's policy making ability. Cynics could argue that the Council was patently out of its depth in a joint project of such complexity; as a result, it was left with no effective control as recompense for its considerable financial input. Certainly Council's public image was severely dented by its handling of the later stages of intergovernmental wrangling. Yet, in fairness, it should be conceded that the Darwin community, or at least that part which favoured a PAC, owes the Council some gratitude for its part in initiating the project after the Cyclone. And, in financial terms, the Council's commitment to the final project was probably less than would have been expected had a community complex of such proportions been constructed on any other joint basis.\*

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\*The PAC has been plagued by delays in construction and cost overruns. It will not be completed until mid-1986.

## Chapter Six

### ORGANISATION AND MONEY

Although questions of organisation, management and finance may seem prosaic, even in a less than dramatic local government context, they are essential ingredients of a comprehensive understanding of Council's development. Through an analysis of Council and staff organisation, some appreciation of the internal politics and the decision-making process can be gained. As in the areas of inter-governmental relations and of function, the organisational nature and management style of the Council underwent expansion, change and adaptation. That course is charted in a necessarily generalised manner in this chapter. The importance of finance to any service-oriented and administrative government body requires no elaborate justification. In what follows, there are three discrete sections: organisation of the elected element in Council; staff structure and management; and finance.

#### Council Organisation

In order to facilitate its decision-making process, the Council has employed the traditional local government device of a committee system. Its rationale is that, by dealing with detailed and specific business relating to sections of Council's activities in smaller (or different) forums, general meetings can be devoted to broader policy concerns and it should be possible to ensure greater scrutiny and control of sectional operations. Moreover, committees allow for specialisation of members' interests, whether or not they conform to personal preference. Given some continuity of membership, committees can develop a degree of expertise and experience which can serve to counter the influence of permanent officials and provide a consistent approach.

But an effective committee system is hard to achieve. No section of Council's work is self-contained and there are overlapping responsibilities between committees. Thus, many opportunities for intercommittee conflict can occur. Although recommendations on action should flow from committees and debate in general council should be confined to their consideration, there is always a temptation to revert to detailed discussion. Members not on a particular committee often feel they can legitimately discuss all Council functions and consequently committee work is repeated in full Council. With a large mobility of

membership, caused by resignation, electoral loss or transfer, consistency in committee decision-making can be lost.

All those practical problems were prevalent in Council from 1957 to 1963. Indictments of the working of the committee system were made by the Behan/Sewell, Done and 1962 Select Committee reports. In their critiques, its shortcomings contributed significantly to Council's ineffectiveness. Moreover, within Council, frequent dissatisfaction was expressed and reforms were discussed. Influenced both by external and internal factors, the committee system underwent several changes.

In 1957, four committees were established: Finance and General Purpose; Works and Services; Parks and Reserves; and Building and Health. Each, comprising four councillors with the Mayor being the ex-officio fifth member, had responsibility for the operations of one of the four organisational sections. That configuration lasted until 1961 but, as a response to intercommittee conflict and in line with a recommendation from Behan/Sewell, a Coordination Committee, consisting of the Mayor and committee chairmen, was formed in 1959. But that experiment was dispensed with in 1960, largely because it proved to be useless and increased the committee work of certain councillors. When a tripartite departmental structure was introduced in 1961, committees were reduced to three with Parks and Reserves being combined with Building and Health. However, the amalgamated committee, as it did not have a clear functional and administrative focus - much of its business concerned activities in other departments - proved to be the weakest link in what was altogether a fragile chain. Except for the inclusion of a House Committee (a joint councillor/senior staff group) with an unclear and unrealistic mandate to improve the Council's operating procedures, the three committee system staggered on until 1963. Particularly after 1959, there was vigorous debate within Council about the efficacy of committees; motions to abandon the system altogether or to have full Council membership on the key Finance and General Purpose Committee (or an equivalent) were frequently put. Given the obvious distaste of many councillors for the time and effort involved with committee work and the patent ineffectiveness and misuse of the system, its survival could be seen as surprising. But it owed much to the pressure exerted for its retention by the NT Administration and, less significantly, to many councillors' reluctance to get rid of a conventional operating structure. One example of the Council's vacillation is instructive. When organisation was discussed at the beginning of the 1962 Council, a motion that '[a]ll Committee business be carried out by a Committee of the Council as a whole' was carried. Yet, less than a month later it was overturned and three committees were set up (Minutes, 16 July 1962, 7 August 1962).

Finally, although it is difficult to generalise in a period of annual elections and relatively high turnover, there was considerable fluidity in committee membership even in the ranks of the longer-serving.

With the reduction of the Council's size in 1963, there was a revamping of the system. Originally, three committees were established but the important one dealing with finance was a committee of the whole, thus allowing all members participation for the first time. That decision proved salutary as it removed some of the intercommittee conflict over resources. In November 1963, the other two (Works and Services, Building, Health, Parks and Reserves) were combined: it also functioned as a committee of the whole thereafter. A further contraction occurred in 1966 with the decision to have just one combined committee, a situation which lasted until March 1970. Then, largely owing to the rising tide of Council business and organisational expansion but also reflecting the pressure exerted by Mayor Richardson, the four committee system was reintroduced. Despite later attempts (notably in 1972) to revert to one committee, it has survived.

Changes, however, in the functional responsibilities and membership have occurred. From 1970 to June 1972, each committee had four members but, with the return of the ward system and the sensitivity of aldermen to equality of treatment for their wards, the membership was expanded to five including an alderman from each ward. All others on the Council could attend committee meetings and speak but not vote. Following recommendations from the 1974 management review some reallocation of committee duties were implemented in 1975 with a concomitant alteration in nomenclature. The titles between 1975 and 1978 were: Finance and General Purpose; Works, Traffic and Parking; Parks and Recreation; and Planning, Building and Health. Each continued with five members and, after the de facto reinstitution of wards, sectional representation was continued. The consultants' proposal for a Chairmen's Committee, with a broad coordination role, was not taken up. In their report, comment on committee operational deficiencies, reminiscent of early critiques, was tendered. While the conduct of committees was seen as:

generally brisk and to the point, [there was] inadequate definition of responsibilities...insufficient emphasis on policy and planning, as opposed to administrative and operating, issues...cumbersome documentation...[and] lack of provision for co-ordination...(PA Management Consultants, The Corporation of the City of Darwin, Report on Organisation and Management 1974, April 1975, 2-10).

In 1978, again owing much to the influence of the incumbent Mayor, another and more far reaching reform was undertaken; three four member portfolio committees (not always with complete ward representation) - Parks and Reserves, Works, Traffic and Town Planning, and Health, Welfare and General Purpose - were formed. Their responsibilities reflected the increasing range of Council activities. Each alderman served on one committee. In addition, there was a Finance and Policy Committee, consisting of all members. Despite some discussion in 1984 about a further change (particularly the downgrading of Finance and Policy, the creation of another smaller 'super' committee to handle financial and forward planning issues, and a proposal to give committees more executive responsibility), the 1978 system is still in place in 1984.\*

By most accounts, the committee system, through better servicing and increased commitment has worked relatively smoothly in recent years but the continuing debate about reforms indicates some dissatisfaction with its cumbersome-ness. Yet, that characteristic is unfortunately inherent if the committees are to remain bereft of wider executive powers. To give them that capacity, however, would strike at the general authority of full Council and the notion of participative equality for all members in broad decision-making. It could also contribute to heightened conflict both between committees and Council, the level of which has declined significantly since the 1960s.

In addition to the formal committee structure, there have been many subcommittees, appointed both from full Council and its committees, operating for various periods throughout the Council's history. Some have comprised councillors/aldermen alone and others on a joint basis with either Council staff or other governmental representatives. Their activities have covered a wide range of specialised areas pertaining to Council functions, staff matters, community affairs and intergovernmental business. Some are noted elsewhere in this study.

An issue which was frequently debated in the Council and in the media, especially in the pre-Cyclone period, was whether committee meetings should be open or closed to the public. On occasions, it provoked bitter rivalry between members and broadsides of criticism from the NT News. On

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\*Following the 1985-6 review, the committee system was revised. The four new committees are: Administration Services; Community Services; Technical Services; and Planning and Policy. The first three have four members, the last five (the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and the chairmen of the other committees).

the one hand, protagonists of closed committee discussion emphasised the lack of privilege available to members and the inhibition placed on free and fearless canvassing of views. On the other side, the opponents ridiculed the alleged benefits of secrecy, arguing that only in matters relating to staff, tenders and the like should proceedings be closed. At times during the pre-1975 era, the supporters of closure did succeed but, generally since then, the more open approach has been maintained. Open fully or partially, however, committee and even Council meetings have seldom proved to be popular spectacles.

Within the committees and the Council, there has always been considerable tension between members - either individually or in factions - over the perceived level of power or influence wielded. All in principle subscribed to the ideal of equal participation and authority but, in practice, there was a constant striving for pre-eminence. Consensus was often difficult to reach and, even then, was subject to the possibility of rescission. Such motions have been a regular feature of Council although their incidence has markedly declined since the early 1970s. The role of the Mayor has been debated regularly in the interplay of internal conflict over power. All incumbents, even those, like Mayors Chan and Stack acknowledged to be popular and effective, have been criticised for endeavouring to increase their influence. That aspect of Council's power dynamics will be further discussed in Chapter Eight. However, there is a further dimension - the relationship between the elected and official components - which must be addressed before a proper assessment of the decision-making process with Council can be reached. Although, by its nature, it is difficult to gauge, some general comments will be made in the following section.

### Staff Structure and Management

When the Council began operations in 1957, a rudimentary staff establishment was provided. The Municipal Officer (Peter Warren) was seconded as Acting Town Clerk and he was assisted by six other officers (three clerks, two secretaries and a supervisor) and the part-time services of the Town Inspector. Transferred also was the industrial (outdoor, day-labour) workforce, previously employed by the NT Administration on municipal activities in Darwin. About 85 workers (including 15 casuals employed for road repairs) were involved; this imposition on Council was to prove a financial embarrassment to Council in its early years. The initial transitional period was ended with the recruitment of a permanent Town Clerk (Neville Butler) and an Engineer (Geoffrey Spence) in late 1957. They were joined by a Curator of the Botanical Gardens (W J Lester) and a Health

Inspector (William Nevill) in 1958. Lester soon resigned and he was replaced by 'Doc' Alex Mackenzie, a sitting Alderman, in July 1958. A Deputy Town Clerk (Bill Sullivan) was recruited in November 1959; with his elevations to Town Clerk in August 1960, Tom Abbott joined the Council as Deputy Town Clerk/Accountant.

Up to the end of 1960, relations between the elected and official components of Council were strained and often hostile. As was perhaps inevitable in the Council's infancy, there was considerable confusion about the respective roles and expectations of councillors and senior staff in the areas of policy and administration. Particularly irksome to the Town Clerk and Engineer was what they saw as the councillors' frequent interference in administrative and management operations. Both Butler and Spence were criticised publicly on several occasions for alleged shortcomings in performance. After enduring many such attacks and questioning whether the Council needed a Engineer at all, Spence resigned in November 1959. (He was replaced in 1960 by Paul Burns.) Butler survived to July 1960 when he in turn abruptly quit; as a gesture of support, four of his subordinates - key personnel - also resigned. Friction also was evident between councillors and industrial staff during the period. Several councillors perceived it as their civic duty to check the capacity and diligence of Council workers; that practice and the ensuing criticism were resented. Moreover, the Council's curtailment of employment conditions (especially the cost of accommodation and messing subsidies inherited from NT Administration days) led to severe industrial conflict in 1958-59. In the parlous financial position of the time, there was constant pressure on and by Council to reduce the size of the industrial workforce.

Both the Behan/Sewell and the Done reports addressed organisational problems in 1959-60. In the former, the need for a clear definition of executive and administrative functions and responsibilities between Council committees and senior staff was expressly emphasised. So also were the requirements for coordinating mechanisms and sufficient delegation. Structurally, departments, headed by permanent heads and linked to particular committees, were recommended. The role of the Town Clerk as the 'chief administrative officer' had to be recognised and implemented. Conflict between elected and permanent members should not be aired publicly - 'washing dirty linen in public is seldom a profitable practice' - but should be investigated formally and in camera (Report, 17-21). Compared to the generalised prescriptions for organisational (and financial) reform by Behan and Sewell, Done was more specific. Generally, however, he supported the earlier assessment of the Council's difficulties and the required changes. Thus, in place of the prevailing four section arrangement, he detailed a

tripartite departmental structure (36-7, 122-4): City Administration (headed by the Town Clerk); Finance (Deputy Town Clerk); City Works (Engineer). In his view, the Health Inspector was not needed as his limited functions could be undertaken by other departments. Responsibility for parks and gardens should be incorporated into the City Works Department with the Curator being restricted solely to the Botanic Gardens. Done considered that the existing staff levels of 94 could be pruned by at least seven (saving \$23,000) and that, with better use of office accommodation, duty rationalisation and more adequate staff control, productivity of the reduced workforce could be increased.

Done's recommendations were largely accepted and his system remained in operation until 1970. The Health Inspector's position was terminated in 1960; Nevill, after legal proceedings about his entitlements left thoroughly disgruntled. With rising commitments and work levels, the number of staff (non-industrial) rose steadily - a situation which Done had not anticipated. In 1962, there were 19 staff, in 1970, 46. Only one new senior officer - the Director of Parks and Gardens (Brian Edwards) in 1964 - was appointed. (He resigned in 1970, to be replaced by George Brown.) However, from 1967-68 there was increasing discussion of the need to relieve the Deputy Town Clerk of his accountancy function by securing a separate City Accountant. But no substantive new appointment was made until late 1973 (Robert Sadgrove). The rate of growth of the total workforce (the industrial ranks, while fluctuating widely in numbers in line with works on hand and the seasons, also increased) inspired loud complaints at various times from the NT News, the Darwin Ratepayers' Association, Legislative Councillors and the general public.

The redoubtable Bill Sullivan remained as Town Clerk until early 1974. By that time, after over 13 years in that position, he totally dominated the organisation. Extremely autocratic and suspicious of any effective delegation, his style of personal management had largely rendered the departmental system meaningless; his writ extended throughout the whole structure, leaving little authority to his senior subordinates. Fragmentation of the 1960s' arrangements occurred rapidly after 1969. In 1971, a major structural change was the re-establishment of a separate Parks and Gardens Department, headed by a Superintendent. Also in that year, the position of Health Inspector was reactivated. The Municipal Inspectorate increased dramatically in 1973-74. Thus, by the end of 1973, there were six rather than three senior officers directly answerable to the Town Clerk.

Although non-industrial staff numbers were static from 1969-70 to 1972-73, they rose by eight positions alone in

1973-74. Day labour in 1974 exceeded 120 at times. Total employment in October 1974 was 195. An investigation of the operation of the Council was undertaken in 1972 by two Victorian local government officials; their task was to assist in the calculation of the five-yearly review of the government's operational subsidy. They were required to report on 'the reasonableness' of four areas: salaried staff establishment; operating costs; the standard of municipal services; and fees and charges (B C Kelleher and J N Webster, Report in Accordance with Ss289/290 of Local Government Ordinance of the NT Concerning the Corporation of the City of Darwin, 19 October 1972). On the question of staffing, they considered that qualified staff was minimal albeit adequate in the light of the few functions performed. While they admitted that there were significant contributing factors (the award system, the tropical climate, the detailed costing involved, the complex administration and sectionalisation), they criticised the heavy staffing in the lower levels, particularly in the Supervisory area where there was at least five too many. Operational expenses were 'unavoidably heavy, the costs of labour and plant being over 20 per cent higher in Darwin'. Services provided, though limited in range, were similar to comparable areas in Victoria and, for the most part, fees and charges were satisfactory. On the whole, the report was not a serious indictment of Council activities. However, certain Council members and staff, by 1973, had concluded that a change in organisational style was overdue. Approaches were made late in that year to a leading management consulting company (PA Management Consultants Pty Ltd).

After preliminary meetings and a formal offer to Council, PA was commissioned to conduct a preliminary review in April/May 1974. Significantly, that was immediately after the retirement of Sullivan. Its report (PA, The Corporation of the City of Darwin: Recommended Programme of Consulting Assistance, May 1974) was a curious mixture of cautious praise of past performance and a judicious critique of Council's present and future capacity. Both, of course, were persuasive selling points to an organisation desirous of change. Its major finding was that: although the Council

has developed quickly and, generally, soundly [it was now] at a stage where it wishes to assume greater strength and effectiveness and the only way to achieve [that] objective is to concentrate more of its resources on forward planning and policy matters (Report, 9-10).

Although the standing of the Council was assessed as 'very high', it suffered from an image of 'a subordinate entity' which should be dispelled. The quality of aldermen and key officers was also high but their talents were frustrated by

over-concentration on detailed operating matters, the lack of specified objectives, and ineffective working priorities. An increase in staffing and improvement in administrative and accounting methods were seen as imperative. Included also was a catalogue of topical financial, functional and political issues perceived to be of general concern. Finally, it remarked:

The management style...is undergoing a major change following the retirement of the former Town Clerk and the appointment of a new Town Clerk...the new style of increased involvement of key Officers is excellent and that it will improve the overall effectiveness of the Corporation. Nevertheless, it has a long way to go to reverse the former autocratic style and this change must be fostered by the Aldermen and Officers (Report, 9).

A package of consulting assistance was outlined at a cost of \$23,500, a figure which at only 1 per cent of annual expenditure, the consultants believed could be handsomely recouped. The commission was accepted by Council. It is not known how Sullivan reacted.

Unlike the preliminary review, the final report, published after the Cyclone, was hardhitting and severely critical (PA, The Corporation of the City of Darwin: Report on Organisation and Management 1974, April 1975[?]). On the overall structure, the major failings were identified as the lack of a proven management team (many positions were either newly-filled or vacant) and provisions for personnel development, insufficient delegation of duties, unclear definitions of departmental and officer responsibility and inappropriate allocation of functions. As reform measures the report recommended the establishment of four departments headed by officers reporting to the Town Clerk as Chief Administrative Officer. They were: Administrative Services and Community Services (Deputy Town Clerk); Finance (City Accountant); City Engineers; Parks and Recreation. Allocation of departmental functions and responsibilities were detailed in subsequent sections and in the series of job specifications in the appendices. The structure of proposed departments, allowing for improved delegation and extra senior positions, was also carefully specified. Further sections focussed upon management deficiencies and rectification proposals both in the organisation as a whole and in separate departments. Particularly emphasised were the improvement of communication between all levels and sections of the organisation and the need to strengthen planning processes and procedures. Although not directly cited as such, corporate management strategies, involving among

others regular 'senior staff action meetings', a sophisticated communications network, staff appraisals, mechanisms for forward planning and control, personnel development, and definition of objectives and priorities, were strongly recommended. Finally, a comprehensive implementation program was outlined; completion dates were proposed within a period ending in July 1975.

Obviously, Cyclone Tracy interfered with the implementation expectation but the general dimensions, although not always to the precise letter, of the PA recommendations have informed the organisational development of the Council since 1975. The full flood of reform was delayed until after the arrival of a new Town Clerk in late 1977. Tom Abbott, who succeeded Sullivan in 1974, while recognising in part the dictates of modernisation, was still essentially a member of the old school of municipal administration. His abrupt resignation in mid-1977, occasioned largely by his dissatisfaction with what he saw as Mayoral interference with his role as Chief Administrative Officer, cleared the way for his replacement by a young, academically qualified 'modernist', Greg Hoffman. During Hoffman's period of office (1978-82), a conscious and determined program of management reorientation was pursued. It still dominates organisational philosophy in the Council in 1984 although some reservations are currently emerging. In July 1984, moves to conduct another management and efficiency review were announced.\* Proponents of the corporate planning philosophy, and particularly the senior staff, have advocated the need for management reorganisation. In fact, the consultant employed to carry out the social needs investigation (Dr Glenn Watkins) was reported to have informed the Council that 'its present operational style was awful' (NT News, 12 April 1984). In his view, future priority should be given to the development of human resources.

One major feature of the new approach has been the drive towards corporate management and planning. The significance of senior staff in their development has been fundamental; the acceptance of the strategy by the elected members derives to a large part from the influence of that group. By far the most important agency has been the Chief Officers' Group, established by Hoffman in early 1978. Since its institution, it has steadily gained in self-

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\*The review, carried out by Touche Ross Services and Pak Poy and Kneebone was completed in April 1985. It cost \$161,000. On the whole, it reported favourably on Council's operations although a number of weaknesses were identified. A major recommendation, later accepted, was the creation of a new Department of Community Services. The Deputy Town Clerk was to be restyled as Administration Manager.

confidence and assertiveness, characteristics which, in part, stemmed from the support given to the group by Mayors Stack and Black and certain aldermen prominent in the corporate planning operation. It sees its primary role as the achievement of the Council's 'objectives through the efficient and effective management of Council resources'. Thus, it has stressed its coordination, communication and policy identification and review functions.

In that development, the Council was treading a well worn path in Australian local government theory and practice. Much of the literature supports the concepts and principles of the new management direction. However, some recent dissenting views have questioned its effects on the democratic fabric of local government (see, for example, M A Jones 1981). Although they concede the problems with departmentalisation and rigid hierarchy and some advantages to corporate strategies, they point to the countervailing bureaucratic and professionalisation tendencies, the accretion of power to senior officers (particularly town clerks and engineers) and the consequent diminution of authority by the elected component. The dangers inherent in any bureaucratic organisation having a well developed corporate personality, expectations and ambitions are manifold. To many critics, they are evident already in Darwin.

Besides the more general democratic considerations, the new management style in the Council has been affected by internal difficulties. One is the high turnover of staff, particularly in the crucial financial sector. Between 1973 and 1984, there have been no fewer than seven substantive or acting city accountants and, at lower professional levels, there has also been considerable transience. In the same period, five have occupied the deputy town clerk's position. A second difficulty has been the dearth of candidates well qualified - either academically or professionally - for senior posts despite the healthy salaries and perquisites offered. But that is a problem that confronts most Australian local government authorities. Credibility of performance in senior Council staff ranks has suffered from the lack of stability and status. With the recent prominence given to intensive monitoring of staff activities, personnel development and performance reviews - all features of corporate management - introspective analysis is sometimes seen as detrimental to productivity and one of the factors leading to demands for extra management positions. So too has been the proliferation of committees and group meetings which has been spawned in the new approach. For example, along with the Chief Officer's Group, a Secretaries' Group and a Supervisors' Group have been formed. All these activities have contributed significantly to the generation of vast amounts of paper work, the management of which also demand more staff

resources. Between 1978 and 1982, the weekly handling by the Records Section rose from 307 to 602 and incoming and outgoing correspondence grew from 15,590 to 31,329.

The Council workforce has expanded from about 190 (50 salaried; 140 industrial) in 1976 to about 340 (163; 177) in 1984 - a rise of 90 per cent. A part of that increase is, of course, attributable to the additional functions undertaken. When Libraries were transferred in 1980, a new department, headed by the City Librarian (Barrie McIntyre), was created. In 1984, it had nearly 40 employees. (On the other hand, some functional positions were lost; one reduction was the Health Inspectorate in 1980-81.) Moreover, a greater level of activity in long standing commitments gave an additional impetus. Post-1976 management developments have been a significant cause for growth in the administrative structure. Since 1979, an Executive Assistant, a Projects Officer, an Administrative Officer and a Public Relations Officer have been employed. The latter, discussed since the mid-1970s, was a response to the unfavourable public image perceived by both aldermen and staff. A truism in local government finance is that, unlike commercial undertakings, an objective is to equate expenditure to income. As Council income has increased dramatically in the past decade, staffing levels have moved in sympathy. Whatever the balance of causes, the burgeoning size of the Council workforce - and more particularly that in senior posts - has attracted opposition and cynicism. A notable critic has been the NT News which often has lambasted what it sees as 'top-heavy bureaucracy' (for example, see NT News, 29 August 1981).

From a situation in the 1950s when the elected members effectively dominated the staff, a more even balance was struck in the 1960s and early 1970s which survived in spite of the strains imposed by Bill Sullivan's approach to management. Largely owing to the efforts of Mayor Stack in the post-cyclone period which, of course, shifted the focus of influence within the elected Council, the equilibrium was maintained. However, in the 1980s, a shift of power to the senior staff was discernible. What pattern might eventuate in the future will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

## Finance

In 1969, when he was campaigning for the mayoralty, Bill Richardson referred to the Council as having become 'big business' (NT News, 24 September 1969). At the time, Council's income was estimated to be about \$2.8 million. By 1983 and 1984-5, it was about \$25 million, a figure which more than justifies a similar contemporary comment. Even allowing for the effects of inflation over the period and

the difficulty of making accurate comparisons because of the different accounting systems used over time, income growth has been dramatic. Using a series of five year time spans, the sequential pattern of growth can be appreciated. With a base figure of \$294,000 in 1957-58, the percentage increase in 1962-63 was 55 per cent. Between 1962-63 and 1967-68, it was 182 per cent; between 1967-68 and 1972-73, 160 per cent; between 1972-73 and 1977-78, 57 per cent; and between 1977-78 and 1982-83, 332 per cent. The massive growth rates in the 1960s were fuelled by major population increase which extended the rating base, a rapidly widening area in which to implement the original Council functions and a number of major projects requiring inputs of capital which was included in Council accounts. In the mid 1970s, the relatively moderate growth was attributable in major part to the disruption caused by Cyclone Tracy after 1974. Although the rise in the late 1970s and early 1980s was, in crude figures, enormous, there were several factors which drastically inflated the totals, chief among which were the large surpluses carried forward - for example, in 1981-82, over 27 per cent of the total budget - the impact of loan money for costly projects like the car park building and a change in accounting practice whereby all income (rather than net of income) was included. However, it also reflected the growth of function - libraries alone in 1982-82, attracted over \$1 million in government subsidy, based on a 9:1 cost sharing arrangement - consistently high boosts in rates, staff expansion and a general increase in Council activities.

Council's income, as elsewhere in local government, comes from property based rates, rentals, fees and charges for services and government subventions. Again accounting problems make comparisons throughout the entire period difficult. However, until 1976-77, as full particulars of all income were separately listed in the summaries of estimates, some accuracy is possible. In the case of rates (general and loan) from 1957-58 to that year, there was a consistent proportional increase from about 15 per cent to over 50 per cent. Other non-government sourced income rose from about 6 per cent to 19 per cent (although nearly half was cyclone insurance payments). The third category - government contributions - correspondingly fell from nearly 80 per cent to 15 per cent. (The remaining items in 1976-77 were internal transfers, loan receipts, bank interest, sale of assets, surplus accounts, and cash balance.) It should be noted, of course, that the latter year in the comparison was rather atypical because it was in the post-cyclone period when the bulk of government expenditure was being directed to other institutions (particularly the Darwin Reconstruction Commission). Nevertheless, the figures indicate that, near the end of the Commonwealth period, the Council's income components were approaching national norms.

For example, in 1974-75, they were 58 per cent rates, 14 per cent other non-government and 28 per cent government grants (ACIR, 3). Since self-government, largely because of large surpluses brought forward, the component proportions are somewhat distorted. Using 1982-83 as an example, the composition of Council income was: surplus and interest, 29.3 per cent; general rates, 23 per cent; loan rates, 2.8 per cent; other non-government revenue, 20 per cent; government input, 19 per cent; and loans, 5.6 per cent. If loan transactions and the surplus were excluded, the percentages were: rates, 37; other, 33; and government, 30.

Throughout, a main element of government financial assistance has been the operational subsidy. As with rates and other Council revenue, it was discretionary income, able to be allocated as Council determined. It was set, during the Commonwealth era, for five-yearly periods, a system which, because of its inflexibility, was unsatisfactory to the Council. Over the length of the contract, the relative worth of the subsidy declined under the impact of inflation and the increase in the population served by Council. Renegotiation was normally bitterly contested by Council and government although Council did not have a viable bargaining position. As an income component, the operational subsidy was quite stable (for example, it was \$310,000 in the mid 1960s and \$290,000 in the mid 1970s) but as a percentage, it declined rapidly from about 30 per cent to 7 per cent. New arrangements were introduced when, with self-government, the situation in the NT was adapted to fit the prevailing national mode of funding local government. Thus, the recently instituted tax-sharing system, whereby councils were allotted a share of personal income tax receipts raised in the Territory (currently 2 per cent) was adopted. Determination of its allocation, as well as an augmentation element provided by the NT Government, to particular councils in the NT has been based on population and rating capacity considerations. Since 1980, the task has been undertaken by a Local Government Grants Committee. By that means, the Council has received an operational subsidy which incorporates, unlike the earlier model, a consistent growth-factor albeit the rate of growth has caused Council concern; in 1978-79, it was \$0.5 million and, in 1983-84, \$1.7 million. However, as a proportion of income, between 7 and 9 per cent in recent years, it has remained relatively stable.

Other government assistance over the years has been substantial. Historically, it has taken the major form of capital subsidies and grants for Council projects. The level, of course, related to the number and cost of the projects concerned and thus necessarily fluctuated. Once again, the provision (or non-provision, as the case might be) of such finance was a fertile area of intergovernmental

conflict. Recently, another dimension, subsidies on operational costs, has become more common; the arrangements made in regard to the library function and the PAC are examples in point. As noted earlier in Chapters Three and Four road funding has also been a contentious area. Although conflict probably peaked during the road reconstruction controversy, allocation remains a source of friction. Dispute since 1981 over the share of Commonwealth grants for local roads, in which local government is given only a scant 11 per cent, has been ongoing. A final category has been loan finance. Up to the mid 1960s, Council loans were usually obtained from commercial institutions but, increasingly, reliance on the source has been replaced by intergovernmental loans. Debt servicing costs in the early 1980s, excluding the separate carparking fund, were about \$1 million per year.

Little needs to be written on expenditure patterns: most of the relevant information has been discussed, albeit obliquely, in Chapters Five and Six. It is, however, interesting to note that, unlike the general pattern elsewhere, a comparatively small proportion of Council's spending is devoted to roads; against an average 35 per cent nationwide, in Darwin less than 20 per cent has usually been committed. That largely reflects the fact that most roads have been constructed by other levels of government or by private developers. Thus, the spread of finance among functional areas is more even despite nearly half of the budget being concentrated in the works area.

Rigorous government control has been a feature of Council's financial operations. But that has been a traditional characteristic of Australian local government and a significant factor in its subservient constitutional position. Despite some loosening of constraints in recent years and further concessions proposed in the review of the Act, government has always possessed an impressive arsenal of control through legislative provisions, audit processes, inspectorial reviews and the need by Council to justify certain classes of expenditure. The reasons for such control have been partly traditional, partly the fear that local government could be a fertile field for waste, financial maladministration or corruption and partly because of the level of government commitment. Needless to say, the Council has always chafed under the constraints.

Some of the restrictive provisions were caused by the financial performance of the council in its early years. Between 1958 and 1960, an almost permanent state of crisis existed with a series of deficits and 'austerity budgets'. The 1962 Select Committee caustically referred to the 'holiday mood' prevailing in the period (Report, 4). All of the contemporary investigations strongly recommended that

detailed published estimates should be closely observed and only in exceptional circumstances should transfers between items be sanctioned by government. Done even proposed that any illegal disbursement should be made good by the councillors themselves (Report, 96). Subsequently, the Council was bound to control its expenditure in broad conformity with its estimates. Moreover, after 1962, cash advances and capital subsidies and grants by governments were paid only upon receipt of evidence of expenditure or substantial commitment in respect of projects concerned. While the latter has been made more flexible, the conformity principle still operates.

To any local government authority and to its public, the collection of rates is a sensitive issue. The question of Commonwealth loan rates has already been canvassed but there were a number of other areas which pitted the Council against specific groups in the community; two of the more vexed were in the 1960s and concerned the Darwin Turf Club and the Waratahs Football Club when both contended that, as their labour and financial resources had developed their facilities, rate concessions should be extended. The Council disagreed. Later concessions were extended to pensioners but the Council has generally jealously protected its rating base. For example, it has consistently refused to introduce discounts for early rate payments, a common practice elsewhere.

Ever since the expansion of the city into its northern reaches, Council has been concerned about the rating differentials between various parts of the urban area. The most notable anxiety has been the protection of inner city residents (and property) from escalating rates caused by spiralling land values. Thus, the Council has advocated, more stridently in the 1980s, a change from the unalloyed Unimproved Capital Value system and demanded government approval for the introduction of a minimum rate at the very least and the ability to charge flats and home units as separate rating entities. Much to Council's disgust, the matter is still under consideration by government although indications are that, despite the political sensitivity of the cost ramifications in the populous northern suburbs, some alteration will be allowed.\* In the late 1960s, another expedient taken by the Legislative Council to control differential growth of rates (and supported for most of the time by Council) was the delay (over four years) in introducing new valuations. But that proved only to delay a

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\*The levying of differential rates and rating multi-unit properties were allowed in 1985. In the Local Government Act (1985), Councils will be permitted to determine their preferred rating basis.

later and heavier imposition. After an experiment with annual valuation, in the early years of Council, which proved to be nugatory, five-yearly periods were accepted in 1962-63. The problems experienced between 1967 and 1971 alluded to above led, in 1973, to a triennial valuation term. Theoretically shorter valuation periods should tend to reduce violent increases but in the climate of high inflation and soaring land values, the greater frequency has exacerbated both dissatisfaction and the desire to amend the rating system.

Rate increases generally meet with scant approval by property owners and, if reflected in rentals, by other residents. Where heavy increases have been made, as has consistently occurred in the 1980s, explosions of anguish and disgust are vented, notably in the press.\* The NT News apparently has a stock editorial heading 'The Big Spenders' in its critique of recent Council budgets (see, for example, the NT News, 15 September 1982 and 14 September 1983). Strategies on rating have varied; some Councils have consciously (as between 1957-58 and 1960-61, the late 1960s and the mid 1970s) tried to limit rate increases with the result of having eventually to resort to massive increases. Others, notably in the 1980s, have opted for regular rises. Either way, the public are bound to be upset; it is only the frequency of criticism that is affected. Following characteristic attitudes towards broader government imposts and spending, little public understanding is evident in relating services received to money contributed. The problem, however, is greater in the realm of local government finances because the services provided are frequently either not comprehended or taken for granted.

Finally, some attention should be given to the question of financial performance. Council's record has sometimes attracted praise but, more often, has been the subject of complaint and abuse. Evaluating performance in any government organisation is notoriously difficult and certainly no easy or definite answer is possible. Opinions will differ according to each critic's perspective. Here, only a broad outline of the debate can be presented. Since the series of reports between 1959 and 1962, there has been little relevant published material. What there was, the 1972 Kelleher/Webster inspection and the PA Management report in 1974-75, were not notably critical. Both accepted that Darwin conditions were not propitious to economic efficiency. Of the mitigating factors, the high labour cost, the problem caused by seasonal conditions, the inappropriate budget and rating cycle just before the onset

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\*However, a smaller increase occurred in 1984 (6.5 per cent).

of the 'wet' and excessive government control, are cited as being largely beyond Council control. There is also no doubt that aldermen, as far as their expertise and their independence from staff advice permit, conscientiously attend to consideration of estimates and periodic financial reports. As the budget is concerned primarily with approved function and much of the expenditure is incremental on past commitments, little opportunity or incentive exists to review financial priorities seriously. New programs, projects and operations, the areas in which most recent criticism has occurred, are funded by 'new' money and thus do not impinge on the expansion of prior activities. On the other hand, there have been seemingly valid queries on the costs of staff expansion, particularly in the administrative area (salaried staff incur on-costs of 45-50 per cent), of the employment of industrial staff in preference to a wider application of contracts, of the hesitant progress towards a 'user-pays' practice, of 'non-essential' activities like public relations and of extension into the potentially expensive welfare and social development fields. Whatever might be a proper verdict on performance, the sudden uncovering in 1984 of a sum of over \$80,000 from a trust fund reputedly closed some years before must raise disturbing doubts about the efficiency of Council accounting. So too do the reports of auditing authorities over the years (see, for example, the report of the NT Auditor-General December 1983).

## Chapter Seven

### ELECTIONS

For many Darwin residents, involvement in local government affairs is limited, as elsewhere, to periodic voting in Council elections. The extent of genuine interest is, however, masked by the presence of compulsory voting which certainly inflates the turnout figures. What percentage of voters would participate under a non-compulsory system cannot be estimated but it would undoubtedly be significantly lower than it is. In Darwin, moreover, the salience of certain demographic and occupational characteristics must be taken into account. Their influence as potent factors constraining the development of civic awareness or commitment is usually unreflected in election results. But, despite their shortcomings as instruments for conferring legitimacy or defining mandates for councils, elections are important events in the life of any representative body and thus warrant detailed attention. They also include several of the more diverting incidents in the Council's history.

This chapter is divided into three broad sections. In the first, the development of the electoral system, characterised by experiment and change, is outlined. The second focusses on the experience of actual elections from 1957 to 1984 and the third upon parties and groups which participated in the electoral process.

#### The Electoral System

Between 1957 and 1982, the number of eligible voters in municipal elections increased dramatically. In 1957, the electoral roll contained a scant 1,253 names. By 1963, it had grown to over 6,000 and, in 1969, exceeded 10,000. Over 19,000 were enrolled in 1975 and about 26,000 in 1981. A major part of the expansion was, of course, attributable to the steep rise in Darwin's population during the period and the extension of municipal boundaries to incorporate new growth areas. Changes to eligibility criteria and other regulations were, however, also important contributing factors.

Under the original Ordinance, the franchise schedules included residential and property-based prescriptions. Subject to traditional nationality, citizenship and age constraints, the vote was extended to those who had resided in Darwin for a year before enrolment day or who owned or occupied ratable land. There were additional provisions

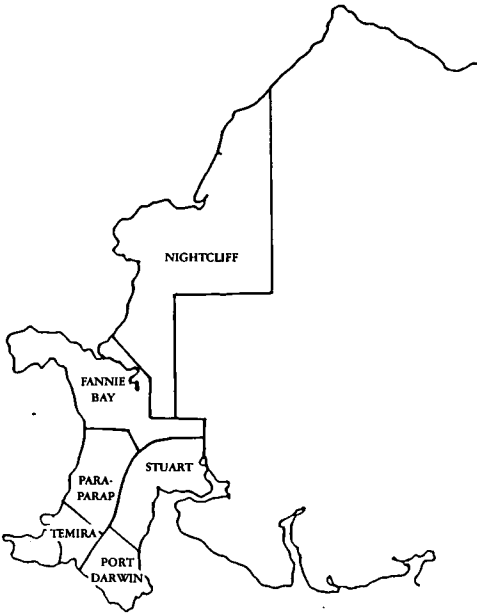
which enabled corporate bodies, trustees and owners or occupiers of ratable properties to nominate voter representatives. Persons qualified under the property-based sections could not be enrolled if rates were over six months in arrears. Where a ward system was in operation (as in Darwin from 1957 to 1963), there was a capacity for plural voting in that owners or nominees could cast ballots in respect of property held in different wards. However, only one vote in each ward was allowable. There were no provisions for compulsory enrolment, postal or absentee voting.

Considerable debate about voter eligibility and voting procedure took place in the early years of municipal government in the Council itself, in the local media and among ratepayers. At election times, there were loud complaints about the unsatisfactory state of the rolls and particularly the purging of those who had not met the rate-paying proviso or who had not voted in previous elections. Some rectification occurred with the effective introduction of compulsory enrolment for the 1961 election (an earlier amendment in 1959 had proved badly drafted and administratively defective) but for the most part the problems were overcome by the decision to implement the full adult franchise in 1962 as part of a package of electoral reforms.

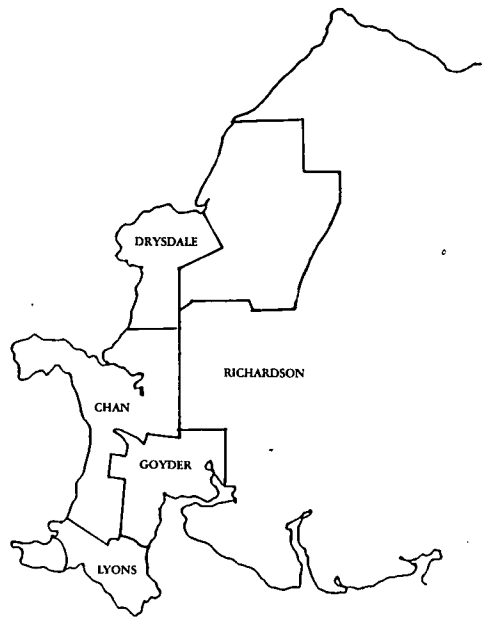
Although the institution of universal suffrage was opposed by some councillors, ratepayers and legislators who defended the principle of the ratepayer franchise and who feared that under the new system ratepayers would be swamped by transients, it seemed to most to be a sensible reform. Both the Behan/Sewell Report and the Legislative Council Select Committees had expressed support and the Council itself had also endorsed it in April 1959 and February 1961. Thus, from the 1963 election the Commonwealth roll was used for Council elections and as a consequence the provisions for nominees and plural voting were removed. In 1969, an attempt was made to reintroduce voting rights for owners of ratable land resident outside the municipality (with the possibility of multiple voting by persons qualified as residents and nominees) but it was defeated.

Other changes affecting the franchise were the provisions for postal voting (commenced in 1966), for special circumstances voting (1972) and for the extension of voting rights to residents on military bases (1977). In line with developments elsewhere in Australia, the age limit was reduced to 18 in 1974. A final noteworthy event was the decision to allow, with the dispersal of population after Cyclone Tracy, non-residents to vote. Those on the roll on 24 December 1974 were entitled to participate in the 1975 Council election. That right was removed for the supplementary elections in 1976.

### WARD BOUNDARIES



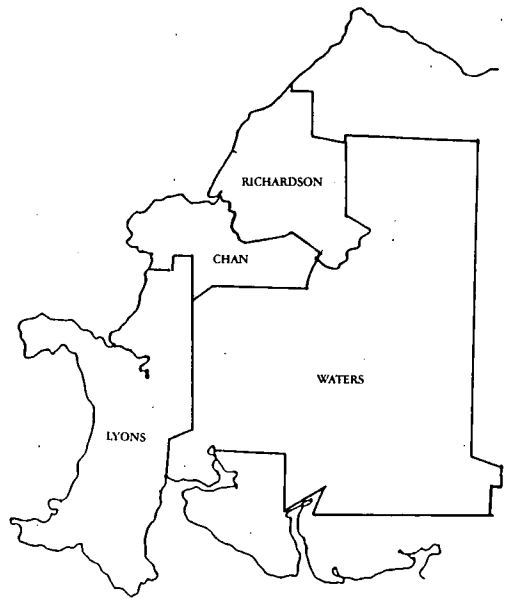
**Map 3 1957**



**Map 4 1971**



**Map 5 1978**



**Map 6 1984**

Since 1957, The Council has been elected under five different structural regimes. In the first period (1957-63) a system of six wards each returning two councillors was adopted. The wards which bore some resemblance to the town based Progress Association districts before 1957 but which also took account of population increase in the Fannie Bay/Parap area, are depicted in Map 3. Elections for half the Council (one from each ward) and the Mayor were conducted each year. With the exception of the six who were balloted to contest the 1958 election, the normal term for councillors was two years. Experience with municipal government under the existing arrangements convinced most Councillors that the term of office of both Mayor and Council should be extended to three years, a conviction that was strongly supported by the Behan/Sewell and the Select Committee reports. There was less unanimity in the discussion of reform in relation to the abolition of wards or the preferred size of a reformed council. In February 1961, the Council backed abolition but later there was debate about the need for a referendum to determine the voters' views. That point was taken up in the interim report of the first Select Committee in August. However, in the Done Report, the division of Darwin into wards was cogently attacked on the grounds of excessive parochialism and sectionalism and the imbalance in the allocation of resources. Done further considered that 'Darwin could be adequately and efficiently represented...by approximately half the present members especially if the ward system...was abolished' (Done 1960, 7). For its part, the second Select Committee, after hearing the views of most incumbent councillors, the Mayor and Council officials, found 'a preponderance of opinion' in favour of abolition and no need for a referendum on the issue (Select Committee Report 1962, 4-5). Based on that evidence, wards were removed but in an amended ordinance a procedure for their possible re-establishment involving a petition signed by not less than two-fifths of the electors was included. The determination of the size of the new Council was the responsibility of the Administrator-in-Council. In the end, it was decided to create eight Councillors, a number less than the 12 preferred by the then Council in 1961.

The second phase remained in operation until 1972. By the late 1960s with the rapid increase in Darwin's population and expansion of the urban area, there were growing demands for a return to a ward system. Most of the councillors (aldermen after 1964) of the period lived in the inner city, leading to accusations that they were favouring their own particular residential locations. Lack of representation of the northern suburbs - new and old - was seen as an indictment of the prevailing system. Taking advantage of the re-establishment provisions, the newly reformed Darwin Ratepayers' Association in 1971 organised a petition

which succeeded in attracting about 4500 signatures. The elected Legislative Councillors from Darwin also supported the demand. Finally, even though the incumbent Alderman (but not the Mayor) submitted a counter-petition for retention in which they defended the Council's performance under the existing arrangements and stressed the inherent dangers of parochialism in a ward system, re-introduction was sanctioned. The Association's suggestion of five wards each returning two members was adopted; in Map 4, the new divisions are shown.

That third structure was however shortlived being one of the casualties of Cyclone Tracy. In the aftermath of the massive demographic disruption, the Legislative Assembly, supported by the Council, attempted to postpone the election scheduled in early 1975 but the legislation was refused assent on the grounds that no extension of a representative body beyond its legitimate term could be countenanced. Faced with the rebuff, the Assembly opted to abolish wards and return to a single city wide electorate, retaining nevertheless the same Council size of ten. The change was always seen as a temporary expedient and with the comparatively rapid resumption of urban normality a de facto ward representation was instituted in 1977. Aldermen were appointed to three wards, each encompassing three Assembly electoral districts. It was expected that subsequently that arrangement, with each ward having four aldermen, would be accepted. In the event, however, four wards returning three aldermen were created for the 1978 election (see Map 5). That system - the fifth - suitably adjusted to take account of municipal boundary extensions, population growth and new Legislative Assembly voting districts, pertains in 1984 (see Map 6).

One further change which perhaps will signal a sixth phase should be noted. In 1980 the Council's term of office was increased to four years, a decision which brought it into line with the Assembly's. It came into effect with the 1984 election. The extension proposed by the NT Local Government Association is expected to provide greater stability and opportunity for longer-term planning by the Council.

Change, albeit less frequent, has also been a feature of the Council's voting systems. From 1957 to 1962 the first-past-the-post procedure was used for both Mayor and councillors in general and supplementary elections. Candidates for the mayoralty could not stand at the same time for a councillor position. As part of their proposals for electoral reform, Behan/Sewell and the 1962 Select Committee favoured preferential voting and that was duly incorporated in the original amending ordinance in 1962. At the same time, however, the inclusion of provisions that

mayoral candidates must also nominate for councillor and that their failure to be elected in a Council capacity excluded them from the mayoralty created problems for the application of dual ballots under the preferential system. In 1963, therefore, both requirements were removed although the ability of persons to stand for Mayor and Councillor at the same election was retained. To overcome the problem fully, it was initially intended to resurrect first-past-the-post for all elections but a subsequent amendment kept preferential voting for the mayoralty. Thus, from 1963 preferential was the preferred system for mayoral and for supplementary elections where only one vacancy was at stake. But it was an attenuated form as allowance was made for one or more squares on the ballot to be left blank. First-past-the-post was used for general elections and for supplementary elections where there were two or more positions to be contested; votes up to the required number to be elected were of equal value. In the case of a candidate for both Mayor and Councillor (alderman) being successful in the former election, his tally in the latter would be transferred where his supporters clearly indicated their intention to other contestants (for example, where there were eight to be elected a voter would mark nine choices on his ballot). The only other noteworthy change was the decision of the NT Government in 1979 to require a full preferential procedure, a move designed to bring municipal elections into line with recently introduced Assembly practice.

Procedures for filling vacancies and for supplementary elections were altered several times during the period. Between 1957 and 1963, where an office of Mayor or councillor became vacant in the six months after the annual election in July, a supplementary election was mandatory. In the second part of the year an appointment could be made by the Council. Consequent on the institution of triennial elections, vacancies were filled by election in the first two years; those in the Council in the last year could be filled by appointment by the Administrator-in-Council. On the other hand a casual mayoral vacancy at any time did not require a supplementary election; a Councillor (alderman) could simply be appointed to the position, again by the Administrator-in-Council. However, in 1969 the mayoral situation was made similar to that of aldermen. More recent changes of significance were the returning to the Council itself of the right to appoint substitutes in 1974 and an amendment in 1981 which brought the procedures into phase with the new four year timetable of 'ordinary' elections.

Throughout, the conduct of polls has been controlled by the Council itself; the Town Clerk has invariably been the Returning Officer and the booths have been manned by Council staff. Because of the slowness in counting and procedural

wrangles, there has been some advocacy in recent years for elections to be run by the NT (or Commonwealth) Electoral Office. However, the right has been jealously protected by Council.\*

The approved dates for general polls were fixed on the first Saturday in July until 1962. Following criticism in Council and in the Behan/Sewell and 1962 Select Committee reports that the July date left little time for incoming councils to prepare and consider estimates and construct a budget by the end of August, in 1963 authority was granted for a council to select a Saturday in May or June. The month, April, was also included in 1974. As part of a standardisation of all 'ordinary' municipal elections in the Territory, however, the last Saturday in May was made polling day.

#### The Election Experience 1957-84

In the era of annual elections (1957 to 1962) there were six general elections and seven supplementary elections. Turnout was generally low; only in 1957 and 1960 (when the mayoralty was contested) were turnouts higher than 65 per cent; in 1957, reflecting the initial enthusiasm at the granting of municipal government, it exceeded 85 per cent and in 1960 it was about 70 per cent. But the uncertain accuracy of the rolls (a continuing problem in Territory elections), the absence of postal voting and the number of uncontested vacancies were contributing factors in explaining the level of turnout under a system of compulsory voting if enrolled. Four mayoral elections were uncontested (1958, 1959, 1961 and 1962). In 1959, however, two candidates did nominate (Cooper and Richardson, the 1957-58 Mayor) but Richardson was deemed to be ineligible because his property was in his wife's name. The Town Clerk and Cooper were both bitterly attacked by Richardson and his supporters for alleged connivance and 'intrigue' in denying Richardson forewarning of the situation. Although a subsequent court decision held that the Town Clerk's action was unwarranted, Richardson decided not to proceed with his candidacy. The NT News described the whole affair as 'a shabby business' (NT News, 19 June 1959). Of the 50 vacancies for councillor, 10 were not contested - all in general elections. The Paraparap Ward was the only one with every election contested. At the other extreme, Nightcliff had four councillors returned unopposed.

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\*The Local Government Act (1985) contains a provision empowering the NT Electoral Office to run Council elections.

The numbers of candidates seeking election was also relatively small. For the mayoralty, four stood in 1957 and three in 1960; for Council, 32 (for twelve seats) nominated in 1957, 16 (for six) in 1958, 17 (for seven) in 1959, eight (for six) in 1960, 13 (for six) in 1961, and 12 (for six) in 1962. Several factors were significant in accounting for the less than enthusiastic response to candidature: the lack of prestige of the Council, the time involved, and the absence of payment and attractive perquisites.

Resignations of sitting councillors occasioned five of the supplementary elections during the period. Two were caused by intention to leave Darwin but the others were made under less than normal conditions. 'Doc' Mackenzie left in 1958 on his appointment to Council staff as the Curator of the Botanic Gardens, Bob Antony quit because of the treatment of striking day-labour staff in 1958, and John Edwards in 1959 withdrew in protest at the decision to disqualify Richardson. Richard Aitken-Quack, elected in Fannie Bay in 1958 never attended Council and, after some 16 absences, was finally removed. The last was even more extraordinary. At the general election in Parapalap in 1958, the poll was declared invalid due to the misrepresentation of one candidate's name. Instead of William Wheatley, the ballot paper had him labelled as 'Lillian', a sex change to which Wheatley strongly objected! But the strangest set of circumstances occurred after Antony's resignation, again in Parapalap. The supplementary election returned P J McDonald in a resounding fashion. One of his losing rivals, however, sought in the courts to have his victory nullified on the grounds that McDonald had solicited votes at the polling booth. Although the case was initially rejected, it was upheld on appeal; the proceedings were accompanied by a good deal of comment about the motives and actions of the complainant. After the final verdict the Council decided not to call another supplementary election and used the provision of S112 to invite nominations for appointment to the vacancy. Three names were submitted and Aub Callinan, who had been a losing candidate in the original supplementary election, was selected by the Council.

As is traditionally the case with first-past-the-post voting in elections with more than two candidates, there were several instances where the Mayor or councillors were elected by a minority of votes. In 1960, Cooper won with only 44 per cent of the valid vote. (Richardson in 1957 had received 62 per cent.) With the comparatively large fields in 1957 and with the added complication of two vacancies in each ward, some curious results occurred. Some councillors were returned with well under 50 per cent support while others achieved that target because of the vagaries of the system without being elected. Only four (Lyons, Graffin, Cooper and Spillet) were clearly preferred by a sizeable

majority in their wards. After 1957, the lowest winning percentage of the vote was 33 per cent (in supplementary elections in Paraparap in 1958 and in Temira in 1959). After 1959, however, the situation was less frequent as there were but three ward contests with more than two candidates; in those three, the victor did not poll a plurality of votes.

According to participants and observers, the early council elections, although never particularly rivetting occasions, were marked by more overt resident interest than has been apparent in more recent times. But, even then, after the first flush of enthusiasm, there was a perceptible waning after 1959. The participation of parties and ratepayer or community groups in the electoral process was one factor in producing interest but probably of greater significance was the smallness and intimacy of Darwin in that period.

Between 1963 and 1972 - the period of triennial elections and the era of a single Darwin electorate - there were only three general and four supplementary polls. The latter included the election of four aldermen and were brought about by resignation. Shortly after the 1963 election 'Tiger' Lyons and Geoffrey Spence resigned thus precipitating two vacancies. Spence, in fact, had left in protest at the government's rejection of him for a post on the Town Planning Advisory Committee; he stood again and was re-elected. The other two aldermanic vacancies and the one Mayoral supplementary election involved Richardson. In 1964, he resigned his position on Council because he was about to depart from Darwin; in 1969, after he was successful in contesting the mayoralty after Chan's death, he had to relinquish his aldermanic position which he had regained earlier in 1969. Turnout varied between 65 per cent and 75 per cent.

All the positions of the Council were contested during the triennial period but that was to be expected given the consolidated roll. There were three candidates for the mayoralty in 1963 and in both polls in 1969; in 1966, only two stood. For the Council, 26 (including the three mayoral aspirants) nominated in 1963, 16 (two) in 1966 and 15 (one) in 1969. In supplementary elections, the figures were eight (for two vacancies) in 1963, five in 1964 and 1969. The pattern of the earlier period was evident again with candidate numbers decreasing in later elections. As in 1957, the 1963 poll was the first of a new system and it was conducted in the aftermath of a long and well published process of change. Moreover, there were clear party divisions among the candidates. Five sitting councillors lost their seats in what was one of the more competitive elections in the Council's history. By way of contrast, no

returning aldermen succumbed in either 1966 or 1969. Indeed, in the period, there were only 17 faces on the Council whereas, from 1957 to 1963, there had been 33. Even allowing for the smaller size of the Council and less frequent elections, stability in membership had increased markedly. Two quite different interpretations have been advanced to explain that development. The first was based on the alleged widespread apathy and indifference to Council affairs in a population which was rapidly growing and highly mobile. The second stresses the community's approval of the work of incumbent members; their retention was largely due to their quality. Probably the real answer is a mix of the two arguments but, to this writer, the more salient is the former view. Except for the spirited contests in 1963 and in the four mayoral elections and the intervention of organised groups, there was little to enliven the electoral process. Even the psephologist would find little of interest in the introduction of preferential voting, multi-member first-past-the-post, or the effects of a successful mayoral contestant standing also as an alderman. Yet, there was some curiosity in the varying fortunes of certain candidates at the polls. For example, Harold Bauer fared relatively poorly in the 1963 general election but handsomely topped the supplementary poll only two months later. Likewise, Ken Slide and Bill Mitchell dramatically improved their standing in elections between 1963 and 1966. But perhaps the most notable concerned Richardson. After barely winning the eighth aldermanic position and coming a distant second in the mayoral race in 1969, he shaded Ken Waters, who recorded the second highest tally, for the mayoralty later in the year. It is difficult to see complete voter rationality in such cases!

Between 1972 and 1984 five general and four supplementary elections (for five aldermen) have been held. Voter turnout for the former, except in the unusual circumstances in 1975, was high - between 75 per cent in 1972 and 87 per cent in 1984. For the latter, however, the percentages were much lower - from 55 per cent in 1973 to 63 per cent in 1982. Turnout since the 1960s has risen, not because of a greater interest in local government but because the mayoral contests which featured well known candidates and were well-publicised in the local media (especially television after 1972) attracted attention. With the developing reliance on media exposure, the costs of candidacy, not only for the mayoralty, has risen dramatically in the period.

Except for the Richardson Ward in 1984, all elections have been contested. Numbers vying for the mayoralty were five in 1972, three in 1975, six in 1978, nine in 1981 and five in 1984. For ten aldermanic places, there were 22 (including three mayoral aspirants) candidates in 1972 and

28 (one also for Mayor) in 1975. From 1978, 12 positions were at stake; in 1978, 30 stood; in 1981, 28; and in 1984, 19. Again, those ranks included two, five and four mayoral candidates respectively. The supplementary elections, all necessitated by resignations, attracted five hopefuls in 1973 and 1982, nine in 1976 and six in 1979.

In the 1972 poll, only four previous aldermen were returned; another three were defeated. A sizeable change also occurred in 1975 with only five sitting members being re-elected. However, on that occasion, the others did not seek office so none of the 1972-75 Council were beaten. One arresting point noted by cynics in that election was that, in the alphabetically arranged list, nine of the successful candidates had names beginning with 'H' or above. The significance of a large 'donkey vote' was seen in the results. Stability of membership was higher in later elections. In 1978, only one was defeated with nine re-elected; in 1981, one and eight; and, in 1984, two and seven. However, the last figure includes two aldermen who had only been appointed to vacancies a few months before.

Some interesting results arising from the voting system can be noted. Where large fields were involved, the use of first-past-the-post once again returned a number of candidates with less than 50 per cent of the vote. Perhaps the most glaring example was in the 1976 supplementary election where the victors were preferred by only about 40 per cent of the electorate. In contests with preferential voting, on three occasions (the 1979 and 1982 supplementaries and the 1981 mayoral race), the candidate who collected the largest share of the primary vote was defeated after preference allocation; in one case (1979), the eventual winner was in third place after the primary count. The effect of a dual candidacy by a successful Mayor was significant in a sitting alderman losing his position in 1984; when the Mayor was excluded, his fourth votes flowed strongly to one particular person which lifted him into third place.

Finally, elections in the period were fairly uneventful. However, losing candidates did challenge the result in three contests. In the Goyder Ward supplementary election in 1973, the victory of Cec Black was objected to on the grounds that he had solicited votes (i.e. handed out how-to-vote cards). After the Town Clerk had refused to accept the objections, the two challengers, although at first considering legal action, withdrew. The other two concerned long-term Alderman, Ted D'Ambrosio. In 1972, after failing in a bid for the mayoralty, he unsuccessfully argued that the election be nullified on the grounds that many voters had been disenfranchised and that he had been disadvantaged because of the theft of his truck containing his election

materials. Defeated in Lyons Ward in 1978, he petitioned the Town Clerk to void the result because of the presence of a 'phantom' candidate on the ballot paper. Although his decision to withdraw was made known before the poll, under the electoral regulations, his name was required to stay. D'Ambrosio claimed that the 'phantom's' nearly 700 votes had distorted the results and perhaps deprived him of victory. The Town Clerk rejected D'Ambrosio's suit.

### Parties and Political Groups

When the ALP decided to run aldermanic candidates in the 1984 elections, there was considerable debate about the appropriateness of party politics in the local government arena.\* Although reports noted the presence at the municipal hustings and in the Council of people with known party affiliations, it was widely suggested that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) move was a new development. However, both the debate and ALP participation have had a much longer history in the post-war period.

Endorsement of candidates by the ALP began in 1959; three wards in the general election and two supplementary polls were contested. None were successful. In 1961, the ALP again participated officially. Two of its four candidates won places (one was unopposed) in the general poll but its nominee in a later supplementary lost. It mounted its strongest effort in 1963 when it ran a slate of nine, including Richardson, a mayoral aspirant. Despite an energetic campaign, only two councillors were elected. One resigned in 1964 but was replaced by an unofficially-sponsored member. A similar informal linkage occurred in 1966 when two candidates (both subsequently elected) advertised themselves as the 'Labor team'. From 1969 to 1984, the ALP chose not to contest Council elections although, in the lead up to some of the intervening polls, there was speculation that the party was considering re-entering the field. At times, particularly since the mid-1970s, the nomination of identifiable ALP personalities and the alleged use of party resources to assist their election have led some observers to claim that the ALP was actively involved. However, even if it ran official or unofficial candidates, the ALP has not been conspicuously successful at Council elections. In 1984, two of the four-man ALP team were returned but one was unopposed and the other elected in third position for his ward only after the transfer of votes. Whether the ALP's relatively poor showing stems from voter resistance to party politics or from other factors is

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\*The same debate took place in the campaign for the supplementary election in Richardson Ward in January 1986!

not known. But, judging from the ALP's municipal campaign platforms over the years, it has been difficult to distinguish the ALP's from those of other non-party candidates.

None of the other major parties - the Country Party (1966-74), the Liberals (1967-70) or the Country-Liberal Party (1974+) - have contested Council elections. Participation has often been discussed but always rejected. But, as with the ALP, allegations of unofficial assistance to the candidature of party members have been common. The only direct intervention of parties other than the ALP, was the standing of the leader of the Australian Republican Party in 1963 and 1964 (his support was, not surprisingly, small) and the Australian Democrats in 1982. Although not a political party as such, a group of nine candidates ran under a common ticket in 1963. Quaintly called the 'Independent Group' it campaigned against the ALP and the independent 'Independents'! Its effort, if indeed it was needed, secured the election of the Mayor and three councillors. Loose alliances of candidates for electoral purposes were often used in the 1960s and early 1970s; joint how-to-vote cards and common advertising were the usual tactics employed.

Of the non-party groups involved in the electoral process, the Ratepayers' Association was perhaps the most significant. It had two main periods of activity - 1958-60 and 1969-74. In its early phase it was formed because of dissatisfaction with Council's 'profligate policy' (NT News, 21 November 1958). It drew its membership (at the most about 100) from a wide cross-section of Darwin society including a strong representation from the trade unions. For a while, it conducted an energetic attack on what it perceived as Council's deficiencies; during the campaign it decided to endorse candidates. Thus, in the 1959 election, it supported four, two of whom were successful. By early 1960 it claimed to have secured the allegiance of eight councillors and the Mayor. But, even then, its enthusiasm was rapidly ebbing and by mid-year it had virtually disappeared from public view. It remained defunct until 1969 when it was revived largely through the effort of Jim Gayton and M J Feeley (both members of the earlier Association and the latter an ex-Councillor). Throughout its second period, it was largely a Nightcliff-based group which continued the role of the local district community group. Although, at one stage it contended that its membership had reached nearly 100, its effective numbers were always much less. Like its predecessor, it maintained a high public profile bombarding the Council (and the NT Administration) with complaints and accusations of maladministration, secrecy and extravagance. Its major achievement was the successful campaign to restore wards for the 1972 election. Between

1969 and 1972, it proved to be a constant irritant to Council which vented its displeasure on a number of occasions. The Association did not nominate candidates in 1969 although some active members did stand. In 1971-72 it declared its intention to mount a vigorous campaign for the 1972 election but, in the event, it only fielded two. Both, contesting Drysdale Ward which included Nightcliff, were elected. Already in 1972 interest in the Association had almost dissipated; it lingered on with little support and purpose, albeit still with some ability to arouse Council's ire. For example, Alderman Tambling attacked the Association as 'ineffectual, futile and superfluous', suggesting that it should be replaced by small regional groups (NT News, 10 January 1973) and in May there was a largely frivolous move by Council to investigate the Association.

No direct attempt has been made to reconstitute a group purporting to represent the general community specifically in relation to local government in Darwin since 1974. However, it is interesting to note that ex-Aldermen like Gayton and D'Ambrosio have talked of reviving the Ratepayers' Association and that at least one candidate for the 1984 election did put forward the need for such a body to scrutinise Council spending. The experience of the Association paralleled the characteristics of like organisations in Australia. They usually have their inception at times of perceived crisis in municipal affairs or are the creations of individual or group dissatisfaction with Council's actions or policy. Because of those factors and the generally apathetic attitude in the community to local government activities, they find it difficult to garner extensive support. Once the reasons for their creation lose their salience, the organisations quickly fade away.

Other community bodies have occasionally entered electoral politics. In 1957 the Fannie Bay Progress Association sponsored the two winning Councillors and, up to 1960 the Nightcliff Lessees' Association provided the district's representation. Its successors (the Nightcliff Community Association and the Nightcliff and Rapid Creek Community Association) whilst not endorsing candidates, were active in representing local grievances and aspirations to Council in the 1960s. In 1971-72, a small group variously called the Civic League of Independents and the Civic Reform League proclaimed its intention to field candidates but none eventuated. It often associated itself with the Ratepayers' Association's activities. In more recent times, groups in the northern suburbs and in Winnellie have been formed but their existence has usually been fleeting and of little electoral impact. For a period after the Cyclone several residents' action groups interested themselves as part of their activities with Council affairs in their areas. Of

some significance also had been the participation of several more conventional interest groups in the electoral process. Examples have been the Chamber of Commerce, the Jaycees, the Darwin Club, the Business Operators' and Managers' Association and the City Circle Traders. As their intervention was not always overt and well publicised, their influence was difficult to measure. Their opponents and detractors, however, often believed it crucial in election outcomes.

As a final comment, the role of the local press should be noted. Its interest in and coverage of Council elections have often stood in marked contrast to the indifference of the voting population. At election periods, the press has tried to define what it deemed the most important issues and policies and to arouse some enthusiasm for local democracy. It has encouraged the dissemination of candidates' views and platforms; even though the electronic media in recent years has contributed to election debate, the press still provides the major vehicle of publicity. The NT News, the most important (and for a long time the only) Darwin newspaper, did not until the mid-1970s openly support particular candidates; it usually merely exhorted the voters to participate. However, latterly, it has editorially endorsed certain mayoral aspirants; in the four elections since 1975 only in 1981 did its preferred choice not prevail. Its electoral influence, despite allegations to the contrary by its critics, should however not be overstated. It usually reflects rather than dictates opinion in the area of municipal affairs.

## Chapter Eight

## MAYORS, COUNCILLORS/ALDERMEN AND STAFF

## The Mayors

The Mayors have always been directly elected, even though indirect election by the Council has occasionally been mooted, most recently by Community Development Minister Robertson in 1982. The position has a separate mandate from the rest of the Council but it does not confer any major statutory power because the Town Clerk has been designated the Chief Administrative (Executive) Officer. The Mayor's formal role differs from that of councillors/aldermen in several respects: the right to preside over general meetings; the ex officio membership of all conventional committees of the Council (although not normally as Chairman); the possession, as presiding officer, of a casting as well as a deliberate vote; and the ability to call a special meeting. (The latter can also be exercised by a request from at least three councillors/aldermen.) Some of those functions can allow the position to be effective in directing Council. For example, the presiding role and the committee membership right can endow the Mayor with opportunities to have greater input in agenda formation, to control the course of meetings, and to obtain a wider conspectus of, and hence influence over, Council business. As the principal representative of Council, the major communicator with its public and the chief link between Council and senior staff, the Mayor can wield considerable informal power. But the real determinants of Mayoral performance in practice are the personalities and attributes of the incumbents themselves and, of lesser significance, the conventions established about the position and circumstances prevailing at the time of office.

Personalities and circumstances will be discussed below but some preliminary observations about convention should be made. Although there has been one notable exception (Stack), 'weak' rather than 'strong' Mayors have been the general rule. Lacking a statutory preeminence and confronted by councillors/aldermen reluctant to concede a leading role to the Mayor, the position has ordinarily been at most primus inter pares. Yet, most recent aldermen have stressed the need for a full-time incumbent and have provided a rapidly increasing mayoral allowance to sustain it. Thus, while maintaining their traditional opposition to strengthening the Mayor's role vis à vis the aldermen in decision-making and management, they have furnished one of the conditions to do so. The allowance has risen from \$300

in 1957, \$1,200 in the early 1960s, \$5,000 in 1970, \$12,000 in 1975, \$25,000 in 1980 to \$45,000 in 1984.\* To those, since 1975, should be added a payment for meetings (currently \$3,000) and other perquisites such as entertainment and car allowances.

Including the new incumbent elected in 1984, there have been nine Mayors since 1957; a detailed list can be found in Appendix I. Periods in office have been relatively short; Cooper, with seven years in office, and Stack, with five, were the longest serving, followed by Black with four, Chan, Richardson and Brennan with three and Lyons and Waters, one. Waters was never elected as Mayor; he filled the vacancies caused by Chan's death in August 1969 and by Richardson's resignation in late 1971. Three - Brennan, Fong Lim and Richardson in 1957 - had not had previous experience on the Council. Only two incumbents - Cooper and Waters - were defeated as the others departed the position for other reasons: Chan died; Richardson (in 1957 and 1971), Brennan and Stack retired from local government affairs; and Black and Lyons decided to continue as councillor/aldermen.

Of the Mayors, only Black, at 35 years of age, could be considered young when he became Mayor. Four - Lyons, Chan, Cooper and Stack - were in their mid to late 40s, two - Waters, Richardson (in 1957) in their 50s, and two - Brennan and Richardson (in 1969) - well into their 60s. Such a grouping was atypical of Darwin's age structure - even their opponents were of comparable vintage - but an explanation is not difficult to find. A basic requirement for a successful candidate was a reputation for wide-scale participation in community groups and activities. Gaining and projecting it takes time. So also does to the development of success in business or a profession, a second significant advantage. In a mobile population, publicity given to reputation and success is vital. Moreover, the mayoralty was demanding in terms of time, money and effort, commodities which are easier to commit after the flush of youth. Long term residence, which again implies some advance in age from the Territory norm, was also of substantial electoral benefit.

The occupations of the Mayors was also atypical. All came from non-government work backgrounds. Indeed, few public servants have even contested the mayoralty. Richardson, Cooper, Chan, Waters and Fong Lim were businessmen; Lyons, Stack and Black were professionals, and Brennan had a mining (and political) career.

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\*In 1985-6 the allowance is \$51,000.

Although the mayoral candidates campaigned as Independents and stoutly opposed the introduction of party politics into the Council, several had well recognised political affiliations. Cooper, Waters and Stack were members of a short lived Liberal Party in the late 1960s, Stack and Black were associated later with the Country-Liberal Party, and Richardson had Australian Labor Party connections. The others, although styling themselves as Independents, have commonly been seen as being on the non-Labor side of politics. An interesting point was that, until Stack assumed the mantle, all previous Mayors had also been members of the Legislative Council. Stack herself ran unsuccessfully for the Legislative Council in 1968 and 1969 and for the Assembly in 1980. In recent times, the perception of candidates' political allegiance has become an important factor in mayoral elections. There is little doubt that the results in 1981 and 1984 were influenced by political factors. In fact, given the demographic characteristics of the constituency and the widespread absence of interest in local government affairs, many voters understandably have based their choice on their understanding of candidates' political leanings.

Circumstances of the Council set the scene for individual Mayors to make their own mark. Lucius Lawrence D'Arcy Richardson (better known as plain 'Bill') arrived in the NT in 1953 and embarked upon a conspicuously successful construction career first in Batchelor and then in Darwin. In his home state of Queensland, he had acquired local government experience as a member of the Redcliffe Council. In 1957, he was handsomely elected with 62 per cent of the valid vote. From all contemporary accounts, he was self-opinionated and dictatorial, characteristics which did not endear him to many of his colleagues. Nevertheless, his domineering style and presidential role have been acknowledged as necessary in a Council so new, uncertain and inexperienced; he supplied leadership when it was sorely needed. Stories of his high-handedness and manipulation were legion, none more so than of his machinations in determining committee membership before the Council had formally met. Richardson was undoubtedly a popular and sociable Mayor, working hard to establish the Council's (and the Mayor's) standing in the community, a crucial task at the time. Despite an abortive attempt to reenter municipal life in 1959, he was absent until 1963. In the meantime, he had been for a short time a Legislative Councillor for Larrakeyah in 1960. His attempt at recapturing the mayoralty failed in 1963 but his reputation enabled him to finish second in the councillors' list and the leading ALP voter catcher. Although he exhibited some of his old spark and personal qualities, his influence was muted by his lesser role and the growing experience of the Council. However, his stay was brief; he left Darwin in early 1964 eventually

to take over the Mataranka Homestead. There, in 1968, he stood again for the Legislative Council as an ALP candidate in Elsey but was unsuccessful. Returning to Darwin, he contested the mayoralty in 1969 but was swamped by Harry Chan. Nevertheless, he won aldermanic office, and on Chan's death, narrowly defeated Waters for the Mayor's position in September 1969. Standing on a platform of 'a People's Mayor', he stressed the need for efficient administration and full-time commitment. But he was not the Richardson of 1957; physical decline caused by age (he was 66) and illness (cancer) had sapped his vitality and spirit dramatically. Richardson's second stint also was served in a radically different climate than his first; the conventions surrounding the position of Mayor had become by that time well established, a consensus approach to decision-making had been long applied, and the aldermen of the time were themselves experienced and generally competent. Thus, he did not stamp his presence on the Council as he had in 1957 and he continued the more relaxed and unobtrusive line of his immediate predecessors. He resigned in late 1971, just a few days before his death (6 November 1971). However, the Richardson association did not end with his demise; his popular wife, Gladys, stood for the mayoralty in 1972 but, despite being seen early as a possible winner, only managed third place behind Brennan and Waters.

Richardson's Deputy Mayor and close friend, 'Tiger' Lyons, filled the position (unopposed) in 1958-59. A lawyer and a resident of Darwin (except for the war years) since the 1930s Lyons was a colourful character endowed with considerable oratorical ability which he used to devastating effect on those who did not share his point of view. His biting wit and sarcasm were often felt in Council debate. But he was reportedly more mellow and more ready to seek and respect consensus than Richardson in his dealings with councillors. Outside the Council, he was gregarious and popular. A fabled toper and, in keeping with his youthful sporting prowess, he was not averse to mixing it physically with opponents. A case in point was a tussle with Jim Bowditch, the Editor of the NT News, over disagreements on the day-labour strike issue (the garbage incident) in 1958. Lyon's period in office was financially and administratively disordered but, as that situation was attributable to the activities of the full Council, blame should not be exclusively levelled at Lyons. After his Mayoral stint, Lyons continued as a councillor until 1963 when he was elected to the Legislative Council, a position he held with some distinction until 1968. He died in 1970.

Harold Cooper was Darwin's longest serving Mayor, holding the position from 1959 to 1966. In that time, however, he faced only two elections; in the other three, he was unopposed. One of those was his elevation to the

mayoralty which was surrounded in controversy. After army service in the NT, he returned in 1949 as a government clerk but switched in 1951 into the stevedoring business in which he served (from 1955 to 1964 as Manager of WA State Ships) for nine years. During that time, he was an active member (and often officeholder) of the Chamber of Commerce. From 1964 to 1969, he was the Executive officer of the Betting Control Board and later operator of a grocery enterprise in Nightcliff. As a councillor from 1957 to 1959, he had been conscientious and diligent, capacities which he was to display throughout his mayoralty. Compared to his predecessors, he was calmer, quieter and certainly less colourful. Although he possessed and expressed strong views and became upset when crossed or disagreed with, he never dominated Council. Contemporaries remember Cooper as extremely dedicated, reasonably popular, and tireless in promoting the Council's image, even though the latter sometimes provoked occasional comment that he was over-interested in pomp and splendour; the general verdict was that he was a 'good' Mayor in the prevailing climate. He was mortified when he was defeated by Chan in 1966 but, after initially announcing his withdrawal from Council, he was persuaded to stay on as an alderman. Citing business pressures, he finally quit in September 1968. Subsequently, he entered the Legislative Council and served there from 1969 until defeated in 1971. (His earlier electoral attempts in 1960 and 1965 had failed.) His death in 1982 went largely unremarked but his contribution during the establishment years of the Council was substantial and meritorious.

With the election of Harry Chan in 1966, Darwin achieved the distinction of having the first Chinese Mayor in Australia. Shortly afterwards, when he became the first elected President of the Legislative Council, he set another record. Born and partly educated in Darwin, Chan was a prominent city businessman and accountant. He was elected to Council in 1959. As a councillor, Chan often demonstrated his independent spirit, being at times an irritant, either by himself, or as part of 'a ginger group', to the majority Council membership. His victory over Cooper owed more to his personal following than to his prior performance on Council. He was extremely popular and it was said that he knew almost everybody by christian name in Darwin. As a person, he was quietly spoken, always civil and patient but also determined and difficult to persuade to change his views. His style of leadership was similar to Cooper's; together they succeeded in developing harmony and a corporate approach within Council. But the times were hardly dynamic in local government affairs; Chan exemplified the mood for increased efficiency, sensitivity, and impact within the council's limited realm. It should also be noted that, for most of his time as Mayor, Chan was

battling what was to be, in the end, a fatal illness. Re-elected in 1969, he soon succumbed. His Legislative Council career, begun in 1962, was also terminated on his untimely death. Chan is remembered with affection and respect by those who knew him.

Like Lyons, Ken Waters was never elected Mayor. His two attempts in 1969 and 1972 were unsuccessful. Waters had served on the Council since 1963 and was Deputy Mayor at the time of both Chan's death and Richardson's resignation in 1969. Thus, his temporary and appointed incumbencies were very short and he did not have sufficient time to leave a distinctive imprint. But his forceful argument, ambition and hard work did make him one of the more effective aldermen in the 1960s. Another long term resident (he came to Darwin as a school teacher in 1952) and a successful businessman in real estate and mining investment, he was in the Legislative Council for one term from 1962 to 1965, when, as in two subsequent attempts in 1968 and 1970, he was defeated. Waters remained on Council until increasing bad health forced him to retire in 1973. He died in 1976. Like the Mayors before him, Waters was associated with a host of community and government groups, a common characteristic of the small Darwin non-government elite of the period.

One of the most colourful characters of post-war NT politics, 'Tiger' Brennan, succeeded Waters in 1971. He had come to the NT in the mid 1930s and worked, except for war service, as a mining prospector and operator. For sixteen years (1955-71), he was a member of the Legislative Council and had become one of the doughtiest champions of constitutional reform. With his stature (one admirer called him 'a kind of Humpty-Dumpty', his topee, his ubiquitous cigars, and his robust language (his favourite adjective was 'blinking') he was a distinctive, even eccentric, personality but well regarded and respected. Pressure from some of his ex-colleagues in the Legislative Council was largely responsible for his decision to contest the mayoralty; they felt that he needed, at his age (67), a new outlet to sustain his interest. As a sometime member of the Administrator's Council and as Chairman of the Tourist Board, he had, albeit limited, experience in administration. However, he found it difficult to adjust to his new position; his lack of prior Council experience proved a handicap and his attempts to impose a new leadership style, even though fitfully waged, were opposed by aldermen with whom he had some furious exchanges. For example, in 1972, Council had accorded him the role of chief negotiator with government and staff but, because of his independent actions, it was withdrawn in mid-1973. While formally a full-time incumbent, his age and declining health coupled with his experiences with Council and disinterest in routine affairs rendered him in practice still a part-time

Mayor. Yet, in his dealings with government both before and after the Cyclone, there were occasions when the 'Tiger' Brennan of old displayed his legendary pugnaciousness. Moreover, he was a good ambassador for the city. In 1975, he considered standing for reelection but the pressures of the position, and particularly the Mayor's role on the Darwin Reconstruction Commission persuaded him to stand down. With his death in 1979, the Territory, lost one of its most interesting characters although perhaps not one of Darwin's most outstanding Mayors. In the interests of accuracy, one incident in Brennan's period should be noted. Unlike most other Darwinians, he managed to sleep through Cyclone Tracy, waking in the morning to find his city in ruins. It was widely held that Tiger's wellknown penchant for hard liquor was the reason and there was resentment that he too had not suffered. In truth, however, he had been suffering from a painful ailment for which he was taking medication; on the night, in addition to his usual libation, he also took rather too many tablets with the result that not even the fury of Tracy could have disturbed him.

Ella Stack, a medical general practitioner and resident of Darwin since 1961, had served on the Council since 1969. She had established a reputation as a hardworking, astute and effective alderman. As in 1969 when Harry Chan had convinced her to stand for Council, her decision to contest the mayoralty in 1975 owed much to Brennan's persuasion. Against two male candidates, she romped home with over 52 per cent of the valid primary vote. Her five year incumbency (she was reelected in 1978 with 43 per cent in a six-way contest), encompassing as it did most of the reconstruction period and the first years of self-government, was an era of change and expansion for the Council. In that process, Stack's role was substantial. Yet, despite her personal talents, the real sources of the enhanced stature of the mayoralty during her term, were circumstantial. As the first effectively full-time Mayor, Stack was able both to promote the public image of mayoral preeminence and to acquire, within the Council, greater influence over aldermen and staff. Her membership of the DRC (and other post-cyclone relief organisations) provided a platform from which she strengthened her authority outside and within Council. The fluid political situation between 1977 and 1980 in which the fledgling NT Government was forging new relationships and approaches to local government enabled Stack to play a conspicuous role; her good political connections and empathy with the new regime gave her peculiar advantages which she used to good effect. Moreover, in the post-cyclone period, there was an influx of many new aldermen, unfamiliar with past conventions, who were quickly and easily socialised to Stack's operational methods and prepared to comply with her style of leadership.

From all accounts, Stack, through her command of greater resources, her tireless endeavour, a certain charisma, and well-honed personal skills in debate and persuasion, effectively dominated the decision-making process in Council. As an advocate and ambassador for Darwin and its people, she had no peer although she did, on occasions, use her mayoral platform to broadcast her own views on a number of subjects, particularly in the moral and social realm, which attracted considerable opposition. She was an exciting Mayor in exciting times. When she stood down in May 1980 to contest (ultimately unsuccessfully) an Assembly seat, she had contributed much to the charting of a new direction for local government in Darwin. Whether the direction was beneficial is, of course, another question. After her departure, Stack returned to medical practice while, at the same time, continuing her participation in a range of community (and national) bodies. Later, she changed her career orientation by accepting a senior executive position in the Department of Health.

In many ways, Stack's successor, Cec Black, 'reaped where Stack had sowed'. He was her chosen heir but only managed to be elected on the Acting-Mayor's casting vote. (Black himself was absent overseas.) In 1981, he barely scraped in after the distribution of preferences had denied the major contender and the primary vote leader (Dawn Lawrie) the position. Black, a lawyer and resident in Darwin since 1968, had been an alderman since 1973 and, for four years, Stack's Deputy Mayor. As a member of Council, he had proved himself conscientious, extremely diligent, a major contributor to discussion and Stack's loyal follower. In 1981, he was still comparatively young (35). His term (1980-84) was hardly illustrious but Black himself was not the author of most of the problems which emerged in that time. Even towards the end of Stack's mayoralty, her dominance over aldermen and senior staff was showing signs of strain. After 1980, factions began to develop openly and the solid power base which Stack had possessed quickly eroded as aldermen sought to reassert their independence. From below, the new senior staff were developing new sources of influence and power. Projects and programs embarked upon earlier created a ferment of dispute and antagonism in which relations with the NT Government and the media deteriorated alarmingly. Black frequently lost control of the situation; his early strategy to continue Stack's style of leadership proved inappropriate in the new circumstances and his later attempts to create a new younger, more dynamic and flamboyant image was a poor substitute. As one of his colleagues noted in interview, he was 'the wrong man, in the wrong place, at the wrong time'. But that, of course, begs the question of whether anyone else, even Stack, could have succeeded given the abounding problems. However, Black's failings did contribute: despite his hard work and



commitment, he lacked a deft touch in management and communication and was also clumsy in his dealings with aldermen, government and the press. The retention of his legal activities in tandem with what he claimed was an equivalent full-time mayoral workload was always sceptically received. Given his recognition of his poor public standing, his decision not to recontest in 1984 was understandable. He was elected as an alderman albeit with a reduced level of support.

As he was so recently elected, it is far too premature even to make a preliminary assessment of Alec Fong Lim, the present incumbent. Darwin born and bred, Fong Lim has been a prominent businessman and community leader. He is also the second Mayor of Chinese extraction, itself a comment on the respected place that group has established in Darwin life. In his election campaign, he emphasised his intentions to give a full-time commitment to Council and city affairs, to press for a businesslike approach to Council activities, and to undertake a heightened advocacy role, especially in relation to tourism in Darwin. Like Brennan, he had no prior experience in Council. There is no doubt that, when his contribution comes to be analysed, the influences of personality, circumstance and convention will, as with his predecessors, be crucial determinants.

#### Councillors/Aldermen

Altogether, there have been 70 councillors/aldermen; two others were elected but did not serve. A full and detailed list is set out in Appendix II.

Council membership has always been male-dominated; only six women have been elected. But that was expected as the numbers of female candidates have been low. Only 22 have ever stood for councillor/alderman, although several have contested more than one election. One almost permanent candidate between 1957 and 1978, Lou Stewart, contested no fewer than ten elections. The highest proportion reached was four of 15 in 1969 and the maximum number, five (out of 28) in 1981. Why, in a supposed era of female participation and equity in the 1970s and 1980s more women have not attempted to enter local government in Darwin is something of a mystery.

In terms of occupation, there has been variation over time. From 1957 to 1963, there was a fairly even split between self-employed businessmen and public servants. The latter included a range of different vocations - engineers, surveyors, clerks, skilled and semi-skilled workers. After 1963, a marked shift occurred. Fewer public servants were elected (their participation as candidates also declined but

less dramatically). For example, from 1963, they (broadly defined) only constituted about 20 per cent of the total membership. Business and, to a lesser extent, the professions from the private sector have provided the bulk of aldermen. It is interesting to note that the election of Jamey Robertson in 1984 brought to the Council a 'blue-collar' worker for the first time in nearly 20 years. The Council's composition certainly did not mirror the community but that is a common characteristic of local government authorities in Australia and not too much can be made of its skewed representational base. It is the quality of representation which should matter.

Although the age structure within Council has also been atypical of the population at large, it has again been a reflection on both the types of candidates presenting themselves and on the preference of the electors. Before 1969, there were few young (i.e. up to 35 years) representatives (Spillett, Mount, Mitchell and Bauer were all in that age group when elected). However, in 1969 and 1972-73, more younger candidates began to put themselves forward either by their own volition or because of outside pressure. With the entry of aldermen like Fitzgerald, Nathanael, Tambling and Black, the average age of Council began slowly to fall. The attraction of younger members continued after the Cyclone; their participation has countered to some extent the aging effect of longer terms and provided, with the exception of the very young (comparatively), a reasonable age cross-section.

For a community in which mobility is a salient characteristic, the length of terms were generally short but, because a key to electoral success was evidence of longer term residence, not surprisingly so. At one end of the scale was Ted D'Ambrosio, who served 21 years; at the other a group of 13, nearly all in the era of annual elections, with one year or less. (New aldermen in 1984 are not counted.) Three (Black, Stack and Cooper) had about 11 years of service each and there was a large group of 23 with between five and 10 years; the remainder have terms between one and five years.

The basic motive for the entry of the majority of councillors/aldermen into local government was the traditional concept of community service. For some, it was an end in itself but for others (initially and developmentally) it was (or became) a means to further political ambition; 20 (but only four with success) contested seats in the NT Legislature before, during or after Council service. But several candidates were stirred to stand by group or party pressure or by the force of a particular issue. Perhaps the best example of the latter was the involvement of Roy Barden in 1972; his prime

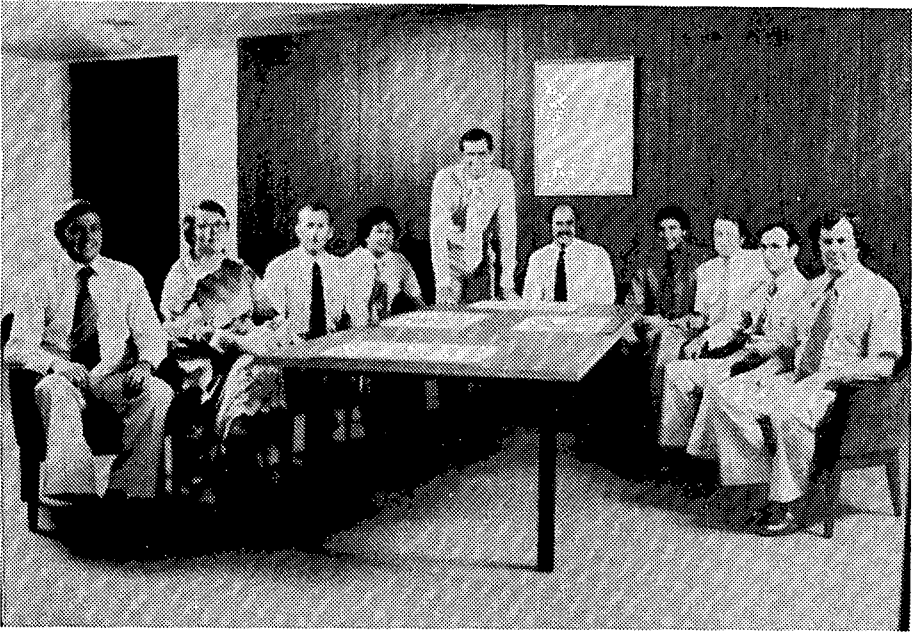


Plate 11: Twelfth Council, 1978-81.



Plate 12: Thirteenth Council, 1981-84.

interest was the resolution of traffic and parking problems in the CBD. Certainly, the allure of substantial emoluments was not a great attraction.

Although many claims for payment had been made previously, not until 1964 were amendments placed in the Ordinance to allow aldermen to receive out-of-pocket expenses for travel and subsistence. Even then, they were very meagre; in the early 1970s, only a maximum of \$4 per day could be paid. Demands for attendance fees had become more frequent and strident in succeeding years, but they were not introduced until 1974 when the Mayor was to get \$25 per day and the aldermen \$20. A maximum of \$1,000 was set. That limit was lifted in 1977 to \$3,000 and, in 1978, the daily amounts were hiked to \$60 for general and \$50 for committee meetings. Although further increases were advocated between 1978 and 1984, concern for financial constraint within the Council was a major factor in keeping fees static. On the other hand, the set maximum was abolished; however, earnings, average about \$3,000-\$3,500, did not rise dramatically. The task of establishing appropriate aldermanic (and Mayoral) rates, was, following Council requests, allocated to a Remuneration Tribunal. In mid-1984, a rise to \$70 for all meetings was recommended and accepted.\*

As elsewhere in local government, the major roles of the elected members concerned communication between the Council and constituents, mediation of electors' grievances (the 'ombudsman' function), participation in decision-making, policy and review and, for some, the representation of local government. Each Councillor/Alderman developed an individual approach to role priority and it is difficult to generalise adequately. However, some broad comment is appropriate. In the first place, quality of role performance varied widely among elected members; some were active and diligent, others were frankly disinterested and even lazy. There was certainly no equality of participation in a practical sense. Leaders emerged in each Council. In many cases, they became Committee Chairmen or Deputy Mayor. There were several factors significant in establishing leadership credentials: length of service, experience, commitment, personal qualities, factional composition of Council and ambition. For most councillors/aldermen, Council service was a part-time occupation (the sole exceptions were those who were retired or semi-retired); those who could and would devote greater proportions of their time and effort to Council business were better placed. Thus, it was no coincidence that elected members

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\*The rate was increased to \$75 in 1985. In 1984-85, the range of aldermanic fees was between \$3,500 and \$7,120.

from the business and professional spheres dominated both Council positions and leadership roles. Secondly, despite the existence of individual priority, the policy-making role was normally seen as the most important by councillors/aldermen, even if many were only dimly aware of the process itself and their limitations. Indeed, the other roles, particularly communication, have not been developed strongly, formally or consistently. A long standing observation has been the public invisibility of Council members between elections and the conception that liaison with Legislative Council/Assembly members was both a more appropriate and effective community representative vehicle. Although there were many accusations of councillors/aldermen serving special interest groups, behaviour within Council suggests that almost all regarded their role as trustees rather than delegates. Once in the Council, electoral platforms (albeit often so banal and generalised as to be meaningless as a guide to action) and commitments were submerged under the dynamics of Council business and individual attitudes and orientations.

Leadership in Council was often signified by election to committee chairmanships and Deputy Mayor. Those positions, in turn, provided opportunities, through interactions with the Mayor, other chairmen and staff, to strengthen leadership roles. Committee membership, although there was of course frequent rivalry for certain places, depended largely in the first instance on personal preference. Except when the Mayor was absent, the Deputy's post was largely formal and carried no additional perquisites but, because it was elected by the whole Council, it also, in most cases, was perceived, not least by its incumbents, as evidence of seniority and eminence. No provision for a Deputy was included in the original Ordinance until 1964 but, until 1962, the council elected one anyway. In the legislative review process from 1959 to 1962, both Council and investigators argued the statutory recognition of the position. Up to 1975, the Deputy was elected for the duration of a particular Council but after that on a yearly basis.

Involvement by the Council on outside bodies - government, community or joint - which impinged in any way on Darwin civic affairs was consistently sought. Although such demands were often rejected and commonly the level of Council representation was deemed unsatisfactory, councillors/aldermen served on a host of committees and groups. Some like the Town Planning Advisory Committee (and its successors) and the Local Government Association have already been mentioned. Others included such diverse bodies as the Brass Band Committee, the Road Safety Council, the Eisteddfod Committee and the Tourism Travel Association.

## Darwin City Council Mayors 1957-84



Plate 13:  
Bill Richardson  
1957-58; 1969-71



Plate 14:  
John Lyons  
1958-59



Plate 15:  
Harold Cooper  
1959-66

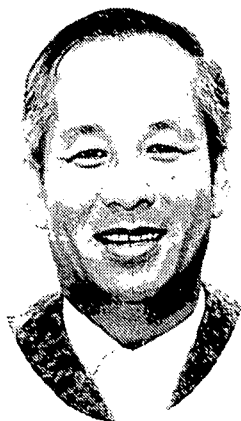


Plate 16:  
Harry Chan  
1966-69

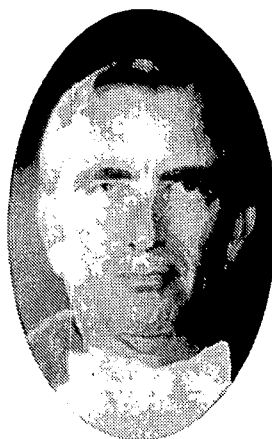


Plate 17:  
Ken Waters  
1971-72



Plate 18:  
Harold Brennan  
1972-75



Plate 19:  
Ella Stack  
1975-80



Plate 20:  
Cecil Black  
1980-84



Plate 21:  
Alec Fong Lim  
1984 +

Since the mid-1970s, concern over the capacity of new (and even longer serving) aldermen to comprehend and to deal with the increasing complexity of local government affairs has grown. When, in 1974, Grant Tambling suggested orientation courses for candidates and new aldermen, his proposal was defeated but that strategy has since been introduced. Use has been made of the Canberra College's courses for councillors and induction programs have been drawn up. Recently, senior staff have been active in airing their feelings about the impact of unprepared aldermen. Thus, for the 1984 election, they assembled a document entitled 'So You Want To Be An Alderman'. It was a pity that its preaching was strong on theory and either slight or misleading on the reality of Council practice. In less public forums, some of the senior staff are less inhibited. For example, views about the need for potential aldermen to have training prior to them 'being permitted' to stand, about the dangers of their 'distorted' preconceptions, about the salience of the 'expectations of the organization' and the desired 'absence of [a]ldermanic interference in management functions' abound (see particularly, Minutes, Chief Officers' Group, 17 August and 14 December 1983 and proceedings of Staff DCC Workshop, 29/30 September 1983). While it may be acknowledged that a problem does exist, the cure, as proposed by senior staff, may be worse than the disease in a democratic and representative authority.

At certain periods, factions and individual rivalry developed within the Council which led to often heated debates, some bouts of colourful language and even threats of physical violence. The press often lampooned the spectacle of conflict and reported it with relish. However, the importance of factions should not be overstated. At no time did all members coalesce in consistent voting blocs, at all times there were those who preserved their independent status. Even when organised party and interest groups were in Council, they did not invariably take the same line in debate or votes. Overall, issues, personalities and locality were more important than ideology in determining outcomes. Of the factors which contributed to factionalism, the most significant was the perception of powerlessness on the part of those who found themselves frequently in the minority. Examples were the 'alliance' of Chan, See Kee and Spence between 1961 and 1963 and Burke, Goodfellow, and Antella between 1981 and 1984. Other divisions were based on religion - particularly between the Roman Catholics and others in the early Councils; age - important in the 1972-75 Council; and attitudes to finance and expansion of function. Despite the internal disputes, however, very few deep and abiding personal antagonisms were generated by Council rivalry. The cool relationship between Richardson and Cooper seemed an exception rather than the rule. Many

are the tales of conviviality and bonhomie over drinks after meetings in which savage exchanges had occurred.

As in all local government bodies the level and quality, of members' contributions varied widely. That stated, it is far more difficult to categorise individual members in terms of effectiveness. Even councillors/aldermen interviewed during the course of this study often had very different views about their same colleagues. Judgements were based largely upon personal relationships and experience and a narrow set of criteria which emphasised attendance, preparation, participation in debate and degree of influence. Understandably those who were longer serving and more articulate generally were seen as the outstanding performers. They were able to make their mark more easily than their transient fellows. Although there were some exceptions where new members immediately established their credentials and where the more long-serving never improved, a ranking of perceived effectiveness had a close correlation with longevity in Council.

Given the essentially prosaic nature of local government activities and the predominance of fairly stolid and earnest members on the Council, few really distinctive 'characters' have emerged. Those who can be so classified were heavily concentrated in the heady and chaotic early years of council when, with a wider societal cross-section and more informality than later, idiosyncratic behaviour was tolerated and even encouraged. The combination of the 'typical' element (exemplified by councillors like Spillett, Cooper and D'Ambrosio) and a 'maverick' group (including councillors such as Chan, See Kee, Spence, Caleo, Bennett, Feeley and Wayne) created a vitality in proceedings unmatched, perhaps sadly, in more recent years.

As a final comment, some curiosities should be noted. The appointment of 'Doc' Mackenzie (no one seems to be really certain if he had a doctorate at all, or where it was granted, or in what academic area) to the Curatorship of the Botanic Gardens in 1958 had interesting parallels with a similar situation concerning the Sunshine Council in Victoria in 1973 (see Jones, 75-6) and was subjected to much the same criticism. After resigning as City Engineer in 1959, Geoff Spence, became a councillor in 1961. Although he disclaimed any intention of settling old scores, his activities early in his term (1961-66) certainly gave his colleagues that impression. It is interesting to note that George Brown, also a senior Council Officer, announced (but never carried out) a like intention more recently. Last, there was D'Ambrosio, long-serving, dedicated and committed. Although it was the general verdict of his peers that he deserved the mayoralty and would have been a worthy

Darwin City Council Town Clerks 1957-84\*



Plate 22:  
Peter Warren  
7/1957-11/1957

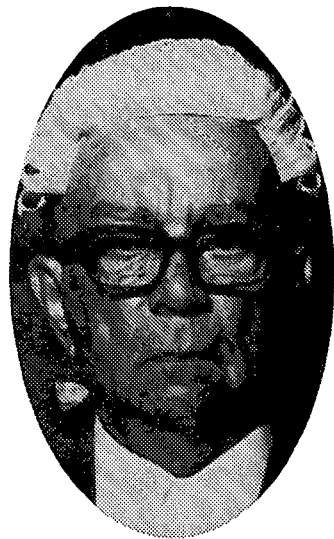


Plate 23:  
Bill Sullivan  
8/1960-3/1974



Plate 24:  
Tom Abbott  
3/1974-6/1977



Plate 25:  
Greg Hoffman  
11/1977-11/1982



Plate 26:  
Garry Storch  
11/1982 +

\*No photograph is available of Neville Butler, 11/1957-8/1960.

incumbent, his five attempts were failures, some embarrassingly so.

#### Council Staff

This section will be comparatively short. Brevity should not suggest that their role has been of less significance than Mayors or other elected members; indeed, a recurrent argument in this study indicates otherwise. But discussion here is focussed primarily on senior staff - particularly, the five substantive Town Clerks - the number of whom has been relatively small. Moreover, several officers served only short periods thus limiting their impact. Except for the Town Clerk, who has a sanctioned public profile, the contribution of senior staff is primarily in-house. Unless the internal power dynamics within Council are appreciated, their influence on policy and decision-making can be charted only imperfectly. Even then, the informal avenues of influence remain elusive and only emerge in part through oral testimony.

As the senior officer, the Town Clerk traditionally occupies a position of considerable potential power. Whether he can exploit it depends upon his personality and circumstance. Some discussion has already been given to the first substantive Clerk, Neville Butler, and little more needs to be written. Butler, despite his long experience (11 years) in local government in Queensland, never adapted to the unruly municipal conditions of the time. Nor could he, given the animosity which developed between him and some councillors and the frequent interference in his functions and control over junior staff. His frustration, compounded by his sensitivity and personal problems, led to his abrupt resignation in 1959. Bill Sullivan, recently appointed as Deputy (and without national advertisement) took his place.

Sullivan, after he had established his position in the early 1960s, developed a commanding presence within Council in his last ten years. To many at the time, he was the Council. A frequent comment from his contemporaries was that he acted as an unelected alderman and the dominant one at that. Tough minded, plain speaking, schooled in the hurly-burly of Queensland rural politics, he possessed the requisite qualities to impose discipline on both his staff and elected members. Through the close relationship he formed with successive Mayors and aldermen, his encyclopaedic understanding of Council activities, and the massive advantage of full-time occupancy (as opposed to the part-time Mayor and aldermen), he forged openly pivotal sources of power. Suspicious of delegation, his administrative style was based on complete personal authority but his enormous capacity for hard work and fairness

won the respect of most of his juniors, from whom he demanded equal commitment. A stickler for punctuality, he often paraded the entrances at prescribed signing-on and -off times and unceremoniously dealt with errant staff. At times, however, his vaunted thoroughness to detail lapsed: at the opening of the Civic Centre, he forgot to provide workable lavatories for the guests. Only frantic last minute improvisations saved the day. Sullivan, who turned 65 in 1973 was given a year's extension but, much to his annoyance, another was not extended and he left the Council on a rather sour note, an attitude which was reflected in his later comments. He died in 1977.

Sullivan's long term Deputy, Tom Abbott (51), after threatening to resign if not given the job, took over but his term proved to be short. A tireless worker and very efficient - his efforts in the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy deserve special note - Abbott, for so long overshadowed by Sullivan, was never comfortable in the rapidly changing scene in the mid-1970s. But, in truth, he was not given (or gave himself) sufficient time to adapt to new demands, personalities (particularly Mayor Stack) and philosophies. His departure enabled Stack to obtain a Clerk seemingly more attuned to her (and the Council's) changed perceptions of the Council's role and needs.

The appointment of Greg Hoffman heralded in Darwin the adoption of the new direction in local government administration which had been gathering pace in Australia in the 1970s. At 28, he was much younger than previous incumbents, had university degrees, and city experience (as Assistant Town Clerk in Rockhampton). His five years in the post corresponded to major changes in the Council, with most of which he was intimately connected; when he left in late 1982, he had helped shape a different organisation. In his relations with his staff and aldermen, there was a strange mixture of affability and reserve, of respect and arrogance; he certainly never established a close rapport with many aldermen who felt that he displayed a certain condescension, insensitivity and favouritism even though they recognised his talent and energy.

On Hoffman's departure, his Deputy, Garry Storch, was appointed. Also young (34), Storch had been in Darwin less than a year. He became the first Town Clerk with experience outside Queensland; hailing from New South Wales, he had had 17 years experience in both city and rural local government. By and large, the management and interventionist approach developed by Hoffman has continued under Storch. Yet there have been some changes in style. More approachable and personable, Storch has managed his relationships with aldermen more astutely and effectively than Hoffman. Moreover, he has eschewed Hoffman's growing propensity to

authoritarianism and been more amenable to group management practice. But, on the other hand, it is clear that Storch's tenure has done comparatively little to reduce the increasing disquiet and unrest apparent among Council staff in the 1980s (see, for example, many of the comments in the Staff DCC Workshop paper, 29/30 September 1983). It could be argued that his newness to the position, his lack of academic qualifications, and competition for leadership within senior staff management have been significant in producing the present situation.

Other senior staff require brief mention only. Of the five Engineers, three - Burns (49), Kemp (31) and Emmerson (49) - were reportedly competent practitioners but never appeared to seek more than narrow administrative and professional roles. Some of Spence's activities have been noted elsewhere but in the fluid conditions of the time he did aspire to staff leadership which led to several clashes with Butler and the Council. The present incumbent, Duncan Beggs (31), in the era of corporate management, has developed interests and influence well beyond the confines of his departmental functions. It is no secret that many elected and staff members regard Beggs as the most powerful single personality within Council. Except where the Deputy Town Clerkship has been a platform for later promotion (as in the case of Sullivan, Abbott and Storch), it has been largely an unheralded position and no recent Deputy has emerged as a distinctive figure. A similar comment can be made of the City Accountants. In both positions since 1973, there has been considerable turnover of staff, a reflection on the general difficulty which the Council has experienced in attracting and retaining quality staff at senior levels. No discussion would be complete without reference to George Brown, the Superintendent (since 1971) of Parks and Reserves. A volatile, outspoken and committed conservationist, Brown has won public commendation and Council rebuke for the stands he has taken on greening issues in Darwin. His influence on the beautification of the city has been substantial.

No Council can operate without the assistance of junior staff - both salaried and industrial. Although they usually carry the brunt of criticism from the public and even elected councillors, their personalities and roles are shrouded in anonymity. Very rarely does an article like one entitled 'In Praise of the Council Men' appear in the local media (see NT News, 26 December 1970). More the pity because, despite conditions like frequent strikes, allegations of sloth and high labour turnover, their contribution has been significant. Perhaps only when they have served a lengthy period, do they receive recognition by Council - commonly, it seems, by the presentation of the Council's crest! Stalwarts like Hans Sachse, Henry

Shepherd, Bill Currow, John Ah Mat and Peter Talbot at least deserve citation in a Council history. So also do people like the Council Solicitors, Ron Withnall and George Dickenson, and the formidable Billy Nichols/Pitcheneder (who for so long and so well catered for Council functions).

## Chapter 9

## PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE

Local government in Darwin has never been a robust institution. Despite expansion of function, legislative amendment, burgeoning budgets and staff levels and large and expensive projects, the essential status of the Council as a local elective administrative body dealing with relatively minor services has endured. Throughout the Commonwealth and self-government periods, the Council has been a subordinate and dependent entity. But not too much should be read into that conclusion; it could equally be made about its counterparts in the states. Although comparative youth and the particular political and socio-economic environment in which it has developed must be cited as contributing factors in assessing Council's record, they should not obscure the fact that local government has always had a low profile in all but the largest Australian cities.

That situation is unlikely to change radically at least in the near future. To do so would entail a major reorientation of the philosophy and practice of Australian federalism. At the national level, the commitment to fundamental reform which burned so brightly in the Whitlam era has dissipated. Although the local government lobby, some academics and the Advisory Council for Intergovernment Relations (see ACIR 1984) continue to propose and debate strategies for an enhancement of status of local government, political support is meagre and often rhetorical. The improvements to funding arrangements, sanctioned by the Commonwealth in the late 1970s, did not amount to fiscal autonomy for local government. Nor is it likely that the current National Inquiry into Local Government Finance, albeit further liberalisation may be proposed, will significantly reduce financial dependency.\* In the Territory, despite the ongoing process of legislative review, there is little real prospect of substantial change at least in the short term.

In the debate on reform both nationally and locally, five options (sovereign status, independence, tidying up of present arrangements, agent status and decentralised administration with no local government) have been canvassed (see ACIR 1980, Goodchild 1981 and Local Government Act

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\*The inquiry reported in October 1985 (see Self Committee 1985). National Inquiry into Local Government Finance, Report, AGPS.

Review 1983a). As outlined by the local review team, the preferred option was 'independence'. It was considered as the 'most realistic goal to set as an objective in the present environment'. Four major advantages were stated: the recognition of the role of local government 'as an integral part of the governmental structure...' under the umbrella of the Territory Government; the opportunity to devolve additional functions and responsibilities as development warranted; the maintenance of existing links and the role of local government 'as an advocate and spokesman for its community leading to its local knowledge being fed into the decision-making processes of other levels of government'; and the making of local government 'clearly accountable to its community for the performance of its functions and responsibilities'. If the 'independent' approach was adopted, then opportunities 'to be innovative, responsive and resourceful...to initiate and promote the local community-based personal and property services' and to secure 'flexibility to develop and take on increasingly important roles' would be provided (Local Government Act Review 1983a, 3-4). Whether the comments were intended as criticisms of past performance was not stated!

To achieve those objectives, several proposals were put forward. Among them were provisions for advisory committees (with extra-Council membership if desired) and electors' meetings (either convened by the Council itself or by electors themselves). However, more important was the suggestion to identify those functions 'best left in the hands of local government'. Although they were little different than those currently in the Act, it was proposed that greater flexibility would be gained by enumerating them in the form of regulations rather than in the principal Act and as heads only (i.e. without detailed fields of activities included). Moreover, Councils were to be permitted wide discretion as to the functions undertaken and freedom to develop them within their areas of competence without external approvals.

Even if the proposals are translated into law, they are unlikely to amount to 'independence' in any real sense. Also included in the review paper was a recommendation that the Minister continue to have the ability, under certain circumstances, to dismiss a Council and to appoint a manager. With such a reserve power, however infrequently employed, full accountability and responsibility will be withheld. Given the omnipresence of NT Government operations within Darwin, identification of exclusive functions for local government will be difficult. In many of the functions (and even the fields of activity within them) stated, exclusivity will only be attained if the NT Government is willing to vacate its existing authority. Although in the recent past, as in the case of public

libraries, devolution has occurred, there is little guarantee that the Government will accede to the much larger transfer of entrenched activities indicated in the list of permitted functions. What is more likely to eventuate is a piecemeal and fragmented transfer of the less prestigious functions and regulatory/licensing roles which certainly will not serve to promote a clear demarcation of authority or to enhance Council's accountability or status. It should also be noted that the Council has also shown a propensity to complicate discrete functional division by handing back certain responsibilities (for example, some ex-S306 roads and the Marrara Complex) to government control. Moreover, permitting Councils to enter into functions (or parts of them) without external approval will be hard to implement. In areas where activities are already being carried out by other government levels, Council participation would cause either duplication of services and resource wastage or negotiations to replace existing operations. The latter would necessitate the seeking of de facto approval. Financial constraint and dependency will be additional factors in limiting Council's freedom to undertake new responsibilities. Approaching governments, either local or Commonwealth, again is an abridgement of 'independent' status which, in theory, can only be achieved through financial autonomy. Finally, there is the awkward question of legitimacy. Although it can be argued that Legislative Assembly and Council elections provide a mandate for inter-governmental deals on functions and powers or that representatives are entitled to make decisions on behalf of their constituents, the fact remains that there has been no direct or open attempt to ascertain residents' opinions on the subject. If rates and charges are increased to fund new activities, resistance to expansionary programs might emerge. The quest for 'independence' may spur a greater community interest in Council's affairs but paradoxically it could be in opposition to reform in practice.

Some aldermen - old and new - hold as an article of faith that the public reputation of the Council has increased in recent years but there is little evidence to support that opinion. Throughout its history, the Council has generally laboured, as have equivalent authorities elsewhere, in a sea of apathy. Despite the gradual stabilisation of Darwin's population, the public relations campaign of the Council and its attempts to forge new community roles, the task of winning greater respect and status will remain formidable. Even if a greater ability to be innovative, responsive, resourceful and flexible (the aims of legislative review) is developed by Council, it is at least arguable whether they will encourage wider public enthusiasm and participation. To succeed in doing so would be alien to Australian political behaviour and to historical experience in Darwin. What is more likely to occur is an

intensification of the elitist propensities and aspirations of recent Mayors, some aldermen and senior Council staff.

At the end of Chapter Three, it was suggested that intergovernmental conflict was likely to be 'an enduring characteristic'. As long as areas of dispute over legislation, function, finance and control remain, relations between the Council and the NT Government will be uneasy. Only a foolish optimist would contend that the current reform proposals will do much more than slightly narrow the field of contention. The coexistence of two levels of government in a relatively small urban area, their characteristically interventionist styles and the need to augment or preserve their political interests provides fertile ground for conflict which no constitutional device can remove. Moreover there will always be the potential for personal rivalry between Council and the Legislative Assembly/NT Government representatives whose roles are often difficult to distinguish. A contrary argument which stresses the particular situational causes for conflict (for example, the youth of the council, the unfairly limited original condition of local government, the attitude of the Commonwealth overlords, and the unsettled early era of self-government) sees conflict as an essentially transitional phase. Although they did contribute to the intensity and consistency of dispute, there is small reason to conclude that, with their disappearance, intergovernmental relations will be elevated to a brave new world of accommodation and accord. Both the contemporary comparative perspective and the special local situation strongly suggest otherwise.

So far this conclusion has dealt primarily with external factors; there, a major theme has been the prospect of continuity. A similar pattern can be predicted in the area of power relationships within the Council. The bureaucratic ascendancy in the Council's decision-making process, a feature of contemporary local government within Australia, seems set to continue in Darwin. Although in democratic theory, that development may be unfortunate, in the prevailing environment it is perhaps inevitable. With rapid staff and budgetary growth, increasing management complexity, ongoing expansionary ambitions, part-time aldermen and the absence of political parties, conditions favour official dominance. Unless there is a marked circumstantial change, re-assertion of control by elected members is not a realistic expectation. Improvements in the mechanical aspects of policy-making may be expedited by greater delegation to Council committees and even senior staff, a revised committee structure, better research, planning and development facilities and the corporate planning strategy but they will not significantly disturb the current locus of power. Thus, the performance of senior staff is of considerable

importance. Their input, in recent years of uneven quality, will be crucial to future Council performance.

Of the factors sustaining the bureaucratic ascendancy, few seem destined to disappear in the short term. Despite the end of spatial expansion, growth and complexity will be compounded by a combination of increased activities (even without functional accretion) and organisational drift. Ambition appears unsated. Given the past experience of their participation and contemporary attitudes of non-ALP groups, organised and comprehensive intervention of political parties in local government in the near future seems improbable. But the discipline and coherence which they could impose on policy and decision-making could be a potent influence in directing political control back to the elected component. If that move were coupled with the introduction of full-time and appropriately remunerated aldermen, the impact would be more pronounced. Even without parties, full-time status, if properly employed and supported, would counter the existing inherent advantages of senior staff. But cost, tradition and community resistance would prevent such an innovation in Darwin as it has elsewhere (with the exception of Brisbane).

Claims that local government in Darwin has reached maturity have been common in the 1980s. As evidence, growth indices, expansion of functions and comparative perspectives are frequently cited. However, such claims are based upon faith rather than objective analysis. In the first place, the concept of maturity is elusive; no clear cut and accepted measurement model exists. If it did, it would certainly involve qualitative factors, criteria ignored by protagonists in Darwin. Secondly, it is inherently difficult to apply to a subordinate and dependent institution which is unable to determine its priorities or future directions freely. It should be noted that the NT Government itself is bound by similar constraints. Thirdly, the performance of the council in recent years provides little justification for claims of maturity, however defined. Finally, the ongoing debate on the future role of local government in the Territory's constitutional structure indicates that the developmental process, which could be interpreted as an index of immaturity, still has a long road to run.

In one sense, the early 1980s do represent an end of an era in Council's history. As noted throughout this study, the period in Darwin from 1957 was characterised by dramatic growth and change. Within the limits of the Council's territorial competence, a more leisurely pace of expansion is now occurring. Confined as it is to its present boundaries - Council's ambitions to extend its activities to the rural fringe area or to Palmerston have

been rebuffed - Council has lost one part of the impetus which provided organisational growth. Future expansion - if it occurs - will be fuelled primarily by the second developmental spur - increase in functions performed. Therein lies a salient explanation of the recent strategy of the Council to widen its ambit of responsibility thus ensuring continuing growth.

Critical comment aside, it would be unfair, in a review of Council's history, not to recognise its contribution to Darwin's civic life and amenities. If the proper standard of evaluation is comparative, then the Council's achievements have been respectable. Although it is difficult to agree with the present Town Clerk's expectation that 'Darwin City Council will shortly become the best local authority in Australia' (DCC Annual Report 1982-3, 5), it can certainly take some pride in the advances made; since 1957 it has travelled far.

## APPENDIX I

## Mayors 1957-84

Bill Richardson	:	1957-58
John Lyons	:	1958-59
Harold Cooper	:	1959-66
Harry Chan	:	1966-69
Bill Richardson	:	1969-71
Ken Waters	:	1971-72
Harold Brennan	:	1972-75
Ella Stack	:	1975-80
Cecil Black	:	1980-84
Alec Fong Lim	:	1984 +

## APPENDIX II

## Councillors/Aldermen 1957-84

Name	Ward	Period of office	Comments
Aitken-Quack, Richard	Port Darwin	1958	Never attended; position terminated
Antella, John	Waters	1978+	
Anthony, Michael	Lyons	1981-4	Defeated 1984
Antony, Robert	Paraparap	1957-8	Resigned July 1958
Astell, Fred	Nightcliff	1959-60	Resigned July 1960
Baban, John	Waters	1984+	
Baker, William	Nightcliff	1957-8	Resigned July 1958
Barden, Roy	Drysdale	1972-5	
Bauer, Harold	Combined	1963-9	Elected s/e August 1963; D/M 1966-9 candidate 1963.
Bell, William	Drysdale	1972-5	Candidate in 1963 and s/e 1963
Bennett, Hazelle	Nightcliff	1959-61	
Black, Cecil	Goyder Combined Chan	1973-5 1975-8 1978-80, 1984+	Elected s/e March 1973; D/M 1975-7, 1978-80; candidate in 1972
Booth, Dennis	Combined Chan	1975-8 1978-81	
Brandon, Dudley	Stuart	1957-9; 1961-3	Defeated 1959; candidate in s/e 1959
Bridgland, John	Combined Lyons	1975-8 1978-81	

## Appendix II continued

Name	Ward	Period of office	Comments
Brown, Edmond	Nightcliff Combined	1961-3 1963-6	Defeated 1966
Burke, Patrick	Waters Richardson	1978-84 1984+	
Burridge, Robyne	Waters	1984+	
Caleo, Felix	Paraparap	1959-61	Resigned Nov. 1961
Callinan, Aubrey	Paraparap	1957-8;	Appointed to vacancy Nov. 1958; candidate s/e 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1963, s/e 1963
Carvosso, Peter	Richardson	1979-82	Elected s/e April 1979; resigned June 1982
Chan, Harry	Fannie Bay Combined	1960-3 1963-6	Elected s/e August 1960
Chesterfield, Max	Temira	1957-9	Resigned July 1959
Chin, Ernie	Combined Lyons	1975-8 1978-84	Defeated 1984; D/M 1981-2
Cooper, Harold	Nightcliff Combined	1957-8 1966-8	Resigned October 1968
Creber, James	Combined	1975-6	Resigned Sept. 1976
Dale, Don	Richardson	1978-83	Resigned Dec. 1983; D/M 1980-1, 1983-4
D'Ambrosio, Ted	Port Darwin Combined  Lyons	1957-63 1963-72, 1975-8 1972-5	Defeated 1978; D/M 1959-62, 1964-6; 1972-5
Dean, Lillian	Fannie Bay Combined	1958-61 1966-9	Elected s/e July 1958; defeated 1961

## Appendix II continued

Name	Ward	Period of office	Comments
Edwards, John	Fannie Bay	1958-9	Resigned July 1959
Elix, Robert	Richardson	1984+	Appointed to vacancy Jan. 1984
Farmer, Terrence	Richardson	1982-4	Elected s/e August 1982
Feeley, Michael	Paraparap	1958-63	Elected s/e July 1958; defeated 1963; candidate 1957, s/e 1963, 1966, 1969, s/e 1969
Firmin, Colin	Combined Chan	1976-8 1978-83	Elected s/e October 1976; resigned December 1983
Fitzgerald, Royce	Combined Lyons	1969-72 1972-6	Resigned September 1976
Ford, Alan	Fannie Bay	1958-9	Elected s/e November 1958
Gayton, James	Drysdale	1972-5	
Goodfellow, Denise	Chan	1981-4	
Graffin, Ray	Temira	1957-9	D/M 1958-9
Gurd, Charles	Lyons	1981+	D/M 1984+
Hannon, Michael	Combined Lyons	1975-8 1978-81	Defeated 1981
Harris, Tom	Combined	1975-8	Resigned Feb. 1978
Hooper, Alfred	Nightcliff	1958-9	Resigned July 1985
Irvine, Terrence	Chan	1984+	Appointed to vacancy Jan. 1984

## Appendix II continued

Name	Ward	Period of office	Comments
James, Alan	Nightcliff	1960-3	Defeated 1963; candidate 1957
James, Earl	Chan	1981+	
Lesley, Robyn	Waters	1978-84	Candidate s/e 1976
Lyons, John	Port Darwin Combined	1957-8; 1959-63 1963	Resigned July 1963; D/M 1957-8
McDonald, Patrick	Paraparap		Elected s/e 1958, election invali- dated; did not take office
McFarlane, Keith	Richardson	1972-5	Resigned Feb. 1975
Mackenzie, Alexander	Fannie Bay	1967-8	Resigned July 1968
McQueen, William	Temira	1961-3	Defeated 1963
Mitchell, William	Combined	1966-72	Defeated 1972; candidate 1963, s/e 1964
Mount, Michael	Fannie Bay	1957-8	Defeated 1958; candidate s/e 1958
Nathanael, Christopher	Combined	1969-72	Defeated 1972
Oakley, Murray	Temira Combined	1959-61 1963-9	Defeated 1961
Richardson, Bill	Combined	1963-4; 1969	Resigned Feb. 1964; November 1969
Robertson, Jamey	Lyons	1984+	
See Kee, Charles	Temira	1960-3	Defeated 1963; candidate 1957, s/e 1963, 1966, 1978

## Appendix II continued

Name	Ward	Period of office	Comments
Sinclair, Herbert	Richardson	1972-5;	Resigned March 1979; candidate 1966; D/M 1977-8
	Combined	1978-9 1975-8	
Slide, Kenneth	Combined	1964-72	Elected s/e March 1964; defeated 1972; candidate s/e 1959, 1969, 1963, s/e 1963
Spence, Geoffrey	Fannie Bay	1961-3	Resigned July 1963; re-elected s/e August 1963
	Combined	1963-6	
Spillett, Peter	Stuart	1957-63	Defeated 1963; elected s/e 1969; appointed to vacancy February 1975
	Combined	1969-72,	
		1975	
Stack, Ella	Combined	1969-72	
	Chan	1972-5	
Sully, Victor	Paraparap	1961-3	Elected s/e Nov. 1961
Tambling, Grant	Chan	1972-4	Resigned Nov. 1974
Taylor, Charles	Richardson	1984-5	Resigned Nov. 1985
Turnbull, Peter	Combined	1976-8	Elected s/e October 1976
	Richardson	1978-84	
Waters, Kenneth	Combined	1963-71	Resigned Feb. 1973; DM 1969-71
	Goyder	1972-3	
Wayne, Claude	Temira	1959-60	Elected s/e Aug. 1959; candidate 1959, 1961
Wheeler, Robert	Lyons	1984+	
Wilkshire, John	Stuart	1959-61	Defeated (Temira) 1961

Notes: s/e - Supplementary Election  
d/m - Deputy Mayor

## APPENDIX III

## Senior Council Officers 1957-84

1. Town Clerks

Peter Warren	July 1957 - November 1957 (Acting)
Neville Butler	November 1957 - August 1960
Bill Sullivan	August 1960 - March 1974
Tom Abbott	March 1974 - June 1977
Greg Hoffman	November 1977 - November 1982
Garry Storch	November 1982 +

2. Deputy Town Clerks

Bill Sullivan	November 1959 - August 1960
Tom Abbott	October 1960 - March 1974
Terry Larkin	December 1973 - December 1974
Graham Backman	February 1975 - July 1978
Jim Raggatt	July 1978 - August 1981
Garry Storch	January 1982 - November 1982
Rod Shaw	March 1983 +

3. City Engineers

Geoffrey Spence	November 1957 - November 1959
Paul Burns	March 1960 - January 1963
Laurie Kemp	September 1963 - July 1965
Bill Emmerson	September 1965 - November 1979
Duncan Beggs	November 1979 +

4. City Accountants

Tom Abbott	October 1969 - December 1973
Robert Sadgrove	December 1973 - January 1975
Graham Backman	February 1975 - November 1975
Brian Payne	November 1975 - April 1978
Cheryl Jaques (Mann)	June 1978 - August 1981
Jim Raggatt	August 1981 - December 1982
Kevern Johnson	March 1983 +

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