



## ABC Online

### **Stateline Northern Territory**

[This is the print version of story <http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/nt/content/2003/s862748.htm>]

Transcript

## **Statehood**

Broadcast: 23/5/2003

Reporter: Mark Bowling / Barbara McCarthy

Print Email

BARBARA MCCARTHY: This week the NT Government announced that statehood is back on the agenda.

Any referendum could be five years away so there'll be time to decide.

And we're assured plenty of time for community consultation.

But the question remains as it was in 1998 when rejected, when put to the people is: do Territorians really want it?

Joining me in a moment will be the NT's first chief minister Paul Everingham.

MARK BOWLING: It's been the dream of NT politicians.

One time rejected by the people at a referendum but the idea now resurrected.

CLARE MARTIN, CHIEF MINISTER: Today my government will begin working with the community on a new campaign to achieve statehood, based on a NT Constitution we develop ourselves.

This time we will get it right.

MARK BOWLING: Five years ago many attributed the failure of the first statehood campaign to the approach taken by then chief minister Shane Stone.

The campaign cost Territorians \$0.5 billion.

CLARE MARTIN: I want to stress that this process will not be driven as happened last time by politicians thinking of their places in the history book.

MARK BOWLING: This time around Clare Martin has pledged that a majority of delegates to a constitutional convention will be popularly elected -- not selectively elected, as was the case last time.

STEVE HATTON, FORMER CHIEF MINISTER: It lost its credibility, because 90-odd per cent of the population had no say, in who should be on that convention.

MARK BOWLING: Five years ago the 'vote no' campaign was led by prominent Aborigines.

GALARRAWUY YUNUPINGU, NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL CHAIRMAN: If you don't know your rights are being protected in the constitution vote no for the statehood.

MARK BOWLING: This time those leaders are looking forward to being involved.

Clare Martin says they will have a central role and that could change the complexion of the statehood debate.

John Howard has given Clare Martin the thumbs-up too but in the end it will be up to Territorians.

A community-based process with the emphasis on being flexible.

CLARE MARTIN: Statehood may coincide with the 30th anniversary of self-government, July 1 2008.

We think by the age of 30 years democracy in the NT might truly be seen as coming of age.

But if the community wants us to take longer to draft a new constitution that satisfies its many important constitutional, political and social priorities, so be it.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: Former chief minister, Paul Everingham, thank you for coming in.

And by the way congratulations -- Charles Darwin University is honouring you with an honorary doctorate.

You have been a great promoter of NT rights and statehood during the CLP years, do you welcome Labor's new push?

Paul Everingham, welcome to the program.

PAUL EVERINGHAM, FORMER CHIEF MINISTER: Thank you very much, Barbara, for having me on.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: And congratulations too because the NTU has awarded you an honorary doctorate.

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Well, again, thanks, and you know, I was very surprised to after 25 years, I guess, receive this honorary doctorate but very gratified.



I'm only sorry that I won't be able to become a medical practitioner.

So what does that mean for you now?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: It's not that sort of doctorate.

Well, I guess it's some recognition of that part that my early government played in getting the Territory on the road, of the fact that we knew back then that a university was absolutely essential for Territory progress and to stop the brain drain of young Territorians leaving for the south.

I mean, back in those days you finished high school, you went south and that was the worst part of pre-self-government, that we were absolutely committed to correct, namely keeping our greatest resource, our young people, in the NT.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: So, Paul Everingham, this week the Chief Minister announced that statehood is back on the agenda.

What are your thoughts on that?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Well, I'm delighted and I hope it won't take five years and I really sincerely wish that they would just put a referendum to people where everybody voted on statehood, they weren't cluttered with some draft constitution and they just voted yes or voted no, and work out the constitution then.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: So do you think five years is too long?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: I do, I think why take five years?

Why say it's going to take five years?

I mean, it need only take 12 months or two years.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: But can you understand the caution that's being taken this time because of the mistakes of the first time?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Oh, not really.

I mean, everybody knows that the first attempt was aborted but the thing is people now have some experience so why should the second attempt, why should they view it with such caution?

I'd be enthusiastic for statehood because the Territory needs a bit of a kick along at the moment.

Since I've been up here in the last couple of days everybody tells me that the place is pretty flat.

I think statehood is the sort of thing to get going so that people can get behind it and move it

along and make Territorians enthusiastic for something they can believe in again.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: When you were chief minister was statehood something that you'd hope the CLP government would bring in?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Statehood was something that I hoped would come, we hoped would come, in time, and 25 years is a damn long time.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: Do you regret, though, that it could be Labor that's bringing statehood in?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Not at all, it doesn't worry me who brings statehood in so long as the Territory does become a state because I believe it's essential for the Territory's constitutional development that it do become a state and it was a sad thing that it was rejected, but I don't think we need 'labour' over it -- sorry to use that pun -- I don't think we need labour over it for five years.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: So what do you think now when you look -- as a former CLP person yourself, as a former chief minister -- when you look at your current party?

I mean, you must still have some links there of sentimentality even, of how the party's doing?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Well, obviously as a founder of the CLP, I'm very sentimentally attached to it but I'm also a realist.

You know, the CLP had 20 years in government, the ALP took that long to get it out of government The ALP's had three years, it's not exactly going like a fireball.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: Do you think the CLP could get back in though?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: I'm certain the CLP could get back in.

The CLP's just got to start articulating good policies.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: Under the same leader, under the current leader?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Look, I'm not talking about CLP leadership.

I'm talking about getting back into government.

CLP -- there's a lot of people out there said to me, you know, "We'll never vote Labor again," because, apparently, things aren't moving along fast enough.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: So what sort of advice would you be giving to members of the party?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: I'd be saying to the CLP, "Get your periscopes up "and be putting forward good policies."



You know, the only things about the Territory is it's jobs, jobs, and more jobs -- give them education, give them health.

Policies in those areas and law and order, and you'll be back.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: But what about leadership?

You need to have strong leaders.

Have you got any thoughts on that?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Well, I'm sure that you have to have leaders who believe in what they're talking about.

I mean, if someone's talking about something they don't believe in they can't convince other people.

But it's not my task to appoint the CLP leader.

It's the task of the current parliamentary party and that's their decision.

It's nothing to do with --

BARBARA MCCARTHY: Well, what's your view then on the current leadership?

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Well, I'm not in the Territory on a day-to-day basis.

I can't say.

I can't really make any constructive comment about the leadership.

It's something for the CLP to decide but I'm damn sure that if the CLP wanted to and got it's act into gear and organised a bit of traction, it could be back there after only four years.

BARBARA MCCARTHY: Okay, Paul Everingham, thank you for joining me on the program.

PAUL EVERINGHAM: Pleasure, Barbara.