

# Northern Territory Chronicle 1997

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Item</i>
<b>4 January</b>	Heavy rains caused by Category Two Cyclone Rachel cut Darwin off from the rest of Australia after the Elizabeth River bridge, 40 km south of Darwin, is flooded.
<b>12 January</b>	St Mary's football team wins its 50th consecutive first grade game, breaking a national record which has stood for 80 years. The first St Mary's team, started by the late Roman Catholic Bishop O'Loughlin and coached by Mr Ted Egan, played its first match on 25 October, 1952.
<b>26 January</b>	Ms Nova Peris-Kneebone, 1996 Olympic gold medallist in hockey, is named the 1996 Young Australian of the Year.
<b>28 January</b>	Headquarters 1st Brigade arrives in Darwin and takes up residence in Robertson Barracks.
<b>31 January</b>	Sir William Forster, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, dies in Adelaide.
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<b>2 February</b>	Mr Edmond Victor (Ted) Brown, a fourth generation Territorian born in 1918 and a descendant of Ned Tuckwell (his great-grandfather) and Vic Brown (grandfather), dies in Darwin. Known for his community spirit and a respected figure in the Darwin racing scene, Mr Brown and earth mover Mr Gerry Monck were responsible for developing the mix of sand, soil and oil for the Fannie Bay racetrack surface in the 1960s, permitting races to be run every day of the year.
<b>7 February</b>	The Darwin Club, one of Darwin's oldest, winds up operations in Admiralty House, The Esplanade after closing its doors in 1996.
<b>8 February</b>	Darwin Football Club celebrates the 80th anniversary of its first match, which was held on 6 February 1917 and resulted in a win for Wanderers 3-5-23 to 3-3-21.
<b>12 February</b>	Two 70 m chimneys, landmarks on the Darwin skyline and the last remaining evidence of the original Stokes Hill Power Station, are demolished.
<b>17 February</b>	Dr Neil Conn AO is sworn in as Administrator by the Governor-General, Sir William Deane, succeeding the Honourable Austin Asche AC QC. The occasion is the first official swearing-in of an Administrator to be held in Parliament House, Darwin, and the first to swear-in a Deputy of the Administrator, Mrs Minna Sitzler.
<b>18 February</b>	The liner <i>QE2</i> berths, for the second time in Darwin, at Stokes Hill Wharf.
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<b>March</b>	An American zoo offers a six-figure sum to purchase Cassius, a 5.4 m Territory saltwater crocodile thought to be the world's largest in captivity.
<b>3 March</b>	The 204 room Holiday Inn opens on The Esplanade, Darwin.
<b>4 March</b>	Former Administrator of the Northern Territory, Commodore Eric Johnston AO AM (Mil) OBE dies, and is honoured with a State funeral.
<b>12 March</b>	50th anniversary celebrations of the first ABC Radio (5DR, now 8DDD) broadcast to Darwin. <b>22 March</b> The Alice Springs Desert Park is officially opened.

<b>27 March</b>	A large cargo aircraft under charter to Sandline (a company which supplies mercenaries) is diverted to Royal Australian Air Force Tindal, where arms sale items to Papua New Guinea are impounded.
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<b>14 April</b>	Territorian pioneer Mr Charlie Schultz, owner and manager of Humbert River station (now part of Gregory National Park) about 600 km south-west of Darwin, dies in North Queensland, having spent 43 years in the Territory.
<b>14 April</b>	The All Seasons Darwin Central hotel is opened in Smith Street on the former site of the Darwin Post Office.
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<b>May</b>	The Hale-Bopp comet appears in Territory skies.
<b>20 May</b>	Mr Bill McKinnon, the most senior surviving Northern Territory policeman, in terms of both date of joining and seniority of rank, dies at age 94. Mr McKinnon was the first white man to climb Mt Olga (1932) and was the official police witness to the last hangings in the Northern Territory over 40 years beforehand.
<b>24 May</b>	The <i>Centralian Advocate</i> , founded by Charles Henry (Pop) Chapman in 1947, celebrates the 50th anniversary of its first copy. Originally published as a weekly journal, the newspaper was bought by News Ltd in 1966.
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<b>9 June</b>	In the Queen's Birthday honours list, Mrs Nancy Giese OBE is appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for service to the development of tertiary education in the Northern Territory, and to the visual and performing arts.
<b>30 June</b>	At a Sotheby's auction in Melbourne, a new record price is set for work by an Aboriginal artist when US\$206,000 is paid for Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula's <i>Water Dreaming at Kalipinypa</i> (1972).
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<b>July</b>	Headquarters Northern Command Area of Operations is extended to include North Queensland and the northern half of Western Australia and the corresponding Exclusive Economic Zone and airspace.
<b>July</b>	Gross State Product in the Northern Territory grows 6.3% in the year to June, compared to a national increase of 2.8%.
<b>1 July</b>	Radio Australia's transmitter on Cox Peninsula ceases operations.
<b>1 July</b>	Mr Michael Ryan wins Territorian of the Year award and Ms Romina Ilad wins Young Territorian of the Year award.
<b>2 July</b>	The Fourth Stone Ministry of nine is appointed, following the resignation of Mr Fred Finch who is replaced in the Ministry by Peter Adamson.
<b>11 July</b>	Snow falls on Ayers Rock, Central Australia, during freak weather conditions, although the Bureau of Meteorology records it as hail. It is believed to be the first time that such an event has occurred.
<b>17 July</b>	The National Gallery of Victoria holds a major retrospective exhibition of the work of Ginger Riley Munduwalawala (b.c. 1937), a Mara <i>jungkayi</i> (custodian) of Limmen Bight country, south east of Ngukurr, and an established artist of international repute. In 1992, Riley won The Alice Prize and produced a series of works for the new Australian Embassy in Beijing; the following year, he won the inaugural National Heritage Commission Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award.

<b>18 July</b>	World famous astronomer, Mr Eugene Shoemaker, dies in a head-on collision on a remote Territory road enroute to the Wolfe Creek Crater National Park.
<b>24 July</b>	The Myilly Point campus of the Northern Territory University is closed, completing the consolidation of the University on the Casuarina campus.
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<b>24 August</b>	Chief Minister Shane Stone announces that work to complete the Darwin to Adelaide railway could start in 1998 and be completed by 2002. His announcement follows a \$100 M Federal funding pledge made by Prime Minister John Howard, at a press conference in Adelaide.
<b>30 August</b>	In the general election for the Eighth Legislative Assembly, 18 seats are won by the CLP and seven seats by the ALP.
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<b>September</b>	Northern Territory Correctional Services utilise computer-monitored bracelets to supervise eleven people serving home detention orders in the Northern Territory.
<b>5 September</b>	At a special memorial service held at Darwin's Christ Church Anglican Cathedral, hundreds of Territorians mourn the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.
<b>15 September</b>	The Fifth Stone Ministry of nine is appointed, with Tim Baldwin replacing Steve Hatton in the Ministry.
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<b>October</b>	After almost 26 years, the ban on crocodile hunting is lifted in controlled circumstances, and a crocodile cull takes place in Arnhem Land as part of a trial program to hunt large crocodiles for their skins.
<b>October</b>	A real estate survey confirms that average prices paid for residential properties in Darwin are second only to Sydney.
<b>October</b>	Conditional approval is given by the Commonwealth Government for mining of the uranium ore body at Jabiluka, 22 km north of the existing Ranger Mine.
<b>23 October</b>	A period of intense building activity at the Northern Territory University concludes with the opening of the new Commercial Building.
<b>29 October</b>	INDEF 97, a seminar co-hosted by the Northern Territory Government and Headquarters Northern Command, breaks new ground in the Northern Territory by bringing industry into Defence operational planning.
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<b>November</b>	The Territory's unemployment rate dips to 3.7%, its lowest rate in 17 years, compared to a national rate of over 8%.
<b>November</b>	Approximately 31 tonnes of metal firearm parts, the remains of firearms surrendered in the Northern Territory pursuant to the Federal Government's gun buy back scheme, are buried in the foundations of the new East Arm Port.
<b>November</b>	The Top End is shrouded in a blanket of haze due to uncontrolled forest fires raging in parts of Indonesia.
<b>November</b>	An outbreak of Philippine fruit fly ( <i>Bactrocera philippensis</i> ) is discovered in Darwin's northern suburbs, causing quarantine road blocks and airport inspections to be imposed for a year.
<b>3 November</b>	The Navy patrol boat HMAS <i>Gawler</i> topples when a shiplift collapses at Darwin Patrol Boat Base. An attempt to refloat the stricken ship almost ends in disaster when it drops four metres into the sea.
<b>11 November</b>	Mt Todd Gold Mine near Katherine closes, leaving 230 people out of work.

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<b>December</b>	<i>Operation Cranberry</i> , a permanent Australian Defence Force surveillance operation across northern Australia, is activated under the control of Headquarters Northern Command.
<b>2 December</b>	The Territory Government sells its remaining 60% interest in the Ayers Rock Resort Corporation to private interests.
<b>12 December</b>	HMAS <i>Townsville</i> brings in <i>MV Vaninda</i> , a high-tech Indonesian stern trawler suspected of illegal fishing; the trawler is larger than the patrol boat.
<b>31 December</b>	The brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign (BTEC), aimed at eliminating these diseases from cattle and buffalos, officially concludes with Australia being declared a <i>Free Area</i>
<b>Also in 1997</b>	Major additions to Darwin tourist accommodation are brought into operation through Luma Luma holiday apartments (78 rooms), the Holiday Inn (204 rooms), the Primavera resort (85 rooms), the Darwin Central hotel (132 rooms), the YHA tourist centre development (294 rooms) and the Mirambeena resort extensions (100 rooms).

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Edited by [His Honour Neil Conn AO, Administrator of the Northern Territory](#)