

Speech by CLP President Shane Stone

Central Council Reception and Welcome Drinks held at MacDonnell Range Holiday Park, Palm Place, Ross Highway, Northern Territory.

Introduction by CLP Vice President Jamie de Brennie

Good evening everyone, it is now my privilege to introduce our next speaker Party President Shane Stone.

Shane Stone started his Territory political career in Alice Springs in the mid 80's. He was at various times Chairman of the Alice Branch, Vice President and President of the CLP. He failed spectacularly in his bid for Sadadeen in 1987 but went onto win Port Darwin in 1990.

Shane Stone became the Territory's 5th Chief Minister in 1995 and in 1997 led the CLP to our greatest victory ever. The CLP received 54.7% of the first preference vote. In two party preferred terms 57.9% delivered 17 seats.

In 1999 having resigned as Chief Minister Shane Stone became the Federal President of the Liberal Party chairing the successful 2001 and 2004 federal election campaigns before retiring in 2005.

Today Shane Stone is a director and Chairman of UK and Australian companies with revenues exceeding \$3.5 billion. His philanthropic work has included Chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh Award in Australia, the Order of Australia Association and the Australian Children's Television Foundation. Throughout his working life as a barrister, politician and businessman he served in the Australian Navy Reserve and retired in 2016 after 40 years' service with the rank of Commander. Shane is married to Josephine who is with us tonight - a special welcome back to the Alice. Shane and Josephine mark 40 years of marriage this year and have two adult children.

Speech Shane Stone

My fellow Territorians, good evening. Jamie has acknowledged and thanked a number of sponsors, office bearers and supporters. Let me add to the list the Mayor of Alice. My parents at different time served as Shire President and Mayor of Wodonga and they always impressed on me the importance of acknowledging the civic leadership of towns and cities where I might be visiting and speaking. I also want to acknowledge former CLP Presidents Graeme Lewis, Suzanne Cavanagh,

Ross Connolly and Tory Mencshelyi. We also have with us tonight former MLAs Barry Coulter and Peter Styles.

How good is this setting against the MacDonnell Ranges at sunset and being back in the Alice enjoying the hospitality of Bev and Brendan Heenan, CLP stalwarts through thick and thin. Jamie has thanked our other sponsors and workers and his wife Alice but let me thank Jamie and commend him on the outstanding job he is doing as Vice President and Alice Springs Chairman.

Many of you are true believers and know what the CLP, the party of Self Government has delivered for the Territory. Let me put it firmly on the public record – the Mills and Giles Governments added to the CLP legacy. Adam Giles was very good for central Australia. There is little justice in politics and in the same way that Australia's best contemporary Prime Minister John Howard was booted from his Sydney seat so too Adam Giles did not deserve on any measure to lose in Alice.

Put aside the shenanigans of certain individuals over the term and you had a good Government who was at times courageous and made a difference.

As Chief Minister in 1995 I inherited a substantial legacy from each of the CLP Chief Ministers' that preceded me. That was an important platform on which to build. Every-one of them - Everingham, Tuxworth, Hatton and Perron - contributed significantly to the Northern Territory on their 'watch'. The Territory was well served by the longevity of CLP Governments dating from before Self Government. I am confident that in time the sale of the TIO and the long-term lease of the Darwin port will be acknowledged as the right thing to do. And there was plenty more lost in the mist of what was observed by us all these past 4 years.

Vice President Ray Bail and I drove down from Darwin – took us 3 days as we called in at various road houses, met Katherine and Tenant members and introduced ourselves to newcomers on the track. Our reception was generous and embracing. Let me assure you there is plenty of good will around for the CLP. I am pleased to be able to report that people don't forget. As Greg Dick said in his enthusiastic embrace at Aileron, *"how the f.... are you Stoney. F.... me, well I'll be f....ed"*. It was just like yesterday.

There is currently an ad on TV for a health fund. It features a quartet of folks the wrong side of 60 strumming guitars and singing "If only I knew back then what I

know now". It is set against a backdrop of young people doing risky things, a middle aged man trying to lift a very heavy pot into his ute and a range of other activities that most of us now wouldn't dream off. That includes climbing a ladder at my age.

If only I knew back then then what I know now – how true.

So what do I know now and what advice may I offer the next generation?

Politics isn't rocket science so keep it simple.

When I started out in politics up to 45% were rusted on voters but now we are lucky to get 30% so you have to work harder.

The mob work you out pretty quickly so don't be tricky and half smart.

There is no substitute for plain speaking.

Many politicians are unfairly betrayed as self-serving opportunists - we must turn that around with better quality candidates and members.

The needs of the electorate are pretty straight forward – safety, security, jobs and your own home.

Infrastructure is key – build it and the people will come.

Power prices are unsustainable for ordinary Australian households.

Cost of living overall is a first order issue.

Politicians fail when second order issues driven by elites take over.

Housing affordability for first home buyers should be a top order priority for all Governments at all 3 levels; finally.

Get your policy points right and differentiate yourself from your political opponents. Right or wrong it was said to me in Tenant that the only point of obvious policy differentiation in the last NT election was open road speed limits.

There is one further observation I will make. There is this yawning gulf developing between our big cities and the regions. As has been pointed out by others there is this massive disparity between people living in the super cities of Melbourne and Sydney and those in the regions and it is at every level.

For some time there has been a serious income divide between city and regional Australians. A marked disparity in wages, property values and wealth generally is on

full display. Agriculture is playing its part in our national wealth creation but many other industries in regional Australia are failing.

Do we Australians really support cities of say 6 to 8 million people? Wouldn't it make more sense for Government to embark on major decentralisation programmes to encourage population shift to regional areas in the same way that Albury Wodonga was kick started by the Askin, Hamer and Whitlam Governments. Closer to home wouldn't it make more sense to increase the NT Government presence in Tennant for mining and Katherine for Agriculture. Is there an opportunity to make Alice one of Australia's largest transport hubs? What has the Federal Government done with boots on the ground to highlight Alice as one of Australia's most important tourism hubs?

While the federal Government has a role to play on the very difficult issue of housing affordability the first order issue is land availability. Local governments have a major role to play here.

Some might be thinking so you have identified the issues and problems what are you doing about them? The fact is that many of these issues have been tackled by successive CLP Governments since Self Government. Permit me to give you some examples. We built the Territory infrastructure against all the odds and despite unrelenting criticism, we reformed the land title system from leasehold with strict covenants to freehold, we transformed the Stuart Highway from a goat track impassable in the wet to a world class highway. We headquartered the Tourist Commission in Alice. We introduced school based constables since disbanded by Labor, we introduced mandatory sentencing for property crimes also disbanded by Labor. The CLP pioneered domestic violence strategies long before the rest of Australia got on-board. We led the national push into Asia and we built the north south railway against all the odds. On that achievement we have with us tonight the architect of the railway Barry Coulter so a big round of applause to acknowledge his contribution. We could have done more as is always the case but let's be clear in the most adverse of climatic conditions north and south we built a Territory community that we all believed in. We are Territorians and in the Territory you can be anything you want to be.

So my fellow Territorians Josephine and I are delighted to be back in the Alice. We enjoyed our early married life here and have great memories. I will be forever grateful to the people of Alice for launching my political career.

'If only I knew back then what I know now'.

Let me assure you the CLP is here to stay – there is always a tomorrow in politics and how long we sit in opposition is entirely up to us – entirely up to you.

Thank you for coming.