

**SHANE STONE'S SPEECH**  
**TESTIMONIAL DINNER, KALYMNIAN CLUB**  
**26 MARCH, 1999**

In the Northern Territory it is the practice you will find in the northern part of Australia that you won't necessarily find in the rest of the nation. And I remember being stuck on an aeroplane at Sydney Airport with John Singleton when we sat there for three hours on the tarmac and he said to me: *'you know what I like about you blokes up north,'* and I think he meant the sheilas as well, *'you're the real Australians'.*

And although it's probably a big claim to make, the reality of it is that you find certain qualities, whether it be in the Northern Territory, in North Queensland or North West Western Australia, that perhaps have been lost to the rest of the nation. And when I read the preamble, although everyone has had a lot to say about it, I was really struck with the reference to mateship. And tonight is about mateship. And I thank you for it.

You know it's an old fashioned concept and it applies equally whether it's between men and men, women and women or men and women. And it's uniquely Australian and it is something that has permeated out of extremes in terms of the very short period of time when the Europeans first came to this great nation. And it's a sense of looking after the person next to you, being there at the right time, being supportive but being blunt. And so I say to you, Dickie Griffiths, and your organising committee that my heart goes out to you because I can never say the words to thank you for what you've done for Josephine and I tonight. Thank you.

But it doesn't end there because, as in Alice Springs, which was an absolutely marvellous opportunity for me to say, thank you; to thank people like Tommy Harris who was prepared to give up his seat so that Shane Stone could become the Member for Port Darwin; to say thanks to people like Marshall Perron who brought me straight into the ministry; to say thank you to the CLP who gave me the opportunity to be a Member of Parliament and to say thank you to many of the people who have worked closely with me, including Suzanne Cavanagh in the time that she served as the general secretary, because the reality is that no one single individual can achieve what has been achieved unless you have the support and encouragement of those around you.

And so to the many CLP members here tonight, and I know that a lot of you don't have any political affiliation, but to the CLP members, and in particular the members of the Darwin Branch and the other branches, I want to thank you very much because I wouldn't have been here without you. And to say to you, and to say to you, Territorians, I would never have been there without you. And I thank you for that.

You know there's been a lot of speculation about what I might do and where I might go but let me make it very clear, Josephine and I are not leaving the Territory, not for one minute. We're here to stay. And for all those labels they throw at me, *'he's only been here five minutes'*, *'he's a blow-in, you know'*. *'Worse, he's a Victorian'*, *'worse he's a Victorian lawyer'*, *'...from Wodonga'*. And I thought I had laid the ground work for my son, for Jack Stone; he can fly too, you know (reference to a father/son Superman tape in the video presentation). I thought, they'll never be able to point the finger at him; conceived in Alice Springs and born in Darwin. They'll never beat that. And he had his first birthday in Tennant Creek, for the record.

I always say to you that it's a great privilege to have served the Territory and not everyone gets that opportunity. It truly is a privilege to be a Member of Parliament, it's an even greater privilege to be a Minister of the Crown, to be entrusted with being the Head of Government - the opportunity to make a difference.

To know that you could implement policies that went to the very heart of a quality of life in the very community that we live in is a very onerous responsibility, as Paul Everingham and Marshall Perron will tell you. And you don't own it, you're entrusted with it, you don't possess it, you are the custodian, the guardian of it.

And one day your time comes and you move on. You don't look over your shoulder, you look forward. You look back with a great deal of satisfaction in the knowledge that you have made a difference and whilst all the people might not agree with you at any particular point in time on a range of issues, you were in the box seat to affect changes.

I received a lot of letters after I left the chief ministership, close to 3000 from Territorians, people who sat down and passionately wrote how they felt. And there was a number of consistent themes, like *'we are not sure we really ever liked you'* or *'at least you had a go'*. But I remember one particular letter that came to me and it said, *'By golly if we ever go to war, I hope you're running it.'*

And I guess if I had a failing - I had lots of failings - it was a unique... I was probably good at winning the wars but I probably wasn't very good at keeping the peace. When Peter Conran made his departing speech he said: *'What I like about working for Stone is that he'd rather get chucked out of office for doing things than doing nothing at all.'* And he rang me today and I said, *'well you were right about that mate'*.

But no recriminations from me, no regrets, what you saw is what you got, no apologies. Some things I might have done better, some things I might have listened to more advice about, but notwithstanding all of that, I just want to say thank you. I want to say thank you to my wife and family for putting up with lots and thank you for your gifts.

You know, in 1982 I was to become the endorsed federal candidate for Chisholm in Melbourne. Michael Wooldridge subsequently went on to win that seat. What influenced me to go north was Paul Everingham. The very same man that now appears on your radio and says *'All I am trying to do is sell power at 20% less than government'*. It's irresistible, isn't it? But I'm glad he is not coming after me.

I've never regretted that decision. People said, *'you could have gone federal and who knows where you would have been today'*. ...not leaving the Territory mate. And it is said to me from time to time, you should come home and I said, *'I am home, I'm in the Territory'*. I'm very proud to be a Territorian, it was your hearts that went out to me when you gave me your support and I was as proud as punch when I stood up on 25 August 1997, 18 seats out of 25 - 58.2% of the two party preferred vote. That's better than sex!

I just want to say to all of you and there are many friends in the room and I don't want to run around the room, but I just want to say and I want each of you to take this message very, very personally as though I'm saying it to you, *'to everyone of you, from Josie and I, thanks for the memories'*.

ENDS