

Northern leader returns home

WANDER into the Northern Territory's Parliament in Darwin, and the chances are you will bump into someone from Bendigo.

Four of the assembly's 25 members are Bendigo-born, and at their head is the Territory's Chief Minister, Shane Stone.

For Mr Stone, leader of the Territory's ruling Country Liberal Party, coming to Bendigo yesterday was something of a pilgrimage.

It is little known he was born in Bendigo in September 1950, and although he was only an infant when he left the area, the city still occupies an important place in his heart.

It is for this reason Mr Stone came to Bendigo yesterday with his eight-year-old son, Jack.

"I've always been proud of the fact that I was born here and consider this one of the great prov-

incial cities of Victoria," Mr Stone said.

"I've been back and forth over the years but haven't been here for a long time. I brought my son Jack to see where his Dad was born."

"This is probably my first visit for about 15 years and I wanted to wait until he was a little bit older before we came to have a look."

Mr Stone was born in Bendigo while his father, Les, was principal of a now-defunct one teacher school at Derby, between Bendigo and Bridgewater, in 1949 and 1950.

But he can trace his roots in the area back to last century, when descendants of Mr Stone's mother Pam, the Devines and the Sandifords, came to central Victoria with the Gold Rush.

The Stone family moved to Chiltern, near Rutherglen, before Shane was one-year-old and he spent his formative years in Wodonga, followed by a career as a navy diver and as a barrister in Melbourne.

Mr Stone moved permanently to the Northern Territory in 1985.

He now presides over a conservative government in one of Australia's most dynamic areas.

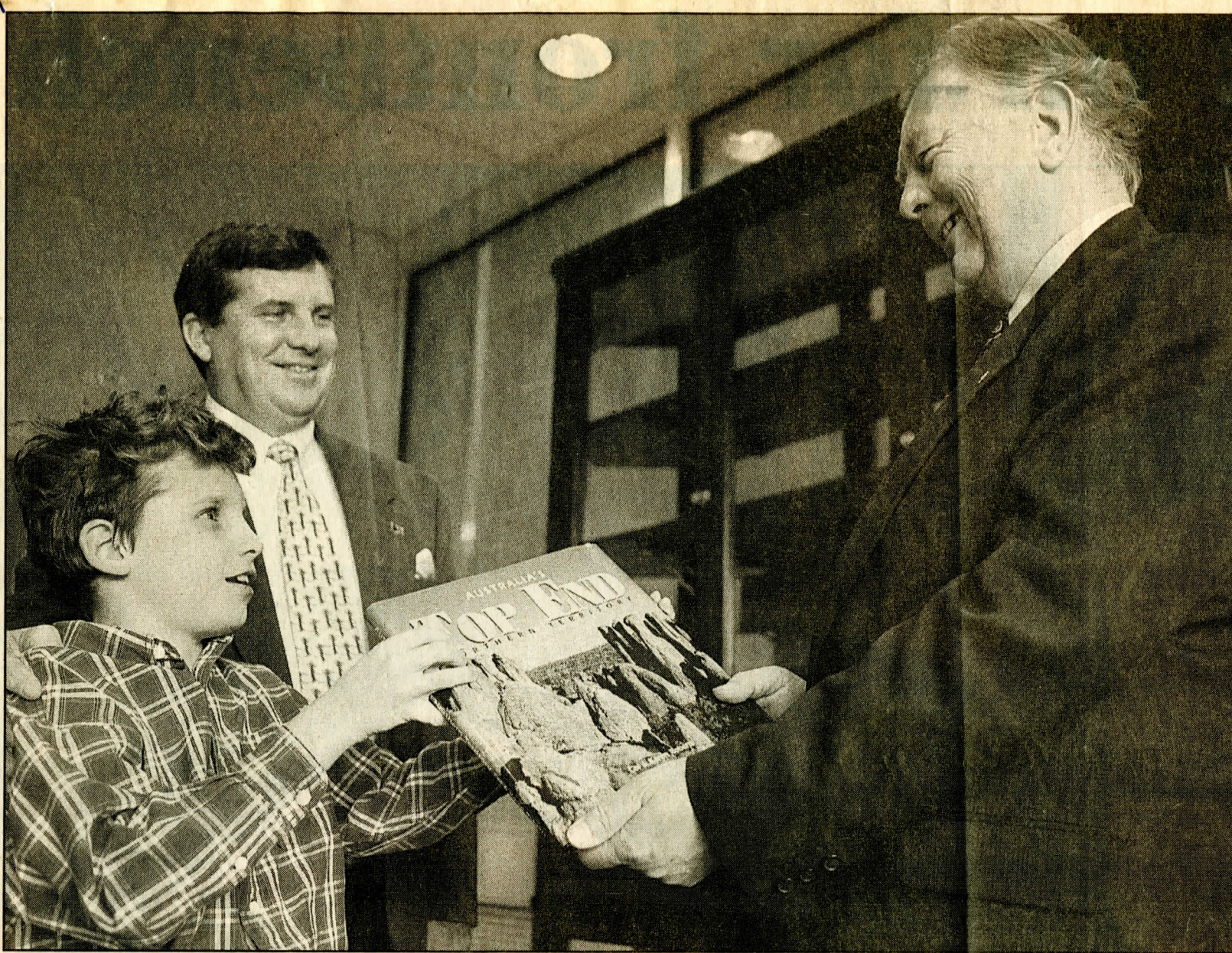
Mr Stone said the ex-Bendigo contingent in the Northern Territory Parliament all sat on the Government benches.

He said two MPs, Loraine Braham and Barry Coulter, both had close relatives still living in Bendigo.

The third Bendigo-born MP is Phil Mitchell.

During his short visit to Bendigo yesterday, Mr Stone met with City of Greater Bendigo Mayor Barry Ackerman, council chief executive Hadley Sides, and Bendigo MHR Bruce Reid.

By MARK PHILLIPS



EIGHT-year-old Jack Stone hands a book on the Top End to Bendigo mayor Barry Ackerman on behalf of his father Shane. Picture: PETER HYETT.

Bendigo ceremony remembers Federation's poet

BENDIGO'S poet of Federation, William Gay, was remembered in a special ceremony at Bendigo General Cemetery yesterday.

Mr Gay, who died 100 years ago, wrote the poem Australian Federation after emigrating to Victoria from New Zealand in an attempt to ward off tuberculosis.

City of Greater Bendigo mayor Barry Ackerman, Bendigo MHR Bruce Reid and regional Constitutional Convention committee chairman Cr Anne Jones were among about 30 people who attended the 8.30 am service marking Mr Gay's death on December 22, 1897. Piper Albert Dole lead the procession to the graveside with Amazing Grace.

Bendigo historian Greta Balsillie spoke to the gathering on the importance of Mr Gay's contribution to Federation.

Mr Ackerman said although the past was important, Bendigo must look to the future.

Flora Hill Secondary College year nine student Katherine Ashby and Quarry Hill Primary School Dux student Time Byrne each read out Mr Gay's works at the service.

Australian Federation
by William Gay

"From all division let out land be free,

For God has made her one: complete she lies

Within the unbroken circle of the skies,

And round her indivisible the sea
Breaks on her single shore; while only we,

Her foster children, bound with sacred ties

Of one dear blood, one storied enterprise,

Are negligent of her integrity.

Her seamless garment, at great Mammon's nod,

With hands unfilial we have basely rent,

With petty variance our souls are spent,

And ancient kinship under foot is trod;

O let us rise, united, penitent,

And be one people, mighty, serving God!"



A CEREMONY in Bendigo yesterday remembered Federation's poet.