



**NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
***of* AUSTRALIA**

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Dr TANZIL RAHMAN MLA

*Member for Fong Lim*

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**HANSARD EXTRACT**

**50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2024

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*This extract is taken from the Official Hansard of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory*

It is great to celebrate 50 years of the Legislative Assembly. I thank all those who came before us and took the reins to represent the people of the Northern Territory, including those who have passed and those who were in the Chamber on the weekend to speak about the last 50 years and where we have come to as a community over those years. These people have shaped the Northern Territory into what it is today. The people in this Legislative Assembly today are here to continue to shape it. I am proud to be part of a team which is making serious change to shape the Northern Territory, bring back that can-do attitude and work with our community on that resilience to bring the Territory back to the place it was.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, today we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. It is a moment to celebrate our shared history and achievements, as others in the Chamber have noted. I recognise that we are meeting on unceded Larrakia country, and I acknowledge all Aboriginal peoples and thank them for their generosity and leadership.

This Chamber has been central to shaping the Territory's story, as we have heard, responding to Cyclone Tracy, championing the recognition of land rights and advancing our fight for self-determination. It has been a place of leadership during moments of profound change. We can be proud of the achievements that have defined this Assembly and the way it has evolved to better serve the people of the Territory. This is a legacy worth celebrating.

It is a time to reflect on how far we have come, and we have heard wonderful stories, as people shared at the celebration on Saturday. We also heard, as noted by the Member for Gwoja, reflections and language that should be deeply troubling to all of us that should have no place in this Chamber.

Milestones like this are not just about looking back; they are also about looking forward. As we stand at these crossroads, we must ask: what do we want the next 50 years to represent?

This is our opportunity to move into the future with renewed purpose and commitment. The foundations that we lay now in this Chamber will determine whether this Assembly continues to earn the trust and confidence of the people we represent. This demands integrity, accountability and a genuine connection to the lives of Territorians. This is the people's House, and the people look to it. What we do here matters in not only the law we make but also the way we work together to make those laws.

We must recommit to building an Assembly that reflects the Territory's diversity, a place where all voices—particularly those from First Nations communities, women and young leaders—are heard and respected. Our decisions must not only reflect our values but also the liberalities of the people we serve.

Accountability must remain at the heart of everything we do, including transparency in how we govern through open ministerial diaries, lobbyist registers and clear reporting. Honest communication strengthens trust. When Territorians see how decisions are made and resources are allocated, they see a government that is working for them.

We must work with courage and urgency to tackle the pressing challenges of our time: the housing crisis; domestic and family violence; community safety; and creating opportunities for the next generation. These issues demand bold action informed by working together and the insights of those most affected.

The next 50 years are ours to shape. I believe that we can and must work together in this Chamber as the people entrusted by our communities to make good law for 100% of the people we represent by working together, listening to each other and making wise decisions based on the best information we have. If we lead with integrity, act with accountability and stay grounded in the needs of all Territorians we can make sure that this Assembly is a place of progress, innovation, compassion, justice and hope. Let us honour this milestone by committing ourselves to the work ahead so that when we mark future anniversaries, we can do so with pride in what we have achieved together.

**Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, in the spirit of the levity brought to this Chamber by Mick Palmer on the weekend, I begin by noting that I am a journeyman cricketer. My ambitions have always far exceeded my abilities on the cricketing field, much to my chagrin. I was primarily a wicketkeeper but also an attritional batsman, not one of these dashers of the modern day who can score 100s in Twenty20s, but somebody who had to grind out every run. Cobbling together a 50 in cricket is hard. Getting off the mark is tough enough, as the long litany of ducks that I have to my record will attest.

As most of you know, this weekend marked the start of the Australian summer of cricket. As I caught a bit of the Australia v India test match in the background—in which unfortunately Australia was humbled to a 295 defeat in Perth—it caught my attention that Virat Kohli, the former Indian captain, turned that game on

the tea session of the third afternoon by converting a 50 into 100. It is hard to do that. That is why statisticians and aficionados of cricket will look at conversion rates for how people can go the distance, not just get off the mark, not just survive but then build and turn it into something substantial and match-winning.

What then did cobbling together 50 for this jurisdiction look like? This past Saturday, as those on both sides of the House have noted, many of us were fortunate to attend an event in this Chamber commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Legislative Assembly. We have reflected upon some of the contributions made by the guest speakers on that day. Without repeating any of them, it is worth noting a couple of additional reflections I jotted down.

We were lucky to have the former Administrator Hon Vicki O'Halloran remind us of the fact that the Northern Territory is the only Assembly to have had continuous Indigenous representation from the get-go.

She was followed by Hon Roger Steele, who made a lot of the reflections on the post-Tracy period that we have heard a little about today. The one that caught my ear was the sentiment regarding the threat and real fear of the possibility of the Commonwealth disbanding this legislature in the wake of Cyclone Tracy, such was the level of dysfunction and chaos here at the time. As was pointed out by the learned Member for Namatjira, resilience is what saw the Northern Territory through that period.

Dawn Lawrie, a former member of the inaugural Legislative Assembly, reflected on that Legislative Assembly and its predecessor, the Legislative Council, and the fact that there were five members from that Legislative Council who fought their case over many years to then earn a seat in the Legislative Assembly.

That First Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, much like the one we sit in, had 17 CLP members and two Independents. Dawn Lawrie reflected on the fact that it was a great aspiration of the people at the time to ensure that we remained masters of our own destiny. That phrase struck me because we are again having conversations about our capacity to exist—existential questions about how to be a self-governing polity, be responsible, have a future and convert 50s into 100s.

I particularly enjoyed Ms Lawrie's anecdote about Hon Bernie Kilgariff. It spoke volumes about the manner in which that first legislature was conducted. Ms Lawrie noted that although she represented an Independent voice, she was given ample opportunity to present her case in this Chamber, and her dissent or minority opinion was duly recorded.

It gives me great comfort to know that in the first few sittings and months of this government of which I am a part that we are also affording all members of the House the opportunity to prosecute their case, be heard and provide robust opposition and democracy.

Stephen Hatton spoke after Dawn Lawrie. Amongst the many things he said, the one that caught my ear was how much time and effort he and his colleagues put into being MLAs. He talked about coming in two hours early to sittings to sit in the reading rooms of the Parliamentary Library to read *Hansard* to get across his brief and know what it was to be a representative here, understand the history of the place and be able to make a meaningful contribution.

The depth of what he spoke about—not just him, but all the others—showed that the history of this place was long. Institutional memory existed as a function of people putting the time and effort into understanding the history of this place, not just at moments of celebration but as part of every day being a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Daryl Manzie, in his witty and loquacious way, reflected on the building of Parliament House and moving from one side to the other. He also weaved in noteworthy remarks regarding the foundations upon which our economic growth was predicated, including laying the preconditions for sustainable resource development and mining, that being in gas and coal, and providing the regulatory framework that has ensured that we have to date been blessed with being able to create economic growth using mining and resource extraction without compromising our lifestyle and environmental protections.

Mick Palmer, with all the levity in the world, noted that being in parliament was ostensibly a boring matter but went on to note—of all the things that I thought Mick Palmer would have pointed out in this House—the significance and the importance of the library. I was dumbfounded. Mick Palmer pointed out the great contribution of having the Parliamentary Library and the Territory Library in this place in what it has offered by providing everyone in this House and members of the public the ability to use the facilities and feel connected to the place where laws are made. As we know, the library will be moving shortly; questions remain as to what will replace it and how we will replace the services that it provides.

Hon Clare Martin spoke pointedly about how the change of government in 2001 marked an important maturing point in our democracy. Indeed, that is the case. A robust viable opposition is important in any democratic polity. She duly noted some of the achievements of that period in providing balance and maturity to our legislature, including freedom of information laws, a revised Estimates process and the FITA.

She reflected on her conversation with Malcolm Fraser in relation to statehood and the offer that was made in the first five years to the Legislative Assembly to realise aspirations for statehood and bemoaned the fact that opportunity was not realised at that point.

We heard you, Madam Speaker, speaking about the decade between 2010 and 2020. Might I say it was delicately put that it was a period of turmoil, which we did not dig into but we recognised was a period of great highs and great lows. I think implicit in that message was the hope that we would experience more stability in the years forward, dare I say it.

The Chief Minister spoke eloquently at the end to bring it all together and to lay an agenda for the future. She duly recognised all the speakers before her.

It was a great occasion to be part of and to get a sense of history for this place.

A notable feature across all the speakers and the political spectrum was statehood. I must confess that I did not expect it to be reflected on by everyone in that Chamber on that day in quite the vociferous terms that it was. I grew up here at a time when statehood was expected, not hoped for. It was a matter of when not if, and it was a great shock to me in 1998 when the referendum was lost. It is encouraging to see both sides of the House again recognising that an aspiration for statehood remains. I think we can build upon that shared aspiration.

The final question, coming back to where I started is: how do you convert 50 into 100? Let me freely say that I am a man who scored a lot of 50s and very few 100s of consequence, so I do not have a monopoly on the wisdom to articulate a vision for how to get a ton on the board. However, from the first day that I came into this place I have maintained that in order to provide longevity it remains incumbent on all of us in this House to protect, promote and advance the aspirations of self-governance, and that necessarily includes a commitment to fiscal responsibility.

I am pleased to be a part of a government that is demonstrating greater fiscal responsibility and laying the foundations to create opportunity for new generations ahead, specifically seeking to raise investor confidence, stimulate population growth, re-imagine revenue models, ensure energy security, target industry support, reduce government wastage, promote market competition and deliver efficient services for all Northern Territorians.

I acknowledge all the past members of this House, and I thank them for their contributions. They have provided the platform upon which all of us will seek to build using our finite time in this place. I highly doubt I will be around to see the Northern Territory reach its ton. The Member for Goyder, with youth on his side, stands the best possible chance. With youth on their side, I hope that the generations of tomorrow will live to see the Northern Territory reach its maiden century.

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#### **VISITORS**

##### **Dundee Beach School**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students from the Dundee Beach School, accompanied by their teacher. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the students and teachers from Dundee in the gallery.

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the motion on 50 years of the Legislative Assembly in the Northern Territory. This marks a special opportunity to celebrate the Territory's shared achievements. A lot has changed over the last 50 years. In the First Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, two of the 19 members