

**Speech Notes for the Chief Minister's
David Hawkes Oration**

17 October 2003

After the Restructure: Moving Towards Excellence

Good afternoon.

I'm delighted to be here.... to deliver the 2nd David Hawkes Oration.

Many of us here know David..... the former Commissioner for Public Employment.....and I think we all appreciate the lasting impact David has had on the Northern Territory's Public Sector.

He steered it through a quite stunning evolution.... taking it from being what some called, "a branch office of the Commonwealth" to an independent and innovative public sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen....

In 1994, Australian corporate philosopher, Richard Hames wrote :

"We are changing our minds about the relationships between enterprise and the worker....about the ethical balance between conservation and development.... about the changing roles that humans play in organisations with the advent of technology.... about leadership and teamwork – indeed *about the very purpose of business and the essence of what it is to be human.*"

The times indeed... are 'a changin'.....

Today I want to talk about the very recent history of the Northern Territory Public Sector – about the changes and the achievements that have taken place since my Government's election two years ago.

I want to talk about the expectations my government has for the Territory public sector.... and look into the future at the kind of Public Sector we will be leaving to the next generation of Territorians.

The restructure of the Northern Territory Public Sector is now virtually complete. Now we are moving into the next stage...which is positioning the sector for new challenges in the future economic and social development of the Northern Territory.

Our own public sector is unique...

Not only is it part of the community.... it's a community in itself.

With 14,500 members, the sector is the Territory's largest employer....and as such.... our employees are both the suppliers and consumers of our services.

But... we face a multitude of challenges:

We have an aging workforce...

There is international competition for skilled staff....

There is increased demand on staff due to the pace of change...

Public servants want a life! They have increased expectations about the balance between work and other aspects of life.

Territorians are demanding greater accountability.... The days when people were prepared to put up with shabby public services are gone forever.

Territorians demand high-quality services: where they want it... when they want it... and in a form which meets *their* convenience - not that of the provider. As consumers, Territorians are as demanding of government as they are of any private sector company.

We are working to position the public sector for a key role to meet these challenges head-on.... to turn them into opportunities and to capitalise on our uniqueness.... as the Territory moves into the next exciting stage of its development.

With major projects like the AustralAsia Railway.... Timor Sea oil and gas... and Darwin's Waterfront precinct... the Territory's population and service needs must surely grow.

The Public Sector has a pivotal role in meeting the needs of the increased population that will result from those projects.

One of my government's first tasks after taking office....was restructuring the public sector by streamlining 35 departments into 19.....

The changes were made to better coordinate resources and achieve efficiencies...

To deliver the same or improved services to the community throughout the Territory.... at a lower overall cost.

The changes create a better environment for career and personal development to take place....

The Government expects to see an increase in the numbers of staff that are available to serve regional and remote communities.

I think you'll agree that, while there is plenty yet to be done.... We have made considerable progress in achieving what we set out to do with the restructure of the sector.

We have initiated a comprehensive report into secondary education that began in January 2003... And the recommendations of the review team will soon be delivered to Government to be considered and acted upon.....

The Bansemer Review of the Health and Community Services Department was prepared over the course of six months....and its 193 recommendations cover

almost every aspect of the administration and delivery of health and community services in the Territory...

We invited former Queensland Police Commissioner Jim O'Sullivan to provide a comprehensive review on the NT Police Force. He handed Government a list of 116 recommendations that became the blueprint for a \$75 million... "Building Our Police Force" Plan that will see 200 extra police on the street by the end of 2006.

The restructure also helped bring like units together to better deliver on the government's priorities and programs.

In a number of key areas cross agency collaboration and focus on key goals is required to achieve the results we are looking for – this is what we call the task force model

I announced a number of these task forces earlier this year this year and they included the Austral Asia trade route – building on the benefits of the railway and port development, the recently announced Darwin waterfront development and the indigenous economic development task force

This is the way of the future. Agencies will required to dedicate resources to this collaborative approach and it will deliver better and more focussed outcomes.

The Northern Territory Public Sector 2002-04.

Enterprise Bargaining Agreement provides a framework for a number of initiatives that reflect the Government's commitment to improving working conditions and flexibility for NT Public Sector employees.

Those initiatives include increasing the paid maternity leave period from 12 to 14 weeks....

I am proud to say that this is a first among State and Territory Governments....

As we stated when in Opposition...this year we have seen the removal of the statutory requirements for public sector staff to retire at age 65.

We recognise that age is not a barrier to productivity and the ability to make positive contributions....

It also gives me great satisfaction to witness the implementation of the Public Service's Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy, which I will expand on further a little later.....

We have led the way by conducting the first detailed survey of bullying in the workplace in Australia. We're working with the unions to develop a strategy that defines, identifies and addresses 'bullying'.

I am advised that one of the recommendations is a zero tolerance approach – which is one recommendation I'd be pleased to support.

We have introduced comprehensive union rights provisions... including right of entry and union training leave.... and provisions from the ACTU's test case on reasonable hours to ensure employees health and safety are protected.

....and we are currently implementing a Remote Workforce Development Strategy to address equity of access to development opportunities for public servants in remote locations.

About 8700 public sector employees under the Northern Territory Public Sector 2002-04 Enterprise Bargaining Agreement recently received a pay rise of 3% of their salary... or \$44 per fortnight - whichever is greater. That follows an increase of 3% or \$46 per fortnight paid in September 2002.

One further initiative I am pleased to announce today is an increase in the amount of salary Public Sector employees may sacrifice for superannuation purposes.

The amount will increase from 30% to 50% of an employee's pre- tax salary. The Commissioner for Public Employment will issue more advice to employees on new arrangements in the near future.

This initiative supports my government's objective of ensuring the Public Sector is able to offer competitive

salaries and conditions that enable us to attract and retain high performance employees.

The Commissioner for Public Employment and the Under-Treasurer are considering other proposals and, provided these contribute to my Government's objective, I anticipate salary sacrifice opportunities will be increased even further.

It is flexibility and work-life balance that will help make the Territory public sector an employer of choice. That balance ensures that public sector employment arrangements are fair, safe, flexible and innovative....

Current programs include flexible working hours....home based work.... job sharing... part-time work.... career breaks.... short-term absences.... family leave and maternity leave.

We are working to recruit and retain trainees from a whole range of groups in the Northern Territory including youth.... under-graduates... women... migrants... indigenous people.... people with disabilitiesand mature aged people through a range of programs.

For example, for the 6th consecutive year, we have implemented the National Indigenous Cadetship Program and this year started the Indigenous School to Work Program – which was piloted in the Territory.

We have set up a public sector-wide committee on equity, diversity and flexibility.... and we have begun development of a sector-wide Women in Management program. It's part of our overall need to provide stronger leadership across government. (pause)

There is no doubt that we have achieved a great deal in a short space of time....but rapid change has its downside.

Today we find there is tension in the system....Some are uneasy and confused....

Are we moving too fast?

The reduction in agencies brings with it greater responsibilities Employees have been brought to greater account....

In some areas people are working longer hours.....

Budget over-runs are no longer tolerated....

Reduced agencies should mean more resources...

Is that happening? Are economies under control?

These are all concerns that we will work through in a transparent way.....but make no mistake about it – I am proud of the professional manner in which the Territory Public Sector has responded to its restructure.

And the longer I am in this position.... the more I value the way in which you go about providing the

services we all....unfortunately sometimes.... take for granted....

But what of the future? What kind of public sector do we want...now that the restructure has concluded?

In this era of privatisation.....downsizing..... deregulation ... and decentralisation....how does the 21st Century public sector employee approach his or her job?

Do they cling to narrow, inflexible rules?

Do they find themselves unable to balance the demands of life outside the workplace?

Jim Armstrong....in his discussion paper to the public service of Canada said:

“There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting better government that costs lesshowever, the frenzied quest for cost effectiveness and efficiency has left little time and energy for:

- 1- a thoughtful analysis about the long term protection of the public interest.... and
- 2- consideration of the rationale for the existence of public institutions....which during the market reforms...was too readily overlooked.”

Is there too much control....too many rules....and not enough adherence to the traditional meaning of the words: “public service?”

Armstrong says a broader approach is required...and that alternative concept is found in the notion of "stewardship.".... of care-taking for the greater good of the organisation for future generations.

He sees stewardship as a choice over the "agency theory" that is often the result of a restructure.....where tangible rewards like money and conditions..... are the goal.

Stewardship, on the other hand, focuses on rewards that are less quantifiable....like opportunities for growth and achievement as the chief motivators for which one works on behalf of an organisation.

Stewardship can be a risky...courageous step. It lends itself to deeper policy reflection..... involving people rather than controlling them....and promoting a longer term... over-the-horizon perspective.

In reality...stewardship completes the work started by the restructuring. It can create a renewed public service culture that restores public confidence and provides a clarity of purpose to all public servants.

But to make the stewardship ideal a reality we must provide the tools for such change. That means creating a leadership style that builds relationships...not structures.

It means learning from mistakes and ending secrecy fostering independent thinking.....and demanding

a commitment to act for the whole – putting service above all else.

Stewardship organisations are people-building rather than people-using. And refocusing on these values requires a change in the fabric of public sector culture....

the way employees are managed....and the way the public service communicates with political leaders.

Our Public Sector must represent the diverse, complex, dynamic nature of the Territory. We must continue to boost our ability to recruit and retain talent – especially indigenous Territorians.

They are the ones who live here... and chances are...they are the ones who will stay here generation after generation. The labor force over the coming decade may depend substantially on them. This is just one of the reasons for reaffirming our commitment to employment equity now

As a result, my government launched the *Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2002-06*, in November 2002.

It is now being implemented, through initiatives like *Kigaruk*, a leadership development pilot program for Indigenous men launched in June.

In partnership with IPAA...we successfully held the first Indigenous Employment Forum in Darwin in September 2003 to establish best practice for employers. 350 people attended.

We are also developing an Indigenous employment tool kit to help Public Sector agencies in employing and supporting Aboriginal staff.

We must get more indigenous people involved in the Public Sector.

In January, Cabinet gave in principle support to funding of \$1 million a year for remote workforce development. This funding is on top of what agencies currently spend on workforce development.

This strategy will help re-define remote service as a life and career enhancing opportunity, and position the Northern Territory in a competitive market to attract teachers and nurses here.

Cabinet is also currently considering a strategy for the employment of people with disabilities, and I look forward to the release of the strategy in December.

As many of you would be aware, my government asked the Office of the Public Sector Commissioner for Public Employment to prepare a policy statement on the future directions of the Northern Territory Public Sector.

The result was Building a Stronger NT Public Sector, which takes a thorough and holistic view of our past,

present and future. Cabinet is currently considering it...and without preempting Cabinet's deliberations....

I can say that the paper contains a range of initiatives in four main areas:

Our people - 'growing our own' people through learning and development opportunities

Managing the workforce –achieving excellence in the recruitment , retention and management of public service employees.

Workforce planning, ensuring we have a workforce that reflects the Territory as a whole and can meet the current and future needs of the community.

The employment contract - improving and clarifying the relationship between the public service as an employer... and its staff.

In conclusion, I just want to say how excited I am by what lies ahead for the Territory. Enormous changes in our social and economic development are happening now..... and the Public Sector has a crucial role in meeting the demands of expansion....within a streamlined structure.

The public service will have to dig deep to find the courage to venture down the track of the stewardship model that I've outlined.....the model that strives for excellence, motivated by the common good.

This cannot be achieved in a public service that operates in a rigid, control-oriented manner. Ours must foster creativity and innovation. It must be outward looking and one that is inclusive of all Territorians.

Thank You

