

THE DARWIN
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY:
A HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE

By Nan Giese



Occasional Papers No. 20

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INTRODUCTION

This talk was delivered by Nan Giese in July 1988 at the State Reference Library in Darwin, as one of the 'Under the Banyan Tree' entertainments.

Nan Giese is well known in Darwin and the Territory for her outstanding volunteer work in many fields, particularly those relating to education and the arts, and for a considerable period was Chairperson of the Arts Council (NT Division).

As a long-standing member of the Darwin Institute of Technology Council, and its Chairperson at the time of this talk, she is ideally qualified to present this potted history of the Institute, and of tertiary education in the Territory generally.



THE DARWIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Darwin Institute of Technology is the major institute of tertiary education in the Northern Territory. It offers 140 courses ranging from postgraduate and degree level in higher education to certificate level in technical and further education. Enrolments as at 30 April 1988 totalled 9052, consisting of 2861 in higher education courses, 3373 in TAFE courses and 2818 in non-award, cost recovery programs. A full-time staff of 500 is supplemented by many part-time staff, both non-academic and lecturing staff.

The Institute is located on a site of 58 hectares in Darwin's northern suburbs, 13 km from the city centre and bounded by parklands. Its facilities are excellent and include a large modern library, science laboratories, and computer facilities for students. Some residential accommodation for students is available on site. The Institute operates a multicultural FM broadcasting station and there is a theatre company on the campus. Health services are provided by the campus nurse and a visiting medical practitioner, and students have access to counselling services as well.

Courses offered at the Institute are vocationally oriented and the awards of the Institute are nationally registered in the National Register of Tertiary Awards. This means that the courses leading to those awards are of a level and standard consistent with comparable courses offered at colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology throughout Australia. Registration is approved only after a course has been rigorously assessed by external panels of experts to ensure that the courses meet stated objectives and that the institution has the physical and teaching resources to provide the course at the required level. Courses are submitted for reassessment every seven years.

The Darwin Institute of Technology was originally established as the Darwin Community College under a Northern Territory ordinance in 1973, having been five years in the planning.

Some twenty years on, it is interesting to trace the developments that have occurred over the past two decades. Firstly, though, I would like to briefly describe the educational arrangements that existed prior to the initiation of an inquiry into Northern Territory post-school needs in 1968.

In 1954, when I came to the Northern Territory, Darwin had a population of approximately 9000. Total educational needs were catered for in a single institution known as the Darwin Higher Primary School which offered primary education and three years of limited secondary education and included the Adult Education Centre, for which the Headmaster of the School was also the part-time Registrar. Provision of services was a joint responsibility shared between the Commonwealth Government, which accepted overall financial

responsibility and provided buildings and physical resources, and the State of South Australia, which supplied staff and curriculum.

With substantial population increases throughout the next decade, separation of component levels occurred and, in 1958, the Adult Education Centre became an independent unit with Mr Harold Garner appointed as its first principal, although existing responsibilities continued without change. It was not until 1968 that the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science accepted full responsibility for community education in the NT (with the exception of Aboriginal education) at all levels. However, an agreed staffing arrangement with South Australia was not terminated until 1972 when the Commonwealth Teaching Service was established.

A spectacular population explosion occurred in Darwin throughout the second half of the 1960s, the annual growth rate averaging 9% with a record 11.5% increase in 1968, a factor which placed increasing and insistent demands on educational services and facilities. Enrolments at the Adult Education Centre almost doubled from 1860 in 1964 to 3499 in 1967.

To obtain an informed assessment of the needs for post-school education and suggestions on how they might best be met, the Commonwealth Minister for Education and Science, Mr Malcolm Fraser, in 1968 commissioned Mr Max Bone, then Director of Technical Education in South Australia, to investigate and report upon:

- the needs for post-secondary education in the Northern Territory and particularly in the Darwin area, excluding the requirements for university education, and
- the means to meet these needs which have immediacy and to indicate future developments within these and other areas.

Earlier in the sixties, 1963 as I recall, there had been a strong push for the establishment of a university or a university college from the small but vocal Graduates' Association of that time. However, in the opinion of the Universities Commission, such a development would require a community population of at least 200 000 to justify the high cost of academic and physical resources that would be needed and, as far as Darwin was concerned, it was therefore a matter for consideration well in the future. This was a view that continued to be held even as late as 1981, by the Universities Commission's successor, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, the body that firmly advised the Commonwealth Government to reject the Northern Territory Government's bid for the establishment of a Northern Territory university, declaring that the situation should be reassessed in the 1990s.

In setting its terms of reference for the 1968 inquiry, the Commonwealth made it very clear that provision of a university was not an option.

Mr Bone presented his report on 30 September 1968. His chief recommendation that 'a community college' should be established in

Darwin was accepted in principle by Federal Cabinet in June 1969. A planning group, the Darwin Community College Planning Committee, was appointed by the Minister on 29 August 1969 to make recommendations on the establishment of the college, including the educational services it should immediately provide, the general lines of educational development during its first five years, and the siting and initial building requirements of the college. The Committee of ten was chaired by Mr Keith Coughlan, Senior Assistant Secretary, Department of Education and Science.

The first report of the Planning Committee was submitted to the Minister in February 1970 and contained recommendations on the proposed nature and functions of the college, about which early decisions were needed to enable the physical development of the college to commence. The Minister announced in July 1970 that the Committee's recommendations on the college's program, siting and initial building requirements had been accepted by the Government. These specified that a completely new institution designed to meet the present and likely future post-school educational needs of Darwin and nearby regions should be built, and that the existing Adult Education Centre should be integrated into this institution. Government approved an expenditure of \$4.5m for the construction, furnishings and fitting of the College, \$4m to be allocated for the construction and \$0.5m for movable fittings, furniture and equipment. The college was to be sited on an area of 20 hectares at Casuarina.

The site chosen was the Committee's second option, the recommendation being that the college should be built on East Point Reserve. The Adult Education Centre had been operating on the original Darwin Higher Primary School site in Woods Street, in the premises vacated by the Darwin High School when it moved to its new building on Bullocky Point. The advantages of a central location, conveniently accessible for as many students as possible, were obvious and the vacant land on East Point Reserve immediately sprang to mind because of the area of land available to provide the opportunity for future expansion, as well as its proximity to both residential and commercial centres of Darwin and the attractive location.

In the event, the fact that this site was reserved by proclamation for the establishment of a future university and that the provision of main services, including road services, was a major and costly problem at the time, influenced the decision to accept the second option on Lakeside Drive in an area of growing population, on a site that was already serviced to its boundaries. The allocation of an area of 20 hectares was totally inadequate and created enormous difficulties when the need for expansion became evident in 1976. It was not until late in 1978 that these were resolved when the Northern Territory Government agreed that part of the adjacent Brinkin subdivision should be developed for education purposes, and the College gained title to the required additional area in 1979.

The Planning Committee envisaged the Darwin Community College as a post-school, multi-level, multipurpose educational institution of a comprehensive nature aimed at providing for educational needs over a wide range of fields. It would offer part- and full-time programs of both

a formal and an informal nature to meet the existing and developing needs of the community. In its report the Committee stated:

'Although many of the programmes offered by the College may be technical and vocational in nature, we believe that a clear distinction exists between such an institution and the conventional Australian Technical College. Its range of programmes will be far more extensive and its capacity to adapt rapidly to emerging needs at various levels as well as its special orientation to local requirements places upon it a more substantial responsibility than that carried by a Technical College.'

The recommendation for an integrated community college was justified on the basis of the size of the community having regard to the wide diversity of needs. It was argued that one multipurpose, multi-level institution offering a wide range of courses would be more economical in terms of physical and teaching resources than the several separate types of institution whose functions would be catered for within the college. Although the concept was a new one in the Australian educational context, similar comprehensive-style institutions had achieved wide acceptance in overseas countries and its relevance to the Northern Territory situation was affirmed.

The Planning Committee continued to meet throughout 1970 and in October produced a second report providing advice to the Minister on the form and functions of the College's governing body, appropriate administrative arrangements for the period before the establishment of the permanent Council, and a timetable for the major stages of development. It also included recommendations on the organisational structure of the College, the pattern of administrative and academic responsibility, and a suggested admissions policy.

Its task completed, the Planning Committee considered it inappropriate that it should assume the role of the governing body of the College and advised the Minister of the desirability of appointing an interim council to cover the transitional period up to the establishment of the College under legislation and the appointment of the College Council.

An interim council, under the Chairmanship of Mr Charles Ebert, formerly Assistant Director General, Department of Education, New South Wales, was duly appointed by the Minister in 1971. Former members of the Planning Committee provided the nucleus of the Interim Council of 11 with some additional appointments. Its role was to advise the Minister on the development of the College, including the detailed consideration of education programs, the preparation of draft legislation, and the appointment of key senior staff.

The College was established as a body corporate responsible to the Minister for Education under an ordinance of the Northern Territory assented to on July 12, 1973. The final meeting of the Interim Council took place in December 1973 when the retiring Chairman welcomed the initial eight new members of the first College Council appointed by the Minister. These, together with the Principal and staff and student

representatives, appointed a further four members and the full Council of 15 members assumed responsibility for the governance of the College on 1 January 1974. Bishop K Mason, the Anglican Bishop of the Northern Territory, was elected Chairman at its first meeting.

Following acceptance of the Planning Committee's recommendations, a building program was endorsed by Government and construction on site commenced in 1972 with a proposed opening date of March 1974. The foundation stone was laid by Mr Malcolm Fraser.

With the building program under way, the Interim Council proceeded in 1972 to make the initial key staff appointments, commencing with the Principal Mr Joseph Flint, the Registrar Mr Peter Tedder, and the Librarian Ms Margaret Clinch. Senior academic appointments followed. The academic planning team of program chairmen was formed in July 1973, with Mr Ted Dalton heading the Tertiary and Commerce area, Mr Peter Simington Technology and Science and Mr Harold Garner Applied Arts and Continuing Education. Intensive course planning and staff recruitment took place in subsequent months and by January 1974, 89 appointments had been made.

In October 1973, at the request of the Commonwealth Government in pursuit of its policies on bilingual education, the School of Australian Linguistics was established within the College. Moves from the Commonwealth Teaching Service and the Department of Education led to the acknowledgment of the need for a program of Teacher Education to be incorporated within the College and an additional program chairman, Mr Don Dickson, was appointed in December 1973.

Throughout 1973, the College operated from departmental accommodation located in the MLC Building in Smith Street, Darwin City, and moved to the Casuarina Campus in February 1974. For various reasons, including a prolonged wet season which held up building supplies, furniture, fittings and equipment for months, the College buildings were not completed in time for the official opening in March and courses began while construction was still underway. Some sections in fact were not handed over until mid 1974.

The official opening was to have been performed by the Queen during the Northern Territory segment of the 1974 Royal Tour of Australia. Unfortunately, a constitutional crisis in the United Kingdom necessitated Her Majesty's precipitate return to Britain and her place was taken by the Duke of Edinburgh, who could not refrain from commenting on the state of the building he was opening, and hoping it would be finished the next time he visited.

Even before the first semester began it was clear that the provision of space and specialist facilities was inadequate to support any responsible development of educational offerings to the scale required. There was a large deficit of both classroom space and office accommodation. An amount of \$960 000 was appropriated for the immediate construction of a second academic block. A further capital grant of \$400 000 was approved for accommodation for the School of Australian Linguistics to be in place by the beginning of 1975. The contract for the academic block was let in December 1974 and plans for the SAL building were

finally drawn up in that month also, but due to the cyclone neither project proceeded.

Because of the shortage of space in 1974, the College continued to operate from the old Adult Education Centre in Woods Street, as well as from the new buildings at Casuarina. In August of that year the Darwin Community College assumed responsibility for the Alice Springs Adult Education Centre, which was subsequently named the Alice Springs Community College. It was located in the former Alice Springs High School at Anzac Hill and was staffed and serviced by the Darwin College. The Darwin Community College Council established an advisory committee in Alice Springs under the chairmanship of Mr Bernie Kilgariff, which was concerned with the general development of the Alice Springs College. During 1974 Alice Springs and the associated centre at Tennant Creek attracted 1095 subject enrolments, with 88 apprentices in courses.

When the College opened in 1974, its academic organisation was arranged according to a structure proposed by the Planning Committee and endorsed by the Interim Council. This was based on the types of programs to be offered rather than on groups of disciplines. Emphasis was placed on the educational functions of each program and the goals the programs were designed to achieve. Executive responsibility for the operation, management and development of each program was vested in a Program Chairman.

Initially, four program areas were established:

- 1 Applied Arts and Continuing Education
- 2 Tertiary and Commerce
- 3 Teacher Education
- 4 Technology and Science (including Trades),

to which a fifth, Australian Linguistics, was added halfway through the year. The first and second subsequently amalgamated to form the Humanities Program.

This did not prove to be a satisfactory arrangement and before the end of the College's first year of operation staff sought a more workable and practical academic organisation. The Academic Board submitted a detailed proposal to Council for a restructuring of the internal organisation in December 1974, but the intervention of the cyclone prevented any change until 1976.

In spite of these difficulties, the College offered an impressive array of courses in 1974, catering for wide and diverse interests at many levels. There were 148 different courses available at Darwin's two campuses and in Alice Springs.

Activities were also conducted at annexes in the outlying centres of Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Tennant Creek using the area schools in after-school hours. Demands in Darwin were so heavy and space so limited it was necessary to make use of all three high schools then operating, to accommodate the overflow in the evenings. In 1974, the College attracted an enrolment of 4197 full-time and part-time

students and employed a full-time staff of 139, supplementing these with 168 part-time lecturers and support staff. The College operated from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm six days a week.

On 24 December 1974, Cyclone Tracy caused large-scale destruction to the College buildings and assets. It was estimated that 62% of the buildings were rendered unusable, being either completely demolished or badly damaged. Most of the buildings were unroofed and torrential rain completed the devastation of the gale force winds. The student residences, academic block, trade workshops and administration block were among the most severely affected buildings. Prompt emergency re-roofing of workshops and repairs to the library roof prevented further water damage to valuable equipment in the trade workshops and to the book collection. Most of the houses occupied by staff were totally destroyed and those staff members who remained in Darwin moved to what was left of the College buildings. At the Woods Street campus, damage was extensive, two of the four buildings being totally destroyed.

Within a week only 11 000 of Darwin's population of 48 000 remained in the city, the rest having been evacuated to other parts of Australia following a complete breakdown of the city's essential services. The buildings still standing at the College became a refuge for the homeless of the neighbourhood. The cafeteria was opened and served meals to those who had moved in or stayed on in the vicinity, living on their blocks under floorboards, in tents, or in hastily constructed shelters.

Surveying the scene in the days following the disaster it seemed inconceivable that it would be possible to repair such wholesale damage. However, by January 15, at a specially convened Council meeting, it was decided that the College would reopen in 1975. College staff, with some outside assistance, worked tirelessly to clean up the mountains of debris, carting away rubbish and clearing classrooms and offices to provide as much usable space as could be salvaged from the ruins.

As many of the staff and students had been evacuated to interstate capitals, with little prospect of an early return, it was decided to operate some programs in Perth, others in Alice Springs and Canberra. However, the strength of the attachment of Darwin residents to their city had been underestimated and within months many thousands of people were already returning. Despite the lack of teaching and housing accommodation and the shortage of staff, since many were unable to return due to the unavailability of houses, enrolments for the first semester totalled a surprising 2500 students, increasing to 2640 in the second semester. By mid-1975 almost all the courses provided in 1974 were once again available to students, in temporary accommodation. Space was leased from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic School at Salonika, as well as a newly constructed warehouse in Winnellie of about 10 000 square feet¹, which was fitted out to meet immediate needs. Subsequently, a long-term lease for an additional area of 27 500 square feet² in a second Winnellie warehouse was

1 929 square metres

2 2555 square metres

Because of the difficulties in regard to site extension, planning of the construction of permanent buildings did not begin until 1979, although a master plan for site development on the extended campus was produced as early as 1977. In the intervening years the restoration proceeded slowly. From the ruins of the former student residences a building was reconstructed to house the College printers, which had languished for three years in a corner of the Winnelle warehouse until it came back to its new home in December 1978. The students had to

A program of post-cyclone repair and restoration continued throughout 1976 and all buildings were upgraded to the new building code. Even with the continued usage of the two Winnelle warehouses (leased at a cost of \$200 000 per annum), classroom and office space was at a premium as enrolments continued to rise. An unfortunate expedient was the location of semi-permanent demountables on campus which, with many additions, are still there twelve years later.

Government was understandably cautious about investing in major capital works in the primary surge zone. The land adjoining the site rose significantly from the College boundary to take it out of the danger zone. However, unfortunately for the College, the Hooker Corporation had, pre-cyclone, signed a development contract with Government to construct Darwin's first private housing estate, complete with an ornamental recreation lake, and plans were well advanced for use of the whole of the adjoining area. When the city was virtually destroyed, Hookers reconsidered the viability of the proposal, and uncertainty over the future of the Brinkin Estate, as it was called, and of the availability of additional land above the surge zone continued until 1979 when the issue was finally resolved. This uncertainty inhibited any planning for long-term reconstruction and development even though by mid-1976 all staff and students had returned to Darwin, with the exception of the School of Australian Linguistics, which remains in Batchelor to this day.

Consultants appointed by the Reconstruction Commission to advise on possible resting and reconstruction proposed that it might be moved to what was planned as a new development at the Marrara Regional Town Centre. The development did not proceed and, as 1975 passed, there was some relaxation of the surge zone policy. Council had little alternative but to reinvestigate the possibility of extending and developing the Casuarina Campus.

It was clear that the Casuarina Campus could not be fully restored without a major reconstruction program. Because the site lay largely within the primary tidal surge zone and the Darwin Reconstruction Commission had placed a prohibition on the reconstruction of major buildings in the primary surge area, the whole future of the College in its present location was thrown into question.

To alleviate the problem of homeless staff immediately after the cyclone, the College purchased 22 caravans which were sited either on the individual's home site or on campus near the student residences.

negotiated. The School of Australian Linguistics was relocated to Batchelor.

wait a further seven years before the student residences were replaced, albeit in a much more favourable location, high on the hill overlooking the sea. The Trades workshops were extended and approval was granted for the construction of one major building to be crowded into the only available area on the restricted site at Casuarina. This multipurpose building was not completed until 1979 but at last brought together the scattered departments of the School of Creative and Applied Arts for the first time. It was resolved that the School of Australian Linguistics would remain at Batchelor as this was the preference of both staff and students and a building program to provide classroom accommodation and student residences there proceeded.

The unsatisfactory nature of the College accommodation through those post-cyclone years continued until 1984, which, on reflection, seems an inordinately long time to be operating a tertiary institution in substandard accommodation and it certainly had an effect on staff morale and student attitudes.

After the cyclone, part of the former population, particularly those who lost literally everything or who could not face the trauma of a possible similar recurrence, chose not to return to live in Darwin. This number included some College staff. For those who did remain and those who subsequently joined the staff the academic achievements of those four trying post-cyclone years were outstanding and greatly to their credit.

The academic reorganisation that was being considered in the fateful December of 1974 was implemented in 1976 and five Schools were established as the major academic elements to replace the former Program structure. These were the Schools of Creative and Applied Arts, Business and Management, General Studies, Technology and Science, and Trades, together with the School of Australian Linguistics which was already in place. The Schools were organised into departments with further sub-groupings to sections where necessary.

In those early years enormous amounts of energy were applied to the designing of appropriate courses and the acquisition of resources required to teach them. In response to perceived community needs and expressed demands, proposals for courses were considered and tested for viability through market surveys to ascertain the continuing commitment of students over a six-year period, having regard to the balance of course offerings throughout the institution and whether costs could be met within the budget appropriation. Approved courses were developed with the help of course advisory committees, consisting of business, industry and professional members to assist the academics with structure and course content to achieve stated course objectives.

By 1980 a wide and diverse range of some 80 courses across the Advanced Education and TAFE sectors was being offered at levels from Post Graduate Diploma to Certificate. In addition, preparatory and bridging courses to assist students to gain access to award courses were available together with a large number of non-award courses. No effort was spared in ensuring that courses were of a high quality and standard, and recognition of awards by national professional

associations in addition to national registration was sought in every instance.

Appropriate physical resources in support of the teaching effort were gradually acquired. The library expanded to become a Learning Resources Centre in 1977 and the book stock, periodicals, Special Collection and audiovisual materials have steadily built up since then. An FM radio station was established on campus and licensed in 1980 and a VAX 11/780 computer was installed in 1981. Sophisticated equipment for engineering courses was obtained over time and the science laboratories were well provided with the requisite teaching resources.

In the early years of the College, the majority of people enrolled as part-time students and it is only in recent years that there has been a reversal of this situation with more full-time enrolments. This coincides with a marked increase in the demand for advanced education courses that take two, three or four years to complete in the full-time mode. Undertaking a four year course as a part-timer certainly requires long commitment and strong motivation to sustain interest and effort over many more years. Nevertheless, many College graduates did complete courses in that way. The first formal graduation ceremony was held in 1978 and since that year it has been a major annual event.

Because so many attended as part-timers, it was difficult for students to organise themselves as a student body, although the desire to do so was strong. The fledgling Student Association was finally formed in 1980 and since that time has matured and developed into the powerful organisation it is today, performing an important and useful role in the service of students. Prior to this, without the backing of a student organisation, on three notable occasions students were provoked to band together to demonstrate for causes of great significance to them. Specifically, these were firstly at the official opening by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh in 1974 when they carried banners and paraded back and forth demanding that child care facilities be provided immediately on campus. Then in 1980 the issue was low-cost housing for students, and interestingly enough the third occasion on which students marched in the streets was in support of the introduction of a Bachelor of Arts course. In the fullness of time all these things came to pass, but many years after they were drawn to the attention of the public.

Self-government came to the Northern Territory in 1978 and with it the power relating to responsibility for education passed from the Commonwealth to the Territory on 1 January 1979. Before this happened, the association between the Darwin College and its Alice Springs annexe had been severed and the Alice Springs Community College was already an independent TAFE College within the Territory system.

The transfer of the Commonwealth power brought a change in financial responsibility and the Territory Government was now required to fund the TAFE component of the integrated institution. Funding from two sources made College administration extremely complex. The appropriation for all advanced education recurrent funding is made by

the Commonwealth Government, through the States Grants (Tertiary Assistance) Act, while the NT Government allocates monies for recurrent TAFE needs. Capital works funds are provided from both sources. However, additional TAFE money can be gained from the Commonwealth through a range of special purpose grants, while States and Territories frequently assist with advanced education funding in areas of particular need. The fact that this institution is fully integrated with programs and staff spanning both sectors makes for further complication as separate accountability for money expended is required by both governments.

Once the site extension issue was resolved, a new master plan for the 58 hectare area was developed. Cranes appeared in the sky over the campus in 1979 and seem to have been a feature on the horizon ever since. Major capital projects funded by both governments have been completed at a steady rate over the past nine years, including a restored (and enlarged) Technology and Science building, a further extension of the Trade workshops, new buildings for the Schools of Business and General Studies, a new Learning Resource Centre, a splendid new Metal Fabrication and Welding workshop, two blocks of student residences, new facilities for Nurse Education, and for Tourism and Hospitality Training, and a new administration/classroom/computer block which is due to be handed over in October of this year. The value of buildings and plant at the institute is now in the vicinity of \$60m. It may be hard to believe, but space is still tight, demountable city is still very much in use, and in fact four additional demountables had to be brought on to campus in May of this year to accommodate students and programs.

By 1984, political, demographic, economic and social changes made the original concept of one all-embracing provider for post-school educational needs for the Northern Territory no longer viable. Of particular significance was the Northern Territory Government's commitment to a university presence in the Territory and the establishment by the Northern Territory Department of Education of a network of TAFE colleges outside the Darwin area, which assumed responsibility for the administration of the Katherine and Nhulunbuy annexes in addition to the Alice Springs Community College.

Consequently, new identity and direction for the Darwin Community College were required to reflect its changed educational role as the major provider of vocationally oriented advanced education programs for the Northern Territory and TAFE programs for the Darwin region. In December 1984 the Darwin Community College was renamed the Darwin Institute of Technology.

The Darwin Institute of Technology can in simple terms best be described as an integrated multi-sector tertiary institution offering both advanced education and technical and further education (TAFE). Its first director, Mr Kevin Davis, was appointed in December 1984, following the resignation in October 1984 of the principal of the Darwin Community College, Dr Flint.

In broad terms, the Institute has a threefold role incorporating teaching, research and service to the community and is committed to preparing people for useful self-fulfilling roles in a changing society.

It has four faculties: Applied Science, Business, Education, and the Arts, offering courses for professional qualifications, graduate qualifications and para-professional/technician qualifications, in addition to trade and post-trade qualifications. A number of specialist courses is also provided for industry and the community. As well, the Institute provides off-the-job training for several programs under the Australian Traineeship scheme.

The Institute is established under its own Act, the Advanced Education and Darwin Institute of Technology Act, which was assented to on December 12, 1985.

Before I finish, I must say something about the future. I am sure you are aware of the upheaval in higher education in Australia today, initiated by the Commonwealth Government in its determination to achieve substantial growth in the system by the year 2000, at no additional public cost. As part of its strategy, the Commonwealth is demanding that there be fewer large tertiary institutions as part of a Unified National System of Higher Education. It maintains that there is now little difference between university and advanced education courses and that the artificial barriers that separated these two components of the old binary system must disappear. They are advocating amalgamations between smaller adjacent institutions so that the savings achieved by rationalisation of services can be applied to funding additional places in the system to catch up on the large unmet demand for places in higher education throughout Australia.

Here in Darwin we have the perfect situation for amalgamation as perceived by the Commonwealth, with two higher education institutions, one with a very small enrolment, operating at costs far above the national norm because of diseconomies of scale. The Commonwealth has made it clear that, to be part of the Unified National System and hence attract funding, there is no alternative to a merger of the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College of the Northern Territory. This has been accepted by the Northern Territory Government. I am optimistic about the outcome, although probably the process will be painful with many sensitive issues to address. Effecting major change is never easy but if all parties concerned approach the merger in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill, acceptable solutions to problems will be found. The resulting new institution which, for want of a better name, I will call the Northern Territory University, with access to the very considerable combined resources of both institutions and the skills and talents of the combined staff, will clearly have many advantages for students and have much to offer the NT community. The prospect is an exciting and challenging one.