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Parliament House

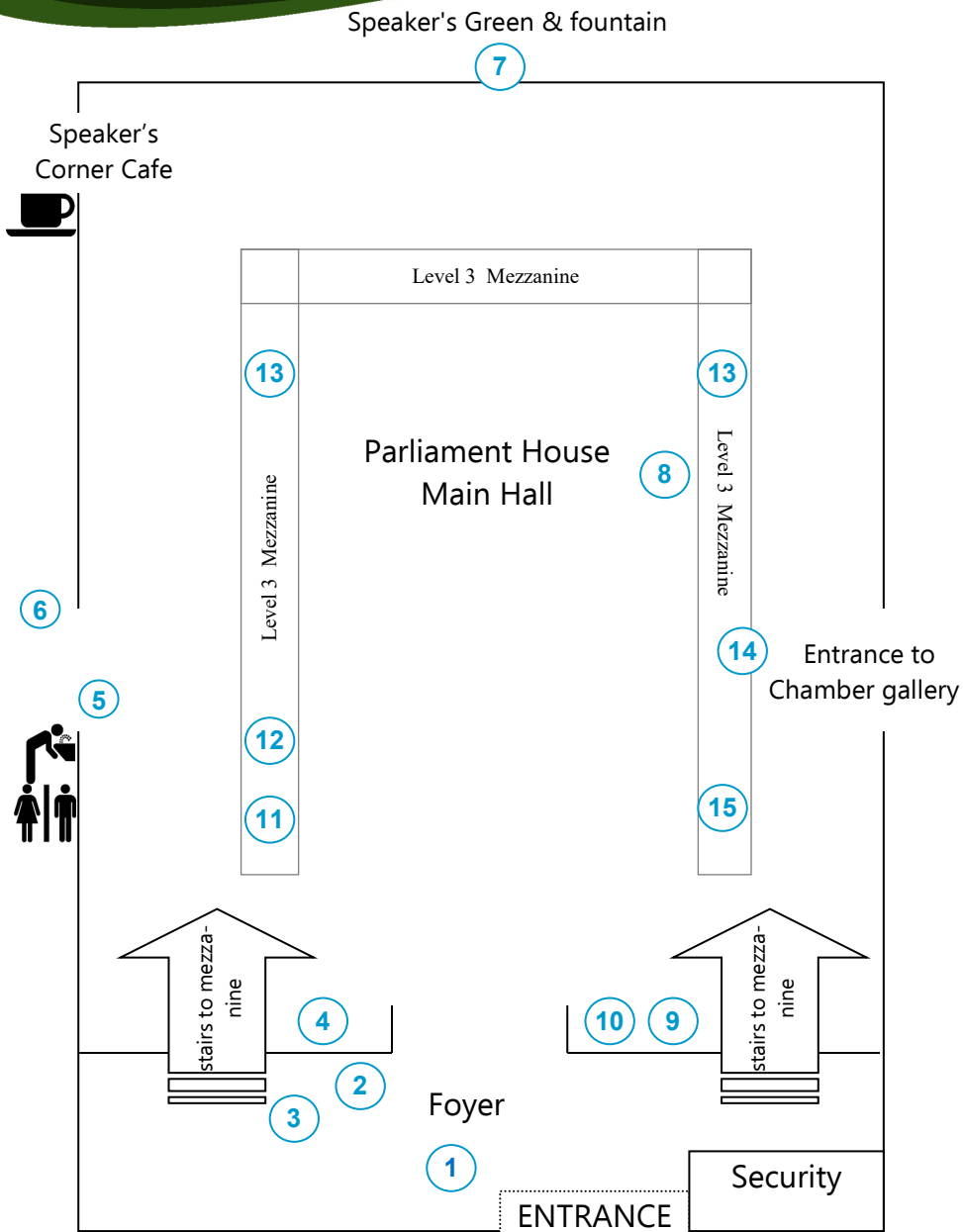
Self Guided Tour Booklet



Mitchell Street, Darwin
Northern Territory
Department of the Legislative Assembly



Self-Guided Tour



- 1968** The Member for the NT is given the same voting rights as other Members of the Commonwealth Parliament.
- 1974** The Commonwealth Government granted the NT a fully elected Legislative Assembly of 19 members, replacing the Legislative Council. A few months later, Cyclone Tracy caused extensive damage to the building yet the Assembly still met amid dangling electric wires and gaps in the ceiling.
- 1975** The NT is permitted 2 members to the upper house of the Federal Parliament.
- 1978** The NT was granted Self-Government with the passing of the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* by the Commonwealth Parliament, although some powers are retained by the Commonwealth.
- 1982** The number of Assembly members was increased to 25 to reflect the Territory's growth.
- 1988** A Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Commonwealth and NT allows the Territory to be funded on the same basis as the states. The NT Government announced a State Square, involving a new Parliament House and Supreme Court, would be developed.
- 1990** The Legislative Assembly moved across the road to the Chan Building (since demolished) during construction of the new Parliament House. On 2 August the Foundation Stone of the new Parliament House was laid.
- 1994** Parliament House was officially opened by the Honourable Bill Hayden AC Governor-General on 18 August.
- 1996** A Remonstrance was sent by the Legislative Assembly to the Commonwealth with grievances about the Commonwealth's proposed *Euthanasia Laws Bill 1996* (passed in 1997) which amended the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* to overrule the Territory's *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995*.
- 1998** A referendum is held in the NT questioning whether the Territory should become a state is defeated by a 51% 'no' vote.
- 2001** With population growth, the NT's one House of Representatives seat Lingiari is divided into two, with the establishment of Solomon covering the Darwin area.
- 2004** The Statehood Steering Committee was established with bipartisan support. Over forthcoming years the Committee published fact sheets and other publications about Statehood and conducted community consultations and awareness campaigns.
- 2018** A Remonstrance was sent requesting that the Federal parliament not determine and distinguish between the rights of Australian citizens based on where those Australians reside within the country and that the House of Representatives repeal section 50A of the *Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978* .
- 2020** The *Electoral Amendment (Territory Representation) Bill 2020* is passed to ensure that future allocation of members from the Territories is more consistent with the states.

Witness to History

- 1863** The NT was annexed from New South Wales to be part of South Australia.
- 1869** The South Australian Surveyor-General George Goyder and his team sailed into Port Darwin on 5 February. Goyder had travelled from Adelaide by the barque Moonta to survey the lands that would eventually become the town of Palmerston, later called Darwin. Goyder's plan included a government precinct around Mitchell Street and the Esplanade.
- 1870** The Territory's future was guaranteed by the decision to link Australia with the rest of the English speaking world by electric telegraph. A cable beneath the sea from Java connected to Britain, while the Overland Telegraph linked Darwin with southern Australia. The point where the cable was fixed from Java is marked by a stone cairn in Liberty Square.
- 1871** The Palmerston Post Office was constructed on the present site of Parliament House, and included workshops and staff quarters for postal and telegraph workers. The Post Office served as the interface between the undersea cable and the Overland Telegraph Line. The first message was transmitted from Palmerston to London in late 1871 and the overland line was completed the following year. The buildings were extensively damaged by the cyclones of 1897 and 1937 but were repaired.
- 1911** The NT was transferred to Commonwealth control with an Administrator.
- 1922** The NT is allowed to elect one member for the House of Representatives, but without voting rights.
- 1936** NT's member in the House of Representatives is given voting rights only on Ordinances (bills of a territory) that affect the NT.
- 1942** On 19 February the post office buildings were reduced to rubble by direct hits during the first raid of the bombing of Darwin in World War II, killing ten people. The post office was later moved to another location.
- 1948** A new NT Legislative Council with 13 members was established but with very limited powers.
- 1955** The old post office site was redeveloped to house the NT Legislative Council.
- 1958** The Member for the NT in Canberra is allowed to vote on any law or matter relating to the NT. All six elected members of the Legislative Council resigned in protest at the delay in the Commonwealth's reforming of the Council. The next year, the size of the Council is increased to 17.
- 1962** The Legislative Council sent a remonstrance to the Commonwealth protesting about their lack of control over local affairs. The Council was given control over defining its own powers within certain limits.

***Parliament House is located on the ancestral lands of the Larrakia people.
We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.***

Parliament House in Darwin was officially opened by the Governor-General, the Honourable Bill Hayden AC, on 18 August 1994. The building is part of State Square which also includes the Supreme Court, car parks and landscaping at a total cost of around \$170 million. Architects Meldrum Burrows and Partners Pty Ltd. were responsible for the design.

As well as housing the Legislative Assembly Chamber, Parliament House is home to the Department of the Legislative Assembly, Ministerial and Opposition offices, Independent and Member offices. The Chamber presently provides for 25 Members with capacity for more in the future. Parliamentary Counsel, media facilities, a café, and craft shop all have space in the building.

Parliament House is 90 metres long by 50 metres wide with a total floor area of 23,000m² on five levels. The building was designed to harmonise with the Top End's tropical climate with provision for climate control through the parasol roof and façade (which diffuse about 80% of direct sunlight), shaded verandahs and cyclone resistance features.

Public use of the building is encouraged and some areas may be hired for private functions. The Main Hall and Speaker's Green are regularly used for public gatherings. A glassed-in gallery is available for school groups to observe Parliament.

Australian materials feature throughout the building. Brown granite was quarried at Mt Bundy, south of Darwin, and black granite in South Australia. Tasmanian Sassafras and Brushbox timbers are used in public areas. The building is intended to serve the NT for at least 100 years.



-----Foyer-----

1. Sturt's Desert Rose Mosaic

The floor features a stylised mosaic of the Sturt's Desert Rose, the NT floral emblem, designed by local artist Geoff Todd. Made of stone and metal, the mosaic symbolises the land, law and people. The seven petals represent the six states of Australia and the NT. Parliament is the radiating arms between the petals and the circle of stainless steel. The people of the NT are represented by the curved lines of bronze encircled by the stainless steel.

2. NT Flag

Our flag, designed by Dr Robert Ingpen AM, was first raised on 1 July 1978 to mark the granting of Self-Government to the NT. The flag incorporates the Territory's three official colours of ochre, black and white, and the official floral emblem.

3. Harry Chan Bust

Dr Harry Chan was the first fully-elected President of the NT Legislative Council which existed 1947-1974 and comprised Members appointed by the Commonwealth Government and elected Members.

-----Main Hall-----

4. Remonstrance

The 1962 Remonstrance, outlining grievances of the NT Legislative Council, was presented to the Senate. In 1988 it was returned on permanent loan to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first NT Legislative Council. The 1996 Remonstrance, presented to the Commonwealth Parliament by the NT Legislative Assembly, outlined grievances with the Commonwealth's intention to override the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act* passed by the NT Parliament in 1995. The 2018 Remonstrance presented to the Parliament of Australia requests that the House of Representatives as soon as practicable consider and pass legislation to repeal section 50A of the *Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978*, to enable the NT Parliament to legislate on Euthanasia.

5. Time Capsule

The time capsule was installed in 1992 and will be opened in 2048 to mark the 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the NT Legislative Council.

6. Post Office Wall



This commemorative wall was made from undamaged coalstone remnants of the Darwin Post Office which was destroyed in the bombing raids of 19 February 1942. The remnant of shrapnel from the bomb, found amongst the Post Office ruins, was donated by Joe Fisher, a former Member of the NT Legislative Council.

-----Speaker's Green-----

7. Memorial Fountain

The fountain has a granite Sturt's Desert Rose emblem as its central feature. The fountain is dedicated in memory of Peter Malmstedt and Andrew Snow who were killed when a crane collapsed during the construction of the building in 1991.

-----Main Hall-----

8. Bombing of Darwin Plaque

Embedded in the floor near the entry to the Office of the Speaker is a plaque indicating the approximate site where a bomb fell on the Post Office during the first attack on Darwin on 19 February 1942. The pillars near the plaque feature interpretive panels in relation to the Bombing of Darwin.

9. Tattered Flag

This was found at the intersection of Smith and Bennett Streets on the afternoon of 19th February 1942 and was donated by Cpl. Hill R.W.J., 'R' Coy 43rd Battalion.

10. Member Portraits

Portraits of our current Members can be found here.

-----Level 3 Mezzanine-----

11. Ngarra Law painting

Ngarra is the Aboriginal customary law of Arnhem Land. This painting is based on the honey bee ceremony which teaches Yolngu people how to live within the law. It was painted by James Gaykamangu.

12. Coat of Arms

The NT Coat of Arms is symbolic of the people, history and landscapes of the NT. It contains our floral and faunal emblems: the Sturt's Desert Rose, the Red Kangaroo and the Wedge-tailed Eagle. In the centre is a shield decorated by Aboriginal motifs. The female figure is a Mimi spirit from Arnhem Land. The motifs on either side of the figure reflect art of Central Australian Aboriginal people and symbolise campsites joined by path markings. The kangaroos are holding shells found on our coastline, the Chiragra Spider Conch and the True Heart Cockle. The eagle grasps an Aboriginal Tjurunga Stone (a secret sacred stone of Aboriginal people of Central Australia). The plumed helmet signifies that the NT was an area of wartime battle.

13. Portrait Gallery

These are portraits of former Chief Ministers and Speakers of the NT. Each portrait is created by an artist of the Chief Minister's or Speaker's choosing.

14. The Parliamentary Chamber



The NT has a unicameral (single house) parliament as the equivalent of a lower house in a bicameral parliament. Green is the colour of most lower houses in the Westminster system, hence the green of the Chamber and furnishings throughout the building. There are three public galleries, one is enclosed for educational sessions. The Media Gallery is above the Speaker's Chair.

Dispatch Boxes (on the table)



The two dispatch boxes were a gift from the Commonwealth Parliament. The boxes are replicas of those in the House of Representatives which are modelled on the dispatch boxes of the British House of Commons. They are made of oak and ebony. Dispatch Boxes are no longer used in modern parliaments but were once used to transport papers between the British Parliament and the Monarch.

Mace (view during Sitting days)

The Mace was presented by the Commonwealth Parliament in 1979. Garrards, the Royal Jewellers to Queen Elizabeth II, created the Mace which is made of silver and gold gilt. The NT Mace incorporates elements to symbolise the relationship with the Westminster Parliamentary tradition. The British Parliamentary system is reflected in the St George Cross at the top above the Crown. The orb shows the NT Coat of Arms and the Queen's cypher (EIIR). Beneath the orb are stylised Wedge-tailed Eagles. The Mace has the NT floral emblem, Sturt's Desert Rose, intertwined with the Tudor Rose and at the base is a Spider Conch Shell.



15. Yirrkala Bark Painting

This painting was created by Narritjin Maymuru, an artist, community leader and proponent of the historic 1963 Yirrkala Bark petition.