

Statehood Story Board Series

Official Launch by Barbara McCarthy MLA

Speaking Notes

9 August 2006

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here today to officially launch the Northern Territory Statehood Story Board Series.

It is also a privilege to be amongst a group of young Territorians who have spent their morning discussing issues related to governance and Statehood.

I will be asking the students to present their findings from this morning and I will be very interested in hearing their views on Statehood and government.

Communication has been a passion of mine for many years.

Previously working in television and now as a parliamentarian, I understand only too well how vital it is that communication be as clear and as unambiguous as possible.

It is for that reason that I have a strong interest in the materials we are launching here today.

I am very fortunate because I have the ability of being able to cross into two cultures as part of my work and personal life - something many of my constituents cannot do.

I therefore see it as my role to be a conduit of information for the traditional peoples I represent. I have to help them understand how their government works and how it may change.

The Statehood process is something that they and all Territorians need to understand if it is to proceed successfully.

It is no secret that the last referendum eight years ago failed because of a lack of understanding.

The *NO* vote was not resounding, it was just 51.3%, but it showed Territorians want to understand what they are voting for.

A report to the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in 1999, a Committee I am now a member of, said there was general support for the concept of Statehood but people needed more information to make an informed decision.

It is with this Story Board series that we will hopefully be able to provide some more of that information.

Last year the Statehood Steering Committee surveyed over 1500 Territorians and found approximately half did not know what Statehood means.

As a result of that survey the Committee produced a range of Fact Sheets.

Those are available on the website and from the information stand here in the foyer of Parliament House.

But we all know not everyone is going to read Fact Sheets.

Some people have limited time, others limited capacity and some have limited interest.

Since we have to give everyone the opportunity to understand Statehood, we have to look at other ways.

That is how the Story Boards were developed.

By taking the information from the Fact Sheets and putting them into picture form, the Statehood Committee is expanding the audience.

It is not just Aboriginal people who respond well to Story Boards.

We all respond to pictures.

If our student body here today had only the Fact Sheets they may well have been less engaged in the discussions they had.

The Committee tells me the images are designed to cross all age and language groups and will become widely known as part of the Statehood process.

Statehood is not a simple concept. When you consider the current governance arrangements and discussions about developing a new constitution and negotiations with the Commonwealth people can feel alienated and may just switch off.

The challenge is to make the complex relevant and approachable for everyone.

As I speak the screen behind me will now run through a sample of just three of the Story Board images.

The First image is entitled *Statehood What's the Difference* –

This story shows the Northern Territory and how the people of the Northern Territory would decide how our parliament works if we were a State. It contrasts with the current arrangements where the Commonwealth Government determines the structure of our political culture here in the Northern Territory.

The story emphasises how with Statehood we may gain further control of our own political destiny.

The next one explains *Self Government* and explains the current status of our Territory legislature.

It shows that your elected representatives here in the Northern Territory can have the laws made on your behalf overturned by people elected to represent another place.

The final image I want to look at is the one that explains the relationship between the Crown and Australia and where we fit in.

Our Administrator has a unique place in the political system. Unlike a governor of a State he reports to the Commonwealth Minister for Territories and is appointed by the Governor General. Maybe the students today will have something to say about that.

I just wanted to showcase these three images to demonstrate how the story of who we are as a political body can be told using this important resource.

I will hold off on the rest, as I am sure the Students are going to demonstrate the effectiveness of the medium by telling us their understanding of Statehood.

Thank you for coming today, I take this opportunity to officially announce the Statehood Story Boards are open for business.

