

TRANSCRIPT WEB PROFILE

Peter Plummer:

Northern Territory Government 1980-2005

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I came to the Territory from Papua New Guinea in 1980. The reason I came was to take up the position of first principle of Batchelor College.

02 Peter Plummer on: NTU review and recruiting Ken McKinnon

My memory is a little bit vague about the exact time when I first, once again, got involved with NTU. I'm pretty sure it was about the time I was CEO of Health, I was on the Menzies Board. And that was also the time when the University appeared to be having severe budgetary problems. From a Government perspective, I, and several other CEOs were involved in trying to assess - we were formally asked by the Government - to try to assess the University's bid for new monies. It was clear also at that time that the Commonwealth was starting to be pretty clear it wasn't going to put additional funds towards the NTU - as the NT Government was also clear - unless they could be really persuaded.

Ultimately, in some discussions we had with the Commonwealth, we became aware that it was their firm view - and it was ours as well - that a really solid review of the University needed to be done. The question was, who would do it? And Commonwealth Bureaucrats said to me - "We just can't identify someone who we would really trust to just come in and do this. We just can't sort out who's available. "

Richard and I had been talking about it and I had said maybe Ken McKinnon would do it. And I knew Ken because he was my boss in Papua New Guinea. I knew his standing in the academic world. I knew he was retired. The real question was would he take up the...When I spoke to Mike Gallagher, (he was a Commonwealth senior Bureaucrat for higher ed - he and Bill Burmester). Gallagher said, "Do you think you can get him?". And I said, "Well, can you pay?" They said, "if you can get Ken McKinnon, we'll pay." So that really was the discussion that Richard and I had with Gallagher, that's the essence of it.. And then from Canberra we went to Sydney and arranged to meet Ken. he agreed to consider undertaking the review. And it didn't take him long to say, "I'll take it up."

So really, I was in a position to pull back and let things happen because Richard was the more appropriate council member to liaise with Ken and Ron McKay and everybody else here.

03 Peter Plummer on: the mergers to form CDU

When Ken McKinnon did the review, his opinion was that Batchelor should be part of the University. I concur with that absolutely - always have. And, I mean, I have to

say, the same applied to Menzies. Clearly not the best use of resources to have another fine but very small institution not part of the University.

04 Peter Plummer on: Ken McKinnon

Ken McKinnon turned this University around. No question about it. In the language of people who live in Papua New Guinea , Ken McKinnon was a "one talk" - I'll go and talk to him.

05 Peter Plummer reflections on: the transition to CDU.

So from my perspective, whilst it was not a pleasant - it was in fact a very difficult period - the outcome has been for this University, a very good one. i believe.

The feedback from my contacts, is from my perspective, very reassuring. i remember last time I was here - back in May. I walked out of the University one evening thinking - "Wow! I'm really impressed with what I'm seeing and what I'm hearing."