Flinders gave us the name. Australia, the Great South Land. The familiarity, the sense of belonging, and the affection for the name, has been handed down to us by successive generations, an inheritance of pride for the future. It's a good name.

Yet we have been surprisingly unoriginal in naming our States. Tasmania is the exception, honoring the skilled navigator who skirted its shores. The rest demonstrate a sad lack of imagination.

New South Wales is, if anything, "Old" South Wales, the first place settled by Europeans. The "South Wales" part was given by Captain Cook, who thought the coastline looked something like the South Wales of his Britain. West Australia and South Australia are geographical terms, not particularly descriptive in the latter, because parts of Western Australia and Victoria are further south, - not to mention Tasmania. Victoria and Queensland commemorate an English queen, memorable in her time, who hardly knew them save as outposts of her Empire.

Yet, somehow, an aura of pride and affection has become attached to them, and we won't change them. Even the most rabid republican would baulk at re-christening Queensland despite the monarchical flavor.

But of all these strange names, the strangest would have to be "South Australia" in the period between 1863 and 1911, when it covered the vast centre part of the continent from the Great Australian Bight to the Timor Sea. On the most generous interpretation, only about one third of this huge expanse could be described as "south"; and to regard Port Darwin, perched well above the Tropic of Capricorn, and closer to Jakarta, Singapore and Manila than Brisbane, as part of the southern segment of the continent, requires a bizarre stretch of the imagination.

I will deal briefly with the curious circumstances which brought about this non-descriptive nomenclature.

When Governor Philip hoisted the Union Jack at Botany Bay, and almost immediately moved to Port Jackson, he annexed, by the power given to him by the British Government, the eastern part of the continent up to 135 degrees of meridian (Slide One). This whole area was known as New South Wales, and was extended, in 1824 to the 129th meridian (Slide Two). Westward from that meridian, and comprising the
rest of the continent, was Western Australia, so declared in 1827. So the whole continent, divided into these two parts, was firmly decreed to be under British dominion, rule and protection. In due course Victoria, South Australia and Queensland became self-governing colonies, carved out of New South Wales (Slide Three)33). At that stage the western borders of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland ran directly south-north along the 141st meridian (Slide Four).

In 1860, therefore, and after the excisions mentioned, the Colony of New South Wales, apart from its local dimensions, also retained that part of the eastern half of Australia which remained. This was the virtually undiscovered country of North and Central Australia and a strip of land between the South Australia and Western Australia borders (Slide Five33). In 1861 this strip of land was extended to the Western Australian border and became part of South Australia.

What we now call the Northern Territory, including Central Australia, then had its eastern or Queensland border at the 141st meridian and its western border contiguous to Western Australia, but it was still part of New South Wales.

Two vigorous new colonies were beginning to interest themselves in this vast tract of land, as their own pastoral and agricultural enterprises expanded up to their own borders. They were Queensland and South Australia.

Queensland was interested but cautious. The idea that it should take over the whole area was mooted but rejected. It contented itself with petitioning the imperial government to move its western border to the 131st meridian. This was granted by Letters Patent from Her Majesty in 1862 (Slide Six33).

The Queenslanders were not prepared to bite off more than they could chew. Governor Bowen stated it plainly: - "neither our population nor our revenues will permit this Colony to undertake the charge of any fresh districts."1

Nevertheless Queensland's relatively small bite deprived the nascent Northern Territory of much of the Barkly tablelands, and, perhaps more seriously, of the vast, but then undiscovered, mineral wealth of Mount Isa.

So, somewhat reduced in size, that part of New South Wales which we would call the Northern Territory, was open to the South Australians. In 1863 Letters Patent (Slide Seven34) were duly granted by Her Majesty in the following guarded language: - "We do hereby annex to Our said Colony of South Australia until We think fit to make other disposition thereof."2

It is plain enough that those terms contemplate a somewhat uncertain and temporary period of annexure. But, although the theoretical evanescence of the imperial grant was recognized, in practical terms South Australians treated the Territory as part of the Colony. The fact that there were no rivals for possession made that possession more confident.

Thus, from 1863, we were governed from Adelaide, and subject to the laws of South Australia. In 1875, the South Australian government extended the provisions of the
South Australian civil service to those employed in the Territory.

It is therefore, in my view, correct to regard the period 1863 to 1911 as the time when we were South Australians (*Slide Eight*<sup>35</sup>).

(*Flag*<sup>36</sup>)

The "South Australian" period of our history poses two obvious questions: -

1. Why did South Australia, with a population of 140,000 in 1863, and with limited financial resources, so eagerly take over a Territory far greater in size than itself, and virtually unexplored?
2. Was the venture a success or a failure?

The first question can, I suggest, be rather clearly answered in both practical and idealistic terms.

The second remains debatable, with a preponderance towards a conclusion which I consider unfair and unjust. I want to correct it. Why did South Australia take over?

I suppose the simplest answer is the one given by Mallory when asked why climb Everest. "Because it is there". It's a good answer. There was the Territory just outside the border, an orphan looking for a parent. The nominal parent, England, was completely devoid of parental affection, and only too happy to farm the brat out. Custody to South Australia, uncontested. The only Colony that really wanted it. Queensland wanted no more than it got, New South Wales was unenthusiastic, and Victoria, though showing some mild interest, was too engorged with gold and new settlers to want any further expansion at the time.

But there were reasons other than mere proximity. For instance, although the pastoralists had not then taken up all the available grazing land in South Australia, it was entirely reasonable of them to look to the future.<sup>3</sup> They were particularly impressed with descriptions of the Victoria River country. South Australia was going through a period of prosperity,<sup>4</sup> its citizens were proud of their foundation as a "free" colony<sup>5</sup> and they were energetic and ambitious.

Expansion was the goal to further prosperity.

A less worthy motive was the prospect of raising revenue by sale of Territory land. But the sales were bungled. The "North Australian Company", one of the corporations formed to purchase land, paid its money but was not put into possession. It sued the government and recovered damages of 78503 pounds, - a very large sum for those days.<sup>6</sup>

In fact most sales were speculative. Mrs Daly who came in 1870 when her father, then Lieutenant Douglas, brought his family with him when he was appointed Resident, reported on the "selectors" who were "busily engaged in preparing for their expedition into the interior". She makes it clear that the "selectors" she mentions were only agents of the purchasers and she then tells us that "each selector in turn chose the
particular allotment he wanted for his client", and then "went south again". Other reminiscences confirm that the top end pastoralist rarely lived on his property which was run by a manager, and the real situation is revealed in this commentary: - "The prospect of a profitable investment rather than a commitment to settling and civilizing the North prompted the dealing in land orders in the 1860s, when these pieces of paper were the favorite "gamble" of the Adelaide people." Absentee landlordism of this type did not augur well for true development, particularly when the hard lesson had still to be learned that the lands in the North did not run to the patterns of development which had proved successful in the South. At the time, there was, as one historian puts it, a "monumental ignorance" of the region and "persistence in temperate land experience only served to compound the difficulties".

Ignorance was compounded by optimism. In the race to cross the continent the tough and experienced John McDoual Stuart, the South Australian candidate, had beaten the far more expensive but less well led Victorian expedition of Burke and Wills. It was therefore perfectly reasonable for the South Australians to regard themselves as the destined owners of the country, and to regard Stuart as the authority. But Stuart let them down. No doubt in his eagerness to encourage development, he overstated. He joined a group of observers who were guilty of what one historian has called "promotional imagery", people who let their imaginations run away with them. Such people are dangerous, particularly so if their known achievements give weight to their observations. How many settlers were seduced by descriptions such as the following, coming from people they were entitled to regard as experts?

Captain Stokes of the "Beagle" and friend of Charles Darwin, after whom he named the harbor: - At the Albert River he speaks of the "plains of promise". At the Victoria River he has a beautiful dream: - "...far away I could perceive the green and glistening villages through which it wandered".

Captain Bremer founded Fort Dundas on Melville Island, and sailed away remarking on the excellence of the soil, the climate and the port of the "finest description".

Stuart wrote that the land was "well adapted for producing cotton", that the "climate was in every respect suitable", and that the land about the Roper River was "certainly the finest country I have seen in Australia".

B.T. Finniss gave his opinion that, "a farmer could make a better living with less trouble in the Northern Territory than he can in South Australia."

Warning signs came from the more realistic A.C. Gregory that the country was not the fertile paradise depicted, but the optimists preferred Stuart. It is always important, in relying on "experts" to make sure you know just what their area of expertise is. Stuart was a fine explorer. He was not an agricultural scientist.

So, with high hopes of extensive pastoral and agricultural development, the South Australian government took over the Northern Territory, and assumed control legislatively, administratively and judicially, with the passing of the "Northern Territory
Act" of 1863; although this momentous event was not conveyed to the local inhabitants at the time; nor did it seem 'to inspire them greatly when it was.

With the hindsight which makes us feel so superior to the past, it might have been more prudent for South Australia if she had confined her annexation up to the Tropic of Capricorn, as was suggested by the British Colonial Office at the time. But this was not an age of prudence, and it is our great fortune as Australians that we were not settled by prudent people. Some might even patronizingly say that South Australians were foolhardy in taking over any part of the Territory. The twentieth century was very fond of telling the nineteenth century where it went wrong. Verdict? Acquit South Australia and convict the twentieth century. In 1863, when the world was wide and much unknown, some might have thought it natural and proper to take risks, and, (dare one say it?), have the courage to do so.

In that very decade of the 1860s the first great Australian poet was writing: -

"No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way."15

Was South Australia wrong to take a leap in the dark? Not in the terms of the 1860s. If we now think her wrong, what does that say about us?

Why did South Australia take over the Territory in the roaring days? The answer is a combination of expansion, optimism, vision, proximity and speculation. Nothing wrong with that. It was the spirit of the age. John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner had crossed the Bass Strait into Port Phillip Bay for the same reasons 20 years before and no-one had censured them for "vaulting ambition which o'er-leaps itself." Why blame an optimistic Colony for being optimistic?

So we can understand, and perhaps some of us might even applaud the reasons why South Australia took over the Territory. The next question is important for us, as Territorians, and is simply: - Did she succeed or fail?

An oft quoted poem contains the line: -

"If you can meet with triumph and disaster".

Very apt. Because the first decade of settlement contained one triumph and one disaster.

The disaster was the ill-fated, badly judged and costly attempt to establish the first northern settlement at "Escape Cliffs". Finniss, whose name is memorialized by the Finniss River, led the expedition, chose a supremely unsuitable spot and bore the
blame for what was described as "utter want of management", and "total disorganization". Yet it is hard not to feel some sympathy for him since he was saddled with a squabbling mob of malcontents. The place was abandoned in 1865, and the government paused for breath and recriminations.

The triumph was the construction of the Overland Telegraph. This extraordinary feat must rank as one of the great milestones in our history; and it was the South Australians who achieved it. The British and Australian Telegraph Company proposed to complete the final link in the telegraph line from England to Australia by laying the underground cable from Java to Darwin. The original plan was then to link up with Burketown, and thence through to New South Wales and Victoria (already connected). To the fury of the Queenslanders, the South Australians trumped them by agreeing to construct the whole line from Darwin to Port Augusta. The enabling Act was passed in October 1870, and Parliament voted the then immense sum of 120,000 pounds for the project. This was a decision of supreme optimism and courage for the small Colony. Stuart, after all, had only crossed the continent in 1862, and most of the country down the centre was virtually unexplored.

The construction of the Overland Telegraph was an epic achieved by men working in appalling situations, using horses and bullock carts over road less and often waterless country. The wet season in the north led to serious delays. Supplies of equipment and food had to be transported to remote areas. The sheer physical labor, in 40 degree heat, of digging in and implanting the poles at the designated rate of "no fewer than 20 to the mile" was itself a challenge to men who had no mechanical tools to do the job. The line, from north to south, was to be nearly 2000 miles long.

As Territorians, many of us would have seen some at least of the country the line went through. It does not take much imagination to appreciate what was achieved a century and a half ago by men with what we would consider almost medieval equipment.

But I would put this another way, and ask you to consider how long the task would take today. Modern equipment would obviously be a great advantage, but what about modern problems of land claims, environmental issues, habitat of native fauna and flora, industrial relations, local community concerns, treasury estimates and parliamentary debates. And, of course, there would necessarily have to be at least one and probably two preliminary enquiries. All this is very worthy and justifiable, but my own estimate of ten years before anything would actually commence is considered impossibly optimistic by most people I have consulted.

The Overland Telegraph was completed in just under two years.

The hero is undoubtedly Charles Todd, then Post Master General of South Australia. His unremitting efforts up and down the line, his drive to continue in face of delays and disappointments ensures his place as one of the great Australians.

Darwin itself, after the fiasco of Escape Cliffs, was finally selected and surveyed by the energetic and highly competent Goyder in 1869. It was then called Palmerston, though its port remained as Port Darwin. For convenience, I will use the name "Darwin" throughout.
South Australia had justified her annexation; and if cynics these days might protest that you can't annex a vast tract of land by placing a small settlement at one end, the South Australians could justly reply that that is exactly what Governor Philip had done for Sydney, and Captain Stirling had done for Perth.

So, under the aegis of South Australia, began that slow, painful and often disastrous progress of the Territory into the present age. A progress constituted generally by three steps forward and two steps back. Or, to put it another way, even failures left a residue of knowledge of what the country could or could not do.

A good example is the failure of ambitious agricultural schemes. No doubt reports of abundant water in the top end were added to the favorable assessments of the explorers, (e.g. Stuart's comment about "splendid country for producing cotton") to produce a sort of plantation philosophy. The wise and prosperous owner (white of course) would live in something like the Old Kentucky Home, while foreign immigrants would provide the labor force and cultivate the abundant fields of cotton, rice, sugar, coffee or tobacco that were expected to flourish. The government did its best. It offered 1000 pounds for the first 100 tons of sugar produced, and advertised in Mauritius and Batavia. Later it offered a bonus of 5000 pounds for the first 500 tons of sugar. Repeated failures ruthlessly drove home the lesson that here was neither the Deep South of the United States, nor the fertile fields of India or China.

In fact all attempts at tropical agriculture failed; but, at least lessons were learned; and facts which seem obvious now had to be painfully discovered. As one writer puts it, "There are no mountains or fertile valleys as in tropical South-East Asia which has the same monsoonal climate."

A good example of the three steps forward, two steps back, development is shown in the discovery of gold. The three steps forward were, the discovery itself, the influx of immigrants, and the commencement of, at least some commercial activity. The two steps backward were the collapse of the boom and the departure of most of the prospectors. Final result, - a scattered town or two, a few gold or tin mines teetering on the brink of profitability, and the nucleus of a mining industry.

Gold booms and land booms had one common feature which appears everywhere in our history, and in any part of our continent. Speculation. Territory gold produced the usual bubble of joint stock companies where shrewd promoters, who never left Adelaide, made more out of share trading than they ever would have made on the goldfields. The well tried traditional methods were employed of hiving off the ultimately valueless shares to the horde of hopeful suckers always provided by bounteous nature for the occasion. We've seen it before and we'll see it again. Value to promoters, - immense. Value to Northern Territory, - nil.

The government passed a Goldfields Act and appointed mining wardens. By then most of the prospectors had picked up as much alluvial gold as was easily available and departed for other fields.
The real success story in the Northern Territory, though marked with many failures and heartbreaks, was the pastoral industry. The South Australians moved out of the old border into the McDonnell Ranges, and gradually discovered what was suitable and what was not, subject to the always imminent possibility of drought. In the north it was more often the Queenslanders in the 1870s seeking new runs to augment those of their own State. But some came from the west, including the redoubtable Alexander Forrest. The Territory became cattle country.

The history of the pastoral industry in the Territory is epic, often tragic, inspiring and peculiarly Australian. Nat Buchanan, Alfred Giles, Dr W.J. Browne of Springvale, Ned Bagot and a host of others have been extolled in books and journals, and require more extensive coverage that I can give here. Suffice to say that, despite huge disappointments, markets limited by distance, redwater fever, drought and desert, the industry slowly and inevitably established itself. By 1910, just before South Australia turned over the Territory to the Commonwealth, the pastoral industry accounted for 60% of the Territory exports.22

The pearl shell industry emerged from 1892 and there was some minor fishing activity.

The depression of the 1890s fell upon the Colony. Revenue from the North was small, and the expense to the South was great. The government began to feel like Sinbad, who had kindly given a man a lift on his back, and then couldn't get him off.

Yet, in a subterranean way, certain events were occurring which, quite unrecognized at the time, would contribute significantly to the welfare of the Territory.

Labor was required, first for the goldmines and then for the railway to be built to Pine Creek to service the gold mines. The white population, much of it transient, could not supply it, and the Aboriginal culture was in no way attuned to continuous toil at set hours for something they had no interest in, and totally contrary to a nomadic existence. The solution was the importation of Chinese laborers.

In 1874 at the request of the mining companies, and with the approval of the government, Captain Douglas was sent to Singapore to recruit 200 coolie laborers. At the expiration of their contract only 24 elected to return to Singapore. Many took up mining on their own account. This was the commencement of a large Chinese immigrant force for the mines and the railways.

The government was caught in a dilemma. The labor force was vital, but Australia, as a whole, was in the grip of the "White Australia" policy. The government dithered. It wanted the labor but it didn't want to be seen as encouraging "Asiatics" to settle. It let them in, then passed laws to get them out. Some Chinese left as a result, but most managed to stay. By 1878 the Chinese outnumbered the whites and continued to do so for decades.23

It wasn't seen so at the time, but this immigration proved a great boon to the Territory. The Chinese were hard-working, conscientious, peaceful and intelligent. Despite great initial prejudice against them, they survived and prospered. Their contribution to the Territory has been immense, and their descendants are amongst our finest citizens.
Another mysterious and unnoticed transformation was taking place. Europeans, some from other parts of Australia, some from Europe itself, the Chinese as they settled into their new land, various peoples of differing nationalities and racial origin, who had somehow drifted in, stayed. Indians, Greeks, Filipinos, Malaysians, Sri Lankans, Finns, Italians and numerous others, mostly keeping to their own distinctive group in the first or second generation, but gradually merging into a heterogeneous and vital community. To these were joined the offspring of Aboriginal – White, Aboriginal – Chinese or Aboriginal – Filipino liaisons, often formed in cruel circumstances, but ancestors of many of the families well known today. Their immediate fate was discrimination, (read "Capricornia"), but they bred tough and survived.

These peoples were born into or lured into the spell of the Territory. Some failed of course; there was drink, crime, poverty and desolation. But the great majority moved, more certainly in each generation, into that special tribe with that special philosophy that Darwin and Alice Springs, and such other neighboring and neighborly places, are really the best places for us. And the most peculiar thing about this peculiarly Australian tribe was that they did not call themselves "South Australians", but "Territorians"; and, what's more, they were proud of it. But it was the South Australians who had created the environment in which they could do so.

Some went south and came back complaining of the cold. Some went south and came back complaining of lack of warmth, in another sense. Those who left permanently, regretted it. Searcy confirms this - "It is a strange fact that all who have lived there for any length of time deeply regret leaving it, and have always the craving to get back again."24

Elsie Masson, writing of women in the tough early years: - "She has had moments of home sickness and loneliness, when she longed to take the first boat south; but, in the end, she has not been daunted. She realizes, with a thrill of pride, that she can call herself, a woman of the Northern Territory."25

Unaware of these latent realities, the South Australian government was only too much aware of the immediate reality of the balance sheet. Yet any real development of the Territory called for greater expenditure not less.

Vague though the policy guidelines might be, the structure of government fell gradually into place. There was still hope in Adelaide that the Territory might yet pay its way if the right formula could be discovered. Various schemes were considered, including a scheme to bring in Japanese migrants. In view of the strong "white Australia" policy of the time, this sounds a bit desperate, but the government was serious and, in the end, it was the Japanese who broke off the negotiations, because
they decided they were not an immigrant people.26

But the hard fact was that the Territory was a continual drain on the financial resources of South Australia. This was exacerbated by the severe depression of the 1890s. Although some South Australians still maintained faith in the ultimate future of the Territory, most felt it was time to face reality. The Commonwealth was coming. It was time for a national effort.

There was common sense in this approach. The Territory did need greater resources than South Australia could now give. So South Australia handed over the Territory in 1911; and was thereby accused of having "failed".

Yet for nearly half a century South Australia had been the only Colony to have shown the slightest interest in it. Certainly it had made many errors of administration, and had stumbled into many mistakes due to ignorance of a strange new land. But it had persisted, it "drooped, revived, but faltered and fought on". It had spent monies it could scarcely afford, and sent up many of its best and brightest citizens, some to fail, and some to succeed, pushing development each time just that little bit forward. In the terms of what could be accomplished in the nineteenth century the South Australians had done their best. There was a foundation for the Commonwealth to build upon. It is unfair to talk of "abandonment", in the pejorative use of the term. This was a sensible transfer at an appropriate time.

Was the annexation for the good or ill of the Territory? In material terms it had not been good for South Australia. By the time the Commonwealth finally took over, the South Australia government had incurred a debt of nearly 4 million pounds. Pastoral, mining and pearling industries were not creating enough revenue to pay the bills, and there seemed little chance that they would ever redeem the situation. Most South Australians, (though certainly not all) were now as desperate to get rid of the Territory as they had been to acquire it. It did not improve matters that the cyclone of 1897 had caused extensive damage, and, therefore, further expense for repairs. And, from 1900 onwards, as separation appeared the most likely probability, one can hardly blame the South Australian public service for lack of initiative for future planning.

So began the familiar chorus that South Australia had failed. Most prominent was Banjo Paterson, writing, in 1898 that "The Northern Territory is a vast wild land, full of huge possibilities, but, up to now, a colossal failure."27

Another critic was Grenfell Price who, in an oft quoted passage in the 1930 Macrossan Lectures said: - "The Northern Territory, almost alone, has remained a vast iceberg of failure, unmelted by the soft waters of neighboring success."28

Leaving aside the "iceberg" metaphor for a Territory, which would be about the last place for one, this was a rather damning indictment by a prominent historian.

B. R. Davidson, again often quoted, wrote of "The Northern Myth."29

Davidson received a robust reply from none other than Gough Whitlam:- "If our forebears of 200 years ago had wanted as many answers as so many of the skeptics of today, Australia would never have been settled. We must be grateful that Captain
Cook took Joseph Banks with him, instead of Bruce Davidson.\(^{30}\)

This was a bit unfair to Davidson, who was merely emphasizing that some of the more ambitious schemes for the Territory were impractical; but it does make the important point that faint heart does not win fair Territory.

While many others have followed the line that South Australia had "failed" the Territory, I am going to be rash enough to question this. I do not contradict the research of these eminent persons. I rely upon that research. I query the interpretation.

What do we mean by "failure". The South Australians started with nothing and moved into a land they did not understand, and which proved conspicuously different from what they had known or expected. They stumbled from one disaster to another, tried schemes that proved unworkable, found others barely workable, cursed their fate, blasted their government, and kept going, learning a bit here and a bit there, adding to the sum of knowledge. Darwin was a wild untidy town, with a high proportion of drunkards, drifters and dissolutes. But it had been well surveyed, on a splendid site overlooking a splendid harbor. And it had, as Mr Brown, the famous landscaper, would say, "capabilities".

As with Darwin, so with Sydney. In each case, forty years after their foundation, neither was exactly a model city. Read historical accounts of Sydney in the 1820s and the 1830s. Historians say some nasty things about the place, but they don't call it a failure.

Excepting the explorers, some of whom, as we have seen, were unduly optimistic, no Europeans knew anything of the Top End in 1863. By 1911 considerably more was known, even if much of it seemed unpalatable. But because the South Australians found, by trial and error, that many activities, viable in the south were not suitable for the north, can we say they failed? Scientists accept that, in research, disproof can often be as important as proof. Surely the same respect should be paid to explorers and settlers.

You don't call a child a "failure" as an adult because he has not yet become one.

The South Australians handed over to the Commonwealth and administrative infrastructure, certainly creaky, but something to build on. They had introduced the common and statute law of South Australia, established courts and appointed judges and magistrates. True, perhaps the Queen's writ did not always run as effectively as it did in Adelaide. But the structure was there, and could be, and was, inherited by the Commonwealth without difficulty. There was a police force, as effective as numbers and circumstances would allow, under the redoubtable Inspector Foelsche. There was a hospital and a school in Darwin; and the town boasted a wharf, constructed at great expense and difficulty, but sufficient to accommodate the ships that called there. There were houses, shops and, (of course), hotels. Most importantly there were people from all over the world making the Territory their permanent home.
Don't forget the Overland Telegraph, that superb gift by the South Australians to all Australia.

And don't forget the franchise. Throughout the nineteenth century South Australia was most progressive Colony in Australia, introducing universal male franchise (including Aboriginals), in 1855-6. In 1895 the South Australian parliament, following New Zealand, took the revolutionary step granting the vote to women, including Aboriginal women, and going even further than New Zealand in allowing women to stand for parliament. The Territory shared in these historic measures. Barbara James comments: "This made the Northern Territory and South Australian women, the first women in Australia to vote, and the first women in the world to have the right to stand for parliament."

Barbara James tells us that although no Aboriginal women chose to enroll to vote in the Territory, about 100 did so in South Australia, and, in the Territory, 82 white women did enroll.31

While with South Australia, Territorians could and did vote to send two members to the House of Assembly and one member to the Legislative Council; and, upon Federation, had the right, while they remained with South Australia, to vote in the Federal elections.

The loss by Territorians of all rights to vote when the Commonwealth took over was one of the causes of the Darwin Rebellion in 1918-9.

I refer again to Barbara James and her vivid descriptions of the many marvelous and hardy women who made their home in the Territory,32 and record my regret that I have not time to tell you also of the rough tough, highly picturesque male characters of those days. Fortunately, there are many books and articles about them and, for this audience, I know you will understand my point that, throughout the nineteenth century, this special breed of Territorian was emerging to give us a sense of identity.

Surely some of that was distilled and developed from the South Australians with their own unique pride in themselves as a free Colony, with advanced political ideals, and a sense of adventure bold enough to probe into the unknown. Forget the chaotic governments and the mistakes of ignorance. Look at the product.

What do we mean by "failure"? What do we mean by "success"? Should anyone have expected that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Territory would have become a thriving, prosperous community, deriving untold riches from a bountiful hinterland? Or that Darwin should, by then, have turned into a fair city rivaling the capitals of the south? Or that Alice Springs should have grown to compete with Canberra as the obvious capital of the Commonwealth, as being more conveniently equidistant from all the State capitals? Is this the only definition of "success" to be allowed, and non-achievement of this goal to be reckoned as "failure"? Come off it.
This is the nineteenth century we're talking about, mate, with camels and horses and cattle trucks; and man - labor, not mechanical leviathans. It took two weeks to get from Adelaide to Darwin. That, in itself caused considerable logistical problems both for human transportation and for provisioning. Are some commentators being wise after the event, tut-tutting at every lost opportunity; and giving no credit for the untidy, blundering, but ultimately significant advances achieved by tough, courageous people in a harsh age.

The south was still developing, and the north needed time. Do we berate the West Australians for failing to make Broome a vibrant city by 1900? Do we lecture the Queenslanders on their lost opportunities at Cairns or Thursday Island by 1900? If we did, I am sure that a West Australian or a Queenslander would give us a short and rude answer; and so they should.

South Australians did not fail. They didn't succeed either, if you measure success by 21st century standards; and what justification is there for doing that?

The South Australians handed over to the Commonwealth in 1911 a riotous, extraordinarily varied society beginning to know itself. It also handed over the foundations of orderly government. The infrastructure was there, elementary perhaps, but firmly in place, and the substitution of a federal public service was thereby successfully effected.

The first twenty years of federal government dramatically proved that the South Australians were better. The Commonwealth government made its first mistake by failing to appoint as Administrator, S.J. Mitchell, a South Australian, the last appointed Resident, who knew the Territory and liked it, and was liked. (His later claim to fame, amongst other distinctions, was as the grandfather of one Roma Mitchell, of whom I am sure you have heard). The Commonwealth appointed Dr. Gilruth, a clever and competent scientist, completely unfitted in dealing with people, particularly Territorians. The result was the roaring days of the Darwin Rebellion, and the undignified exit of the Administrator and the Judge. The South Australians were entitled to feel that those who loudly proclaimed their "failure" might discuss how far they might consider the Commonwealth had succeeded.

The South Australians builded better than they knew. It is time we acknowledged a debt of gratitude, rather than a chorus of complaint.

The question, Did the South Australians fail?, can be effectively answered by another question: - Could anyone else, at that time and in those circumstances have done better?
The work I have used as the standard reference is "Far Country", by the doyen of Territory historians, Professor Alan Powell. I have also gained great assistance from the researches of Peter Francis Donovan in "Land of Promise", and "A Land full of Possibilities", both available in the State Library of the Northern Territory, and in the work of Lenore Coltheart in "Australia Misere". I have also drawn from various papers of Professor David Carment, and the books "Occupation Citizen", and "No Man's Land", by Barbara James.

I hope I have adduced from these the factual material for what I have written. Conclusions from the facts are my own, and the reader is at liberty to challenge them; but it would be a gross injustice to the excellent writers mentioned above, and any others quoted, to suggest that they agree with my conclusions or arguments. Indeed, I am fairly sure that most would disagree, and I acknowledge the weight of authority against me; but I feel bound to put a different point of view.

1. Donovan "Land of Promise" (LP) 70
2. The full text of the Letters Patent can be found in "Selected Constitutional Documents of the Northern Territory" collected by Alastair Heatley and Graham Nicholson and published by the NT Department of Law.
3. Powell "Far Country" 70 -75
4. Donovan LP 58
5. Powell 85
6. Powell 84
8. Coltheart "Australia Misere" 87
10. Coltheart 65
11. Coltheart 44
12. Powell 48 -49
13. Donovan "Land full of Possibilities" 28. Powell 70 -71
14. Donovan LP 526
15. Adam Lindsay Gordon "Ye Wearie Wayfarer"
16. Coltheart 114 -115
17. Powell 85 -90
18. Donovan LP 14, 415-416
19. Donovan LP 2286
20. Powell 120
21. Coltheart v
22. Donovan LP 515 -516
23. Donovan LP 459
24. Searcy "In Australian Tropics"
26. Mrs Daly "Digging, Squatting etc. 223
28. Powell 74
29. Melbourne University Press 1972
30. Quoted in "The Saga of Development of Northern Australia" James
Cook University — Pacific Regional Conference — Cairns 7 12
31. Barbara James "Occupation Citizen" ISBN 0 646 264303
33. Scott, Ernest A short History of Australia (7th. ed.) Melbourne , OUP, 1947
   pages 248 to 253
34. Heatley, Alasdair and Nicholson, Graham Selected Constitutional Documents of
   the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT Department of Law, 1989 p152
35. Ridpath, John Clark, Ridpath's History of the World, Vol. VIII, Cincinnati, Jones
   Brothers, 1913
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