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Sesquicentenary of the NT Police



The year 2020 is a special year for the Northern Territory Police Force.

The Northern Territory Police Force is the oldest institution in the Northern Territory, and the year 2020 marks 150 years of continuous policing to the community of the Northern Territory.

In January 1870 Sub Inspector Paul Foelsche arrived in the then town of Palmerston to begin policing in the Northern Territory on behalf of the SA Mounted Police Force. Since then, there has been a continuing police organisational presence in the Northern Territory. Although there have been several changes in administration, there were shared personnel from one organisation to another, giving an unbroken line of policing service to the NT.

The Commissioner of Police has asked your society to act as the coordinating organisation, in partnership with the other members of the NT Policing family, of the 150th Anniversary or Sesquicentenary. We were happy to accept the challenge.

At this stage, planning for the celebrations in 2020 is proceeding but I ask that you

commence making plans to visit the NT in the dry season of 2020 in order to join with us in making it a year to remember.

The major celebration will take place over about a week on 5th July 2020 to 11th July 2020. There will also be some events in other centres in the NT that may be worth attending, particularly in Alice Springs around about Police Remembrance Day.

We will keep you advised as planning continues.

Mark McAdie APM

President

The NT Police Museums and Historical Society Inc.



Mounted Constable A R Clapp, Died on Duty

(reprinted here with the Kind Permission of Katherine Musuem who recently published this story with appropriate acknowledgments for source materials from NT Police Musuem and Historical Society)

Mounted Constable Arthur Robinson Clapp served at the Katherine and Maranboy Police Stations. Born in England in 1898, and migrating to Australia as a young man, he spent time in Victoria before joining the Northern Territory Police Force on the 14th of September 1925.

His record of service notes, quote 'The Commissioner in 1926, reported the outstanding action of Mounted Constable Clapp in swimming out to the auxiliary ketch John Alce and quelling a fire on board the ketch. Mention was also made of his work in the detection of trading in liquor with Aborigines' end quote.

Mounted Constable Clapp took charge of Maranboy police station on the 1st December 1926 in troubled times at the small tin mining community. Unruly and undesirable behaviour including threats and intimidation against residents by some workers was thought to result from a cessation of work at the tin crushing plant due to a lack of water and mechanical problems.

Bad behaviour was also attributed to what was described as the lax manner in which former Constable M C Cheyne had conducted his duties and his failure to maintain law and order.

On taking over from Cheyne, Constable Clapp carried out his police duties by taking action against sly grog runners and controlling 'rampant offences' being committed in the area.

Such was the unrest at Maranboy it warranted reports to the federal government and led to

offenders appearing before a magistrate and complaints being laid against Constable Clapp.

Calm appears to have been restored by the 15th January 1927 when, in a telegram to the Department of Home and Territories the Acting Administrator for the Northern Territory advised, quote 'Understand no difficulties being experienced and field now quiet...No charges made against Clapp merit inquiry as he was legally entitled in the execution of his duty to take the action complained of. From information received Clapp is admirably carrying out his duties and is being loyally assisted by the law-abiding residents of Maranboy, end quote.



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Figure 1 -- The Horse Shoe Creek Police Station. It was moved to Maranboy in 1917.

The issue remained in the public eye, escalating on the 1st February 1927 when the *Northern Standard* newspaper in Darwin published an article that appeared to libel the character of Constable Clapp, resulting in legal action against the newspaper and elevated again to national attention.

An extract from former Police Commissioner McLaren's unpublished book provides an insight into events:

'The Acting Secretary of the Department in Canberra, in his report on 8th February 1928 continued –

"As Clapp, the Constable referred to, was a public officer and a member of the Police Force whose character should be above reproach, the Government Resident, North Australia, recommended that the Crown Law

Officer, Darwin should be authorized to proceed against the *Northern Standard* for criminal libel in the Lower Court. After the matter had been considered by the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor, approval was given for the Crown Law Officer to act for Constable Clapp. The case was heard by the Supreme Court in Darwin, and the Editor of the *Northern Standard* was fined 200 pound and ordered to be imprisoned until the fine was paid.

McKinnon, the Editor appealed to the High Court against the conviction by the Supreme Court, Darwin. The appeal was allowed, and the sentence was amended by reducing the period of imprisonment if the fine was not paid to not longer than six months. The costs of the appeal were payable by the respondent. The fine was paid by the Editor of the *Standard*, who was liberated on the 14th December."

Mounted Constable Clapp was denied knowledge of the outcome of court proceedings.



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Figure 2 - Prison cell, Maranboy Police Station circa 1930's. NT Library PH0136-0141 Henry and Gwen Scott Collection

On the 5th November 1927 he died on duty whilst patrolling railway construction camps near Katherine (one report states Mataranka) when he bailed up a couple of sly grog runners at gun point. When replacing the pistol in his holster it is said to have discharged and the bullet severed a main artery in his leg, however reports of the incident vary. Other reports state that he seized an automatic pistol from a man which fired as he placed it in his belt. Whatever the event there being no medical assistance available he died as a result of the injury.



Figure 3 - Mounted Constable Arthur Clapp in uniform standing behind the railway pay car (Katherine Museum Collection)



Figure 4 - Grave headstone of Mounted Constable Arthur Robinson Clapp, Katherine Cemetery



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Some eight years after his death a grieving mother, Mrs Emily Clapp made the long, sad journey around the world to see the grave of her only son. A report of her visit 'Former Bairnsdaleite's Death Recalled' appeared in the *Gippsland Times* on the 29th August 1935. (Courtesy trove.nla.gov.au).

FORMER BAIRNSDALEITE'S DEATH RECALLED

The Late Mounted-Constable Arthur Clapp

Mother's Long Voyage to See Grave

Before joining the mounted police in the Northern Territory, the deceased young man was employed in the Woodglen district and for a brief period was on "The Advertiser" staff. He took a very keen interest in the Returned Soldiers' League.

Mrs. Emily Clapp, an English mother, who arrived at Darwin, on Tuesday last, by the Burns Philp liner, Merkur, is on a sad mission to the Northern Territory. She proceeded 200 miles inland by the weekly train to see the grave of her son, Constable Arthur R. Clapp, of the Northern Territory mounted police, which is at Katherine. Mrs. Clapp has travelled all the way from England, and right around the eastern Australian coast, on this mission, which is nearing its end.

Mrs. Clapp said she was a Lancashire woman, and her only son, Arthur, migrated to Australia when quite a young man. After working in Victoria he joined the Northern Territory mounted police force, and was stationed at Katherine. One day he seized an automatic pistol from a man and placed the weapon in his belt but it exploded, wounding him fatally, and he died on November 5, 1927. After her son's death she formed the resolution to see his grave.

"I felt that I could not rest until I had travelled to Australia to see his grave. It took a long time to make the necessary inquiries, and to save the money for the trip, and now I am nearly there," said Mrs. Clapp, who added that she had received nothing but kindness from the Australian people.



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History of Darwin Police Stations

Written by Mark McAdie APM

DARWIN POLICE STATION (Originally Palmerston) Opened 1870 to Present

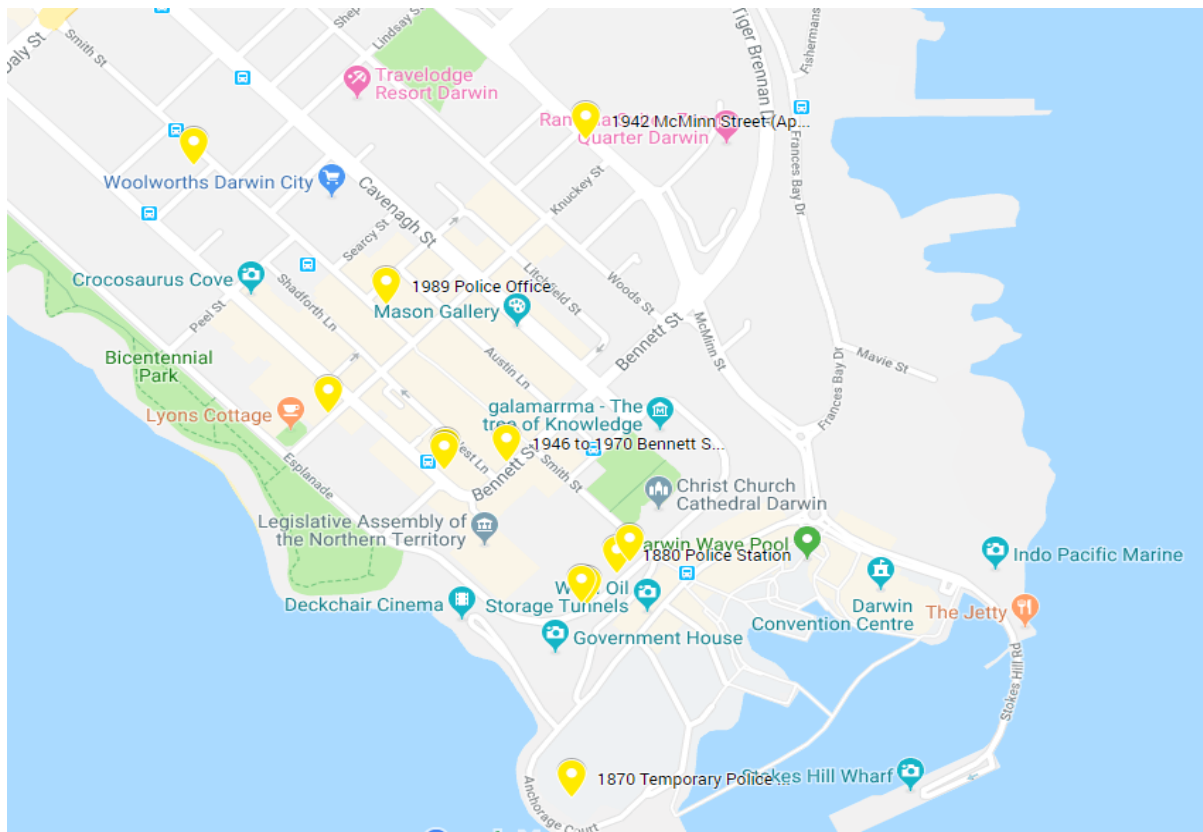


Figure 5 – of all the Darwin Police Stations in the Central Business District of Darwin



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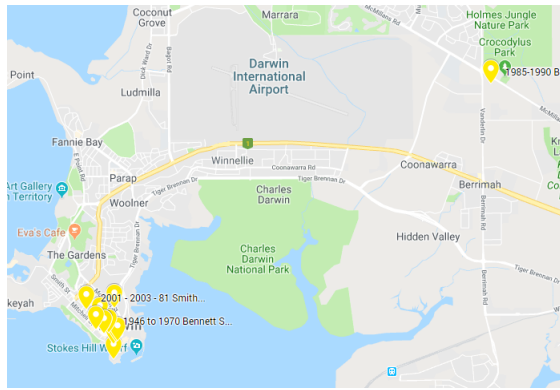


Figure 6 - Location of All Darwin Police Stations since 1990



Timeline of All Darwin Police Stations and Locations

1	1870	Dr Peel's former residence in Goyder's Camp – foot of Fort Hill – precise location unknown
2	1870 - 1874	Corner of Mitchell Street and the Esplanade
3	1874 - 1875	Courthouse – The Esplanade
4	1875 - 1880	Corner of Mitchell Street and the Esplanade
5	1880 to 1942	The Esplanade between Mitchell and Smith Streets
6	1942	McMinn Street – precise location unknown
7	1942 - 1946	No station due to wartime
8	1946 to 1970	Bennet Street between Mitchell and Smith Streets
9	1970 to 1985	24 Mitchell Street near Bennett Street Intersection
10	1989 to 1990	60 Smith Street
11	1990 to 2001	24 Mitchell Street near Bennett Street Intersection
12	2001 to 2003	81 Smith Street
13	2003 to Present	Knuckey Street between Mitchell Street and the Esplanade



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The First Darwin Police Station

Unsurprisingly, Darwin Police Station is the both the earliest and longest open police stations in the NT.

When Sub Inspector Foelsche, along with his small detachment of South Australian Police, arrived in Darwin on 4th January 1870, there was no police station in Darwin, because of course at this early stage of Darwin's history there were few permanent structures.

When Sub-Inspector Foelsche and his party of troopers arrived at Port Darwin there was no police accommodation available, so Dr. Peel, whose house was near the camp, allowed the Inspector the use of same for a police barracks.

This house or police barracks was built of rough timbers, with iron roof and bark sides. It was used and known as the police barracks until 1874.



Figure 7 - The First Darwin Police Station (Temporary)

The location of this police station / police barracks is not completely clear, but it appears to have been near the beach at the base of Fort Hill.

The Second Darwin Police Station

This building, however, was not in use for long, as it fell to the Police themselves to build

a Police Station. The new building was constructed of timber slabs with a corrugated iron roof. The police, with the support of Foelsche, objected to putting the roof on, and that was completed by day labour hired by the Government resident

In December 1870 Foelsche wrote a report to the Commissioner of Police:

“From the time of my last report, the 12th August till the 13th December 1870, some of the troopers when not otherwise engaged, employ themselves in erecting a new Police Barracks on the Tableland. They have cut and carted the timber themselves put up a building 38 ft long x 14 feet wide, divided into three room, viz - Office and Corporal's quarters 10 x 14 ft, Messroom 12 x 14 Bedroom 16 x 14 ft.

On the 13th December 1870 this building was so far completed, that it only required the floors, doors, windows and covering of the roof. This work the troopers declined to do, assigning as a reason, that they had received no assistance from the Government Resident, but the building is now being finished by that officer and when completed the troopers will be quartered on the Tableland.

P.T. Todd has erected a hut for himself and family close to the Barracks, but on private property, and occasionally assisted me in making additions to my quarters.

On the 8th November 1870 I took up my quarters on the Police reserve on the Tableland, part of which I have fenced in and during my leisure time, have made such additions as I required to accommodate my family when they arrive here.



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Corporal Drought has occasionally assisted me in this work, he has also attended on me during three attacks of "Billious Fever" I have been laid up with, and during which time P.T. Catchlove has been temporarily in charge of the Barracks in the Camp."

The "Police Reserve" to which he refers was on the corner of Mitchell Street and the Esplanade and intersection which no longer exists. The Police Station was occupied from January 1871. At the same time a stone building consisting of two cells was built to house prisoners.



Figure 8 - Darwin's first Permanent Police Station situated at the corner of Mitchell Street and the Esplanade



Figure 9 - Foelsche's Residence - next to the first Permanent Police Station

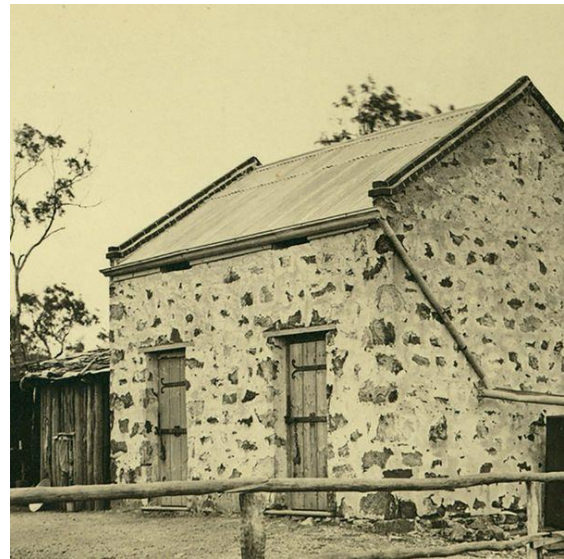


Figure 10 - The first set of cells in Darwin - they were sited behind the Police Station at the corner of Mitchell Street and the Esplanade on the Esplanade side



Figure 11 - This photograph taken from the front door of Government House clearly shows the siting of the Police Station, the cells behind and Foelsche's house to the left.

The Third Darwin Police Station

The timber Police Station was not destined to be long lived. Although staffing in Darwin did not vary very much over those first years, the Police Force outgrew this first police station after only a short time due to the addition of a small Water Police unit and a number of Police Stations in the hinterland. Also, unsurprisingly, a simple timber building quickly succumbed to the depredations of the



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voracious Darwin Termite (Darwinus Mastotermes).

On the 8th May 1874 an announcement was made in the Northern Territory Times and Gazette:

“A very creditable building has been designed by the Government Architect for the Police Station, and is expected to be commenced shortly.”¹

Another notice on 17th July 1874 stated:

“During the present week the police have removed from their old station at the corner of Mitchell Street, and have taken possession of the building recently used as a Court House. This is in consequence of the site of the station being required for the erection of a new and larger building for the police force, such building to be of stone, and of an improved style of architecture.”

There is a courthouse building that remains to this day as is part of the complex of buildings occupied by the Administrator as offices. It is situated on the Esplanade between Mitchell and Smith Streets. Its was not the building used as a Police Station as the current building was built because of the following tender in 1883:

“TENDERS for building new COURT HOUSE, Palmerston, will be received at the above office (where plans and specifications may be seen) up to noon of the 15th of MARCH next.

Neither the lowest nor any tender necessarily accepted.”²

We know the courthouse building they did move to had only recently been completed and most probably occupied the same land that the 1883 Courthouse (which still exists) and no doubt seemed the obvious place to temporarily house Foelsche and his staff as it would still allow easy access to the cells and prisoners in the Palmerston Goal. The following photograph from 1878 (and excerpt of a photograph taken by Foelsche) shows the 1875 Police Station with the extension that was built as a house for Foelsche, the Palmerston Gaol, a gap and then a building which was almost certainly the Courthouse.



Figure 12 - The Esplanade from Fort Hill in 1878 it shows the Police Station to the left and the Courthouse Second Building from the right, the site of the 1880 Police Station is between them

¹ Northern Territory Times and Gazette, 8th May 1874, retrieved from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3142738/549165>, 7th May 2019.

² Northern Territory Times and Gazette, 17th February 1883, retrieved from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/551403>, 10th May 2019



Figure 13 - a further magnification of the preceding 1878 photograph showing the building which was most likely the Courthouse it is certainly not the same building that is presently on that site (the 1883 Courthouse).

The Fourth Darwin Police Station

The new station was built of local stone with corrugated iron roof at the Corner of Mitchell Street and the Esplanade. It had a wraparound veranda. It was a very handsome building, so much so that Government Resident eventually developed designs upon it. It was replaced in fairly short order, although the building was extended in 1880 to include living quarters for Inspector Foelsche and his family.



Figure 14 - The 1875 Police Station that remained in use until 1880

The Fifth Darwin Police Station

On the 29th March 1879 and notice appeared in the Northern Territory Times and Gazette:

“Tenders for New Police Station

Tenders for building new Police Station at Palmerston, will be received in the office of the Government Resident up to noon of Monday, 14th April.

Plans and specifications may be seen, and other particulars obtained, at the office of the Supervisor of Works.

Neither the lowest, nor any tender, necessarily accepted.

Tenders to be marked on outside, "Tender for new Police Station."”

This new Police Station was to be built between the cells at the rear of the extant Police Station and the Courthouse, with the obvious intent of retaining the use of the Cell complex that was now at the rear of the Police Station.



Figure 15 - The 1875 Police Station with two cell blocks between it and the camera - the 1880 Police Station was to be built beside the cell block to the right of the picture



Figure 16 - The 1880 Police Station with the Courthouse to the right. These two buildings comprise the standing complex in the Esplanade that is used as the Administrator's Offices

The Sixth Darwin Police Station

The Police Station built in 1880 remained the Police Station until 19th February 1942. On that date the building sustained moderate damage as a result of the bombing of Darwin by the Japanese.

From the records available it appears that a piece of the SS Zealandia travelled from the wharf, early 700 metres away, crashed through the roof and embedded itself in the floor of the inspector's Office in the Police Station. As a result:

“The police station on the Esplanade was evacuated and the Administrator approved that a police station be opened up in McMinn Street in a residence previously occupied by Mr Devereaux. All records and books had been packed and loaded on a railway truck by Sergeant Littlejohn preparatory to shifting up country en route to Newcastle Waters. All other papers at the station were burned. Firearms were shifted to McMinn Street.³

³ McLaren, W.J., The Northern Territory and its Police Forces, unpublished manuscript, p964

The Police occupied this house as a Police Station and the one next to it as Police Barracks (the Police Barracks had been rendered uninhabitable by a direct hit from a Japanese bomb).

The precise location of these two houses is not known, beyond the fact that they were in McMinn Street, though one would have to suspect that it was at the Port end of the street, closer to where the Police Station had been. We also have no photographs of the two buildings, though they were probably elevated houses of fairly standard type of the era.

Whilst the headquarter element of the Police Force was move almost immediately after the bombing to Alice Springs to maintain the civil administration of the NT, the Police Station component remained in Darwin until 4th April 1942, when the Police Station was closed, and all remaining records were transferred to Alice Springs.

The Seventh Darwin Police Station

At the end of the war the civil Administration of the NT made a slow transition back to Darwin.

During the war the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) had commandeered all buildings in the area of the Police Station in the Esplanade, including the Police Station, the Courthouse, Administrator's offices and what remained of the Police Barracks.

When the police force asked for its assets back it met with a blanket refusal from the RAN who, by then had plans of developing a Naval Base encompassing all of the land bounded by Mitchell Street, Bennett Street, McMinn Street and the Esplanade. Although



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it never did manage to create a contiguous Naval Base out of that area, it certainly maintained much of it as a Naval Base and the Police Station remained part of Naval Headquarters in Darwin right up until Cyclone Tracey.

The return of both the overall Police presence and of the Police Headquarters began in 1945 at the Parap Police Station, utilising the old Parap Primary School as a Police Mess (Barracks) for some years thereafter.

The Darwin Police Station and Police Headquarters were finally re-established in Darwin in a building that came to be known as the Bennett Street Police Station in late 1946.



Figure 17 - Bennett Street Police Station and Police headquarters circa 1950s - the building was constructed as an arcade come residential building called the Mendis Building in 1941 but was eventually purchased by the Commonwealth Government.

The Eighth Darwin Police Station

The Bennett Street Police Station survived and was in use by the NT Police right up to Cyclone Tracey. Although it had remained in use, it had lost its status as Police Station in late 1970 when a new police station was opened in Mitchell Street.

“The police buildings under construction at 30th June 1970

included Groote Eylandt Police Station, Alice Springs Police Station and female cells, Adelaide River Police Station, a residence and Trackers quarters, Police Headquarters, Darwin and Casuarina Police Station and cells.”⁴

This was a modern, fully airconditioned building that included an impressive public entry and a partially underground cell block with enclosed sally port. Shortly after its completion it was connected to the newly Completed Police Headquarters building via the Watchhouse Sally Port.



Figure 18 - the new 1970 Mitchell Street Police Station (photo taken in 1985)

The Mitchell Street Police Station was destined to have a chequered history. Whilst it survived Cyclone Tracey pretty well intact and acted as the centre of Policing Operations in the weeks that followed along with the HQ building next door, the photograph above was taken at about the time it was closed as a Police Station, replaced as the centre of Police Operations by the then Berrimah Police Centre (now Peter McAulay Police Centre), officially opened 28th June 1985.

⁴ McLaren, W.J., The Northern Territory and its Police Forces, unpublished manuscript, p1466



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The Ninth Darwin Police Station

Commissioner Peter McAulay had reached the conclusion that a city the size of Darwin (population then approximately 75,000) could not support multiple police stations and given the layout of the city and the growth that was planned to occur in what was to be Palmerston and Litchfield Shire that a police station situated in Berrimah would be best placed to meet the needs of Darwin into the foreseeable future. As a consequence, both Darwin and Casuarina Police Station were closed, and a central base of operations set up at the Berrimah Police Centre.



Figure 19 - An aerial photograph of the Berrimah Police Complex taken shortly after its completion in 1985

The Tenth Darwin Police Station

But even the Police Commissioner does not get the final say in Police Operational matters. The demand for police stations from the public does not recognise operational realities and is driven by perceptions of policing that are not necessarily in synch with how Policing is actually undertaken. The public place a premium on a permanent police presence on the ground. This eventually led to a review of the closure of the Darwin Police Station. Because the changes were driven by the

public and not by operational need, the return to a Darwin Police Station came about in stages. The first stage was the opening of a "Police Office" which was merely a front counter in a shop in an arcade next to the then Woolworths in Smith Street. The number of staff operating out of this office was gradually increased and the daily coverage of operating times was also gradually increased.

The Eleventh Darwin Police Station

Police vehicle patrol continued to operate from the Berrimah Police Centre but eventually in about 1990, the old Mitchell Street Police Station was re-opened and police patrols returned to a home in the city.

The Twelfth Darwin Police Station

However, the site had simply become too valuable to remain in Government hands and it was sold out from under the Police Force to the Territory Insurance Office for redevelopment. They owned it for a year or two before demanding to take possession in 2001. The Police Force planned to develop a new Police Station in a public/private partnership with Randazzo Developments, but the time frame was much longer than allowed by the TIO. This led to the identification of a temporary Police Station at 81 Smith Street, Darwin. The building in question had, for some time been known as the MLC Building and the part to be occupied by the police had, until a short time before, been occupied by the Automobile Association of the NT (AANT).



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Figure 20 - The site of the temporary Police Station at 81 Smith Street 2001-2003

Arrangements were soon made, and the Darwin Police Station was moved to 81 Smith Street in the latter half of 2001.

The Thirteenth and Present Darwin Police Station

This station was always intended to be temporary and after two years of development, a new station (and present Darwin Police Station) was opened in Knuckey Street, in the Mitchell Centre. The Police Station is unusual in that whilst the front counter is in a shopfront on Knuckey Street, the remainder of the Police Station is on the Second (Watchouse), Third and Fourth Floors of that tower.



Figure 21 - Opened in 2003 this is the Current Darwin Police Station



Cop Jokes

Just had two police officers at my front door. They asked me, "Are you familiar with the letters HB?" I said, "No, I'm not."

"How about LS?" they asked. I replied, "No." Then they asked, "What about JD?"

I said, "Hang on a minute, am I a suspect or something?" They said, "No, these are just initial enquires."

An officer pulls over a man and a woman for driving their late-model Mercedes coupe 20 kilometres per hour over the posted speed limit.

The officer approaches the car, seeing an affluent-looking late-50s gentleman behind the wheel and a striking woman at least 20 years younger—and bearing a diamond on her left ring finger worth at least a year of the officer's salary—in the passenger seat.

"I stopped you because you were going 80 in a 60 zone," the officer says.

The driver replies, "No sir, I was going just a little over 60."

The woman says, "Oh Stuart! You were going at least 80 and hit the brakes when you saw the cop car on the side of the road!"

The man gives his wife a dirty look.

The officer says, "I'm also going to give you a ticket for your broken tail light."

"Broken tail light?" the man replies. "I didn't know about a broken tail light."

The woman exclaims, "Stuart! You've known about that tail light for weeks!"

The man gives his young wife another dirty look.

The officer then says, "I'm also going to give you a citation for not wearing your seat belt."

The driver replies, "Oh, I just took it off when you were walking up to the car."

"Stuart," the pretty woman says, "you know you never wear your seat belt!"

The husband bursts out, "Shut your mouth, woman!"

The officer takes a moment, and then says, "Ma'am, does your husband always talk to you this way?"

"No," she says, "Only when he's drunk."