



Robyn LAMBLEY MLA *Member for ARALUEN*

What is the Current State of Crime in Alice Springs?

Dear Residents,

This time next year the NT will be in the midst of a General Election with the final polling day on 24 August 2024. This 12 month lead up to the election is always an intense time with politicians and want-to-be politicians lining themselves up for preselection and presentation to the community.

We have 4 year fixed terms in the NT, which obviously means whichever political party wins, we are stuck with for 4 (sometimes very long!!) years. At the time of the next election, the current Labor Government will have held office for 8 years.

It is time for all voting Territorians to start weighing up what they want from their Government and who deserves to represent them in the NT Parliament from 2024 to 2028.

The next sittings of Parliament are from 29th to 31st August 2023.



There is no denying crime in Alice Springs has dropped off over the past few months. But to what extent remains unclear as the manner of reporting of Police figures is seemingly changing and becoming less straightforward, and the NT Labor Government is moving the goal posts to suit themselves and their narrative.

There are several reasons for this drop in crime:

- It is winter - Crime in Alice Springs always drops off in the cooler months.
- The "Stronger Future" Alcohol Bans that were lifted in July 2022, were reinstated in February 2023, under the direction of the Prime Minister of Australia. This turning on the grog, then turning off the grog again, in more than 400 Aboriginal living areas and town camps caused untold damage. Reinstating those alcohol bans has gradually led to a drop in alcohol fuelled crime and violence.
- The implementation of the two take away alcohol free days on Mondays and Tuesdays from February 2023.

The management of alcohol supply and demand in Alice Springs has always been critical to the management of law and order in town. Ironically what we now know from the lifting of the Stronger Future Alcohol Bans from July 2022 to February 2023, is that in order to maintain law and order across the whole of Central Australia, these alcohol bans must stay in place. The Town Camps have sadly always been focal points for alcohol fuelled violence and anti-social behaviour. For this reason, the Alice Springs Town Camps must remain dry. These alcohol bans were put in place more than 15 years ago, during the "intervention", specifically to keep Aboriginal women and children safe. Nothing has changed. They must remain in place.

Whilst banning takeaway sales of alcohol 2 days per week seems to be having a positive effect, it is not a sustainable solution. Alice Springs has never been subjected to any single alcohol restriction strategy as extreme as this before. The vast majority of people who drink alcohol consume it responsibly. Penalising everyone for the sake of a few, for an indefinite period, is too much. Whilst I agree this strategy should stay in place for an extended period, the Government must set a date at some point in the future for this ban to lift and other, more and sustainable and targeted, strategies to be implemented.

With the warmer weather fast approaching, once again we wait to see what will unfold when it comes to crime in Alice Springs. We can only hope this summer will not be as bad as the last.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Parliament Update

NT Sitings

The last sittings of the NT Parliament were on 25-27th July 2023. This three days of Parliament was dominated by debate on Government responses to crime.

The Government are under enormous pressure to toughen up their legislation to protect Territorians, particularly since Darwin is now falling victim to escalating lawlessness, and Top End residents are feeling the same sense of desperation we have been feeling in Central Australia for years.



No Change to Bail Laws

The NT Government commissioned an internal Review into Bail Laws and Weapon Laws in March 2023, in response to the tragic and heinous stabbing murder of 20 year old Declan Lavery in Darwin whilst working in a bottle shop. Much to the shock and disappointment of most Territorians, the Review recommended that no changes be made to the Bail Laws.

This is despite Declan allegedly being murdered by a man that was on bail, having previously committed a serious crime involving a weapon. The Review only recommended making minor changes to NT weapons laws relating to the use of machetes and axes in crimes. With crime spiralling out of control and our NT prisons and juvenile detention centres packed to the rafters, the Government has backed themselves into a corner and appear to be failing on all fronts.



Age of Criminal Responsibility

On 1st August 2023 the age of criminal responsibility in the NT went from 10 years of age to 12 years of age. This means that any child under the age of 12 will never be held responsible for any crime they commit. The plan of the Fyles Government is to further raise this to 14 years of age within the next 12 months. Whilst no one wants to see children locked up, the timing of this change is not good. With the huge increase in youth crime in recent years, the consequences for young people doing the wrong thing has now dramatically weakened, sending a message of absolute tolerance and acceptance of bad behaviour. Locking kids up does not work, however neither does them not experiencing any consequences for their bad behaviour. The Government has also not set up adequate diversion or rehabilitation services for these children. It remains to be seen how this will play out for law and order. The long term outcomes and benefits for these kids having no legal responsibility for their actions will be interesting to see.

Wanding Legislation



During the last Parliament, instead of improving the Bail Laws the Fyles Government chose instead to introduce legislation "on urgency" to allow Police to use scanners or wands to detect weapons.

The Government had to look like they were doing something. And whilst the use of these scanners is an important tool for the Police to have, there was nothing urgent about this legislation. The Government was under extraordinary pressure to tackle crime and this is what they came up with. Police will be able to use these "wands" in certain prescribed areas of the NT and under certain conditions. There was unanimous support for this in the Parliament. Concerns were raised in debate, however, about targeting people that normally carry knives, pen knives or tools but these problems can be easily resolved over time.

26,000 People Sign Crime Petition

On Tuesday 25th July the Opposition Leader tabled the largest petition in the history of the NT Legislative Assembly. Almost 26,000 people called on the NT Government to toughen the NT laws on crime in response to the alleged stabbing murder of Declan Lavery.

They have called this suite of changes "Declan's Law". The petition will now be debated in the next sittings of the NT Parliament.

Government Ministers have not attended or addressed the numerous public meetings that were held in Darwin in response to the senseless and tragic deaths of Declan and Bangladeshi student Md Isfaque Rahman, aged 23.

The overall response of the Fyles Labor Government to increasing public unrest and concern over crime and anti-social behaviour has been one of denial.

CBD Roadworks

I asked the Minister for Infrastructure, Eva Lawler, on Tuesday 25th July, exactly when the CBD road works in Alice Springs would be completed. It goes without saying that these street and road works have gone on for way too long, literally years! Our CBD is still an ugly mess. Minister Lawler was regretful and almost apologetic, saying that the Government did not plan for these delays and problems with this project. She said she "hoped" the work would be completed "by the end of the year". I have learnt not to hold my breath when it comes to NT Government timelines in Alice Springs.



The Unimpressive History of the National Aboriginal Art Gallery - Alice Springs

The National Aboriginal Art Gallery and the National Aboriginal Cultural Centre planned for Alice Springs were first announced together and funded \$70m by the previous CLP Government in their May Budget 2016, over 7 years ago. It was originally proposed as a combined National precinct for Aboriginal art and culture. At that stage there was no National Aboriginal Art Gallery or Cultural Centre in Australia. This was meant to be the first and only one of its kind in the country.



In August 2016 there was a change of Government and the new NT Gunner Labor Government made the decision to separate the Art Gallery from the Cultural Centre with a \$50m / \$20m split of the funding.

The new Labor Minister for Tourism and Culture, Lauren Moss, set up a National Aboriginal Art Gallery Steering Committee, announced in April 2017.

Renowned author and curator Hetti Perkins Co-Chaired the group which consisted of eight members from across the country. This Committee provided a report to the NT Government in November 2017 which included a range of Recommendations, the most poignant being about the best site for the gallery. They Recommended:

"Subject to the endorsement of and legal agreement with Apmereke art-weye (Traditional Owners) and Kwertengerle (Traditional Managers), the ISSC recommends the NATSIAM (the gallery) be located in the spectacular natural setting of the Desert Park precinct of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) in the Northern Territory"

Despite this clear recommendation that the Gallery be located at the Desert Park, in early 2018 the Gunner Government announced that Anzac Oval was their "preferred site" of the Gallery. This was against the will of most of the key Traditional Owners and the Steering Committee.

This decision to make Anzac Oval the preferred site was met with great negativity and even hostility within the Alice Springs community. In response to this adverse reaction, the Gunner Government embarked on an extended

consultation or "conversation" triggered by the then local Member for Braitling Dale Wakefield throughout 2018. The theme of the consultation was "Have a coffee with Dale" which turned into an entirely meaningless process because the Government had already made their decision about the site.

Meanwhile the race to covet the first National Aboriginal Art Gallery was being won and lost. Whilst procrastinating over an endless cup of coffee the NT Government was pipped at the post by the SA Government who in 2018 secured Federal "City Deal" Funding and announced the inception of the Centre for First Nations Cultures and a National Aboriginal Art Gallery.

Construction of this SA precinct is well underway and ultimately it is hoped it will be an international project, at an estimated cost of up to half a billion dollars.

In 7 years, three NT Labor Ministers Dale Wakefield, Chansey Paech and Lauren Moss (see photo below, left to right) have failed to deliver beyond a "concept design" for the National Aboriginal Art Gallery.



The first design was released in 2018. The second concept design was released on 28th July 2023 with local and interstate architects being awarded a \$7.175 million contract to design the National Aboriginal Art Gallery in Alice Springs.

The funding for the Gallery has remained stagnant for years with the NT Government not adding one additional new cent to the project for 6 years. The available funding currently sits at \$149m including \$69m of NT government funding and \$80m of Federal funding. In 2018 Minister Moss publicly stated the project would cost "at least \$250m".

The costing estimates for the Gallery did not include the complete debacle over the use of Anzac Oval as the "preferred site". The NT Government paid the Alice Springs Town Council \$3.66m for the compulsory acquisition of Anzac Oval in March 2023 after a protracted legal battle. On top of this, the cost of relocating rugby league and

rugby union from Anzac Oval to the Kilgarriff Estate is estimated at \$20.5m. The Gallery was supposed to attract untold private financial investment because of its cultural uniqueness and importance. This has never eventuated. The complete mismanagement of the entire project from go to whoa by the NT Labor Government has put off any likely or sensible benefactors, patrons or investors. The feud over the location of the Gallery in Alice Springs and the inability of successive Ministers to actually deliver has been deeply embarrassing and made any prospect of private investment extremely unattractive.

In the meantime, Minister Paech selected another "advisory group" to the Gallery which first met in April 2022.

The Government currently employs a team of NT Public Servants to manage this project, all paid handsomely. The project now has two Directors, each with a salary package in excess of \$237,000 per annum. The whole team costs the NT taxpayers a total of over a million dollars per annum.

Seven years down the track we still don't know the timelines of when the Gallery will be constructed, opened (God forbid!) or what the business model will be for operating it.

Meanwhile the NT Government is presiding over the building of another Aboriginal Art Gallery" in Darwin called the "NT Art Gallery", next to the NT Supreme Court Building, just across from Parliament House. Their incompetence truly beggars belief in managing (or failing to manage) a similar project in Alice Springs. Is it just because it is in Alice Springs that this Government has been so negligent, so uncommitted and dispassionate? Or is it just because no one in Labor cares enough to drive what is meant to be a game changing project for all Territorians?

Whatever the reasons are for this project languishing undelivered and disrespected for so long, it will definitely be a monument to the struggle of Aboriginal people and their art, playing out disgracefully even in this day and age.



Seniors Specials

August is Seniors Month and in the coming weeks numerous events will be held across the Territory to celebrate the role seniors play in our society and to encourage participation in recreational and wellness activities.

One of the biggest events is the Seniors Expo, which takes place on Tuesday 22nd August at the Alice Springs Convention Centre. This event hosts stalls showcasing health, finance, legal, safety and wellness organisations for seniors from across the Territory.

Council for the Aging

One of the main organisations which advocates for the rights of senior Territorians is the Council for the Aging NT, also known as COTA.

COTA is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the rights and interests of people over 50 in the Northern Territory. COTA's vision embraces the shaping of a just, equitable, age-friendly and humane community in which people are enabled to contribute and grow to their fullest capacity, and have access, with dignity, to appropriate care and support.

COTA aim to empower older people, those who work with them, government and the community into achieving well-being and social justice for older people. They also play an

important role in advocacy for seniors in the areas of: aged care, retirement income, health, older workers, housing, age discrimination, older women, elder abuse, digital inclusion, social inclusion, voluntary assisted dying laws.

With the loss of the Advocate in June 2020, many seniors were left without a vital source of information about the community. The quarterly newspaper produced by COTA provides interesting news and content to seniors throughout the Territory, covering aspects such as legal matters, news, events and any recent or upcoming legislative or policy changes

COTA also provides information on important programs and events to senior Territorians, including:

- * Seniors Card
- * Seniors Expo
- * NT Concession Scheme
- * AGED CARE: Help to Access Services
- * MEMBERSHIP: Individual, Joint, Club
- * Seniors Calendar
- * Digital Literacy and Learning
- * Seniors Business Discount Directory
- * Seniors Voice NT Newspaper
- * Volunteering
- * PICAC & MASP: Multicultural Seniors

For more information, contact COTA:

Fran Kilgariff (Central Australian Representative & Seniors Card)
0438 635 354

Debbie Pepper (Aged Care Navigator) 0423 828 558

Head office in Darwin: 8941 1004

Grandparents Day

NT Grandparents Day celebrates and recognises Grandparents, grand-friends, kin and those who take on the role of a grandparent in their family or community.

It is also day for Territorians to thank grandparents for their care and support and for sharing their knowledge, experience, and traditions with younger generations

Grandparents Day is being held on Sunday 29th October at the Alice Springs Cinema.

Contact COTA for further details and tickets.



Seniors Month Events

National Seniors Lunch

10 August
10:30am - 4pm
Ooraminna Homestead

Bookings Required
Cost - National Seniors
Members \$25
Non-Members \$35

for details contact:
Kathy Fritz
0407 529 791

Seniors High Tea Bingo

26 August
3pm - 4pm
Alice Springs Public Library

Bookings Required
Cost - Free

For details contact:
8950 0555
www.aspl.eventbrite.com.au

Memorial Walk & Morning Tea

31 August
From 9am

Alice Springs Cemetery &
CA Aviation Museum
Cost - Free

For details contact:
U3A Margaret Bolger
0488 688 522