



ARALUEN NEWS

February 2026

Robyn LAMBLEY MLA *Member for ARALUEN*

Welcome

Dear Residents,

The NT Parliament started with a bang for 2026 on Tuesday 3 February.

With the CLP NT Government now in their second year of office, the Chief Minister laid out her vision for the year ahead. This included the usual political chest-beating you can expect from these types of speeches. Overall, it left me wondering, what exactly does Alice Springs get out of the Government's plan? Darwin, as you would expect, is the clear winner when it comes to the big funding commitments. As per usual it is the regional areas with arguably greater need, that are treated as poor cousins. The decreasing rates of crime in Alice Springs are certainly encouraging but what economic boom and opportunity lies ahead for us?

It seems our most optimistic prospect for the future lies in the fate of a rare earth mine at Aileron, Nolan's Bore, 135km north of town. Arafura Resources has been developing a rare earth mine at this site for the best part of 20 years.

With rare earth now a vital ingredient in the production of many modern devices we now consider essential, this mine will almost certainly get off the ground. But exactly when is the question. When it does get the final green light (or Final Investment Decision), Alice Springs will not know what hits us. It will bring prosperity like we have not seen for many years. More jobs, more people and more business opportunities.

The last economic boom for Alice Springs was during the "intervention". Whilst for some the intervention is remembered as a time of loss, it was a boom time for Alice Springs. People came from all over to Central Australia to implement the initiatives of the NT Emergency Response or "intervention" and to service the increasing demands. House prices soared and businesses exploded with huge private and public money flowing into the region. No matter what happens to Alice Springs, I have great confidence that we will sustain and survive, better than most inland, outback towns. We have the infrastructure and capability to remain a vital service and regional hub for Central Australia.

But having a prospective light at the end of the tunnel, like Arafura Rare Earths, gives a different and very positive perspective to how we might proceed going forward. The final decision on Nolan's Bore is dependent on overseas investment, something that is obviously subject to great forces beyond our control.

In the meantime, we enjoy our lifestyle and the comfort of Alice Springs just as it is.

2026 BLACK DOG RIDE ALICE SPRINGS
SUNDAY 15th March Black Dog Ride

TICKETS \$35 RIDERS \$20

PILLIONS

Raffles & Auctions at Stuarts well. Raffle tickets \$2 each or 3 for \$5. On the day only!

When: Sunday 15th March. Where: Anzac Oval Carpark 7:30 am onwards. Sam stands up to Stuarts Well and 1pm Back to Welcome to Alice sign (south). Lunch: \$15 per head Compulsory

When does the Todd River Flow?

The Todd River cuts through the heart of Alice Springs as a wide, sandy riverbed—dry for most of the time. When it does flow, the event is so rare that local legend holds anyone who sees it three times will never leave Alice Springs. The last decade reveals there is no pattern to when the river flows and when we get the rain in Alice Springs and the catchment area. In 2019, Alice Springs recorded just 68mm of rain—less than a quarter of the 285mm annual average. The Todd remained bone dry. Then came the reversal. By 2022, 439mm had fallen—more than six times 2019's total—triggering three or four flow events. In March 2024, 154.8mm fell over three days, the wettest three-day March period in 36 years, sending the Todd raging through town.

I often laugh when people refer to our "wet season". We do not have a wet season in Alice Springs, it can rain at any time. On Monday 9 February we saw the Todd River flow fully. Always a spectacular sight bringing people together to enjoy this natural wonder.

Alice Springs Infrastructure Projects 2026

This year we can expect progress on the following Projects

Project	Funding	Status (2026)
Todd Mall Redevelopment	\$20 m Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC)	Planning & Development
New Sporting Facilities (Gillen)	\$14.1m NT Government (NTG)	Concept & Planning
New Alice Springs Library	\$14.96m NTG + \$5m ASTC	Concept & Planning
Multicultural Centre	\$5m NTG	Concept & Planning
Tourism Central Australia HQ	\$4.8m NTG	Planning & Negotiations

NT Parliament Sitting Dates 2026

March	10 — 12
March	17 — 19
May	5—7
May	12—14
July	21 — 23
August	25—27
October	13—15
October	20—22
November	24—26

Budget Estimates

June 9 — 18



The Women's Museum of Australia

International Women's Day Breakfast

Friday 6th March 2026

7 am - 9 am

Tickets \$65 pp

Women's Museum of Australia and Old Gaol
2 Stuart Terrace

Tickets Available

Women's Museum or at Givergy

Enquiries: contact Meegan Ph: 8952 9006
Email: admin@pioneerwomen.com.au

On 5th February 2026 I gave notice of a motion calling for the NT Government to: Acknowledge that when considering building the next new hospital in the NT, at the very top of the list is a new Alice Springs Hospital; and, that no other NT town or region needs and deserves a modern, new hospital more than Alice Springs and central Australia. Many of you will know I have been calling for a new Alice Springs Hospital for many years. I first moved a motion in 2015 calling for the then CLP NT Government to start planning for a new hospital. Since then I have put up numerous motions calling for the same thing. With the recent collapse of a section of ceiling in the old Royal Darwin Hospital as a result of Cyclone Fina in November last year, Top Enders have also been calling for a new hospital in Darwin. As far as I am concerned, they can get in the queue! The problem for the NT Government is that most of our hospital infrastructure is old and fails to meet the standards and expectation of most Australians. Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy, Katherine, and Alice Springs Hospitals are all relics from a by-gone era.

The edge we have in Alice Springs is that our hospital services a massive geographical area, including cross-border regions, and a significant population of around 50,000 people. Our need for contemporary Hospital facilities far outweighs other NT regions. The Palmerston Regional Hospital was the most recently built new Hospital in the NT, opened in 2018. At that point It had been over 40 years since a new Hospital had been built anywhere in the NT. I think the Federal Ministers who decide on our hospital funding need to ask themselves, how would you feel if your parents, spouse or children became acutely or critically ill and had to be admitted into the Alice Springs Hospital? If they were honest, most of them, who enjoy the very best modern health facilities in our urban centres, would be absolutely horrified. Alice Springs and Central Australia residents deserve better, and I will continue to fight for them. This motion will not be debated in Parliament until 2027, but it is on the agenda.

Australia’s next Census will be held on Tuesday, 11 August 2026. For the first time, the Census will include questions on sexual orientation and gender for people aged 16+, and will expand the ancestry question from two responses to four. The ancestry question asks about your cultural or ethnic background and where your family’s ancestors came from. In the 2021 Census, people could list up to two ancestries, such as “English and Irish” or “Australian Aboriginal and German”. In 2026, individuals will be able to record up to four ancestries. Census data is used to help plan essential services and infrastructure ensuring government funding and resources are allocated appropriately.



More Pokies for Alice Springs: How Many is Enough?

The recent approval to double the number of poker machines at two Alice Springs pubs has reignited debate about gambling harm in our community. But how many poker machines does Alice Springs really have, and how does this compare with other Australian towns?

The Numbers

Alice Springs has approximately 570 poker machines: 420 at Lasseters Casino and 150 in four community venues. With a population of approximately 26,000, this means one poker machine for every 46 residents - more than twice the national average. In 2023-24, Alice Springs gamblers lost nearly \$15 million in community venues alone, with combined Darwin and Alice Springs casino losses exceeding \$80 million.

The Recent Expansion

In 2023, the Todd Tavern and Gap View Hotel were approved to double their poker machines numbers from 10 to 20 each. Anti-pokie campaigner Jonathan Pilbrow challenged this through the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, but NTCAT sided with Iris Capital, the Sydney-based group that owns both pubs and Lasseters. “It is a bigger loss for people whose lives are turned upside down by these predatory and addictive machines,” Mr Pilbrow said. “Our campaign demonstrated how broken the NT’s laws are when it comes to protecting marginalised communities.”

National Comparisons

Australia hosts 76% of the world’s pub and club poker machines despite having only 0.3% of the global population. The comparison is stark:

- Western Australia: 1 machine per 1,372 people
- National average: 1 machine per 114 people
- Northern Territory: 1 machine per 100 residents
- Alice Springs: 1 machine per 46 residents

Darwin has five times Alice Springs’ population but less than twice the casino machines (627 vs 420), suggesting Alice Springs is disproportionately targeted.

The NT has the highest rates of problem gambling in the country. Unlike most states, the NT sets no cap on casino poker machines. Since Iris Capital purchased Lasseters in 2021, almost 150 machines have been added.

Disproportionate Impact on Indigenous Australians

Aboriginal gamblers are more than five times as likely to experience problem gambling - 5.3% compared with 0.9% for non-Indigenous gamblers. Visits to Lasseters consistently show approximately 80% of gamblers are Aboriginal, despite Aboriginal people comprising just 20% of Alice Springs’ population.

The Royal Australian College of Surgeons stated: “Gambling, specifically on electronic gaming machines in the current Alice

Spring venues, is a commonly acknowledged co-variable associated with family violence, which frequently culminates in acts of interpersonal violence requiring surgical care.”

What Can Be Done?

Western Australia maintains its ban on pokies in pubs and clubs, resulting in just one machine per 1,372 people. Potential NT reforms could include caps on casino machines, reduced caps in pubs and clubs, mandatory pre-commitment systems, and stronger protections for vulnerable communities.

As your local Member, I believe Alice Springs deserves better than to be a profit centre for gambling corporations at the expense of vulnerable residents. Anti-pokie campaigns continue gaining support.

If you or someone you know is struggling with gambling harm, help is available through Gambling Help NT on 1800 858 858

FACT

The Alice Springs Correction Centre (or prison) was opened in 1996 with capacity to accommodate 400 prisoners.

As of 2 February 2026, the prison is accommodating 812 prisoners.

Introduced Legislation

During the last Parliamentary Sittings, a number of pieces of legislation were introduced to be debated and passed into law in the future. Four of these Bills have been referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, namely the Electrical Safety Bill, Bail Bill, Bail Amendment Bill and Commercial Passenger Bill. The Legislative Scrutiny Committee examines Bills introduced into Parliament to assess their compliance with fundamental legislative principles, including rights and liberties, and reports to the Assembly on any concerns to assist informed debate and decision-making. If you wish to make a submission on any of these Bills, please visit the NT Parliament House website. Submissions close on **Monday 16 February**

Electrical Safety Amendment Bill 2026

This Bill amends the Electrical Safety Act 2022 to permanently exempt certain low-risk electrical work from the requirement to issue a certificate of compliance. The exemption applies where an electrician replaces an existing fitting or appliance with a like-for-like item and the work does not alter the capacity, safety or functioning of the electrical installation. The amendment gives legislative effect to an interim exemption that commenced on 1 January 2026. The Bill is intended to reduce administrative burden and compliance costs for electricians, businesses and households, while maintaining existing safety requirements for higher-risk electrical work.

Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026

This Bill amends the Sentencing Act 1995 to introduce a mandatory minimum non-parole period of 25 years prison for the murder of a current or former partner, except in exceptional circumstances. The amendment increases the existing standard non-parole period of 20 years and places intimate partner murder alongside other categories of serious offending under Territory law, including the murder of a child or a public official acting in the course of their duties. The Bill responds to the Northern Territory's high rate of domestic-violence-related homicides and strengthens sentencing outcomes for this category of offence.

FACT

The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress first applied to redevelop the old Memo Club site into a health hub in 2017. After almost a decade the impressive new Mparntwe Health Hub is due to be officially opened next month.

Bail Amendment Bill 2026

This Bill amends the Bail Act to clarify that its provisions apply to both adults and young people, and to all relevant courts, including the Youth Justice Court. The amendment addresses legal uncertainty identified in recent court proceedings, where questions arose about the Act's application in youth justice matters. The Bill confirms that existing bail tests, conditions and review mechanisms apply consistently across the justice system, ensuring clarity for courts, prosecutors and police when making and reviewing bail decisions involving both adult and youth offenders.

Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Amendment (Licensing) Bill 2026

This Bill amends the Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act 1991 to extend and standardise licence terms for commercial passenger vehicle operators. It allows licence holders to apply for or renew licences for periods of 12, 24 or 36 months, replacing shorter licence terms that required more frequent renewal. The amendments reduce regulatory touch-points between industry and government and provide operators with greater flexibility in managing their licensing arrangements. The Bill implements recommendations of the Approvals Fast Track Taskforce aimed at reducing unnecessary regulatory burden on business.

Local Government Legislation Amendment (Code of Conduct and Other Matters) Bill 2026

This Bill amends the Local Government Act 2019 and associated regulations as part of the second tranche of local government reforms. It repeals the existing councillor conduct framework and introduces a new tiered code of conduct system, including early-stage support mechanisms, independent assessors and an independent code of conduct panel for serious or repeated misconduct. The Bill also strengthens mandatory training requirements for elected members, modernises election notice and publishing requirements, clarifies rates treatment for social and affordable housing through concessional arrangements, enables councils to make superannuation-equivalent payments to elected members, and clarifies council delegations and governance oversight arrangements.

FACT

There are approximately 18,000 vehicles registered in Alice Springs, this includes commercial and passenger vehicles.

Passed Legislation

Housing Amendment Act—Passed 5 February 2026

This Act aims to restore the legal basis for the remote rent framework following a High Court decision that invalidated aspects of the existing scheme. The amendments clarify the process for making rent determinations for remote public housing. The Act enables the continuation of rent setting arrangements in remote communities while a broader review of remote housing rent policy is undertaken. The Act was declared and passed on urgency on 5 February 2026.

Latest Crime Statistics

In November 2025 crime in Alice Springs and across the board dropped significantly compared to November 2024.

This is very, very positive and I hope this trend continues.

November 2024 compared to November 2025

Crime	Nov 2024	Nov 2025	↑/↓
Crime Against the Person			
Homicide & Related Offences	0	0	Nil
Assault - Total	193	179	7%↓
Assault - Sexual	14	6	57%↓
Other acts endangering persons	30	30	Nil
Crime against the person totals	237	215	9%↓
Crime Against Property			
Domestic Break Ins (including attempted)	174	54	69%↓
Commercial Break Ins (including attempted)	17	11	35%↓
Motor Vehicle Theft	51	3	94%↓
Theft other than MV	213	104	51%↓
Property Damage	294	192	34%↓
Crime against property totals	749	364	51%↓

The offence data was extracted from NT Police SerPro system 02/01/2026

GILLEN OVAL MULTI-SPORT PRECINCT

PROJECT UPDATE - INFORMATION SESSION INVITATION

The Northern Territory Government has engaged Andrea Rice Architects to deliver the detailed design and documentation for the new Gillen Oval Multi-Sport Precinct

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND AN INFORMATION SESSION ABOUT THE GILLEN OVAL MULTI-SPORT PRECINCT. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR HOW THE PROJECT IS PROGRESSING AND ASK QUESTIONS DIRECTLY TO THE DESIGN TEAM

Join us at the upcoming drop-in information session:

DATE: **Wednesday 25th** TIME: **5.00 p.m.**
February 2026

LOCATION: CENTRALIAN MIDDLE SCHOOL LIBRARY
56 MILNER ROAD, ALICE SPRINGS

The development of the precinct will provide a versatile community facility, giving the school and local sporting codes enhanced playing and training grounds

We look forward to seeing you there!

Billing Chaos: Jacana Energy Consumers Facing Shock

Alice Springs families and businesses have been hit with massive electricity bills after months of billing delays by Jacana Energy, sparking a community petition and widespread complaints. The crisis has left vulnerable residents, including pensioners and single parents, facing impossible financial choices.

A Change.org petition launched last month by Alice Springs resident Beth Tudor rapidly gained hundreds of signatures. The petition highlights systematic failures in Jacana's billing systems causing genuine hardship for Territory families.

Beth's story is shocking: after living in her home for over 15 months as a registered customer, she received no electricity bills. Then, just weeks before Christmas, she was suddenly confronted with a \$4,400 debt. Despite Jacana acknowledging the delay was entirely their fault, they demanded immediate payment arrangements of \$155 per fortnight.

"As a single parent and domestic violence survivor on a fixed income, this is a 'choice' between keeping the lights on or feeding my child," Beth wrote. After sharing her experience on the Alice Springs Community Forum, she discovered many local residents reported the same "delayed billing trap" - with delays ranging from 6 to 15 months, followed by massive catch-up bills demanding thousands of dollars.

Other residents report similar experiences. Taylah received no power bill for over 12 months, then a huge bill right before Christmas followed by another due just after Christmas. When customers complain, they're told that Power and Water Corporation failed to send meter reading data to Jacana Energy - suggesting systemic communication failures between government-owned entities.

Billing issues aren't limited to delays. One customer received a \$15,000 water bill due to a meter reader misinterpreting a "3" as a "9." Smart meter upgrades are contributing to billing delays, with some residents experiencing delays of 2-3 months after installation. Kerry Connor, General Manager of Energy Consumers Australia, told ABC Alice Springs that in a national survey of financial counsellors, Jacana "ranked very low in the effectiveness of its systems" for supporting people struggling to pay bills.

The petition calls on Jacana Energy and the NT Minister for Renewables and Energy to: waive all debts older than 6 months caused by Jacana's billing delays; accept affordable payment offers from vulnerable customers; and stop all threats of disconnection for families affected by these catch-up bills.

If you've received an unexpectedly high bill or haven't received a bill for an extended period, contact Jacana immediately on 1800 522 262 to dispute charges and request an affordable payment plan. You can sign the petition at: <https://www.change.org/p/stop-jacana-energy-from-punishing-alice-springs-families-for-their-own-billing-errors>

As your local Member, I want to hear about your experiences. Government-owned corporations should support vulnerable Territorians, not cause hardship through administrative failures. If you're experiencing difficulties, please contact the Araluen electorate office.

FACT

The NT Government owns approximately 1,115 public housing dwellings in Alice Springs, around 100 of these are now managed by Community Housing Central Australia on behalf of the government.

Donating Your Stuff to Charity

Alice Springs residents wanting to donate unwanted items to charity are finding it's not as straightforward as it once was, with local op shops facing significant challenges.

One of the biggest challenges is finding and keeping volunteers. Both Vinnies and the Salvos Store operate with skeleton crews, heavily reliant on volunteers to sort, price, and sell donated goods. When volunteer numbers drop, donations pile up unsorted and some items go straight to the dump without being opened - simply because there aren't enough hands to process them.

Not all donations help. Items that struggle to sell in Alice Springs include men's suits and formal business wear, heavy winter clothing in summer, outdated electronics, and anything damaged or stained. These take up valuable space and ultimately cost charities money to dispose of. Meanwhile, there's strong demand for casual clothing, children's wear, household basics, and good quality furniture.

Online platforms like Facebook Marketplace mean many people now sell items rather than donate them. Nationally, op shop revenue declined 2.4% in 2024-25 as donations dropped in both volume and quality.

For Alice Springs charities that use op shop proceeds to fund emergency relief - food

parcels, utility assistance, material aid - this is serious. Our town has a level of need 15 times the national average.

You can help by donating quality goods, items you'd be happy to buy yourself. Think everyday clothing, children's items, kitchenware, and clean furniture. Ask before donating large items. Please consider volunteering if you're able.

Vinnies: - 8952 1074, 38 Railway Tce.

Open 9am-4pm Tuesday to Saturday. Closed Sunday & Monday.

Uniting Church: - 8952 1856, NOW at 64 Todd St. Open 10am-1pm Monday to Friday. Closed Saturday & Sunday.

Desert Connections 8929 1947, 8/59 Elder St. Open 10am-2pm Monday to Saturday. Closed Sunday.

Salvos Store: - 8952 7997, 17 Whittaker St. Open 9am-5pm Monday to Saturday. Closed Sunday.

Re-Discovery Centre ASTC: - 8950 4340, Commonage Rd Ilparpa, (next to Blatherskite Park) Open 8am-4pm Wednesday to Sunday. Closed Monday & Tuesday.

The Remote Area Op-Shop network is accessible via admin@circulation.org and through website: - <https://www.remoteopshopproject.org/> Donations are made via the post office service as per website.

Community Notices

School Holidays

6th—13th April
20th June—12th July
19th September—4th October

Aileron Bush Weekend

3rd—6th April

Alice Springs Cup Carnival

11th April—4th May

Ladies Day

18th April

Anzac Day Dawn Service

25th April

Top Half Folk Festival Ross River

1st—4th May

Bangtail Muster

4th May

Finke Desert Race 50th Anniversary

5th—8th June

Beanie Festival 30th Anniversary

Araluen Arts Centre
19th—22nd June

Alice Springs Show

3rd—4th July

Harts Range Races

31st July—3rd August