

ARALUEN NEWS

September 2025

Robyn LAMBLEY MLA Member for ARALUEN

Welcome

Our New GREEN Alice Springs Town Council

Dear Residents.

Beautiful spring weather is upon us. As the days grow warmer, many of us are reminded of just how punishing last summer was.

For three long months, the temperature sat stubbornly above 40 degrees. In my more than 30 years living in this town, it was the hottest summer I can remember. The relentless heat forced us indoors during daylight hours, with outdoor activities possible only before sunrise or after sunset. For those who had to work outside, it must have been unbearable.

Seeking comfort indoors became the only option, and even then, the heat took its toll. It restricted our lives, left us feeling drained, and meant day after day of being unable to do the things we wanted. Let's hope the coming summer is less brutal.

One of the greatest challenges faced by successive NT Governments has been our very low population growth. The truth is, the climate alone is often too severe for many people to endure. In Alice Springs, our summers are not for the faint-hearted. The irony is that from April through September, we live in a winter paradise. But while much of Australia enjoys a more forgiving summer, we are left with months of relentless heat.

The Top End faces its own extremes—oppressive humidity, the build-up, and a long, drenching wet season with little seasonal relief.

While crime has had a major impact on our ability to grow our population, the reality is that the weather has always been a significant deterrent. Living in the NT requires a certain resilience and toughness. Not everyone is cut out for Territory extremes.

The people of Alice Springs have elected a new Mayor, Asta Hill, representing the Greens, along with Greensendorsed Councillor Aia Newport. This result marks a significant moment in the political history of Alice Springs, traditionally regarded as a conservative town

The success of the Greens in this election is a clear signal to the major parties, CLP and Labor, that the political landscape in Alice Springs is shifting.

While the Greens are known for their progressive approach to social and economic issues, the primary responsibility of Council remains unchanged: to deliver essential local government services such as roads, parks and waste management. Sound financial management and sensible decisionmaking in the best interests of rate-

payers must always remain the priority, regardless of the political affiliations of elected members.

Mayor Hill achieved a decisive result in both the Mayoral and Councillor primary votes, demonstrating the strong confidence placed in her by the community. I look forward to working collaboratively with Mayor Hill and all Councillors to ensure Alice Springs continues to be well represented and effectively served. The eight elected Councillors are:

- Sean HEENAN
- Damien RYAN
- Cherisse BUZZACOTT
- Larissa ELLIS
- Allison BITAR
- Aia NEWPORT
- Danial ROCHFORDDarren BURTON

Target to Close in April 2026

Target Alice Springs is set to close its doors in April 2026 after the Alice Plaza allegedly secured Woolworths as its new anchor tenant, taking over the site where Target has operated for over a decade.

While the Alice Plaza may gain a new tenant with plans for an upgraded supermarket, the town loses Target. This is a net loss for local shoppers who already have limited choice.

If the talk of the town is true, Yeperenye Shopping Centre will also take a major hit with the departure of Woolworths, leaving behind a huge gap that will be difficult to fill given the decline of retail in Alice Springs. Woolworths has operated out of the Yeperenye Shopping Centre for more than 30 years. It is difficult to understand why they would allow negotiations with Woolworths to fail.

This reshuffle may look like progress for one shopping centre, but overall, it is short-sighted and very disappointing for the town.



A Personal Experience of Buying Pepper Spray in Alice Springs

From the 1st September 2025 Territorians have been legally allowed to purchase Pepper spray or OC Spray for personal protection. A friend who eagerly set about purchasing OC spray on that first day shared with me her experience. Here is what she discovered.

Purchasing OC Spray was very simple in Alice Springs. There are 4 registered dealers. None have a shop front, so you will have to attend a discreet warehouse to obtain OC Spray. A list of "NT Firearms Dealers" selling OC Spray is on the website provided.

On arrival I was asked for ID. In my case I presented an NT drivers license. Once this was scanned I was asked to complete a dec-

laration. The declaration is on an iPad and is very straightforward. I was asked how many canisters of what size I required. I chose one small OC Spray for a cost of \$45. The whole experience took 10 minutes and was very straightforward. The person I dealt with was very professional.

My concerns with this experience is that the suitability of persons buying OC Spray is self-assessed. There was no approval process or wait period of any kind. It felt too easy.

There are some things to note.

- You cannot transport more than 2 cannisters of OC Spray at any one time.
- If you are carrying OC Spray you must

- carry your declaration.
- OC Spray cannot be carried in public view. It should be concealed in pockets or handbags etc.
- If your OC Spray is stolen this must be reported to the Police.
- You cannot fly with OC Spray.
- OC Spray should be kept in temperatures below 45 degrees Celsius.
- OC Spray is a weapon and cannot be taken to certain locations.
- Employers can provide OC Spray to employees in certain circumstances. Please see more information here https://pfes.nt.gov.au/police/firearmsweapons/oc-spray-trial.

When Do I Need to Go to the MVR?

The Alice Springs Motor Vehicle Registry (MVR) has been under pressure for years. Despite staff shortages and long queues, the staff continue to provide excellent service — but they can only do so much. Knowing what the MVR does (and doesn't do) can save you time.

Q: Do I go to the MVR for a vehicle inspection? A: No. Vehicle inspections are carried out at authorised inspection stations in Alice Springs — not at the MVR.

Q: So what services does the MVR provide?

- Registering and renewing motor vehicles
- Issuing and renewing driver's licences
- Transferring vehicle ownership
- Issuing number plates
- Processing fines, fees, and compliance matters

Q: What should I do if my vehicle needs a roadworthy inspection?

A: Take it to an authorised inspection station (a list is available on the NT Government website or at the MVR front counter). Once your vehicle passes inspection, you can finalise the paperwork with the MVR.

Q: When do I actually need to go to the MVR?

- To submit documents that cannot be completed online
- To pay fees (if not paying online)
- For services that require an in-person check (e.g. proof of identity for a new licence)

If I Get Cancer, Where Will I Be Treated?

For people in Alice Springs, cancer treatment can feel like a lottery. Some patients are treated at Alice Springs Hospital by local doctors and visiting oncology specialists. Others are transferred to Darwin, to the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre. Depending on the type of cancer, some are referred interstate to specialist hospitals.

Where a patient ends up is not only determined by their diagnosis but also by the availability and capacity of cancer clinics at the time. This uncertainty adds to the already heavy stress of a cancer diagnosis for people in Central Australia. Alice Springs Hospital and local clinics work hard to provide continuity of care and support for residents, no matter where they are sent. But the reality is that families are often left juggling treatment in multiple locations, far from home. This is a challenge for patients, families, and the health system alike.

Does the NT Government Sell Its Public Houses?

It is rare for the NT Government (NTG) to sell its assets — and this includes public housing. It is equally rare for the NTG to buy new property. A recent exception was the purchase of the Silkwood pastoral property, adjacent to Litchfield National Park, which is being turned into a conservation area.

In Alice Springs over the past 10 years, a small number of derelict public houses have been sold. In these cases, the cost of restoring the dwellings to a liveable condition was simply too high. Some public housing tenants have tried to purchase their homes over the years. This can be a long and difficult process, with the NTG often refusing to sell.

That said, if you are interested in buying your public housing property, my advice is: pursue it. Write to the Minister for Housing and put your case forward. While success is rare, there is no harm in trying.

Will the "Two-Day Takeaway Alcohol Ban" Stay in Place in Alice Springs?

The two-day-per-week takeaway alcohol ban (on Mondays and Tuesdays) was introduced in January 2023 by the former NT Labor Government. Alice Springs has adjusted to this significant restriction, just as the community has adapted to many other extreme alcohol controls over the past two decades.

Is this a "forever" policy? Possibly. So far, there are no signs that the CLP NT Government is considering scrapping it.

Will Another Curfew Be Called if Crime Spirals Out of Control Again?

Yes — the NT legislation allowing for curfews is still in place. It was introduced by the former Labor Government in 2024. The first curfew in Alice Springs was from 27 March to 16 April, and the second from 8 July to 10 July 2024. The first Alice Springs curfew was implemented

after riots in the town and targeted youth under 18 years of age. It was considered effective as a short-term measure to restore order. The second curfew was in response to a crime spike. It was far less effective because unlike the first, it lacked focus and failed to achieve its goal of getting young people off the streets.

As we head into another long, hot summer, the use of curfews remains on the table. They may not be a permanent solution, but they are one option available to manage acute spikes in crime when the safety of the community is at risk.

Do Members of Parliament Have Government Funds to Allocate to the Public?

No — NT Members of Parliament do not receive Government funds to distribute to the public.

All Members receive an Electorate Allowance, which is designed to cover the costs of running their Electorate Office, vehicle, and some travel. This allowance is paid fortnightly into the Member's personal bank account and is treated by the ATO as personal income, subject to tax. Importantly, it is not public money set aside for community grants.

Sometimes, if there is money left over after paying expenses, Members choose to donate small amounts to local groups or not-for-profit organisations. How this money is used is entirely at the discretion of each Member. "Bush" Members (those representing remote electorates) receive a higher allowance than "urban" Members, so they may be in a better position to provide financial help to community groups. Importantly, it is not public money set aside for community grants.

Is Desert Knowledge Still Operating?

The Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) precinct remains one of the great mysteries of Alice Springs. After more than 20 years of existence, it is still difficult to find anyone who can clearly define and articulate exactly what DKA is and what it actually does. DKA is established under its own legislation — the Desert Knowledge Australia Act 2003. According to its website, DKA "facilitates the development of educational, employment and enterprise pathways, arid zone-focused research, and technological progress relevant to the wellbeing, resilience and sustainability of desert communities, both within Australia and around the world.' Over the past few years DKA has received approximately \$1m per year in funding from the NT Government.

For those directly involved in DKA, their work is valued and important. But for many in the wider community, DKA remains difficult to grasp—and its outcomes and impact are not always clear. After two decades and many millions of dollars, perhaps it is time to ask what Territorians are really getting in return.

The State of Democracy in the NT

With voter turnout at the August 2025 Local Government elections sitting at just 54%, one must question the decision by the former NT Labor Government to close the NT Electoral Commission (NTEC) shopfront in Alice Springs in 2018. The official reason was "low foot traffic." But in doing so, the NT Government removed any visible presence of the electoral system in Central Australia. There has been no permanent NTEC staff in Alice Springs for years. This surely contributes to the appallingly low voter turnout across Central Australia in recent elections.

For context, the Federal seat of Lingiari has recorded the lowest voter turnout of any electorate in Australia at the past two Federal elections – dropping from 66% in 2022 to 62% in 2025. The voter turnout in the Central Australia seat of Gwoja was the lowest for the 2024 NT Election at 42%. It raises fundamental questions:

- When turnout drops below 50%, can the result truly be called representative?
- Should electorates where most people don't vote continue to be represented in the same way?
- Can any Member genuinely claim a mandate if fewer than half of eligible voters participate?

These are questions that go to the very heart of democracy in Central Australia.

Closure of the Central Australia Museum

tained here?

The announcement in early September 2025 that the Central Australia Museum will close has come as a huge shock, despite rumours circulating for several years.

Located within the Araluen Cultural Precinct, the Museum has long featured natural and earth science collections and has shared a home with the Strehlow Centre for decades. According to government sources, there are four main reasons for its closure:

- A continued decline in attendance.
- Exhibitions that have remained unchanged for 25 years, leaving the Museum outdated and in need of renewal.
- Redevelopment of the Strehlow Research Centre, which will now expand across the entire building. This will provide greater storage capacity, enabling more Aboriginal cultural material and sacred items to be repatriated to Central Australia over the next decade.
- Ongoing funding uncertainty, particularly with the Museum requiring an overdue upgrade.

The collection will now be packed and split between storage facilities in Darwin and Alice

Springs, with no immediate plans for public display. Geology specimens are likely to remain in Alice Springs.

This closure is yet another blow to tourism in Central Australia. It also raises questions about the long-term viability and cost of operating museums and galleries in our region—including the long-promised National Aboriginal Art Gallery, still not built after a decade of delays. Museums and galleries represent a permanent financial commitment for taxpayers. They rarely break even, let alone generate profit. If the NT Government cannot sustain a relatively small, 30-year-old museum in Alice Springs, how realistic is it to believe that a much larger

The experience of other institutions in Alice Springs adds weight to this concern. Megafauna Central, opened in 2018, is a beautiful facility but has low visitation and high operating costs. The iconic Women's Museum of Australia also struggles month to month.

Aboriginal Art Gallery can be funded and main-

As government budgets tighten and priorities shift, the future of our museums, collections, and cultural exhibitions is deeply uncertain.

My First 12 Months as Speaker

Being the Speaker of the NT Legislative Assembly comes with many challenges. When determining whether Members are complying with the rules of the House, there is always a degree of interpretation. And no matter what you do, someone will accuse you of bias.

That is why my absolute mission as Speaker has been to be fair and reasonable.

Over the past 15 years I have sat in every quarter of the Assembly — as an Opposition Member, a Government Member, a Minister, and as an Independent on the crossbench. I know what it feels like to be frustrated, unheard, and sometimes treated unfairly by the Chair. Now, as Speaker, I better understand the nature of these roles, and why some are more prone to stretching the limits of the rules in order to push their political agenda.

Opposition and crossbench Members, whose primary role is to scrutinise and challenge Government, inevitably find themselves most often at the sharp end of the Speaker's rulings. Having spent more than 10 of my 15 years in Parliament in those very roles, I know exactly what it feels like to be called to order or even thrown out of the Chamber. I can recall prosecuting my case so strongly that I knew full well I was on the brink of ejection — and sometimes crossed that line deliberately.

Across the world, Speakers are routinely accused of bias against the Opposition. But having now sat in both seats, I can say it is less about bias and more about Members knowingly pushing their luck. Parliament is, after all, a theatre of politics. For some, being thrown out is part of the strategy. Yet when a Member is ejected without seeing it coming, it can feel deeply confronting and unfair. The alternative, of course, is always to behave.

Much of the interjection and banter across the Chamber never makes it into Hansard, and not all of it can be clearly heard by the Speaker. Disorderly conduct can occur not only in the words spoken, but also in the persistence of interjecting. Opposition and crossbench Members, in their role as attackers, are more often caught in this space. But Government Members are not immune — particularly when the Opposition hits a nerve. When Government Members behave disorderly, the same rules and consequences apply.

Like the new Government and new Opposition, I too am still learning. The role of Speaker requires balancing the Standing Orders, the right to free speech, and the need for democracy to be played out fully and fairly on the floor of Parliament. My commitment is to uphold those principles, ensuring debate is robust but conducted with respect for the rules that protect our institution.



The Honourable Hugh Heggie
Administrator for the Northern Territory

One Year into this 4 Year Parliamentary Term

The CLP Government recently marked its first 12 months in office. The 2024 NT General Election not only delivered a change of government but also brought 12 first-time Members into the 25-seat Parliament — 10 from the CLP, one Green, and one Independent. All 12 have now completed their first hectic year in politics

In my role as Speaker, it has been fascinating to observe the settling in of the new Government, the reshaped Opposition, and the development of these new Members over the past year.

For most new Members, speaking in Parliament for the first time is terrifying. Many begin by scripting their speeches word-for-word. Over time, confidence grows: they move to part-scripted, part-ad-lib contributions, and eventually some speak "off the cuff" using only notes. Others, however, never stray far from a full script. Becoming an effective Parliamentarian takes time, practice, and self-assurance and given that some new Members had never delivered a public speech before entering Parliament, their progress has been impressive. Ministers will always rely on prepared texts when delivering highly detailed or technical information, where accuracy is critical. Government and Opposition Members also have staff who draft speeches and provide speaking points. Independents and the Green Member, however, have no parliamentary staff and must prepare their own material.

Overall, the transformation in skills and confidence across the Chamber has been remarkable. Most Members have found their feet and are now using the rules of Parliament to their advantage.

But 12 months in, the "honeymoon period" is over. The next three years will be much harder, as the CLP faces mounting scrutiny over its promises to reduce crime, repair the budget,

and manage the Territory's high debt.

An experienced politician once described the rhythm of a four-year term to me as follows:

- Year 1 Save
- Year 2 Design
- Year 3 Build
- Year 4 Promise

New Governments typically make tough cuts early, hoping voters will forgive them by the next election. By the second year, the focus shifts to designing and selling a vision, followed by building it in years three and four — all while making promises to secure re-election. For the CLP, the pressure is twofold: delivering on its policy agenda while keeping its large team of 17 Members disciplined and united. Ambitious backbenchers can quickly become restless, and internal tensions are always a risk.

On the other side of the Chamber, Labor's four bush Members have had their own challenges. After eight years in Government, they now face the reality of Opposition — underresourced, outnumbered, and stripped of the power they once held. Three of them previously occupied some of the most senior positions in the NT — two as Attorneys-General and one as Speaker. Adjusting to Opposition has been difficult, and the workload is enormous. None of them live in Darwin, yet they must frequently travel there to stay visible, all while trying to maintain their bush electorates. Rebuilding Labor's presence in Darwin after its 2024 losses will be a monumental task.

The first 12 months of this 15th NT Parliament have been marked by dramatic change — exactly what Territorians voted for. The sparkle of change may fade as the hard grind of governing and opposing sets in, but that is politics. Delivering is always the hard part. By 2028, as the next election nears, no doubt the colour and excitement will return.

Changes to NT Anti-Discrimination Laws

The NT Anti-Discrimination laws have always stirred strong emotions. They should reflect the values of our community — fairness, respect, and freedom. Australia has long prided itself on being broad-minded. We laugh at ourselves and each other, and we value free speech above many other rights.

But in Parliament I've seen how giving rights to one group can sometimes come at the expense of another. As Bishop Charles Gauci said: "What is reasonably likely to offend or insult one person may not be reasonably likely to offend or insult another."

In 2022, the former Labor Government pushed through sweeping changes. After consulting on a draft Anti-Discrimination bill, the Fyles Government brought a watered-down version to Parliament — but it still went too far. The most controversial changes included:

- Stripping religious schools of the right to employ staff who share their faith.
- Making it unlawful to "offend" or "insult" someone over disability, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity or intersex status.
 These risks silencing free speech — even harmless jokes could be caught.
- Allowing people to lodge complaints on someone else's behalf, even if that person

doesn't want a complaint made.

 Opening the door for complaints based purely on someone claiming they were "offended."

Unsurprisingly, religious groups, schools, and many in the community pushed back hard. Now the CLP Government has introduced amendments, which Parliament will debate before the end of the year. These reforms include:

- Scrapping "Hate speech" rules and replace them with clear laws against inciting hatred, contempt or ridicule.
- Restoring the right of faith-based schools to prioritise staff who share their values.
- Remove unclear terms like "offend" and "insult" and focus instead on preventing real harm.

I strongly support these changes. Faith-based schools should be free to employ people who uphold their values. And free speech should not be stifled by laws that punish harmless words or jokes. The CLP's amendments bring the NT Anti-Discrimination laws back to common sense: protecting people from genuine hatred and discrimination, while respecting freedom of belief and expression.

NT Crime Stats

Legislation Passed in the September 2025 Sittings of the NT Parliament

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 - Updates taxi/ride, motor vehicle and traffic laws; tidies bus-safety powers (incl. removal for non-compliance), abandoned vehicles, trailer rego, and strengthens drink/drug-driving provisions.

Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 - Tougher animalwelfare laws (clear duties for care, bans on prong collars, stronger cruelty/bestiality offences) and related Criminal Code up-

Gaming Control Amendment (Community Benefit Fund) Bill 2025 - Allows not-forprofit organisations operating from NT Government-owned facilities apply for CBF capital-works grants again.

Lands, Planning and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 - Omnibus planning/building/heritage/water tidy-ups to streamline approvals and modernise several Acts.

Police Administration Amendment (Police Public Safety Officers) Bill 2025 - Formally creates the PPSO role within NT Police to boost public-safety coverage in hotspots.

NT Legislative Assembly Sitting Dates remaining for 2025

October 14-16 October 21-23

November 25-27



Bills to be debated in the October 2025 **Sittings of Parliament**

1) First Home Owner Grant

The Government has extended the boosted First Home Owner Grant. If your homepurchase contract's "commencement date" is on or after 1 October 2025 but before 1 October 2026, the grant is \$50,000. From 1 October 2026, it reverts to \$10,000. The Bill simply updates the dates and amounts in the Act so the higher grant continues for another vear.

2) Container Deposit Scheme (CDS)

This Bill modernises the Container Deposit Scheme law and widens which drink containers attract a refund. In short, the scheme will apply to all containers up to 3 litres, removing earlier exemptions like wine and spirits. It also tidies up who makes decisions (moving functions from the NT EPA to the Department/CEO), adds NTCAT review rights for certain decisions, and sets practical transition periods so industry can update labels and machines.

3) Electricity market reform

This Bill updates the Electricity Reform Act to enable staged market reforms. It introduces Territory Electricity Market Rules (TEM Rules) so the Territory can set and change detailed market and system-control arrangements by rule, requires coordinated planning of generation and networks, and creates a pathway for a new planning tool (a Regulated Electricity System and Investment Plan) to guide future investment.

4) Electricity System and Market Operator (NTESMO)

This Bill formally creates NTESMO, a standalone statutory corporation to run powersystem control and the wholesale market, undertake whole-of-system planning, and procure system services where required. It sets up a governance board, reporting and audit requirements, and the usual publicsector accountability settings.

The latest Alice Springs Crime Statistics for June 2025 show an improvement compared to June 2024. The overall number of crimes has reduced. When it comes to crime, there is never anything to celebrate, but an incremental reduction is a very good sign. For years under the former Labor Government we saw incremental increases in crime month after month, year after year for 6-7 years. We never saw figures like this.

Alice Springs Crime Statistics

June 2024 compared to June 2025

Crime	June 2024	June 2025	1/↓
Crime Agains	t the Per	son	
Homicide & Related Offences	0	0	NIL
Assault - Total	174	128	26%↓
Assault - Sexual	7	15	114% ↑
Other acts endangering persons	17	18	5.88% ↑
Crime against the person totals	198	161	18%↓
Crime Again:	st Prope	rty	
Domestic Break Ins (including attempted)	67	66	1.49%↓
Commercial Break Ins (including attempted)	15	18	20% ↑
Motor Vehicle Theft	3	7	133% ↑
Theft other than MV	163	106	35%↓
Property Damage	176	198	12.5% ↑
Crime against property totals	424	395	6.83%↓

The offence data was extracted from NT Police SerPro vstem 15/08/2025

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Electorate.araluen@nt.gov.au





09 - 19 October, 2025

Mparntwe Alice Springs International Film Festival

Presented by Red Hot Arts in partnership with Darwin International Film Festival



Upcoming Events

Alice Springs School Holidays

20 Sept-5 Oct

Desert Mob 2025

11 Sept -26 Oct Multiple Venues

Alice Springs Film Festival

9 Oct—19 Oct Araluen Art Centre

Diwali Night Markets

16 Oct, Todd Mall

World Teachers Day

31 October

The OLSH School Fete

14 November, OLSH Bath St.

Community Notices

