

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Nightcliff Primary School and Charles Darwin University

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 6 students from Nightcliff Primary School, accompanied by their teacher, Greg Hauser. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: Also in the gallery are the Charles Darwin University preservice teachers, accompanied by their lecturer, Janice Crerar. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION BILL
(Serial 25)

Continued from 16 August 2017.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I support the Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill. First, I will address a comment that was made during the welcome to country speech during the opening of this Thirteenth Assembly by Dorrie-Anne Raymond. This was her expectation of us as parliamentarians:

We don't expect miracles. We do not expect all the difficulties in the Territory to be solved by the current elected representatives. But representing us in parliament is a sacred duty, one entrusted to you by us, the people of the Northern Territory. To fulfil this duty, you must bring us with you, hear us when we speak, act in wisdom and foresight and above all, do no more damage.

The previous government caused damage, withdrawing the BDR overnight without any system in place to replace it. It was irresponsible. It was literally done overnight. I know there were people in the community talking about the inconvenience of showing their ID because they were not problem drinkers. That story was told on many a bar stool and at many a barbecue ...

Mrs Lambley: And will continue to be.

Mr McCONNELL: I pick up on the interjection. What I find really interesting in that statement by Dorian Raymond is 'do no harm'. That did harm. The evidence is there that it caused harm.

I thank the minister for presenting this bill. Changes in the way Northern Territory policies affect alcohol consumption will affect all communities in the Northern Territory, including communities in my electorate, which have raised this with me on numerous occasions during the campaign.

During the campaign, the alcohol policy of the Territory was raised many times regarding people having concerns about being treated differently because they appeared to be Aboriginal, yet other people who appeared to be of other races went through and did as they liked. They were concerned because people in Darwin and Palmerston were treated differently to people in Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs. Is that what we expect of a government? Is that fair enough? No, it is not fair.

I did not come to this place to see policies like that stay in place. Alcohol is dangerous; it causes a lot of damage in the Northern Territory, most noticeably in alcohol-related vehicle accidents, domestic violence and things that happen on Mitchell Street. Alcohol is a big problem in the Northern Territory.

I note that no community member in the Northern Territory has spoken to me about open slather approaches to alcohol. Communities are aware that alcohol abuse leads to increased health problems and is linked to increased rates of interpersonal violence. Everyone I have spoken to agrees that access to alcohol must be managed. However, the message of controlling alcohol must be fair and equitable and should not place police in situations where they are racially profiling people, which is considered a 'necessary evil'.

First, we must acknowledge that we, in the Northern Territory, drink too much alcohol. This sometimes but not always leads to further harm in our communities through violence and crime. In addition the overuse of alcohol has enormous individual health implications.