



NORTHERN TERRITORY
***of* AUSTRALIA**

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HANSARD EXTRACT

**COMMONWEALTH DAY &
MARY POPPINS**

THURSDAY 20 MARCH 2025

This extract is taken from the Official Hansard of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, 10 March was Commonwealth Day and an opportunity to appreciate that we belong to a Commonwealth of Nations with shared history and aspirations. Although the event traces its origins to Empire Day, a day which was initially conceived to celebrate the British Empire, since the latter half of the 20th century the focus has shifted to emphasising the modern Commonwealth of Nations. The event was renamed Commonwealth Day in 1958, and its date moved to the second Monday in March in 1977.

Commonwealth Day is typically marked by a message made by the Head of State in the Commonwealth, as well as additional statements from the Commonwealth Secretary-General. There are interdenominational observances which are held in cities across the Commonwealth, including one held by the Head of the Commonwealth at Westminster Abbey, London.

I note the passing of the occasion today for three reasons of salience to this House. The first is that, at a time of shifting geopolitics and global uncertainty, it is worth reflecting on whom we actually share common values and commonality with and some of the positive forces that bind us together.

The second thing I note is that, notwithstanding the complexities of colonisation, it is worth appreciating, especially on a day when we have been espousing all the virtues of education, what a significant role the Commonwealth has and continues to play in education globally. I am personally extremely grateful for the educational opportunities I have been afforded by the Commonwealth over a range of years.

Thirdly, whilst the Commonwealth and the UK headquarters might feel extremely distant from us in Darwin, we all, more than most, belong to the Commonwealth in a direct way as members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The CPA has been relatively dormant in our polity for a number of years, but it is one of the oldest established organisations in the Commonwealth. It brings together members who are united by their respect for the rule of law, individual rights and freedoms and the pursuit of positive ideals for parliamentary democracy. It is something we should work together, as a parliament, to reinvigorate under the auspices of the Speaker.

The CPA is made up of almost 180 other legislative chambers and branches divided across nine geographic regions. We are a long way from the rest of Australia, but we are part of a broader fabric of democracy across the globe, and it behoves us to be part of it while we have the opportunity. There is a vast opportunity for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and to share good practice.

I personally am learning an enormous amount from the CPA materials that we all have available to us. There are all sorts of information modules that are really instructive for the old and new parliamentarians amongst us. I note that today, whilst rushing past the lift, I found this flyer, 'Top 10 Tips for New Parliamentarians', amongst many other bits of material that I believe the CPA Headquarters Secretariat has been putting around to try to nudge us in the direction.

New and old parliamentarians would probably benefit from some of these ideas: don't panic; remember who you work for; seek advice; get prepared; specialise; set boundaries; keep it clean; build relationships; and read your standing orders—I imagine that would have been a useful one today for a number of us.

The theme of Commonwealth Day for 2025 was 'Together We Thrive'; that is the point. Commonwealth Day is an international harmony day, and just like the event we celebrated so enthusiastically yesterday and will officially celebrate again tomorrow, it is worth appreciating.

While we are in the neighbourhood of London and the CPA, I also wanted to shine a light on Darwin's recent production of *Mary Poppins*, which brought together a huge number of people who devoted six months to putting on an artistic production that was genuinely first rate and worthy of recognition. The amateur production made up of cast, crew and helpers of more than 100 sold out five shows at the Darwin Entertainment Centre. It was a long and intense production. Things like these are not just small Mickey Mouse things; they are high-quality productions that support the Darwin Entertainment Centre and bring people into the CBD who then spend in the city.

I was lucky to catch the final matinee show at which there was a packed room of kids who I could not believe kept it together for what was an excellent but pretty long show. It is a testament to the quality of the production that all those kids stayed engaged. Young and old appreciated the event.

I shout out the people who were involved in the production because they did not even get a mention in the *NT News* until after the five shows had sold out. That is the state of affairs and neglect when it comes to our arts sector, in my opinion. I have spoken several times about the fact that we punch above our weight class in putting on artistic productions and having a disproportionate number of people involved in visual art, music, dance and theatre. This is the stuff that makes us money, whereas a lot of other stuff does not make us much at all. It is worth getting behind our arts sector because it is a growth sector that, alongside other industries we are looking to champion, can help us move forward and prosper economically and socially.

To the creative team of Cat Hart, director; Michael Loughlin, musical director; Abigail Hatton, choreographer; Sally Bevis in wardrobe; Tom Lydiard in lighting design; and Chris Kluge in sound design, well done on your hard work.

The stage and technical crew, who are often neglected, built amazing sets. They are Annette Gore; Mary Verus; Michael Bradtke; Madeline Jarvis; Chris Kluge; Tully Gelfling; Daniel Gore; Mahli Seden; Angel Aquino; Debbie Barnett; Allie Kendall; Swahnnya De Almeida; Michael Gore; and Oliver Jarvis.

The set maintenance and construction and costume teams do the hard work behind the scenes that no-one notices but makes the whole thing hang together. They are Chris Kluge; Daniel Gore; Ben Hall; Michael Gore; Mitchell Strzelecki; Resy van Beek; Annette Gore; Martin Gore; Cat Hart; Glen Jarvis; Sally Bevis; Yvonne Corby; and Jacqui Saunders. Thank you for all your hard work.

Those were the people behind the scenes, which gives you a scale for the number of people who are involved in putting on something that large. It is not just about a few posters at the last minute; it is six months of tireless effort from people.

The orchestra is Benjamin Bradtke; James Teh; JC John Collins; David Smith; Amy Zhao; Sam Harrison; Bruce Cartwright; Joel Hoare; David Pye; Craig McGiffen; Matt Holt; Oliver Locos; David Chin; Jenny Hodgkinson; Tania Watts; and Michael Bardon. Thank you so much for giving up your time to perform in a high-quality musical from a difficult book.

Thank you to the ensemble who did the hard work shoe-shuffling on the stage: Ben Hall; Patrik Ralph; Harry Walker; Glen Jarvis; Justin Dela; Vega-Dela Pena; Fuakava Hatch; Liz Keith; Andrew Edwards; Chris Obst; Ludo Harrison; Lyndelle Barry; Helen Nenke; Sarah Cullinan; and Cameron Wieck.

To the main cast, it is an enormous amount of work being involved in a production like this, learning all the lines, giving up your time whilst holding down a full-time job and doing it for free to share and make the Territory a better, liveable place that has lifestyle options where you can watch *Mary Poppins* and go shooting, fishing, hunting and drag racing. These things are important in their own right. To Kameron Arthur; Martin Gore; Rachel Wharam; Lina Zhao; Jonathan Bradtke; Lily Daniel; Jett Hutton; Fiona Wake; Yolande Davidge; and Resy van Beek, thank you so much for your efforts. Yolande Davidge recently underwent a medical procedure, and I wish her all the very best in her recovery.

Finally, I would be remiss not to single out Mary Poppins herself. Hannah Clark, who played Mary Poppins with such grace and poise, really deserves a shout-out as a class performer. When Hannah Clark is not busy entertaining children as Mary Poppins, she is Captain Starlight at the hospital—that is who she is. She is the one cheering up all those sick kids in the hospital and then in her down time, doing it on stage with her voice.

It is not a small enterprise putting on something like this. Thousands of Territorians benefited from being a part of it. I commend the production to the Assembly.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, apologies in advance for a bit of a shift in tone. Just a forewarning that my adjournment will be heavy in nature and may be upsetting for some people to hear.

I feel that with my platform comes enormous responsibility to speak out for the voices who are often muted. After our epic night on Tuesday, I got home at 2 am. Unable to sleep, I jumped online to Instagram to be confronted with the images of dead and dying children—I am sorry; I know this is unprofessional, but I am just a normal person, not a career politician—from the latest indiscriminate Israeli bombing of civilians in Gaza. It was such a wrenching feeling to have been so swallowed up in an incredibly intense night here with all the pettiness, hostility and outright lies that happen in this Chamber, which can feel like the whole world, for that to then be shattered by being instantly transported to the refugee tents of families in Gaza.

As I lay in bed, my 15-month-old baby lay sleeping peacefully next to me, I saw images of little Palestinian babies mutilated, their feet poking out of the rubble. On Tuesday night this week, Israel broke the ceasefire