



NORTHERN TERRITORY
***of* AUSTRALIA**

Dr TANZIL RAHMAN MLA

Member for Fong Lim

HANSARD EXTRACT

FANFARE FESTIVAL!

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

This story also connects clans and country across Blue Mud Bay, linking three peninsulas: Garra-para of the Dhalwangu clan; Baniyala of the Madarrpa clan; and Djarrakpi of the Mangalili clan. It illustrates the connections between places and patterns that form the basis for sea rights.

I highly recommend that anyone in this Assembly and anyone who is listening who can visit this beautiful part of the Territory that is Blue Mud Bay and Baniyala takes the chance to view this living sculpture. It is a highlight and an incredible experience when it coincides with the sea rights anniversary celebrations. The celebrations were held in Baniyala today. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend as the proud local member, but I have been to those celebrations in the past and they are special. That is when you get to see this living memorial and Baniyala itself become the epicentre of cultural performances and the passing on of knowledge of the ancestral songs and dances for sea country. This truly showcases the Djalkiripuyngu leaders' rights to the cultural and economic management of their country over thousands of generations.

In closing, I congratulate the Djalkiripuyngu leaders on another successful anniversary of sea rights. I hope to attend their fantastic celebrations in Baniyala next year. Congratulations to the Blue Mud Bay leaders on 17 years of sea rights.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I will be quick. I have a very special guy in my electorate who has a birthday today. Jason, if you are watching, happy birthday. If I get my maths right, you are turning 20. Happy 20th, and I hope you have a great one. Cheers.

Madam SPEAKER: Wow, that was brief.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, members may recall that on 21 May I foreshadowed my intention to launch a fledgling music festival in my electorate. It is my great pleasure to report tonight on the inaugural Fong Lim Fanfare Festival, held from 4 to 6 July.

The purpose of the festival was manifold but primarily to bring some joy and vitality to my electorate via celebration of band music. The festival was presented under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and delivered in association with partners from the University of Sydney's Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Sydney Grammar School, Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Association, Ton's Bistro @ Dinah, Haileybury Rendall School, Northern Territory Music School, Australian American Association and Government House.

I thank the branch president of the CPA for allowing us to raise the profile of the CPA with branding across all these events. As I have pointed out, the CPA is a powerful organisation that we all belong to across countries, and we could all do well to have more involvement with it.

The mini festival we ran over a few days featured three exciting performances by the renowned 21-piece jazz big band Dr V's Swing Thing from Sydney. That was led by acclaimed saxophonist, band leader, conductor, educator and composer Mr David Theak, who is the leader of the jazz performance program at the University of Sydney and one of the giants of Australian jazz and music generally. We were blessed to have him and a range of other people volunteer their time to come from interstate, put on a three-day music festival and spread a bit of joy.

We ran three events over three days. They were all different and, I am pleased to report, all successful.

On 4 July, at my beloved Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Association, we did an event called Swing, Swing, Swing! We had a glamorous Territory formal 4 July dinner dance. Guests were invited to dress up, dine and dance the night away to the sounds of classic Rat Pack tunes. It was quite the contrast; we had ballgowns versus the beloved crusty barnacles in hi-vis at the Dinah Beach Yacht Club, but it was proof that the Dinah Beach Yacht Club scrubs up all right as well.

It was a sold-out event with tonnes of swing dancers, amazing food service by Ton's Bistro, which I commend for being short-listed for a bunch of catering awards recently. It even made a modest start towards fundraising for the new pontoon that Dinah Beach is seeking to replace, which is an essential piece of infrastructure that is important to all mariners in the Northern Territory.

It was also a useful opportunity to build bridges with the Australian American Association and the US Marines who are part of our society here and often do not have terribly much to do with civil society. I was pleased to see that some off-duty people came to help us enjoy the event.

On 5 July at Government House we held a special outdoor terrace concert hosted by Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO, PSM to support the Administrator in recognising the contributions of community musical volunteers. There were about 150 of those volunteers from organisations and ensembles, including the Darwin City Brass Band; Hot and Cold Big Band; Darwin Beach Choir; Darwin Chorale, which recently celebrates its 40th anniversary; the Army Band of the 1st Brigade; the new Royal Australian Navy Band; Vocalective Singers; Darwin Symphony Orchestra; Arafura Wind Ensemble; and Arafura Music Collective.

I was delighted to also see the Members for Port Darwin and Johnston at the concert. Thank you so much for coming down. It was wonderful to have parliamentary colleagues there. I note, of course, that everybody else was more or less at the Alice Springs Show. I could not compete with the Alice Springs Show, so fair dues to those of you who could not make it, and thank you to those of you who could.

It is fair to say that it was a well-received event. The first response of a lot of the people who were contracted by those organisations was, 'You want me to play at what when?' It was a case of, 'No, we want you to sit in the audience and for once be thanked for the contribution you make towards social cohesion, art, culture and the economic impact of the arts'. It was nice for a lot of those people who sing the national anthem for us at all the events, fly the flag for us and make these event happen to have an opportunity to be recognised.

Again, it was a good opportunity to fly the flag for the CPA and for people to ask, 'What is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association? How is it involved with these initiatives?' I might add that cultural exchange programs through the CPA are a core part of its business.

The third event we ran was on the following day, 6 July, entitled Dave Theak's Jazz Jamboree. We did an interactive holiday masterclass and performance aimed at inspiring our next generation of young artists, particularly musicians. As some of you know, growing up in Darwin I benefited from an amazing musical education. I fondly recall the excitement of watching touring band performances. Our hope was to provide something similarly fun and inspiring for young and old alike.

I am pleased to say that even though we had slightly smaller numbers than we had hoped for, every kid who turned up would have walked away inspired and with something to aim for. A series of kids, who all play in our public schools and some of our private schools as well, were all able to sit in on an interactive masterclass to learn from some of the best people in the country in what was a privileged opportunity. I was delighted to put on that event for a select few because it made a profound difference to the people who could attend the event.

My priority will always be, first and foremost, delivering for my electorate, but it is worth noting the economic footprint of this modest event. A conservative estimate would be that I generated, in partnership with all the people who contributed their time, a six-figure contribution to our GSP (gross state product) from a three-figure investment in operating costs. That is basically a return on investment of a thousandfold-plus, notwithstanding the absolute versus relative quantum of that impact.

We are not talking about a big-ticket project that generated millions, but it is safe to say that I generated hundreds of thousands in three days of putting on free music. There is an economic argument and a logic to supporting the arts here. I keep explaining to everyone in this House that it is the small things added together that compound into sustainable economic growth models. You need people, but you also need regular activity and not necessarily chasing white elephant projects the whole time. That is my subtle dig at the fact that the arts pay off and it is worth us investing in the arts. I extend a courtesy to the Member for Gwoja who also makes a similar point on a recurrent basis, we both being the Parliamentary Friends of Live Music, as it were.

How is it that I can calculate such a generous sum? If you think about the cost of flights, accommodation, production costs, ticket sales, food and beverage costs, catering contracts and all the money those guys spent at the Mindil Beach and Parap markets, as well as all the secondary tourism tours, I had 25 people come here with their families for at least four days. Then there is the knock-on effect of everyone who was involved in that event. The return on investment is extremely high, and it is worth us considering what actually generates bang for buck in the Northern Territory economically.

Going back to the artsy side of it, the festival was a lot of fun; it was a delight to put on music and spread joy. It was great to see parliamentary colleagues being part of it. It was also heartening to see so many people invested in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and asking questions about what it did, what we could for it and what it could do for us.

We started small but mighty in 2025, and fingers crossed we will expand Fanfare over the next few years and hopefully involve a lot of local wind bands, brass bands, big bands and put on gigs through some of Fong Lim's hidden gem locations. I represent an electorate with a lot of cool places to make music that a lot of people do not know about. There is a lot of airport hangars, industrial warehouses, microbreweries, gin distilleries and seaside venues. There are pretty great schools as well, all of which had a small part to play in this year's festival and which I hope will have an even larger part to play in next year's festival.

I appreciate that it is a congested time of year, and it was a no slight on the Alice Springs Show; we organised this some nine months in advance and ended up clashing with the show. I make this commitment, though: if it is the case that we end up doing this on the same weekend this time next year, we will make sure we get to Alice Springs on tour because I know a lot of the people who were involved with the tour really love the Territory and were delighted to be a part of promoting the arts and music education in the Territory. I might add that some of them have longstanding connections to the Territory as people who lived or worked here in the past.

It was a fantastic opportunity to get an initiative off the ground, and I very much appreciate the support of everyone in the House for helping me to make it a successful event. Thank you very much.

I look forward to reporting back on the Fong Lim Fanfare Festival in 2026.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I will speak again about the escalating horror that Israel is perpetrating in Gaza. Israel continues to slaughter and starve the Palestinian people, and I speak on this today because we all have a moral obligation to speak against these blatant war crimes. We have an obligation to amplify our community's distress at the genocide. We have a duty to stand up and support in particular our Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities in this time of unbearable pain.

We also have a duty to call out the federal government's sickening complicity with Israel's actions through our two-way arms trade and our support of the US military, which supports and finances Israel's actions. With weapons parts being sent directly from RAAF Base Tindal in Katherine to Tel Aviv, you cannot tell me that this is not relevant to us in the NT.

The past 21 months have been witness to a deliberate planned genocide carried out by Israel on the people of Gaza. For those who have been listening, Israel made its intentions clear. Amnesty International reviewed statements issued by the Israeli Government and military officials between 7 October 2023 and June 2024 that dehumanised Palestinians and called for or justified genocidal acts, and it found 22 separate statements made by senior officials that called for or justified genocidal acts, providing direct evidence of genocidal intent, which is important in humanitarian law.

As if those admissions, the horrific proof on our screens every day and the arrest warrants from the ICC for Netanyahu and his war Cabinet were not enough, leading genocide scholars across the world have confirmed this is a genocide. That includes two prominent Israeli human rights groups in the past two days that have come out and said, 'Our government is enacting a genocide in Gaza'.

This makes it hard for me and the millions of people in this country who are distraught and who have marched in protest, written letters and shared articles to understand how most of our political representatives stay silent. How can you do this during a livestreamed genocide? I still cannot believe there are people so cruel and so deadened to their humanity that they can simply ignore the suffering we are witnessing. When I listen to the deafening silence from most people in this Chamber, I am left to think, 'Surely, you must not be seeing the images and videos that we are'. I cannot believe that even the most heartless person in this room cannot be moved to action once they see the reality.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table some images and share some stories.

Leave granted.

K McNAMARA: This is only a drop in the ocean of the suffering and trauma, only a minuscule fraction of the sheer numbers of destroyed families and traumatised children. Honestly, I collected these images in five minutes. There is just so much more.

We have the paediatrician, Dr Alaa al-Najjar, who was in hospital, working with patients who were being brought in, when the ambulance brought in the nine charred and mutilated bodies of her children. Nine out of 10 of her children were killed in an Israeli strike as she was working at the hospital.