



**NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
***of* AUSTRALIA**

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*Member for Fong Lim*

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**HANSARD EXTRACT**

**DARWIN FESTIVAL 2025**

TUESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2025

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

These successes highlight the incredible sporting spirit that thrives within Casuarina. Behind every award and selection are hours of training, dedication and the support of families, teachers, coaches and volunteers. I thank everyone who contributes to nurturing young talent and creating opportunities for our kids to succeed not just in sport, but in life. Casuarina is a community that celebrates its young people, and I look forward to seeing what these athletes achieve next. Congratulations to all of them.

I congratulate Casuarina Car Wash, which officially reopened under new ownership and management on 11 August 2025. The new operators are Gibba and Katrina Turnbull, along with their son Mathew and his partner, Danika. Gibba and his family are no strangers to hard work and determination. They have been successfully running family-owned businesses since 2001, starting from humble beginnings. Their first business was a labour hire company, and over the years they expanded into accommodation services in the mining industry, a tree-logging business and several other car washes.

Casuarina Car Wash has long been an important local service. Under the Turnbull family's leadership I know it will continue to thrive, and I wish Gibba, Katrina, Mathew and Danika every success as they embark on this exciting new chapter.

**Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the Darwin Festival 2025. Sixty-four sellout shows, a record 50 venues, an extraordinary list of international guests and some of Australia's and the Territory's most dazzling performers and artists lit up the city between 7 and 24 August.

I was fortunate to represent Minister Boothby to recognise that last year's Darwin Festival won the gold award at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards on 3 April at the Last Supper. I very much enjoyed having the opportunity to go to the program launch at the Deckchair Cinema on 3 June.

My involvement with this festival goes back a long way to when it was the Bougainvillea Festival in the 1980s. Growing up in this place, I have extremely fond memories of what it was. I remember what the Darwin Festival was when it started, and I know that it has now become world class. I say that with some authority because I have had the privilege of attending other great festivals around the world. I can say with great confidence that the Darwin Festival is truly magnificent.

I am surprised nobody is saying terribly much about the Darwin Festival tonight, given that it raised \$33m for our economy last year. For once, I am not here to talk about economics and the economic value of the festival. We should reflect on the pure artistry, the value of social cohesion and the goodness that it brings to our city, because it is important to remember the things that make Darwin and the Northern Territory a liveable, loveable and wonderful place.

One of my fondest memories as a Darwin Festival performer in years past was playing baritone saxophone in a Motown show between midnight and 3 am in the Spiegeltent, which used to be in the Darwin Botanic Gardens. I have seldom done more fun things in my life. I digress, so I will return to talking about this year's festival which had packed crowds.

The festival's closing weekend at the Darwin Ski Club featured the sold-out Anthony Callea and Tim Campbell 'The Songs of Elton & George' concert, the mesmerising Sarah Blasko and the final performance on the final night by the ultra-high energy Melbourne Ska Orchestra.

The festival is in its 46<sup>th</sup> year. The Darwin Festival saw this year, as it does every year, the introduction of something new—the Fort Hill Parklands venue opened, which was fantastic. On the opening weekend Guy Sebastian performed, which you could hear from Parliament House, as well as the New Zealand band L.A.B.

There were eight world premieres over the entire Darwin Festival period. The biggest-ever Taste of Darwin program had all its events sell out. Other sellout shows included Indian mentalist Suhani Shah; Emma Donovan; Merrick Watts, who does the hilarious *An Idiot's Guide to Wine*; comedians Melanie Bracewell, who a lot of us see on TV, and Dave Hughes; John Safran; Burnout Paradise and many more.

It was wonderful to see so many others out night after night enjoying themselves in our CBD, dancing, laughing or even just being in awe of people on the stage. If you have not been to Festival Park before, put it in your calendar to do next year because it is an amazing atmosphere. Everyone has a great time, listening to live music and eating amazing things. Whether you were at Festival Park, dancing at Club Awi or at a show, there was an amazing vibe.

All of Darwin is indebted to the people who organise the festival, believe in the festival and work their bums off for the festival. I am personally indebted to Artistic Director Kate Fell and CEO James Gough, who I met

when I was fortunate to represent the minister, and likewise Darwin Entertainment Centre CEO Georgia Hendy—it is now the AANT Centre—for inviting me to attend so many of the shows across August.

I would like to talk about many of the shows and there are many things I would like to point to, but I am limited for time so I will only speak about some of the shows I attended. To give you a sense of how broad, diverse and wonderful the festival was, flick through the program. You will see that an insane amount of stuff goes on in a short space of time, and there is something for everyone.

As many of you know, I am a musical person, so I tend to gravitate towards watching musical things, but the festival is a great opportunity to branch out and see stuff that is truly different, engaging and exciting in a different way. This year I decided to concentrate on the circus, theatre, ballet, opera and all the things that you do not get to see every day in Darwin. I will pick out a couple of my favourites.

La Ronde circus was at the Spiegeltent, which used to be in the Botanic Gardens but is now across from Parliament House. Inside that giant tent the things that people did and the feats of strength were astonishing. The show sold out night after night. I was going to take my dad with me, but I am pleased I did not take him. It would have been difficult to explain it to my father. There were a lot of pretty racy costumes—I will not lie—but it was absolutely delightful and so entertaining.

I took my dad along to Bangarra Dance Theatre's Illume program. I do not really understand anything about modern dance, but it is wonderful to see something I do not understand. The artistry and strength was beautiful. The Entertainment Centre was packed, and the performers received a standing ovation. Everyone loved it.

It is a privilege to see these things in person, and it is important that we had the opportunity to expose young people to all this. For the young, old, seasoned veteran, uninitiated—everybody—it is a beautiful opportunity. We talk about restoring the Territory lifestyle. I am a bad fisherman, but I love to fish and camp. It turns out I am a reasonable shot. However, the lifestyle is not just about hunting, fishing and camping; it is also about having the Darwin Festival and the arts.

The arts not only pay off amazingly economically, as I keep pointing out, but it is good for the soul. It is good for us to bond, sit in the park and eat Hanuman and ask, 'What is that quirky music?', and have a circus guy walk past juggling and god knows whatever else. It is a wonderful atmosphere and a magical place to be at this time of the year. I digress; I should talk about other shows.

I saw Suhani Shah, the mentalist, whom many of you have seen. Honestly, it was terrifying the things that she could do. Some of my colleagues are nodding. I was in fear that she would pick me out and pick my brains for all my deepest, darkest secrets. It is truly astonishing the kind of things that can be deduced. It is impressive. I do not know anything magic and I think it is not fair to even call it magic; it is more mentalism, as she puts it. She is a rock star across the Indian subcontinent. To see this woman do what she was doing on the stage was impressive.

I am a patron of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, as many of you know. The Heaven and Earth program was wonderful, especially the world premiere of *Wuyal's Journey*, which was something that you do not get to see every day. It was a long time in the making. Netanela Mizrahi and Banula Marika's work in cooperation was a special thing that they shared. It is worth everyone looking into it rather than have me explaining it poorly, but the bottom line is that it is a truly amazing cross-cultural celebration of Indigenous song with our Darwin Symphony Orchestra. It was something to celebrate. Everyone was extremely moved by the whole thing. It was a privilege to be there.

I saved the best for last. I saw a show called *Duck Pond*, which is basically the ballet *Swan Lake* done by circus performers. I cannot tell you how spellbinding it was. The feats of strength and the things people could do are such that you feel embarrassed just sitting in your chair and think, 'I can barely get up and down and this person is suspending their body weight on one finger off a rope'. It was mind blowing. If you ever get the opportunity to see Circa, please do so because they are amazing.

My time is drawing to a close, so I cannot say terribly much more today. I wish I could speak about the Darwin Fringe Festival, which I had the pleasure to launch, representing Minister Boothby, on 11 July. Hopefully I can talk about that on another occasion. The 10<sup>th</sup> Darwin Fringe Festival, which was launched this year on World Fringe Day, is a special opportunity for local performers.

I am already looking forward to the 47<sup>th</sup> Darwin Festival, which will again be curated by Kate Fell. It will be held between 6 and 23 August 2026 and will be preceded by the 11<sup>th</sup> Darwin Fringe Festival. I urge all of you

to get involved next year if you did not get to them this year and enjoy the wonderful festivals of August that we have in Darwin.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak on a number of matters. First of all, Gerry (Geraldine) Crowhurst from the Palmerston 50+ Tuesday Club recently had her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Gerry is a foundational part of the 50+ Tuesday Club. She is a rock who is always at everything unless she is literally in the hospital. I always appreciate getting my smiles and hugs from Gerry when I come to visit. Happy birthday, Gerry. I hope you had a great one. I am sorry I missed the party today, but I was here in parliament. Congratulations on your 80<sup>th</sup>, aka 21 with a few years' experience.

An amazing thing that happened recently in my electorate was the Book Week assembly at Rosebery Primary School. Congratulations to Principal Danielle Banicek and Assistant Principal Natasha Nichols. A lot of hard work was done by parents and teachers to get kids in their costumes and to have all the costumes made, ready and delivered to the school. The teachers especially put in a lot of time to make costumes for the performance and put makeup on the kids. Having three boys, I can appreciate how much work that is. They did it first thing on a Friday morning before assembly, which is even more impressive.

We started the assembly with a dance from the Year 3/4 and 5/6 students. Having boys and knowing how hard it is to get them to do anything you want them to do, it was incredibly impressive. It was a fantastic dance. After that, all the students marched up and down showing off their costumes. At assembly all the classes sit in rows with a gap down the centre, so class by class they all hopped up and marched so that their parents could see them. It was great.

I asked the principal afterwards why there was no judging and awards for best costume. She said that it was much better this way. Honestly, I would hate to judge best costume at that assembly because there were so many fantastic costumes from all the kids. We had about three Spidermen, we had a Minecraft costume and many costumes that I tried to work out what they were; I think I am starting to show my age. Unfortunately, the teachers were invisible. I could not see any of them because they had all dressed up as Where's Wally, so no-one could find them. Well done, Rosebery Primary School, on a fantastic Book Week assembly.

On Monday 1 September I had the honour of attending the NRL NT Frank Johnson and Gaynor Maggs Medal Awards with my colleague the Member for Fannie Bay. This is a fantastic night when NRL NT honours its standout players, coaches, officials and teams from the season.

As a proud supporter of the Palmerston Raiders and the Northern Sharks, I must admit that the Litchfield Bears are working hard and building their club, and the results are there for all to see in their rankings on the ladder and their results on the night. Well done to President Em Burkitt and Vice President Luke 'Hoody' Mahood of the Bears. I think the Members for Nelson and Goyder would agree with me on that.

Congratulations to the Northern Sharks for a strong showing on the night and being well represented in the awards. This is a credit to club President Gordon Hounslow, the committee and all the coaches, players and volunteers.

Some of the award winners on the night were:

- Frank Johnson Medal—Matt Woolmington, Litchfield Bears
- Gaynor Maggs Medal—which I had the privilege to present—Erin Luchetti, Litchfield Bears
- Rising Star—Murray Fogg, Litchfield Bears
- Gatley Shield Player of the Year—Trey Crowley, Nightcliff Dragons
- Under 18s Player of the Year—Murray Fogg, Litchfield Bears; and George Rosas, South Darwin Rabbitohs
- Coach of the Year—Thomas Gunn, Northern Sharks
- NT News Player of the Year—Trent Wedding, Litchfield Bears
- 'No More' Representative Player of the Year—Jacinda Summers, Darwin Brothers, one of our fantastic real estate agents, I believe
- John 'Shadow' Mount Club Champion—Litchfield Bears.