



NORTHERN TERRITORY
***of* AUSTRALIA**

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Member for Fong Lim

HANSARD EXTRACT

CHRISTMAS SEASON MUSICAL EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2025

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The awards night was fantastic. I acknowledge volunteer NT committee members Hon Daryl Manzie, Chair; Spencer Harvey, Vice Chair; Lee Upton, Treasurer; Shannon Holborn, Secretary; Hon Joshua Burgoyne; Natasha Fyles; Bronwyn Haack; Belinda Howie; and Brigadier Douglas Pashley. I thank everyone involved for their ongoing commitment to our young people and this exceptional program.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, tomorrow I will thank people and reflect on the year gone by, but tonight I welcome to Bellamack the Koffee Deck which is a new cafe located between Ebony-Rose Hair Design and the Bell Bar at the corner of Forrest Parade and Chung Wah Terrace.

The Koffee Deck is the vision of Priya, who is a local Palmerston mum and was previously a teacher at Woodroffe Primary School. It is open 7 am till 1 pm Tuesday to Sunday and is fur baby friendly. Everyone in Palmerston and the surrounds, please come by and grab a coffee or drop in on your way to work to support the Koffee Deck; it is amazing.

I thank the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association Inc which recently had its AGM. Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association (PLSA) has been operating since 1997 and was originally established to provide morning tea and minor events for the seniors of Palmerston. Having become incorporated, its scope was expanded to include providing events for seniors of both Palmerston and Litchfield. The association is supported by the City of Palmerston, Litchfield Council and many other sponsors. The PLSA is a fixture of the Palmerston seniors' landscape and hosts regular morning teas in Palmerston and the rural area. It also organises the annual Seniors Fortnight during Seniors Month.

The Palmerston members regularly contribute towards the association's raffles which are well attended and well received.

At the AGM, the patron, Natalie La Pira, continued; thank you, Natalie. The new president for this year is Neville Driver. I thank Marg Lee for her service as President of the PLSA. The vice president is Janette Ashby; secretary, Valerie Wilkie; treasurer, Sheryl Sephton; and public officer, Neville Driver. I make special mention of Neville Driver, who is an efficient organiser, drives a hard bargain and gets the best for the PLSA out of all and sundry.

The general committee members are Glenda Bradbury; Christine Cardow; Geraldine (Gerry) Crowhurst; Maryke Lawton; Helen Lemcke; Gillian Marnell; Barbara Murray; Glenda Reid; Jennifer Segav; and Diane (Di) Spicer.

At the AGM several people were recognised for their distinguished service and given various awards. Gerry Crowhurst received the 10-year service award. Gerry, we thank you for your service and for all you have done for the PLSA.

Recognised with life membership were immediate past president, Marg Lee, who has been a staple of the PLSA and various seniors' groups around Palmerston. Thank you for your service, Marg. Also recognised for life membership were Sheryl Sephton and Janette Ashby. Thank you to everyone involved with the PLSA and the committee for all your hard work.

I honour the Palmerston Cricket Club in the suburb of Woodroffe in my electorate, which recently held its annual general meeting. The 2026 committee has continuity and renewal, with new faces and familiar faces. I am pleased to welcome new committee members Hamish Martin; Tamika O'Brien; Laura Ryan; Dale Edwards; and Justine Edwards. I give a big thank you to the returning members for their continued commitment, Adrian Gallagher; Glen Chatto; Luke McMahon; Daniel Fett; Joel Carter; Briony Gallagher; Sarah Fowler; Brendan Rudd; Anthony Schuppan; and Mel Osborne. I also thank the outgoing committee members for their contributions over the past year.

The president is Adrian Gallagher; vice president, Glen Chatto; treasurer, Luke McMahon; assistant treasurer, Daniel Fett; secretary, Joel Carter; junior coordinator, Briony Gallagher; men's player represent, Hamish Martin; women's player represent, Sarah Fowler; social media manager, Tamika O'Brien; maintenance team, Brendan Rudd, Varinder Kumar and Anthony Schuppan; and general members, Mel Osborne, Laura Ryan, Dale Edwards and Justine Edwards.

Well done to the Palmerston Cricket Club. I look forward to another great season at Woodroffe Oval.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, this time last year I reflected on the festive note of the Treasurer's midyear report and I made a promise that I would turn up here in a Santa suit if I could report on

positive economic metrics, and I wanted to 100% stick to that promise, but, alas, it will have to wait until the new year because the Treasurer has decided to defer that until the new year.

However, it gives me the opportunity to speak about my other great love, which is music. I reflect briefly on the fact that whilst Christmas is a time for all of us to unwind to a large extent, for a lot of performers and entertainers it is a busy time of the year. They are working, sharing and providing the backdrop to Christmas for the rest of us to enjoy the festive season.

For most of us a lot of it starts with the Christmas Pageant, which happened on 15 November and went through the city. It was a wonderful event with a magnificent atmosphere. It was good to see so many people out there and the lighting of the tree. It is a unique and special event. Having a Christmas Pageant when it is that hot and sweaty makes you feel at home—Christmas in the tropics.

That is where it starts for a lot of people, but for me, I must confess, my Christmas season now is starting to become synonymous with the Stuart Park Primary music assembly. It is fast becoming the most important fixture in my musical calendar. It was such a pleasure again today to go and join the junior and the senior school band and play along with the mighty trombone section. We put on a stirring performance of favourites like *Tequila*, *Eye of the Tiger* and *Funky Town* as well as *Jingle Bells* and a range of others. Honestly, I cannot tell you how much joy it brings to me.

Maria Albion runs a fantastic school at Stuart Park Primary. Sylvia Siskamanis also does stellar work. Alastair Marshall runs the choir, and it is a wonderful choir to listen to. I could not have thought of anywhere better to be at lunchtime today. There was a huge mass choir, a beautiful guitar ensemble, a fantastic percussion ensemble and the junior and senior bands. They were ably supported by the Northern Territory Music School, which does not get enough recognition, in my opinion, for all the hard work it does across our schooling system.

To Tim Sinclair, Genevieve Meahan and Natalie Chin, who conducted all those ensembles, well done for all your hard work. It was wonderful. I note that Natalie is retiring at the end of this year. She seems far too young to be retiring, and she will be sorely missed. I know she will still be a fixture of the music scene of the Northern Territory.

As I have said before, Stuart Park is a wonderful school and preschool. My favourite moment of the year, other than the music assembly, was the Preschool Wheel-a-Thon. I love that the school is invested in professional development and has a great and active council, longstanding dedicated staff and consistent numbers. It is a melting pot of a school with a diverse student cohort. The staff of 40-plus people are committed to all the right things—literacy, numeracy and explicit teaching—which is the foundation for them to provide great extracurricular opportunities for the kids, like the music program.

I am delighted to spend a bit of my time still being a music teacher on the side. I can honestly say, hand on heart, to everyone in the Stuart Park Primary School community, thank you so much for sharing your community with me. It has been the joy and the highlight of my current job, without a shadow of a doubt.

Another organisation I am constantly grateful for, which I think all of us should be grateful for, is the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. I mention it regularly because I never want us to forget what an important fixture the orchestra is in our landscape, providing opportunity and helping us to grow a vibrant community.

On 19 November it was lovely to be at the orchestra's 2026 program launch to hear about all the concerts it has coming up next year. There will be about a half dozen of them in March, May, June, August and October through to December, looking at virtuosity and imagination; island songs; the movie hit stuff it does; Shakespeare and symphony, with poetry, loss and love; the Palmerston Classics; the Family Proms; Mozart and more; and music for curious young minds. It is wonderful to see young kids interact with the orchestra, as I saw recently in Palmerston. Towards the end of the year, the orchestra always has a Songs of the Season moment, when the rain comes, the frogs start singing, the voices soar and joy abounds.

If you cannot wait until next year, 6 December is this year's final Darwin Symphony Orchestra concert, *Symphony of the Soul*. It is a farewell full of heart and soul. Tchaikovsky's quote was, 'Without exaggeration, I put my whole soul into this', being his sixth symphony, and that is what the orchestra will play. The concert is also a farewell to artistic director and chief conductor Jonathan Tooby, who has poured his soul into the orchestra for the last seven years. He has done a wonderful service.

I am grateful to the Chair, Claire Kilgariff, for keeping me in the loop with the orchestra, and Dr Richard Mills, who is the new artistic director. It is a great coup that we have secured someone of his stature to be involved with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. Of course, I wish Jonathan Tooby the best with his future endeavours.

Another taken-for-granted fixture of our calendar is Carols by Candlelight in the Amphitheatre. This year is its 50th anniversary. Think about it: that is a long time it has been running. I encourage you all to go there. It is a wonderful event.

On 7 December there will be a 50-strong choir, 18 soloists and the Band of the 1st Brigade of the Australian Army, plus dozens of volunteers. The Darwin Chorale forms the backbone of that choir and does not get a lot of credit for it, but its members do amazing work. I have been to recent rehearsals at Robertson Barracks and everyone is working hard. It will be a fantastic event. Come for the food, festivity and fun, sing along and watch the fantastic fireworks.

It would be remiss not to mention specifically Nora Lewis, who is now Dr Nora Lewis AM, having been recently awarded an honorary doctorate from Charles Darwin University for all of her services to music, as well as Captain Natalie Dajski, leader of the 1st Brigade band, who is putting in huge amounts of effort making sure it will be a great family fun show for everyone.

Remember it also raises a tonne of money for Variety, so go out there. I think this year it is themed as the Golden Oldies concert. All the people who are on the soloists' register had to be long-term Territorians to get on the roster, so if you want to see some old famous names and faces of Darwin celebrity music, they will all be on stage. I would name drop them all, but I know I would miss a couple. Come out for that.

If you are looking for something a bit different, on 13 December there is the Navy Band, which is growing and we are seeing an expanded presence playing in lots of functions, including in Parliament House where we are seeing it all the time now as well. At my beloved Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Association (the Dinah Beach Yacht Club) the Patron and the Noteheads are putting on jazz carols. It is an opportunity to kick back and enjoy a tropical Christmas. That will be a great atmosphere as well.

Well done to everybody at Dinah Beach for not just battening down the hatches, but rebuilding the place off the back of the cyclone the other day. There were a few different things to contend with in the aftermath of it, and the carols will be a great opportunity for all of us to celebrate together. I warmly encourage and invite everybody in the House to come along if you fancy some of those famous chicken wings alongside a few Michael Buble Christmas tunes.

If you are looking for something a little more conventional, the Arafura Wind Ensemble every year, close to Christmas, puts on its annual Salvation Army Carols by the Lawn at the church hall on Yanyula Drive and Lee Point Road. It is conducted by the indefatigable Stephen Pevely, who has been on the Darwin music scene forever and a day. He is a phenomenal clarinettist, wonderful conductor and generous individual. It is a great community event.

The band has become a pivotal part of the event's success. Along with the carols, there are always classic Christmas selections performed by the AWE. It is a fun festive gig close to Christmas Day. Those of you who cannot get away somewhere exotic and still want to sing Christmas carols and be surrounded by a bunch of people lighting candles in 35-degree heat and humidity, which will likely extinguish your candle, come along because it will be a fun time and a wonderful place to celebrate Christmas together.

I will not say an exhaustive list of thankyou's. I simply want to say to everybody in this place, my colleagues, the staff, all the people who keep the building operational and the people who I probably appreciate the most, Hansard—who put up with how fast I speak and all the things that I say—thank you so much to everybody for facilitating and enabling the work that we do in this place. To all my colleagues, I honestly wish you all a safe and restful Christmas break. I hope that we all, God willing, have a positive and prosperous year ahead.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I pay special tribute to Mr Ken Simmons who tragically and sadly passed away on Sunday 16 November 2025.

Ken was dear to me. He was in his late seventies. I first met him when I got to know his daughter, Bridget, and her family, Dean and her two boys, Lucas and James. Ken was Bridget's dad and I met them during the campaign before I was elected. Straightaway we got on well and he told me how he used to deliver the phonebooks around the suburbs. He said to me, 'If you ever need any help delivering any of your flyers, let me know', so I took that opportunity. He started to deliver newsletters for me, more than five years ago, for the electorate of Brennan.

He passed away only a couple of weeks ago. It was a sad time. His daughter, Bridget, was by his side the whole time. It all happened quickly.