NORTHERN TERRITORY
of AUSTRALIA

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Member for Fong Lim

HANSARD EXTRACT

COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

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call the clinic or 000 to get assistance. It is a real serious concern, and it is breach of basic human rights that we should have no matter where we live.

I am calling on the Northern Territory Government and Telstra to get together and come up with a contingency plan for Wadeye. Wadeye is one of the largest Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, and we should not be seeing telecommunication power outages in a community such as this. It is not good enough. It is having an impact on staff at the clinic, operations at Thamarrurr Development Corporation and people's welfare when they are having to travel to put in their work hours as they cannot put them in online.

I am calling on the Northern Territory Government to get together with Telstra and work through options. They could set up more Starlink so there is some sort of telecommunications for the residents of Wadeye. I understand the issues; I have spoken to the Telstra NT General Manager himself. We know a flooding event is happening across the West Daly region. The power system in Palumpa is flooded, and that affects the line to Wadeye.

We need to come up with another solution for a community as large as Wadeye. It is a similar size to Tennant Creek. Imagine if Tennant Creek had been out for two or three weeks. This is the second time it has happened in a matter of a couple of months.

There were many people at the St Mary's versus Nightcliff NTFL grand final last Saturday night. I want to give a special shout-out to the AFLNT team, who I spoke to earlier this week; they donated 500 tickets for people affected by the floods, including evacuated Palumpa and Daly River residents. People from those communities were thrilled to have some peace of mind and enjoyed the footy without worry or anxiety about what was happening back in their community.

I went to the footy on Saturday night and saw several members from across the Chamber. It was an excellent night. It was wonderful to see families from Daly River and Palumpa enjoying the night at footy, and you could see that they were not stressed at all; they were just enjoying the footy like everyone else, and it was a relief to take their minds off the flooding event occurring in their community. I give a huge shout-out to AFLNT for donating those 500 tickets.

I also give a shout-out to the welfare team at Foskey Pavilion and Marrara for helping to coordinate how people would get to the game. Buses were organised for people from Foskey Pavilion who were staying out at the Darwin Showgrounds, to bring people in and to get them home safely.

I give a huge thank you to AFLNT, and I look forward to working with you on such initiatives in the future.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I honour the Country Women's Association of the Northern Territory. A lot of people do not know what it does and still think that it is an organisation largely about tea and scones, but it is a lot more than that.

The objectives and governance of the CWA seek to improve the conditions of life for women and families in the NT, provide community services, participate in and support our town and district schemes for cultural and welfare projects and, moreover, to be non-party-political, non-sectarian and a not-for-profit organisation.

Particularly in our rural and remote communities, the CWA has sought to improve the welfare and circumstances of women and children by bringing people together, improving their lives and providing better educational opportunities. It seeks to reduce the drift of population to cities by improving health, education and communication services in the outback.

The first branch of the CWA in the Northern Territory goes back a long way to 1930 at Rankin River. The Darwin branch was established later in 1937, with the CWA of the Northern Territory being established in 1960. Before 1960 the branches that used to exist in the lower part of the Territory were formed under the CWA Association of South Australia, and those in the Top End were formed under the CWA of Queensland.

We had previous branches across the Territory in Batchelor, Mount Bundy, Jabiru, Pine Creek, Victoria River Downs, Elliott, Warrego, Ali Curung and even in Amoonguna. Now in 2026, there are still six branches left, and they are in Alice Springs, Darwin, Groote Eylandt, Litchfield, Katherine and Tennant Creek. The Tennant Creek branch will celebrate its 90th anniversary this year, and I am reliably informed by the Member for Barkly that it is the repository of fantastic arts and crafts, which is all headquartered safely in the Tennant Creek offices.

The actual headquarters of the CWA these days is in Fong Lim, in Bishop Street, Woolner. It has a lovely building there. What does the CWA do in that building? Quite a lot and quite charitable work. In line with its objectives, it fundraises and donates back to the community to support a lot of like-minded organisations. Many of you in this room have talked organisations and enterprises that the CWA raises money for, such as Aged Care secret Santa; Alzheimer's Association; Aunty's Free Feeds; CareFlight; Darwin hospice; Darwin Youth Services; Dawn House; Foodbank; Days For Girls; Doctors Without Borders; Down Syndrome Association NT; Freds Pass Rural Show; McGrath Foundation; playgroups; Australian Red Cross; Royal Darwin Show; Royal Flying Doctor Service; Ruby Gaea Darwin Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc; and many sporting organisations.

Some of us are familiar with the fundraising activities of the CWA which include things like market stalls selling jams and preserves; craft fairs; high teas; raffles; and other stalls at shows across the Territory. Many items are sold to fundraise and many of them are handmade by members through knitting, crocheting, sewing and other methods. There is also catering prepared by CWA members themselves.

Still, a lot of the CWA's work is donated. Some of its creations such as knee blankets, teddy bears, beanies and booties for premature babies are donated to hospitals on a regular basis.

The CWA also functions as a learning centre; it is not just about jams and preserves. It has a program where it looks at countries to study, and this year CWA is looking at Denmark. Its members are learning Danish embroidery and pickles, amongst other things. It is about cultural education and the promotion of cross-cultural exchange.

It was my enormous privilege to be invited recently, along with the Member for Fannie Bay, to a special event at the CWA NT offices in Fong Lim—a high tea featuring as the guest of honour the Governor-General, Her Excellency Sam Mostyn AC. It was a beautiful event. The Governor-General looked at the quilts and crochet poppies being created for remembrance of war and animals that died at war.

We all got to take a look at the 'Territory Icons in Thread' project, which CWA members have been working on in partnership with women in remote communities for some time. It culminated in the Governor-General being gifted a CWA history book from the NT which, as a neat segue to its country of study being Denmark this year, the CWA was able to gift to the Danish royals recently down south. I thought that was a nice touch.

My gratitude goes to the outgoing president, Judy Anictomatis OAM, for inviting me to that special event.

I also point out one special person who was there that day, Nancy Fuchs. She is the oldest member of the CWA in Darwin; she is 96 years old. She is so special to me because Nancy Fuchs and her husband, Peter Fuchs, were the reason my family ended up in Australia in 1971. Her husband, Peter Fuchs, was the Swiss Consul-General and an engineer and hydrologist who befriended my grandfather when he came here to work on the Snowy Mountains. After war broke out in Bangladesh, they were kind enough to take in my grandparents and their three kids, the eldest of whom was my mum. To this day we have maintained a connection with the Fuchs family. It was wonderful to see Nancy there alongside her daughters, Jackie and Ann.

Sadly, Nancy had a fall just after that event and is currently at RDH with a broken leg, so I wish her all the best. I hope you got the flowers; I shall see you sometime soon at Pearl.

There is a serious social advocacy side to the Country Women's Association; it focuses on issues facing women and families across the Territory. With that in mind, it was my privilege to be a small part of the CWA International Women's Day 2026 event, 'Balance the Scales', where it raised $6,000 for Top End Women's Legal Service, a noble cause. I was pleased to make a modest contribution to allow a table of women from Fong Lim to attend that event, who maybe otherwise would not have been able to make it.

I am grateful to Rachael Shanahan who invited me to collaborate on that event with her. We planned to hold it in my electorate office like last year, but it was too big an event and, ultimately, it got much nicer digs. I also congratulate Rachael on having recently been elected the new incoming president of the CWA NT. She will do a fantastic job and is a wonderful person in her own right.

The CWA is about a lot more than tea and scones; it is prudent to remember that. That tagline appears on its own website in jest, but as the 90-plus guests who attended the International Women's Day event on 8 March 2026 learnt from the speakers that day, the CWA continues—usually quietly and without fuss—to keep supporting women and families in the Territory. CWA members are, no doubt, doing work to help people through floods and weather events as well. I am simply not aware of the work yet, or I would call it out directly.

That is the kind of organisation it is and the work it does in earnest. The CWA does serious work, not just pickles, preserves and tea.

The Darwin branch helped families in 1930 when the Channel Island Leprosarium was up and running to look after people who would otherwise not be looked after. It is a noble organisation. In the words of Dr Valerie Asche AM, a former CWA NT patron and later president, 'Everywhere, the organisation has made lives brighter and better. It has reached out a compassionate, gentle and practical hand to help give where it has been needed. It has made Australia a better place by constantly using its influence and its resources to argue for improved conditions of life.'

Long may the CWA Northern Territory branch continue its fine work.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister and I attended two different events, one at Zuccoli Primary School and one at the Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School. Both are in Zuccoli, which was split in the last election. It used to be the Chief Minister's electorate, but after the last election it became half the Chief Minister's and half my electorate. We both have the opportunity to go to those local schools in Zuccoli; they are wonderful schools.

On 25 March we attended the Mother Teresa school and addressed about 20 students who are all school leaders, from grades four through to six. We had a wonderful morning tea and discussion about being leaders at school and in their community.

I feel like I warmed the kids up a little by asking a lot of questions because they then asked me a lot of questions. Then the Chief Minister came in, really pumped them up and gave them a good rah-rah talk. She is a great leader so the kids of Mother Teresa were happy about that.

Then we went to Zuccoli Primary School. It was a different setup; they had tables sprawled across a classroom with many children. They were the same ages though, from about year four to year six. They peppered us with a lot of really hard questions, which was fantastic. We were both able to tag team and talk about what it is like to be a leader.

Both of those schools and their students show we have some wonderful leaders in our future. The Territory looks bright having them there doing what they do, not only for their school but their whole school community as well.

Recently, the Rosebery Primary School held its AGM, and I congratulate the new committee for 2026. The committee will be doing a lot of hard work for the Rosebery Primary School. They are Terrance Kong, the Chairperson, a parent; Kim Goodwin, the Treasurer, a parent; Penny Seamer, the Secretary, a parent; Sofia Wilson, a parent member; Meigan Cunningham, a teacher; Megan Grant, a teacher; and Danielle Banicek, the principal.

The Member for Blain and I have attended many Rosebery Primary School councils over our time. We still like to get there when we can, but sometimes they are on during sittings which makes it tricky. We know how much work that school council does for the children of Rosebery Primary. They are a dedicated group, often involved in lots of things like school fundraisers and running the canteen. We are often there helping them out at barbecues and colour fun runs.

A couple of years ago they even slimed me, which was revolting. Only recently, they dunked the Member for Blain in the water, which was a lot of fun. That was all thanks to the school council. They really have a lot of fun at the same time as doing the important work.

It takes dedication to be on the school council; there are a lot of responsibilities and you receive training. Those parents, teachers and everybody involved over the year do a fantastic job. Good luck in 2026 to those on that Rosebery Primary council. I wish them all the best.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, it has been a huge week for sittings, and we are down five days out of the six for the March sittings.

I forewarn the CLP government that I will have a lot of questions. I want to work constructively on the pre-planning for weather events and the anticipated cyclone approaching the gulf. The current tracking on the map is directly across many of my communities in the Arnhem electorate.