

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 22 March 2023

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory urges the Northern Territory Government to work on solutions to prevent and address the causes of violent crime

APO NT and its member organisations acknowledge the tragic passing of a 20-year-old employee of the Airport Tavern BWS store in Jingili on Sunday night. We send our sincere condolences to the family and friends of the young man, and repeat the strong messages that have come from leadership and community across the Northern Territory: **we condemn all violence against anyone, anywhere.**

We at APO NT commit to working with the broader NT community and decision makers to ensure this never happens again. However, we urge the Government to avoid knee jerk reactions and rushed reform.

“We know the impact that hastily applied bail reform can have. It happened here in the Territory in 2021 when bail law reform for young people occurred, and yet we didn’t see any reductions to offending,” said Dr John Paterson, acting CEO of NAAJA. “We at APO NT call for a calm and measured response- one that is well considered and based on evidence- to ensure community safety across the Territory.”

“We know law reform as proposed by the Chief Minister this morning will disproportionately impact Aboriginal people. We urge the Northern Territory Government to work with Aboriginal leaders and communities to address the systemic and broader causes of this serious incident and build together long-lasting, high-impact solutions,” said Nick Espie, Principal Legal Officer, NAAJA.

“We know what is needed in the NT to enable safer communities- the expansion of appropriate bail support services across the NT, and investment in programs that address problem behaviour and cycles of reoffending. We need to invest in mediation and conflict resolution programs, as well as alcohol support and rehabilitation programs.” said Mr Espie.

“We understand the community sentiment of anger and anguish. And rightly so. But quick fixes will not, and cannot, prevent crime. And filling up jails is not the answer,” said Dr Paterson.

“Aboriginal communities already have the solutions, but not the funding and resources to proactively address these issues. Our leaders are seeking to partner with the Northern Territory Government to share decision making on a path forward that improves community safety for all Territorians,” said Dr John Paterson.

“The outcomes we want to see can be achieved. So, we’re asking all levels of government to honour their commitments to the NT community, and work with us to prevent and address the causes of violent crime,” said Mr Espie.

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About APO NT: The Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory is a formal alliance that, through its membership, represents the majority of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The alliance was formed to provide a more effective response to key issues of joint interest and concern affecting Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, including working in genuine partnership with governments to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians. The alliance comprises the Aboriginal Medical Service Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), Central Land Council (CLC), Northern Land Council (NLC), Tiwi Land Council (TLC), Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC), Aboriginal Housing NT (AHNT) and the Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network (NT IBN).

MEDIA: Interviews with spokespeople can be organised by contacting Seranie Gamble, APO NT manager, 0473 423 806