# Inquiry into how the corporate sector establishes models of best practice to foster better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS), Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) and Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) thanks the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs for the opportunity to provide input to the *Inquiry into how the corporate sector establishes models of best practice to foster better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers.*

This joint submission from our four organisations outlines a recent case study of corporate sector behaviour that demonstrates disregard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the lack of corporate responsibility for the many harms created by selling alcohol.

The case study is situated in the context of ongoing historical tension between corporate profit- seeking, government policies aimed at supporting business, and the health and welfare of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (NT). For many decades, Aboriginal communities and their leaders across the NT have repeatedly resisted attempts by the alcohol industry to make inroads into their lives. At times, they have lost these battles in spectacular fashion, though in the long run the outcome has been that many communities across the NT are today ‘dry’ by their own decision. In the NT today, the proliferation of dry Aboriginal communities is part of the landscape, and an appreciation of that context is crucial.

For almost five years, Woolworths Group (and their alcohol retail arm Endeavour, which is now its own standalone company) relentlessly fought to build what would have been one of Australia’s largest liquor stores, an 1800-square-metre Dan Murphy’s, on the doorstep of Bagot community, a dry Aboriginal community in Darwin. In April 2021, Woolworths Group abandoned the proposed development due to sustained criticism and community opposition.

The development was opposed by the Bagot Community, members of the public, and organisations including NTCOSS, DDHS, AMSANT, FARE, the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT), Public Health Association of Australia NT Branch (PHAANT) and Association of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies NT (AADANT).

As this submission outlines, Woolworths Group (including Endeavour) continually pushed for their Dan Murphy’s application to be approved, despite strong opposition, including from First Nations people and organisations who have been working to create stronger, healthier and more resilient communities. At the core of this problem was a failure by Woolworths Group to meaningfully engage with the local community, particularly Aboriginal communities near the proposed location of the development.

Woolworths Group and Endeavour’s engagement throughout the application process was narrow and self-serving, focussing on securing liquor license approval, which ultimately disempowered Aboriginal people, their organisations and their leadership. Corporations must go much further, ensuring their engagement contributes to the empowerment, recognition and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

[open submission as pdf](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Joint-submission-Inquiry-into-corporate-engagement-with-First-Nations-people-FARE-AMSANT-DDHS-NTCOSS.pdf)