

LANDMARK REPORT HIGHLIGHTS FAILURES BY WOOLWORTHS AND SHOWS NEED FOR REFORM

9 June 2021: The full report by the Woolworths-appointed panel, led by Danny Gilbert AM, into the company's now abandoned plan to build an alcohol megastore in Darwin, was released today.

The report highlights what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, health and community organisations and leaders have been saying for many years – that Woolworths failed to meet community expectations on consultation, that they did not consider the social and public impacts of the proposed development, and that they lobbied Government for law changes that led to fair processes being ignored.

The landmark report has implications for corporations, highlighting the need to acknowledge and reduce the harms caused by alcoholic products and for governments across Australia to consider the real impacts of alcohol harm on people, families and communities.

The review was finally carried out after almost five years of community opposition to the 1800-square-metre Dan Murphy's in Darwin, near the dry community of Bagot.

Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS), Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), the Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS), and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) said that the report provides a unique opportunity for governments to set a higher community standard for alcohol harm reduction across the country so that communities are protected.

AMSANT CEO John Paterson said the report shows that the Dan Murphy's megastore would have inflicted immense harm on the Darwin community and should never have been pursued in the first place.

"For years we called on Woolworths and Endeavour to listen to our concerns and to hear our voices about the harm our communities experience from alcoholic products every day. The review found that Woolworths and Endeavour failed to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities. We were persistently ignored," Mr Paterson said.

"This landmark report points to the unconscionable conduct of Woolworths in pursuing this store in the face of large community opposition and the way in which the Northern Territory (NT) Government facilitated this. This report also shows that governments must do more to stop corporations from being able to pursue decisions that put profits ahead of community health and wellbeing," DDHS CEO Olga Havnen said.

"The NT Government now needs to re-commit to reducing alcohol harms and improving the health and wellbeing of Territorians together with health, social services, disability and justice organisations," NTCOSS CEO Deborah Di Natale said.



“The behaviours described in the report of prioritising commercial interests ahead of public interest, ignoring the harm that will be caused by the store, not considering the considerable social impact and insufficient consultation – reflect a pattern of behaviour from Endeavour and other alcohol retailers across Australia,” FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi said.

Ms Giorgi also said that governments need to have robust systems in place to reduce alcohol harms in the community instead of allowing corporate interests to impact decisions.

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