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Community leaders call for Woolworths Directors to abandon plans for Dan Murphy's superstore

12 November 2020: Today community leaders and organisations have released an open letter calling on the Woolworths Board to stop its plans to build one of Australia's biggest Dan Murphy's within walking distance of three dry Aboriginal communities.

This coincides with Woolworths' Annual General Meeting (AGM) today where the issue will be raised with Directors.

Signatories of the open letter include: Pat Turner, CEO, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO); John Paterson, CEO, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT); Olga Havnen, Chief Executive Officer, Danila Dilba Health Service; Thomas Mayor, National Indigenous Officer, Maritime Union of Australia NT and Deborah Di Natale, CEO, Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS).

This week the Northern Territory (NT) Government introduced legislation that will fast track the bottle shop application, despite the Liquor Commission rejecting the application because of the harm it will cause local communities.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community organisations have made it clear that we don't want Woolworths here, pushing their cheap grog on our people.

"The absolute hypocrisy of Woolworths taking this action, while being a partner of NAIDOC Week, is almost unbelievable.

"Corporations do not make decisions, people make decisions and Directors need to face up to the impact this will have on the lives of children and families," said John Paterson, CEO, AMSANT.

"Woolworths has been fighting for five years to build this alcohol superstore despite knowing the harm it will cause.

"By ignoring the community's voice and the clear advice from the Independent Liquor Commission, Woolworths Directors are shamelessly putting their profits ahead of the health and wellbeing of the community," said Caterina Giorgi, CEO of the Foundation of Alcohol Research and Education (FARE).

FARE will take the open letter to Woolworths' AGM and seek to ask the following question:

"Today we're bringing you an open letter from community, health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations asking you to put aside the ill-considered and harmful plan to build one of the biggest bottle shops in the country in Darwin within walking distance of three dry Aboriginal communities. The Independent Liquor Commission rejected your application because of the harm it will cause. Will you abandon your plans to build this Dan Murphy's?"

The NT Government has a five-year moratorium on new liquor licences. To get around that law Woolworths applied to transfer the licence of a small BWS store near the centre of Darwin, to the proposed Dan Murphy's, which if built will be 48 times the size.

The NT Liquor Commission emphatically refused Woolworths' application. Woolworths then lost its appeal in the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Despite a clear decision by the Independent Liquor Commission that this store should not go ahead, Woolworths continues to pursue this project. Now the NT Government is again introducing special legislation to keep alive Woolworth's bid.

"Woolworths is wielding its enormous corporate power to get what it wants at the expense of people in Darwin who are at their most vulnerable.

"We're now calling on Woolworths Directors to take seriously their corporate social responsibility and abandon their plans to build one of Australia's biggest bottle shops in Darwin," said Deborah Di Natale, CEO, NTCOSS.

The open letter follows more than 100,000 Australians signing a [change.org](https://www.change.org) petition earlier this year, opposing the Darwin Dan Murphy's.

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