CYCLONE DEVASTATION

Cyclone Marcus certainly made an impact as it made its way across the Top End. The number of trees that brought down powerlines causing widespread black-outs was phenomenal. Despite the damage and significant clean up in the aftermath, it is in times like these that the true spirit of the Territory shines through.

Neighbours helping each other and strangers stopping to help their fellow Territorians in their time of need was great to see. Thank you to all emergency and frontline workers, volunteers, telecommunication technicians, local businesses and especially Power and Water employees who have worked tirelessly to keep Territorians safe.

Though some residents were without power for a number of days and many properties have significant damage, we are fortunate Cyclone Marcus was only a Category 2 cyclone.

It is a timely reminder to us all that we should never become complacent and the constant reminders about being cyclone ready by having our cyclone kits cannot be underestimated.

Message from Gary

I was saddened to hear of another great loss for the Wadeye community in the passing of Mr Perdjert. Mr Perdjert only retired last year after many years as one of Wadeye’s Aboriginal Liaison Officers and was recognised for his commitment to his community with a Policing Excellence Medal.

Another loss in the electorate was the passing of well known Adelaide River identity Jock Gilmartin. Jock owned and ran the Adelaide River Store with his wife Rita for decades. Jock was a JP and was a generous contributor to the Adelaide River Community.

Floods, telecommunications, roads, heritage sites and tourism opportunities have kept the electorate office a hive of activity and I’m pleased to have made some progress on a range of issues as summaried later in this newsletter.

A reminder that Rhonda is happy to visit patients who find themselves in hospital. If you find yourself in this situation and would like a visit, please let my office know.

As Opposition Leader, the safety of Territorians, the cost of living in a declining economy and attracting people to holiday and stay in the Territory have been key topics so far this year.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and interesting. As always I welcome your feedback and ideas. My door is always open!

Gary
UNDERGROUNDING POWER COULD BE THE LABOUR FORCE THE TERRITORY NEEDS

Exploring the acceleration of a staged program to underground powerlines could provide the Territory with vital employment opportunities and capital works.

The ABS Labour Force Report shows a drop of 5,000 less people employed in the NT (full-time) compared with the same time last year.

In the wake of protracted power outages across the Top End, many people have echoed my calls for government to prioritise the undergrounding of power lines, a CLP vision that dated back to undergrounding work in Larrakeyah in 1979.

It is time to underground powerlines, not underground a carpark in the CBD.

LIQUOR LAWS AND BOATING

The Opposition has listened to Territorians. Territorians are not happy with the proposed 0.05 restrictions for boating, fishing is part of our lifestyle and fishos have told us they feel they are being unfairly targeted. We oppose the recommendation.

There is not enough evidence to support this recommendation and we believe there are more pressing issues that should be the priority for the government to implement in the Riley Review. This includes immediate recruitment and appointment of Liquor Licensing Inspectors.

Until we see more convincing evidence we oppose the recommendation. Boat safety is not part of the Liquor review it is a separate issue, and is not included in the Liquor Act and will not be part of the government’s rewrite of the Act.

Implementing this recommendation would mean an increased workload for Police, who are already dealing with stretched resources.

We do not need more regulation, we need immediate measures to fix the alcohol harm in the Territory. Some examples include:

- Enforce laws we already have (paperless arrest and the 2KM rule, for example)
- Improve treatment facilities (this government has cut $8 million from the last budget to Alcohol and Other Drugs funding)
- Sobering up shelters

TOURISM SPEND MUST CONVERT TO VISITATION

Tourism is a vital contributor to our Territory economy, creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs and creating opportunities for many Territory businesses.

Tourism should be a focus of government, as it aims to stimulate the economy and drive private investment. However, as with all marketing spend, it is paramount there is a significant evaluation undertaken to understand what has worked previously and that any new dollars will be spent wisely with significant returns on investment.

The devil is in the detail of this plan and the Opposition looks forward to seeing the comprehensive plans the government has put together.

In short, this recently announced spend must convert to people visiting, and spending money in the Territory.

CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS COULD OFFER OPPORTUNITIES

Increased crime in the Northern Territory and a high rate of disadvantage and recidivism should be the catalyst for increasing programs to provide skill building opportunities.

Cutting budgets to programs offered in correctional facilities is counterproductive.

Programs such as Sentenced to a Job, which provided people real and meaningful skills should be increased, not cut.

Approximately 85 per cent of prisoners in the Northern Territory are Aboriginal.

Training is an enabler, it would drive the generational change this government talks so much about, as well as providing positive role models and allow further opportunity for Indigenous people to be part of the community and contribute to our economy.

Upskilling should be run alongside additional counselling and support programs so we see less people returning to jail. Education and support is a key factor in closing the gap.
DALY RIVER FLOODS

The recent floods at Daly River and surrounding communities reiterates the importance of the government ensuring locals are equipped with appropriate facilities and processes in place.

At Daly River, there is no facility for evacuation, so locals must come into Darwin, leaving their homes and pets behind.

A new school building, promised and budgeted for under the previous CLP government and the unsuccessful Labor Daly candidate, would double as an evacuation point for the township. Pictured is a Schematic Master Plan image showing the community evacuation space that was planned.

If the Labor Government was truly listening to the local Nauiyu community funds would have already been allocated for this important education and safety facility.

It is paramount that all emergency services, including Police, are resourced as a priority, to ensure that they can help keep Territorians safe and as informed as possible, particularly in events such as this.

Photo courtesy NT Police

DARWIN RIVER ROAD

A long standing dispute between the Northern Territory Government and the Litchfield Council has finally been resolved with the NT Government finally conceding the Old Darwin River Road (service road) belongs to them.

With only a handful of residents who live and access the service road it probably doesn’t mean much to most people but for those who live there, the stand-off meant no repairs to the road or maintenance of the road verges.

I am pleased that this matter has finally been resolved!
Thank you to Hon Nicole Manison, the responsible Minister who quickly ordered the repairs to the road and scheduling of verge maintenance as soon as the ownership was clarified.

And still on Darwin River Road, it was brought to my attention that the depth indicators at the Darwin River Bridge had been absent for close to 4 years!
This is being fixed and I’m sure by the time you receive this newsletter new indicators will be installed.

This is a dangerous crossing that very quickly covers the road, another thank you to the Minister for her department’s quick action to rectify this.

Do you have a child under 5?
Royal Life Saving NT are providing a FREE KEEP WATCH Community Morning Tea in my electorate office

Wednesday 11th April from 10am to 11am

Come along to meet the staff from RLSNT

I hope to see you there!
**TELECOMMUNICATIONS NIGHTMARE**

Prior to Cyclone Marcus, many residents in the Darwin River area have had frustratingly slow internet speeds and landline drop-outs - some since October last year. I have been working with Telstra and NBN to get to the bottom of this issue.

Ants in the lines have caused some of the issues but has not resolved the problem for many residents.

“...the speed capabilities on the Darwin River Tower look pretty good...”
NBN fixed wireless experts

Despite numerous complaints about internet speeds, NBN tried to tell us that following an upgrade in October last year, the speed capabilities on the tower looked pretty good with no congestion problems. This is obviously not the case!

I am working with both Telstra and my federal colleagues to address this issue.

I urge anyone who has had ongoing problems with their landlines or internet to please get in touch with my office.

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**SMART ENERGY GRANTS**

Territorians can now access energy-efficient initiatives for their homes through new ‘Smart Energy’ grants.

The Smart Energy grants run through a voucher system on a 50-50 co-contribution basis for up to $1,000 to owners of residential or investment properties to undertake energy efficiency measures to their homes.

For approved eligible members of the NT pensioner and carer’s scheme, the co-contribution required is 25% (instead of 50%).

All works must be either a new renewable energy source, the replacement of a non energy-efficient fixture with an energy-efficient one, or an electricity management device, and can include:

- installation of solar PV system
- installation of batteries connected to a solar system
- installation of a solar or energy efficient pool pump
- installation or replacement of a solar hot water system
- energy efficient lighting replacement
- installation of smart meters/energy monitoring devices.

- energy efficient air-conditioner replacement (including reverse cycle systems)
- energy efficient electric heat pump hot water system or pool pumps

All works must be completed by an eligible Territory business.

For further information, drop into my office or contact the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation on 1800 193 111 or visit their website at www.smartenergy@nt.gov.au

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**GAMBA ACTION PROGRAM**

Don’t forget to get your FREE resources from the Weed Management Branch to assist with gamba grass management on your property.

- Car battery operated spray packs (battery not included)
- Glyphosate: a herbicide for managing gamba grass
- Quickspray units on trailers for larger infestations

Herbicides and spray packs are available from:

- Freds Pass Sport & Recreation Reserve
- Territory Wildlife Park
- Coomalie Community Government Council

- Bushfires NT
- Beatrice Hill Volunteer Fire Brigade
- Dundee
- Wagait Shire Council

For further information, give my office a call or call the Weed Management Branch on 8999 4567
**Most influential Australian female Entrepreneurs**

It was fantastic to read about Territory success story Karen Sheldon Catering and her Salt Bush social enterprise in The Canberra Times in the lead up to International Women’s Day.

Karen has joined other women in being listed as an influential Australian female entrepreneur - well done Karen!

Many people across the electorate would know or have heard of Karen. Starting her first catering business in 1982 Karen has gone from strength to strength now employing 100 staff with Karen Sheldon Catering. Karen’s passion is her social enterprise Salt Bush that helps indigenous people into work and off welfare and out of poverty.

"We must look at the very best ways of using technology to achieve whatever we see is vital for helping the country. For me that’s using digital technology and the smaller world we are in to deal with remote social issues. There is a job for every single Australian in their own homeland we just have to use technology to its best advantage. We have to become the smart country as well as the lucky country."

Karen Sheldon - source Canberra Times.

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**TAKATA AIRBAG COMPULSORY RECALL**

On 28 February this year the Commonwealth Government issued a compulsory recall of all vehicles with defective Takata airbags.

Two in seven Australian vehicles are affected by this recall. Twenty-three deaths and 230 injuries have been reported worldwide with 1 death in Australia and 1 person seriously injured in the Northern Territory.

Given the serious risk of injury or death and the lack of satisfactory action by some vehicle suppliers, the Commonwealth issued the compulsory recall.

All suppliers of vehicles with defective Takata airbags must replace the airbags in vehicles by 31 December 2020.

It is important to note that prior to the compulsory recall, not all vehicles with defective Takata airbags were recalled. Approximately 860,000 vehicles were *not* under voluntary recall.

A subset of Takata airbags called ‘alpha’ are considered to pose the highest safety risk of the recalled Takata airbags. Around 89,000 alpha airbags have been replaced but there are still around 25,000 yet to be replaced.

**What should drivers do?**

All drivers are urged to check whether their vehicle is affected by visiting [https://www.productsafety.gov.au/recalls/compulsory-takata-airbag-recall/takata-airbag-recalls-list](https://www.productsafety.gov.au/recalls/compulsory-takata-airbag-recall/takata-airbag-recalls-list) or contacting their supplier.

You will need your VIN number which is available on your registration papers.

Further information is available from our office or you can contact your supplier.
The Kenbi Open Area Declaration over beaches and the intertidal zone of Aboriginal land in the Cox Peninsula area was gazetted on Wednesday 21 March.

The gazettal clarifies the public’s ongoing access to the area.

The long-running Kenbi land claim was settled in 2016. As part of the settlement a compensation package was negotiated between the NLC and the NT Government to provide permit-free access to beaches and to fish in the intertidal waters and reefs.

Following extensive consultation with traditional owners and custodians the final map detailing restrictions around sacred sites has been finalised.

Following this declaration, some significant areas are now prohibited to access:
- Quail Island
- Djajalbit Islet
- Two Fella Creek
- the northern beach of Indian Island

In addition, the northern Cox Peninsula area has been granted to the Kenbi Land Trust as Kenbi freehold title.

The next step in the post settlement process is the Remediation of the Wagait tip site which will commence this dry season and take between 15 to 18 months to complete.

Further details including the map can be found at [www.nlc.org.au](http://www.nlc.org.au)
WAGAIT & COX PENINSULA UPDATE

A very pro-active group of residents of the Wagait community have been working to increase tourism opportunities for the Wagait and Cox Peninsula region.

I was pleased to co-ordinate the inaugural meeting of like-minded individuals along with a number of key public servants from Environment & Natural Resources and Tourism and Culture.

The Cox Peninsula and Wagait Beach have many sites of historical significance including a number of sites from WWII, including the Milady bomber.

There are also a number of indigenous sites of significance and of course the Charles Point Lighthouse that will be celebrating its 125th anniversary this year.

It is great to see the community come together and look for solutions to increase visitor numbers and enhance tourism opportunities.

Another long standing issue as everyone living in the area is well aware, is the Mandorah Jetty. Following damage to the jetty late last year as a result of inadequate maintenance repairs the community expressed their anger and frustration publicly gaining media attention.

I wrote to the Chief Minister asking when the new Mandorah Jetty and Boat Ramp works would commence.

Unfortunately the Chief Minister and his government wouldn't commit to a timeline, only stating it is listed in their 10 Year Infrastructure Plan.

This is not good enough for the residents who rely on the Ferry Service as a vital link to work, education and the basic necessities of life.

I was pleased to hear the jetty withstood Cyclone Marcus without further damage but will continue to lobby government to fasttrack the replacement jetty and boat ramp facility.

COOMALIE SHIRE PATIENT TRANSPORT

In February 2017, I presented a petition on behalf of Coomalie residents calling on the Northern Territory Government to provide a Patient Transport Bus service for the area.

The Government responded by providing a Low Aquity Transport service. This service commenced in September last year.

Unfortunately, the service only stops at the BP Roadhouse at Adelaide River or the corner of the Stuart Highway and Batchelor Road. This drop-off/pick-up is approximately 12kms from the township of Batchelor.

I asked a question of the Minister during the March Parliamentary Sittings and urged her to increase the service to at least the same level as the Palmerston Hospital Shuttle Service which offers door-to-door service. The Minister to her credit had already asked her department to look into this issue and provide a service that meets the community needs.
Student Representative Councils

Congratulations to all the students across the electorate who nominated as Leaders for their school. It takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there, well done to you all.

To the students who were selected by their peers, congratulations on this great achievement! Pictured are the newly elected Berry Springs Primary School Student Leaders.

Australia Day Awards

Rhonda and I had the pleasure of sharing Australia Day celebrations with Coomalie residents at Batchelor starting with a big Aussie breakfast.

Congratulations to all nominees and recipients of awards this year, I do enjoy hearing of the fantastic community spirit right across the electorate.