

## Reconsider Dan Murphy's plans in the Northern Territory - AMSA



The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) calls upon the Northern Territory Government to urgently reconsider its plans to allow a Dan Murphy's superstore to be built next to electively dry communities in Darwin.

Despite being rejected twice by the NT Liquor Commission, Woolworths-owned Endeavour Drinks Group continues to move forward with plans to construct a Dan Murphy's superstore in Darwin. The proposed location for the development of the superstore is within close proximity to three voluntarily dry communities. Furthermore, the NT Government is working to change legislation that may override this decision by the NT Liquor Commission.

"This governmental direction completely undermines the efforts of the Bagot people to protect their community, and their health. We require a government that listens to, and respects First Nations voices above that of large corporations," AMSA President Sophie Keen said today.

AMSA Indigenous Portfolio Manager Bradley Goff said the members of the Bagot community have exercised their right to self-determination through electively having their community declared dry under the Liquor Act (2019).

"This was a course of action grounded in a desire to minimise the impact of alcohol on their community," Mr Goff said.

"The development of a liquor superstore within walking distance of the Bagot community not only jeopardises the effectiveness of their actions, but also renders farcical the legislative provisions that afforded them the opportunity for self-determination in regards to alcohol access."

The proposed liquor store risks harm to health arising due to increased availability of alcohol. This includes direct health consequences from alcohol consumption, as well as ancillary harms from exposure to increased alcohol use around these communities, such as alcohol-related violence.

Legal penalties may be applied for carrying or consuming alcohol within the dry communities in close proximity to the store with the enforcement of the Liquor Act (2019).

This is particularly concerning with the rates of over-policing observed within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. It is also possible that the threat of over-policing coupled with the availability of alcohol could effectively coerce communities to stop maintaining their status as a dry community, impeding their capacity for self-determination.

"Supporting and enabling the construction of a Dan Murphy's store in this location, a move that values profits over the health and wellbeing of community members, demonstrates a blatant disregard for the health, values and concerns of local community members," AMSA Healthy Communities Project Coordinator Emily Bruggemann said.

Public health and healthcare organisations, including Aboriginal primary healthcare organisation Danila Dilba, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the Public Health Association of Australia and the Australian Medical Association, have expressed their concerns that this move would be detrimental to the

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health and wellbeing of community members, particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Community members have been petitioning and rallying against the development of the store since 2016, with to date more than 150,000 people signing the 'Keep grog out of our communities' petition started by BlakBusiness.

AMSA will continue to advocate for First Nations people and address the systemic inequities that contribute to poorer health outcomes. With Indigenous Health being a national priority for AMSA, the organisation urges governments to do more to listen to, support and foster the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities.

AMSA is the peak representative body for Australia's 17,000 medical students. AMSA is a non-Indigenous organisation that respects and acknowledges the voice of Indigenous bodies in this space. AMSA will continue to advocate for First Nations peoples and the elimination of existing systemic inequities through policies that enable self-determination and have undergone thorough community consultation. AMSA Healthy Communities is a project within AMSA that advocates for healthy lifestyles and advocates on public health issues.

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