CHAMBER TO QUIZ POLLIES. Report by ERWIN CHLANDA.

Candidates for the next Territory election will be quizzed by the Chamber of Commerce about their position on local issues, says Neil Ross, local Chamber head. He says questions will range from "anti social behaviour and other issues affecting the quality of life in the town", to payroll tax and attitudes towards development. The chamber will be making the replies public. Mr Ross says the Darwin railway is seen as the government's main cure for the town's current economic woes, but given its uncertainty, the government should look at other projects, so long as they create "an asset that will provide lasting benefits". Mr Ross says the town has "slowed a lot last year, it's very, very, very quiet" although the tourism industry is "pretty reasonable". He says: "The railway is an article of faith. "Either you believe it's going to create a long term benefit or you don't." He says if the railway goes ahead "it will be for political, more than economic reasons." The parallel could be the Yulara tourist resort. "The NT Government carved it out of the desert." Now it's a world class resort. "They probably sold it too cheap. It cost the taxpayer a lot of money but this year the resort will spend $60m and that's all private money. "Nothing's coming from the government which is continuing to get the benefits from the taxes Yulara generates." No private enterprise could have built that and survived. Now you have an appreciating asset. "I think the railway should be seen in that context." But the downside is that the Government can't build the railway and maintain the other infrastructure in the Territory." Mr Ross says he's "skeptical" about the requirement that 70 per cent of railway expenditure must be spent in the NT or SA. He says there is "every encouragement" to follow that guideline " but at the end of the day the consortium will spend their money where they believe they can get the best value for their dollar." The big ticket items, the rails, the cement will probably come from SA." There are opportunities in Tennant Creek and Katherine. "You go there and take advantage of them. "There is no secret that there are a lot of companies hurting elsewhere in the country." There are a lot of very hungry companies out there. "At the end of the day the railway consortium will go to wherever the competitive bid will be." It's very unlikely that Alice Springs companies will get all that much of it." Where I believe we have opportunities is in supplying labor." They're just going to be screaming for bodies all the way up and down the track, just simply to do the toil." It's the services side that we can offer, from mechanical repairs, supplying fuel, catering and especially the transport industry Ð it will be stretched to the maximum," says Mr Ross. "The long term benefit of the railway will go to the Top End more than here." The NT Government's development strategy for the last 15 years has really been centered on the railway." Look at their port development. The whole thing hinges on the railway line." Mr Ross says other projects needing ongoing government encouragement are the Mt Johns Valley development Ð residential, sporting and commercial Ð combined with the convention centre, which "will be a boost". Mr Ross says: "If Alice Springs is quiet Darwin is even quieter. Believe me there's a lot of long faces up there. "Darwin makes Alice Springs look like a boom town, at times." If the railway doesn't go ahead the focus should be on roads, access, some accommodation facilities to boost the tourism industry, including the trans Australia highway linking Queensland with WA." There's a lot of interest in the West," says Mr Ross." We've seen an off-season increase in tourism numbers, mainly international visitors in October and November. "That's a market we really haven't even scratched." We could have a year Òround tourist industry if we marketed it properly." Spending by and on Aboriginal people is significant, and Pine Gap "continues to contribute although their construction phase is probably finished for the time being". Mr Ross says the opportunity for Aboriginal people in tourism is "phenomenal, especially with overseas visitors". "We're a long way from providing this to Aboriginal people satisfactorily. "If the Aboriginal people wish to share their culture with others, the potential is enormous. "The government could create an atmosphere that would encourage such a participation, but I'm not quite sure how a government could make this happen overnight. "It depends on creating the atmosphere where those sorts of things are possible. "We live in God's country here and we'd like to share it with as many people as would like to come."

NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES: INSIDE STORY!
A letter from MacDonnell MLA John Elferink triggered the events which last week culminated in the resignation from the CLP of former Minister Loraine Braham, and her announcement to stand as an independent for her current seat, Braitling. This is revealed in the minutes of the CLP's Central Council meeting held in Alice Springs in late November last year. The Alice News has obtained a copy of the document. Only seven of the 45 delegates and alternate delegates were from the Alice Springs region at the meeting which overturned preselections by the local "electoral college", and dumped Mrs Braham. When asked for a comment this week, she said neither she nor members of her branch had ever been shown the letter from Mr Elferink, despite several requests. The minutes do not contain a summary of the document, and Mr Elferink declined to release a copy to the Alice News. The News understands that at issue was the fact that five people delegated to the college by the Stuart Branch had not been formally elected, but appointed by the president, Tony Bohning. On the evening of the council meeting, November 26, several CLP members alleged that "stacking" had taken place but would not be quoted by name. The local college had dropped Mr Elferink and replaced him with Mr Bohning, re-endorsed Mrs Braham and Greatorex MLA Richard Lim, and chosen Ken Lechleitner for Stuart and Peter Harvey for Araluen. The minutes indicate that a lively debate preceded the "all bets are off" decision by the ruling party's governing body. Party vice president and former Chief Minister Marshall Perron is summarised as saying: "If the process is flawed it should be reopened and not let go to become a festering sore to go on for years." Chief Minister Denis Burke: It's "the right thing to do, we have no other option. There was no time for friendships or loyalties". Alice delegate Helen Fisher: "The decision had been made before the process had begun ... there was a lack of confidentiality which weakens the process." Mr Perron: "Not all members leaked information, there was a slight on every member of the committee because of the leaks. Delegates ... were not to tell any person outside this room." All 10 nominees for Central Australian seats, including Nina Hodges, Matt Pearce, and Simon Holding, were then asked questions by a panel of five, including only two Central Australians: Mr Perron, Lyn Setter, Tim Thompson, Brian Marlor and Derek Poolier. The News understands that the meeting was then opened to questions from the floor. After ballots Mr Lechleitner was endorsed for Stuart, Jodeen Carney for Araluen, Mr Harvey for Braitling and Mr Elferink for MacDonnell. Dr Lim was re-endorsed for Greatorex without a ballot. After Mrs Braham's demise he was appointed Minister for Central Australia. Other business referred to in the minutes, relating to a report by Senator Grant Tambling, referred to correspondence between him and Mr Perron, and said: "Question raised as to the representation as a CLP Senator in Canberra ... understanding that you do what the CLP direct you to do." Meanwhile, Mrs Braham says three CLP members, without her permission, entered her electoral office on Wednesday last week, and removed files. Mrs Braham was in Darwin at the time, being carpeted by Chief Minister Denis Burke. "It's just another indication that the internal mechanisms of the CLP are not ethical," said Mrs Braham.

'KIDNEY' FOR THE DUMP. Report by KIERAN FINNANE.

A shipping trunk for $40, a German-made dentist's mirror for $10, a rocking horse for $20, were snapped up by bargain hunters during the first days of trading at Bowerbird Enterprises. That's the pretty name given to the recycling shop at the Alice Springs landfill, which opened its doors just over a week ago. The shop was stocked by a month's worth of scavenging from the landfill and some early drop-offs. Its operators, Michael Klerck (pictured above) and Kirsten Hutchinson, hope that soon most people will think to drop off their reusable items first. "That way they won't have to pay for them at the weigh bridge!" says Kirsten. While "treasures" are a matter of luck and timing, any visit is guaranteed to find a range of bikes and tricycles, odds and ends of timber and steel, screws, bolts, nails in varying sizes, and households full of preloved furniture and bric-a-brac. The goods are laid out in tidy lots, category by category: if you know what you're after, you won't have to look through the entire shop and yard to find it. Electrical goods hadn't been put on display last week, but soon will be. They'll be tested with a multimeter but will also carry a warning that they have not been fully tested. The operators have been interested to find very few white goods to salvage. "It seems that the market here is already taking care of those," says Michael, the site manager. "Second hand goods have a fairly high value in Alice Springs." He's been checking out lawn sales, second hand shops and auctions to get a feel for the market and says prices at the Bowerbird are appropriately at the lower end. Haggling is welcome, as long as it's friendly. Michael hails from Tasmania where he worked at the Resource Tip Shop in Hobart. He came to Alice specifically to manage the two year recycling centre and weighbridge contract, let by the Town Council. (Council staff continue to manage the actual tipface work, including compacting waste and covering it with dirt at the end of each day.) He sees the Bowerbird as a kind of "kidney" for the landfill: "We filter out what is useful." The shop is expected to pay its own way (wages and on-costs) and to eventually earn revenue for the Arid Lands Environment Centre, its sole shareholder. Michael is optimistic about that: the first week's trading surpassed expectation and they're
not yet offering a "full load of goods". He says that, based on information from other tip shops around Australia and taking into account the size of Alice Springs' population, the shop is expected to take around $400 a day. At present the Bowerbird is also acting as a collection point for brown, green and clear glass and aluminium cans, all still being recycled by Russ Driver & Co. They will be researching opportunities for recycling paper and plastic, but at present there are no viable markets, says Michael.[Trading from 10am to 4.30pm, Sat from 9am.]

GROG ACTION: DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH!

Despite an earlier statement that he would introduce trial measures to curb the abuse of alcohol in Alice Springs "by January 1" or "certainly early in the new year", Licensing Commissioner Peter Allen is still carrying out "community consultation" on the issue. On Monday this week he was having discussions with representatives of the Alice in Ten Quality of Life Committee, and the People's Alcohol Action Coalition. The latter is a group of health professionals, church ministers, representatives of Aboriginal organisations, as well as other concerned citizens. The group recently released a list of "core requirements", including restrictions on availability, to alleviate alcohol related harm in Alice. Spokesperson John Boffa said the requirements have "a scientific basis and a good chance of working". "We feel the needs and wishes of the community have been clearly expressed, and it is up to Mr Allen to act in the very near future," said Dr Boffa. The Quality of Life committee is dominated by senior public servants, with some representation of Aboriginal and other community-based organisations, and one representative each of the Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce. The committee's acting chair, Sue Korner, Regional Director of Territory Health Services in Central Australia, led the discussions with Mr Allen on behalf of this committee. Former Minister for Central Australia Loraine Braham (having been charged by the Chief Minister to report to cabinet on public opinion about alcohol control measures) stated in November last year: "I'm particularly interested in what Quality of Life will come up with ... and I don't know how they'll ever reach a consensus." Consensus continues to be elusive. The committee met last week to consider endorsement of a set of recommendations prepared by the now defunct Alice Alcohol Representative Committee (AARC), but, according to a spokesperson for Ms Korner, "did not endorse the document as proposed". The spokesperson said the committee is "currently putting together preliminary proposals for a framework of action", which, together with the AARC recommendations, were to be discussed at Monday's meeting. The full committee will meet again this Friday "to formulate a position and framework of action". The AARC recommendations are in broad agreement with the core demands by PAAC, while more detailed and stronger in some respects. As well as a ban on casks of wine greater than two litres, they include D for immediate implementation D an across the board reduction in hours for sale of takeaway alcohol. Suggested hours are 1-8pm Saturday to Wednesday and 3-8pm Thursday and Friday (the main pay and cheque days). Other recommended measures are:

- the establishment of an Alice Springs Alcohol Task Force, to oversee strategies for the prevention of alcohol-related harms;
- amendments to the Liquor Act, aimed at strengthening it and ensuring its more rigorous enforcement;
- increased staff and resources for the Licensing Commission in Alice Springs.
- an Alice Springs code of practice developed and displayed by licensees, with practice to include providing free water on premises; providing free non-alcoholic drinks to the driver of a group of drinkers; ensuring safe transport home to "obviously vulnerable patrons"; and breathalysing patrons suspected of being intoxicated.

The last has been firmly rejected by licensees, who don't see it as part of their role. Chairperson of the Liquor Licensees' Association, Diane Loechel, says breathalysing "would be an infringement of civil rights" of the person tested, and would "open up a litigator's dream". "There is no clear definition of Intoxication' legally speaking," says Mrs Loechel. "It's a very difficult issue, and it's not our job to be judge, jury and executioner." As for other practices, Mrs Loechel says provision of free water and non-alcoholic drinks to drivers is already standard; the Todd Tavern, of which she is co-proprietor, has snacks and food available; and some venues offer free transport home on certain nights. "Licensees do realise we have an obligation of some sort to people and do our best to fulfill that," says Mrs Loechel. She had no comment to make on the issue of restricted hours for takeaway alcohol. To support their argument, AARC pointed to the beneficial effects of the current restrictions on availability on Sundays:

- the Night Patrols and the Sobering Up Shelter do not operate on Sundays;
- the police patrols encounter far fewer problems;
- the hospital has many less emergency emissions;
- the town is quieter and has fewer problems in virtually all respects.

Meanwhile, the latest evaluation of alcohol restrictions in Tennant Creek, conducted by the Menzies School of Health
earlier pledges that the current $165m will be the ceiling: "I'm not sure how the government is going to position itself," to stop a project of this size. "Should there be more NT government money, despite Chief Minister Denis Burke's investment, be a problem?"We're looking for a mere three per cent of the investment," says Mr Harvey. "That's not going enough done."Not surprisingly Mr Brooke takes an even more aggressive view: "The CLP vote in Braitling has collapsed. "It's because the [party's] Darwin based Central Council has overturned the preselection decisions made down here. "That's a problem for the people of Braitling because they have been taken for granted by Darwin. The conservative candidates rely on the business judgment of the private investors: "If you talk to the community of Alice Springs they will say there has not been enough done."But Mr Harvey says "Mrs Braham can't be part of the solution because she was part of the problem: "I think Alice Springs hasn't had the focus of the politicians that it really has needed. "What's happened in the Country Liberal Party indicated that. "Loraine Braham has lost her endorsement from the CLP. "One of the reasons was that there was a lack of representation of Alice Springs." What would he do better than, for example, Mrs Braham, and Araluen MLA Eric Poole? "What they have done is history. People can look back and reflect on what has been done, and that's one of the reasons why I am standing in Braitling. "If you talk to the community of Alice Springs they will say there has not been four recent studies, the researchers found that "as a package" the restrictions have had "a sustained and positive impact" on reducing per capita alcohol consumption in Tennant Creek, and on reducing levels of injury and violence.(The incidence rate of presentations for assault among Indigenous males has fallen from 69.9 per 1,000 population per quarter before restrictions were introduced, to 15.1 in the April-June quarter of last year.For Indigenous females, the rate declined from 100.4 to 29.2 over the same period. The incidence rate among non-Indigenous people, although much lower than the Indigenous rates, has also declined over the same period.) The researchers found that the restrictions that apply specifically to Thursday trading have become less effective in the past two years, but despite that evidence, which accords with popular perception, only one third of surveyed residents wanted the restrictions scrapped. "A clear majority wish to retain or modify them", while "all other restrictions continue to have widespread community support", according to the Menzies draft report.

BRAITLING: GRAPPLING FOR ISSUES. Report by ERWIN CHLANDA.

While the Mother Of All Battles in the next Territory election is expected to be fought in Braitling, at the moment there is an eerie similarity in the three candidates' platforms. They say the Alice economy is desperate for a shot in the arm, and the region needs far more vigorous representation in a Darwin centered government. And the railway issue although devoid of meaningful detail is uppermost in the minds of Peter Harvey (CLP), Peter Brooke (Labor) and the newly independent, Loraine Braham. Mrs Braham, after being denied preselection by the CLP and forced to resign from the party last week, says she is "buoyed" by the defeat on the weekend of the Liberal government in WA, largely the result of voter disaffection with the major parties. However, she denies reports that she is seeking to form a Territory wide coalition of independents: "I would encourage people who have similar philosophies to mine, to come forward. "I've had some approaches, from the Top End as well as down here."But I don't want every Tom, Dick and Harry to ride on my shirt tails. "That's not what I'm on about. I'm on about people who have the same genuine thoughts as I do, a Liberal view."There's been this feeling, she's going to form a team, so let's all jump in. "That's not what it's all about. "My aim is to take the vote away from the CLP. "I think that's the only way we can get a change."Of the three Braitling candidates only Mrs Braham has made a decision on preferences not to direct them. She will give the voters all options on her how to vote cards. "The last thing I want to encourage them to do is to cast an informal vote," she says. Mr Brooke says his preferences will be "decided by the party as a whole, through its organisational wing."Mr Harvey says: "It's undecided. It will be a party decision. "Certainly they will consult with me."He clearly expects the contest will be between him and Mrs Braham who claims to have a lot of grassroots support in Braitling. She says of the 200 people who called to offer support following her dumping, 30 per cent were from her electorate. But Mr Harvey says Mrs Braham can't be part of the solution because she was part of the problem: "I think Alice Springs hasn't had the focus of the politicians that it really has needed. "What's happened in the Country Liberal Party indicated that. "Loraine Braham has lost her endorsement from the CLP. "One of the reasons was that there was a lack of representation of Alice Springs." What would he do better than, for example, Mrs Braham, and Araluen MLA Eric Poole? "What they have done is history. People can look back and reflect on what has been done, and that's one of the reasons why I am standing in Braitling. "If you talk to the community of Alice Springs they will say there has not been enough done."

Not surprisingly Mr Brooke takes an even more aggressive view: "The CLP vote in Braitling has collapsed. "It's because the [party's] Darwin based Central Council has overturned the preselection decisions made down here. "That's a problem for the people of Braitling because they have been taken for granted by Darwin. The process was disgraceful."Mrs Braham is adamant that she's been a vigorous advocate for the region, but because of Cabinet confidentiality, she can't say what exactly she fought for: "There are some decisions made you're very uncomfortable about. "But you sign an oath when you're sworn in as a Minister. You can't divulge Cabinet papers and discussions." All three candidates support the Darwin railway although none of them can be even remotely specific about its benefits to Alice Springs. The conservative candidates rely on the business judgment of the private investors: "if they put in that much money, it must be OK, seems to be the reasoning. Mr Harvey, asked why he supports the project, despite the absence of any available information on what the railway will even carry, says: "It will be an absolute boon for the NT as a whole."He says there will be "great opportunities [for] huge storage facilities. "We all know that the climate in the southern states is cold, wet, raining. I believe Alice Springs is well positioned to take advantage of the possibilities of storage."Is the loss of the $70m John Hancock investment a problem?"We're looking for a mere three per cent of the investment," says Mr Harvey. "That's not going to stop a project of this size." Should there be more NT government money, despite Chief Minister Denis Burke's earlier pledges that the current $165m will be the ceiling: "I'm not sure how the government is going to position itself,"
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at the start of the Papunya Tula art group. At that time he'd had contact for the better part of 40 years with white
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all made for sale; some were painted because the men were remembering their own country. All the earliest paintings
that I saw were done with the men in separate camps; the women and children were nowhere to be seen, they were
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THE CENTRE OF ALL STORMS. By KIERAN FINNANE.

At first glance it's a small, unassuming painting, on your left as you walk into Araluen's gallery housing the Flinders
University touring show, Twenty Five Years and Beyond: Papunya Tula Painting. It's among the show's earliest works
(cat. no. 11, detail pictured at right), dating from 1972, painted by senior Pintupi man, Walter Tjampitjinpa. At the
opening weekend's "walk in the art" at the gallery, Dick Kimber, author, historian, long time friend and associate of
western desert people, with intimate connections to the early days of the Papunya Tula art movement, treated the
crowd of around 100 people to an account of the painting's depth and importance. Doubtlessly numbers of other works
on show could have been similarly approached, had time allowed. The following, an edited extract from Mr Kimber's
talk, reveals something of the marvellous hidden dimensions of even a seemingly simple painting:- A painting like this,
with a plain black background, its basic elements in outline with an infill of white dotting, was very common in the
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the country almost certainly has some ironstone that attracts lightning to it, because despite there being no major
features around there, when I first went to it there had been lightning strikes all over the place from the storm that went by, and the men took that to be the mythological ancestors having definitely been at work. When there was what we would see as a natural circular bit of spinifex that had actually burnt they saw that as where the storm boss, the lightning, had sat down for a while. For them, the whole landscape was alive, they'd sung the right songs, a storm had come through. The lightning boss marches at the front, mustering the storm. The storm comes as big black clouds, the water starts to stream down and because of the little hill at the western end, the water starts to flow into the claypan. (This little claypan had a native well dug into it, about three to four metres deep, with three steps down into it.) Then the claypan overfills and the water runs between the sandhills.

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