ICE in the Northern Territory

As more information comes to light about the dangerous drug ICE and the harm it is causing in our community, the more we are all concerned particularly for our young people. As a mother of two teenagers I am extremely worried about the contact my children may have with this drug.

In the September sittings of Parliament the Government tried to pass legislation on “urgency” to allow Police to randomly search vehicles for any drugs (including ICE) with a designated 3km area. The Parliamentary process for all legislation is that notice of the legislation must sit on the Parliament Notice Paper for 30 days to allow sufficient time for community consultation and Member of Parliament to study and research the legislation. This enables an informed debate, essential for good Parliamentary process.

The Government wanted to ram this legislation through on urgency but failed to get the support of the Chamber. Most Members saw no reason why the legislation should avoid the usual 30 days of public scrutiny. The Government had not sought any public feedback on this proposed legislation, including no consultation with the legal fraternity. A tardy and dangerous way for Parliament to do business, operating halfcocked.

The retaliatory response of the Government of not winning the urgency motion was to then accuse the “scourge” of ICE in the territory, implying that we were all heartless human beings who did not care.

This is simply not true. This urgency motion was ill conceived and ill advised. The Government did not provide a broad strategy on how they intend to combat ICE, just an obscure police power to extend their ability to randomly search vehicles – which has overtures of a Police state. The NT Parliamentary Select Committee investigating ICE in the NT has yet to even table their findings.

There was no urgency. The Police currently have the powers to search vehicles under certain circumstances for drugs. This will continue.

The Government went to the unbelievable length of placing two full page advertisements in the NT News on Friday 18 and Monday 21 September entitled “ICE Drug Laws Blocked”, listing all the Member of Parliament that voted for and against the “urgency” motion. These advertisements cost taxpayers $8000. It was a political stunt that may well back fire for them. I suspect this advertisement may contravene the rules of Government advertising because of its misleading and deliberately political overtones. Gerry Wood has referred this matter to the Auditor-General for investigation with my full support.

My reason for raising this issue is to reassure you that all Members of Parliament are committed to addressing the problem of ICE in our community – despite what the Government will have you believe. It also illustrates the silly, time wasting and expensive games that were played by Government in Parliament in September.

New Chair of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

A motion in Parliament in September instigated by the Labor Opposition has seen a reconfiguration of the Public Accounts Committee of the NT Parliament. With a minority Government in place, Labor passed a motion that this Committee should more accurately reflect the new Parliament with 2 Government members, 2 Opposition members and 2 Independent members, and that the Chair of the PAC to be an Independent member.

The position of Chair of the PAC was first offered to Gerry Wood, the Member for Nelson, who declined. I was the second choice and accepted the offer. The PAC is perhaps the most important Committee of Parliament. It scrutinises all Government expenditure and revenue. It manages the Estimates process. It provides an essential level of analysis of Government that is particularly important in the NT Parliament where we do not have a Senate or Upper House.

I am very honoured to take on this position as Chair of the PAC.

Areas Moved into Araluen

• Lose the mainly rural areas south of Heavitree Gap to Namatjira.
• Gain the whole Golf Course area and parts of East Side, Mount Johns and Sadadeen from Greatorex.
• Lose the mainly rural areas south of Heavitree Gap to Namatjira.

moved out of Araluen

• All rural areas south of the Gap including; Arumbera (Transport Hall of Fame) Connellan (Chateau Hornsby) (Old Timers) Flynn (Desert Park) Ilparpa Kilgariff Temple Bar Station White Gums

NEW ARALUEN ELECTORATE BOUNDARIES

These new boundaries take effect from the next NT General Election scheduled for August 2016.

• Gain part of the suburb of Araluen from Braithling.
• Gain the whole Golf Course area and parts of East Side, Mount Johns and Sadadeen from Greatorex.
• Lose the mainly rural areas south of Heavitree Gap to Namatjira.

To view the new electorate boundaries, go to: www.ntec.nt.gov.au

Arlanen News

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October 2015
Dear Residents,

The past two months have been an anxious wait to hear the outcome of the 2015 NT Electoral Redistribution or boundary changes.

In June you may remember the initial recommendations of the Electoral Redistribution included the scrapping of the seat of Araluen. The final recommendations were made public on Tuesday 15 September.

I am pleased to inform you that Araluen has survived but with some significant changes. The bad news is that Alice Springs has lost the electorate of Greatorex and a vital voice in Parliament. Throughout this whole process, what concerned me most was Alice Springs would be left worse off and have less influence in the “Darwin-centric” NT Parliament. These changes will mean that the two Alice Springs Members of Parliament will have to work even harder and be a louder voice than ever before.

Behaviour in Parliament

With the minority CLP Government struggling to function in this new paradigm of forced negotiation and genuine debate - it is intriguing that it is the behaviour of some members within the CLP team that is seriously letting them down. “Men Behaving Badly” was certainly the over-riding theme of the September sittings of Parliament, with the Attorney-General John Elferink threatening to “slap” the Member for Nightcliff, Natasha Fyles. Add fats being loudly thumped on desks, spectacles being thrown, dummy spits and abusive tirades, this was a bad week for the Government who had completely lost control of themselves and the Parliament.

People who know me will confirm that I am no prude or radical feminist, but I do believe that this type of behaviour cannot be tolerated. The Chief Minister has not shown any leadership on this issue. Instead he responded to the media by saying “I support the motion. The CLP Members for Brailleing and Greatorex both voted against the motion.

Politics over-ride good sense and a real commitment to Alice Springs.

2. Promise of funding for Alice Springs night time youth Services

In February 2015 the Chief Minister, under intense pressure from the community, promised to commit more funding to night time youth services. From two questions I asked the Chief Minister in Parliament, it was clear that no money has been allocated and no services have been contracted to provide additional youth services. With the warm weather approaching, I dread to think of another hectic summer of anti-social behaviour on our streets. I called upon the Chief Minister to honour his promises. Nine months of no action is unacceptable.

3. The use of the Rhonda Diano Oval primarily for athletics

Brailleing residents have not been consulted about the use of the Rhonda Diano Oval for a $2m upgraded athletics track and a proposed 1.8m high fence around the oval. I asked the Minister for Sport a question pertaining to this in Parliament, which he was unable to answer. A Brailleing residents group are mustering support to ensure their voice is heard and I am very happy to help them in any way I can. As a former Brailleing resident, I loved the Rhonda Diano Oval and would hate any of the user groups to be excluded from accessing this much loved community facility.

Putting Alice Springs on the agenda

In the September 2015 sittings of Parliament I raised three issues specifically pertaining to Alice Springs.

1. Motion to change the First Home Owners Grant

I presented a motion to Parliament – that the guidelines for the First Home Owners Grant be reversed to again include existing homes, as well as new homes.

There has been a 95% drop in the take up of these grants over the past 9 months since the guidelines were changed, which is having a profound negative impact on the Alice Springs economy.

This motion was voted down by the Government. The CLP Members for Brailleing and Greatorex both voted against the motion.

In closing

This is a fascinating period in NT politics. Never before in the history of NT politics has there been such a high proportion of Independents: making up 20% of the Parliament, or 5 out of the 25 Members of Parliament.

The impact of this has been a stronger democratic process. The Government can no longer assume they can pass their business purely on the numbers.

They have to debate, inform, consult, engage and follow due process. They are no longer getting away with cutting corners, as we saw with an attempt to get legislation through on urgency in the September sittings.

It is concerning that Government scandals have taken precedence over issues that people really care about - health, education, roads, business, jobs etc.

As an Independent Member I am not interested in political point scoring. I am only interested in the well-being of the people of the Northern Territory.