

The community of Bagot is fighting the development of a Dan Murphy's in Darwin, backed by community and health groups who are worried about the potential harm the megastore will have in the Territory.

By Keira Jenkins  
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Helen Fejo-Frith has lived in the community of Bagot, near Darwin, for more than 20 years. She's a respected Elder in the community, and not much goes on without her knowing about it. One thing Ms Fejo-Frith is particularly concerned about is the effect of alcohol on her neighbours, friends and family.

She says she's already lost her brothers, her mother, and too many community members to alcohol. With a Dan Murphy's proposed just a few kilometres from her dry community (as well as two others nearby, in Kulaluk and Minmarama Park), Ms Fejo-Frith told The Point she is worried the impact of alcohol will only get worse.

"We've got enough alcohol outlets at the moment around Darwin and even around here at Bagot where we are," she said.

"We don't need a big mega store like that because it will just cause more violence, more people getting killed, people dying and children not being looked after."

The store was originally proposed close to these three communities. After community opposition, the site was relocated 1.3 kilometres away from the original proposal.

Ms Fejo-Frith said she fears the new site is still too close, and people will still be able to walk or drive to the outlet.

"We'd say there's about 13 or 14 different alcohol outlets right around us," she said.

"It's not as if we need another one. There's plenty already, there's too much really already.

"They've got to start thinking about the health and welfare of everybody not just thinking about 'we can make heaps of money out of this'."

Another Bagot resident, Joshua Poulson, told The Point that he is not only concerned for his own community and the others close to the development, but that the development may have a flow-on effect to remote communities around the Territory.

"It's going to cause a huge problem, not only here but in other communities," he said.

"I think it will impact other communities, remote communities because people are gonna come in and buy a lot of grog, waste their money on grog and take it back to their communities and cause more problems there."

Mr Poulson has given up drinking. He said he's seen the problems alcohol can cause in his community, and doesn't want that to be part of his life.

"I've given up for seven years because I see what alcohol is doing to people," he said.

"People ending up with liver disease, kidney failure, a lot of alcohol-related illnesses."

#### **'More harm'**

The CEO of Danila Dilba Health Service in Darwin, Olga Havnen said she's also concerned about the alcohol-related harm that Ms Fejo-Frith and Mr Poulson are worried about.

"The Territory has some of the worst rates of alcohol-related harm for the country," she said.

"We've got consumption rates that are on par with Russia and other northern parts of Europe, they are at fairly horrific levels and the Territory is up there with them.

"When you look at data for, say, alcohol related road fatalities, 48 per cent of all road deaths in the Northern Territory are alcohol related.

"We know for example from police data, that within the five kilometre catchment area of where this Dan Murphy's is to go, data already indicates that more than 74 per cent of all domestic violence breaches are alcohol related.

"You look at all of that together and you think, well why on earth would you want to create more harm."

#### **'We have a voice'**

But there is some support from the surrounding communities.

In a video provided by the managers of the proposed development, Endeavour Group, Kulaluk resident and the chairperson of the Gwalawa Daraniki Association Helen Secretary said she supports the move.

“We do not object to Dan Murphy’s, we support Dan Murphy’s,” she said.

“Darwin is Larrakia Land and we are the Traditional Owners of this land and we have a voice in regards to how our future goes for our community and our people.”

Ms Secretary said she’s been in discussions with Dan Murphy’s and Endeavour Drinks about the development and is satisfied with the consultations.

But in Bagot, Ms Fejo-Frith said she felt her community had been ignored in the consultation process.

“Nobody came anywhere near us to consult,” she said.

“What do they expect, that we’re going to stand there and say ‘yeah, no worries, go ahead and do it’?”

“There were a lot of people around here that didn’t want it and myself included in this.”

### **'Tactics and strategies'**

Aboriginal Medical Service Alliance of the NT (AMSANT) CEO John Paterson is highly critical of the way Woolworths has conducted business, especially when it comes to community consultation.

“Don’t treat us like mushrooms and try and pull tactics and strategies over us to try to persuade us to support your application because that ain’t going to be had,” he said.

“That ain’t going to work... It’s almost taken me back to colonisation days, where the colonisers came into this country and they brought all of their trading products to deal and trade with the First Nations people who had been here for millions of years to try to win across and influence.

“It’s wedging Aboriginal people, it’s wedging Aboriginal organisations and that style of tactic and play is definitely right in line with early colonisers.

“It’s a disrespectful act. It’s not showing us respect and we don’t support that at all.”