

# Justine Davis MLA

*Independent Member for Johnston*

Alawa - Jingili - Millner - Moil

*Doing politics differently*

28 January 2025

Your Excellency,

I write as an elected representative of the Northern Territory to express serious concern regarding the recent appointment of Mr David Connolly as Administrator of the Northern Territory.

I do so with respect for your office and for the constitutional significance of the Administrator's role. While the appointment process is political, the Administrator's office itself is not. As a representative of the Crown, the Administrator position demands impartiality, restraint, dignity and respect for constitutional convention. Its purpose is to unite the community, safeguard lawful government, and represent the Crown as standing above factional politics.

In light of these fundamental responsibilities, Mr Connolly's appointment raises serious concerns.

The Administrator is not a symbolic figurehead. The role carries real authority and real consequences. According to the Northern Territory Government House website, the Administrator *"is a symbol of unity who represents all Territorians."* Territorians are therefore entitled to expect rigorous vetting, sound judgment, and absolute confidence that the person appointed can genuinely represent everyone, not only those he considers worthy of representation.

It is difficult to see how all Territorians can feel represented by someone whose publicly documented social media history includes mocking Welcome to Country ceremonies, ridiculing Indigenous languages, joking about perpetrating domestic violence, objectifying and demeaning women, denying intergenerational disadvantage, and making transphobic statements. Amongst other concerning posts, in 2019, Mr Connolly publicly posted: *"According to the Greens I was supposed to go home and committ (sic) domestic violence. Lucky I was too rooted."*

Survivors of domestic and family violence, Aboriginal Territorians, transgender people, and others who have been targeted or demeaned in this record are all part of the community the Administrator is required to represent. These are not abstract concerns, they speak directly to whether Mr Connolly can fulfil the unifying purpose of the Administrator's office.

Mr Connolly's social media commentary is not a matter of a handful of careless posts. It reflects a pattern over many years that raises serious questions about judgment, values, and suitability for a role that requires the highest standards of conduct. While the posts have since been deleted, there has been no apology and no clear acknowledgement of the harm caused by the posts or of their incompatibility with the office. Deletion is not accountability, and the absence of intent does not negate impact.

Justine Davis MLA, Independent Member for Johnston



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In a public statement, Mr Connolly said he *“will now be a fierce advocate for all Territorians.”* Being a fierce advocate for all Territorians requires more than removing past statements and promising restraint while in office. It requires demonstrated respect for the dignity, safety and equality of all members of the community, including those previously ridiculed or marginalised.

Over the last 12 days I have heard directly from many Territorians regarding Mr Connolly's appointment. Constituents and other community members have been contacting me to highlight their deep reservations about Mr Connolly's suitability for the role. I share those concerns, and I raise them here on behalf of all Territorians who are seeking reassurance, accountability and confidence in this essential office.

Mr Connolly's appointment has already caused harm and deepened division. The Chief Minister's assertion that *“Territorians are going to love him”* is tone-deaf and dismissive of the very communities this office exists to serve. Mr Connolly's appointment is not a question of political alignment, it is a question of institutional integrity and public trust.

As Governor-General, you are the guardian of the standards and integrity of the Crown's representation. The Administrator serves at your pleasure, and it is precisely in moments like this, when public confidence has been so clearly undermined, that the Governor-General's role as a constitutional safeguard is most important.

The Northern Territory deserves an Administrator whose conduct, background and temperament reflect the highest standards of impartiality, dignity and respect.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that the endorsement of this appointment be rescinded, and that the process by which it was made be reviewed in light of the expectations traditionally attached to the Administrator's office. Such a rescission would strengthen, not weaken, public confidence in Australia's civil institutions.

Territorians are entitled to transparency about how this decision was made, and to clear evidence that the Administrator can meet the standard of judgment, unity, and representation the role demands.

At this moment, Territorians are looking to you to protect the integrity of our democratic institutions and the credibility of the Crown's representation in the Northern Territory. Where public trust has been so clearly compromised, intervention is not only appropriate, it is necessary.

Yours faithfully,



Justine Davis MLA



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