

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

<https://www.afr.com/companies/retail/danny-gilbert-names-panel-for-darwin-dan-murphy-s-review-20210204-p56zhf>

## Danny Gilbert names panel for Darwin Dan Murphy's review



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Four high-profile business, health and Indigenous leaders have been appointed to an independent panel established to review Woolworths' controversial plans to build a [Dan Murphy's liquor store](#) close to dry communities in Darwin.

Woolworths' application to build the mega Dan Murphy's store was approved by the Northern Territory's director of liquor licensing in December after the retailer agreed to move the 1800 square metre store to a new site and impose strict trading restrictions. (Woolworths' original application was rejected by the NT Liquor Commission).

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Opponents of Woolworths' proposed Dan Murphy's store in Darwin claim it will cause harm.

However, Woolworths put the plan temporarily on hold in December and said it would establish an independent panel, chaired by Gilbert+Tobin managing partner Danny Gilbert, to review health concerns and stakeholder engagement.

This followed accusations [the retailer had failed to consult with local community organisations](#) and had ignored concerns about the impact on public health.

“While stakeholder engagement has been extensive to date, we acknowledge that there are some in the community that feel they have not been adequately consulted regarding the proposed store,” Woolworths chairman Gordon Cairns said in December.

Mr Gilbert subsequently appointed four panel members – Heather D’Antoine, an honorary fellow with Menzies School of Health Research, Neil Westbury, chairman of the MJD Foundation and a former director of the Indigenous Land Corporation, Nigel Browne, former crown prosecutor and chief executive of the Larrakia Development Corporation, and Roland Houareau, general manager of INPEX in the Northern Territory.

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“I am pleased with the diversity of experience of those who have accepted my invitation to be part of the [independent review] into the proposed Darwin Dan Murphy’s development” Mr Gilbert said on Thursday.

“Work has commenced, and the panel plans to deliver its findings to the Woolworths Group board by the end of March,” he said.

The review will include the adequacy, breadth and depth of stakeholder engagement, including with respect to public health concerns, the extent to which stakeholder concerns were factored into decision-making and best practice for the supply and sale of alcohol from the proposed store.

**You are a billion-dollar company who can afford to facilitate proper communication and information about this review panel, along with appropriate notice of what you expect of our small organisations in the coming months to meet your last-minute consultation.**

— Indigenous and health groups

Earlier this week three Indigenous and community health organisations wrote to Mr Cairns raising concerns about a lack of information about the proposed review panel, including its terms of reference and timing, and ‘egregious’ claims about Woolworths’ attempts to engage with community groups.

The letter, from the Northern Territory Council of Social Service, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance and Danila Dilba Health Service, also complained to Mr Cairns about Woolworths’ “gimmicky” attempts at consultation as part of the review.

These included an open forum in a shopping mall in Darwin, which was announced via the media.

“Inviting us, through the media, to engage in good faith with your panel – then announcing the appointment of a mediator and further disparaging us for not engaging with Endeavour Drinks at a promotional stall in a mall does not repair trust,” the groups said.

“You are a billion-dollar company who can afford to facilitate proper communication and information about this review panel, along with appropriate notice of what you expect of our small organisations in the coming months to meet your last-minute consultation,” they said.

“It is not reasonable to expect us to respond to consultation by press release and to jump to short deadlines while Woolworths spends a leisurely seven weeks and counting to release details of your review panel and its process.”

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An Endeavour spokesman said the group had been working with and engaging with communities and groups in Darwin for almost five years to develop a plan for a Dan Murphy's store that would operate responsibly.

“We have sought and received feedback from local Aboriginal organisation Larrakia Nation, and they have contributed to some of the measures we have put in place for the proposed Dan Murphy's, and the continued dialogue for precinct management if the store opens,” he said.

“We have been engaging with the traditional owners of the land of the proposed store through the Gwalwa Dariniki Association which administers the Kulaluk and Minmarama communities, for more than three years, and we have their support.

“We have sought feedback from other organisations, and remain very keen to meet with them.”

About 45 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community organisation leaders wrote to Mr Cairns late last year calling for him to abandon the store altogether.