



Position Paper – Pepper Spray trial in the Northern Territory

October, 2025.

NPY Women's Council expresses strong opposition to the Northern Territory Government's decision to carry out a 12-month trial, effective 1st September, to allow members of the community to purchase, possess, and use Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray — commonly known as pepper spray. This policy shift forms part of a broader "tough on crime" agenda that continues to disproportionately target and harm Aboriginal communities.

During the 12-month trial period, OC spray is available for over-the-counter purchase from licensed firearms dealers throughout the Territory. Civilians aged 18 and over are eligible to purchase OC spray upon presenting valid identification and completing a 'buyer declaration' affirming they have no relevant criminal history, police, or court orders that would classify them as a 'prohibited person.' However, concerns have been raised regarding the lack of oversight and accountability, as well as the legislation's vague language permitting the use of OC spray when it is considered a "reasonable response in the circumstances as the person perceives them."

***"You know all the Directors we don't want to create more problems. It's dangerous. It's a big risk. It's going to cause more violence. We don't want that to come into communities or to be in community stores [...] We say no, no pepper spray."*– NPYWC Director.**

NPY Women's Council Board of Directors have expressed concerns that the purchase of OC spray could impact Anangu young people and families travelling in and out of Alice Springs, as well as traverse borders and potentially reach SA and WA communities without adequate guidance around how and when the spray can be used. Introducing weapons into the community under the guise of safety contradicts the evidence; such measures are far more likely to escalate conflict than to prevent it, leading to a diminished sense of safety for all. If the NT Government is genuinely committed to building safer, more cohesive communities, it must shift its focus from punitive measures to addressing the structural conditions that give rise to harm. Communities need investment in housing, health, education and specialist domestic violence and youth services in order to achieve meaningful change.

NPY Women's Council urges the NT Government to listen to the evidence, centre the voices of those most impacted, and significantly invest in community-led, culturally informed solutions that promote healing, justice, and long-term wellbeing for Anangu.