1 September

Tackling Alcohol Related Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

The Northern Territory Government today announced the most comprehensive reforms in the Territory’s history to curb alcohol-fuelled violence and crime.

Attorney-General and Minister for Alcohol Policy, Delia Lawrie, said a new five-point plan would tackle alcohol abuse and reduce anti social behaviour in the Territory.

“Alcohol continues to be involved in 60 per cent of all assaults and 67 per cent of domestic violence assaults which is simply too high, while last year police reported taking people into protective custody 54,000 times.

“Studies also show that alcohol abuse costs our community a staggering $642 million or $4197 for every adult Territorian compared to $944 per adult nationally.

“Our Government is saying enough is enough and taking tough action to turn off the tap to problem drinkers in our community who continually commit alcohol fuelled violence and crime.

“The reforms will also provide consistency across the Territory and ensure bans on drinking and take away alcohol can be effective anywhere in the Territory.”

“The majority of Territorians who responsibly enjoy a drink and don’t get involved in alcohol fuelled crime and violence won’t be affected.”

The new proposed reforms include:

- Banning problem drinkers from purchasing takeaway alcohol
- Introducing mandatory rehabilitation treatment for problem drinkers
- Rolling out a new Territory-wide Banned Drinker Register in all take away liquor outlets
- Replacing the existing Alcohol Court with a Substance Misuse Assessment and Referral for Treatment (SMART) Court
- Expanding and enhancing rehabilitation and treatment options for problem drinkers

ALCOHOL BANNING NOTICES

The Government plans to introduce new laws that allow NT Police to issue alcohol banning notices preventing problem drinkers from consuming and purchasing take away alcohol.

Under the proposed new laws, Police may issue a banning notice of up to 12 months to a person who is:

- Placed in protective custody three times in three months
- Charged with an alcohol-related offence
- Involved in family and domestic violence assaults and offences involving alcohol
After being issued with a third banning notice, a person will be referred to the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Tribunal. The Tribunal can issue drinking bans and make mandatory treatment orders for problem drinkers.

“These proposed new laws will provide Police with greater powers to intervene and turn the tap off to problem drinkers,” Ms Lawrie said.

“It will also allow health workers and family members to step in and ask for a problem drinker to be banned from drinking or buying take away alcohol.”

**BANNED DRinker REGISTER**

The Northern Government will provide $6 million to roll out a Banned Drinker Register in all take away outlets in the Northern Territory where an ID or permit system is not currently in place.

Ms Lawrie said 70 per cent of all alcohol sold in the Territory were take away purchases and the Territory-wide alert system will prevent banned problem drinkers from buying take away alcohol.

“The Banned Drinker Register alerts licensees to banned drinkers who attempt to buy take away alcohol,” she said.

“It is an important measure to make sure the tap is turned off to people who have been deemed a banned drinker.

“While everyone buying takeaway alcohol will have photo identification scanned it’s a small inconvenience to cut crime and violence and to keep our community safe.”

**ALCOHOL COURT REFORMS**

As part of the reforms, the Alcohol Court will be replaced by a new Substance Misuse Assessment and Referral for Treatment (SMART) Court to deal with people charged with a criminal offence where alcohol or drug abuse is involved.

Ms Lawrie said the SMART Court will have more flexibility than the existing Alcohol Court, and will be able to deal with a wider range of offenders.

“Orders handed down in the SMART Court will be more flexible and be tailored to meet the needs of individuals charged with alcohol and/or drug related offences,” she said.

**INCREASED REHABILITATION SERVICES**

There are currently 300 treatment and sobering up shelter beds across the Territory.

The Territory Government will continue to work with the Australian Government to further increase rehabilitation and treatment options for problem drinkers including extra treatment beds, counselling and outreach programs.

**AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**
The Northern Territory Government will provide $500,000 a year for ongoing community education campaigns to promote safe and responsible drinking in a bid to change the culture of drinking in the Territory.

A comprehensive television, radio and print advertising campaign, themed *Enough is Enough* will begin soon highlighting and explaining the new reforms.

This will build on the NT Government’s successful *Championship Moves* advertising campaign and compliment existing Australian Government’s binge drinking awareness campaigns.

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