CLP AMT Urgency Motion not so Urgent while Beds remain Unused

Shadow Minister for Alcohol Policy, Natasha Fyles, said that CLP amendments passed on urgency in November 2014 to give health professionals the ability to refer Territorians to Alcohol Mandatory Treatment (AMT) facilities are still not in effect 11 months later.

“To pass something on urgency and not act on it 11 months later speaks directly to the Giles Government’s incompetence and is further proof that they can’t be trusted to perform to the most basic of functions,” said Natasha Fyles.

Back then the CLP argued the amendments on urgency were designed to "strengthen and increase the referral pathways to AMT" - a key recommendation of a Review of the Act commissioned by the Government and delivered in March 2014.

The urgent AMT Bill sought to amend Section 8 of the Act and insert:

\[(d) \text{ is, in accordance with procedures prescribed by regulation:} \]
\[(i) \text{ referred by a health practitioner to a senior assessment clinician for an assessment; and} \]
\[(ii) \text{ taken to an assessment facility} \]

This latest error is in addition to a number of scandals associated with the establishment of this unworkable policy, including:

- The CLP Government is only pursuing a police response to what is clearly a social problem;
- AMT was initially established at the medi-hotel at the expense of remote patients seeking treatment and accommodation in Darwin and the secure care facility in Alice Springs was initially utilised for AMT patients instead of its required use;
- Minister Lambley promised 182 beds in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Gove and Katherine while Minister Elferink confirmed only 138 beds in Darwin, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek at Estimates this year;
- The 2013/14 Annual Report shows that only 400 out of 800 projected people were treated at AMT centres showing underutilisation;
- There was a death in care in October 2014. The Coroner was critical about the lack of procedures and the lack of an evidence base for the forced detainment of people for three months and recommended an independent evaluation, and;
- There has still not been an announcement about the successful tenderer for an independent evaluation of the program.

“There are also claims that as a result of capital works to protective custody police facilities in Darwin, there have been zero referrals to the Darwin AMT center for some time, which means:

- No one is being assessed at the 12 bed unit run by the Department of Health, and;
- There are no referrals for treatment to the 78 bed facility in Berrimah, opened in late 2014.

“The incompetence of this CLP Government has left Territorians without the most basic levels of service we all rightfully expect. The sad truth is that no one trusts the CLP to follow through on anything they say.”

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