Gerry Wood, Independent Member for Nelson, says that his recent visit to the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Centre at Berrimah operated by Saltbush Mob has reinforced his belief that these types of centres are essential in helping people with severe alcohol dependency to be given a chance to turn their lives around.

He says while he knows there has been a review of these centres he is still concerned that the new Government will close these centres regardless.

Gerry says that critics of these centres should visit the centres first and get an understanding of what those running these centres are trying to do.

Gerry says the programme helps people who are continually affected by alcohol and who cannot make meaningful decisions anymore. It also gets these people off the streets where they have become a public nuisance and where their own lives are at risk.

Gerry says the programme deals not only with problems caused by the abuse of alcohol but for many residents it is the first chance they have had for years to have a thorough health check. This is an opportunity for any health problems to be assessed and treated.

He says when the programme is completed there is a six month follow up by an aftercare case coordinator. Residents are also assisted in returning to their country which is another benefit of the programme.

He says some may oppose these treatment centres based on them being mandatory but if they are operated for the right reasons such as compassion and a genuine concern for those who cannot help themselves then he believes they are an essential part of alcohol rehabilitation programmes in the NT.

Gerry says he understands that running these centres in not cheap but the benefits outweigh the cost implications. He says that the Government should increase its take on revenue from all the pokie machines in pubs and clubs to fund these centres. After all the alcohol industry needs to take its fair share of responsibility for helping the less fortunate.