LAST DRINKS FOR CLAYTON’S COURT

The resignation of the Katherine Court clinician due to the tiny number of clients she treats highlights a significant and costly policy failure by the Henderson Government.

Member for Katherine, Willem Westra van Holthe, said the resignation of Veronica Murphy from the Katherine Court further highlights the Henderson Government’s failure to properly utilise the alcohol courts.

“During her 18 month tenure with the court, Veronica has had just 17 referrals through the Katherine Alcohol Court, and just 4 of those people have completed their treatment,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“Mrs Murphy’s hours have been cut by the Government to such an extent she could no longer afford to live on the income she earned at the Court.

“Given the extensive problems associated with alcohol in Katherine, it defies belief that the court clinician is under-worked. How is it that only 17 of the hundreds of habitual drunks in Katherine are being diverted from the criminal justice system through the Alcohol Court?

“This is a clear sign that this half-hearted effort is another example of the lip service this Government pays to alcohol problems Territory wide.

“Far from the Henderson Government getting on top of the grog problems in Katherine, the latest figures show apprehensions in the town have increased significantly.

“From the start of this year to mid September there were more than 6000 apprehensions by Katherine police for drunkenness compared to just under
4000 for the same period last year. These figures don’t include additional drunks taken to the sobering up shelter.”

But the problem with Alcohol Courts is not restricted to Katherine.

Mr Westra van Holthe understands the court clinician in Gove is employed only one day a week at the local hospital and that one full Court Clinician’s position in Darwin has also been cut.

“My colleague, the Shadow Justice Minister Jodeen Carney, has been warning for years that the Alcohol Courts are failing Territorians.

Labor has a ‘soft’ approach to law and order issues, including alcohol problems. Failing to take a hard-line is condemning problem drunks to a lifetime of ill-health.

“It’s time the Government started listening and stopped kidding themselves that their alcohol policies are working.”

Further comment: Willem Westra van Holthe 0414 778 430