MEDIA RELEASE

SMART COURTS AREN’T VERY BRIGHT

John Elferink MLA
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The Government’s plan to introduce SMART courts for dealing with problem drunks is a re-hash of its failed Alcohol Court experiment.

Shadow Justice Minister, John Elferink, said four years of failure by the alcohol courts to reduce anti-social behaviour have taught the Henderson Government nothing.

The Government describes the SMART courts as having the power to ‘make particular orders for eligible offenders who are seriously misusing alcohol or other drugs, and for related purposes’.

"But basically the SMART courts uses a similar model as the alcohol courts," Mr Elferink said.

"In the first 18 months of the alcohol courts, only 8 people successfully completed court order treatment programs – a dismal failure by any measure.

"Between July 2006 and mid last year only about 390 people fronted the court, 201 treatment orders were made and of those, 83 were not completed.

"Given that more than 35,000 people were placed in protective custody across the Territory in the past year, it’s obvious alcohol courts are irrelevant.

"The SMART courts are not about being tough on drunks, they’re about treating offenders as victims with a view to keeping them out of jail and giving them another chance.

"Sadly it is the public who pay the penalty.

"Territorians are sick and tired of being the punching bags for the Henderson Government’s failed policies.

"If the Government wants offenders to go through treatment programs, then they can use the existing sentencing powers and ensure rehabilitation programs are available across the Territory."

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