Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says the Chief Minister on Stateline has stated that people with a drinking problem have a disease but the Attorney General believes that repeated drunks will be required to attend rehabilitation and if not they will be guilty of an offence.

Gerry says they should not be made criminals.

Gerry says that he supports compulsory rehabilitation but not the requirement to send people to prison.

He says compulsory rehabilitation for repeat drunks would give
- those affected people a chance to dry out and time to assess where they are going with their lives and
- a chance for the community to have some peace from these people’s anti-social behaviour

He says that the process of committing someone to compulsory rehabilitation could follow a similar law to that passed earlier this year called the Mental Health and Related Services Act. This Act allows the involuntary admission of a patient with a cognitive disability to a purpose-built facility designed to help protect that person from themselves or others. One such centre already exists at Holtze.

Gerry says a similar facility or facilities could be built for those continually picked up for drunkenness. This could be part of an existing rehabilitation centre or a stand-alone facility.

Gerry says the CLP policy of obtaining a conviction so that they can be sent to gaol and then do rehabilitation is the wrong way to go.

The Mental Health and Related Services Act allows an independent Tribunal such as the Mental Health Review Tribunal to make decisions about whether a person should be admitted to a mental health facility and that could be a similar process for those with long-term drinking problems.
Gerry says that unless they have committed a serious crime, people should be treated in a place that is staffed by professionals and structured around attending to the patient’s mental and physical health, nutrition, education and rehabilitation. It should not be run by Corrections but by the Department of Health whose Minister now is responsible for Alcohol Policy. The Chief Minister has said drunkenness is a disease.

Gerry says that before the Governments acts on any policy it should be talking to those providers already operating such as CAAPS, Amity and FORWAARD to get a second opinion to make sure that whatever policy the Government does, it will have a real chance of affecting real change in the lives of those who most need help.

Cessi foro gallinarum sed surgo