Alcohol lock ups in our suburbs doomed to fail

Leader of the Opposition, Delia Lawrie, today slammed the CLP Government plan to lock up 140 problem drinkers in residential settings, saying it will fail to tackle thousands of chronic drinkers across the Territory and breaches basic human rights.

“It’s a disgrace that the CLP are giving Police powers to detain people for up to 72 hours without any clinical assessment in facilities that people will literally abscond from into our suburbs,” Ms Lawrie said.

“Territorians have seen a massive surge of drunks on our streets since the CLP scrapped the Banned Drinkers Register (BDR) and AOD Tribunal. There were 2,500 banned drunks restricted from purchasing takeaway alcohol – what will happen to the 2360 drunks the CLP are ignoring?”

“In another broken promise, the CLP have torn up their election commitment to build secure rehabilitation facilities in Katherine and central Australia. Instead they announce plans to use the Royal Darwin Hospital medi-hotel designed for patients. It is outrageous.

“The CLP had promised it would build compulsory rehabilitation centres yet now it is pushing the problems onto the non-government sector that has no facilities or programs designed to compulsory detain people.”

Ms Lawrie said deep divisions in the CLP over this doomed policy clearly still exist, with Minister Robyn Lambley this morning blaming her colleague the Treasurer, Dave Tollner, for a failure to deliver supply restrictions in Darwin and Palmerston, which she indicated would have her support.

“The CLP are in disarray, they know this disgraceful abuse of human rights will fail to tackle the scourge of chronic alcohol misuse and that it is little more than window dressing without the support of experts in this sector,” Ms Lawrie said.

“A significant flaw in this plan is that it relies on Police to use the protective custody system, but the Police have turned away from taking problem drinkers into protective custody and are instead taking them to sobering up shelters or our hospitals.

“It is an expensive farce, a clumsy attempt to tackle demand side of problem drinking that will leave thousands of problem drinkers still on our streets with unrestricted access to grog causing ongoing mayhem.”

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