The second quarterly figures released today show the Government’s Alcohol Mandatory Treatment system is having a significant impact in taking chronic alcoholics off the streets and giving them the opportunity to turn their lives around.

In the first six months of operation, 206 people have been referred to the system – steering people away from the revolving door of protective custody and sobering up shelters, and placing problem drinkers in an environment to address their serious alcohol addiction.

Between July and December, 164 problem drinkers were placed on treatment orders. Of these, 155 people have so far completed orders of up to three months.

Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation Robyn Lambley said there had been many success stories in the first six months of operation.

“Our AMT system is providing a pathway for problem drinkers to address their alcohol abuse, reconnecting people with family and rebuilding their support networks in the community,” she said.

“In another positive step, 78 clients have been placed on 70 per cent income management for up to 12 months following the Federal Government granting welfare quarantining powers last year.

“These powers provide a further tool to restrict people from accessing alcohol once they leave treatment,” Mrs Lambley said.

Mrs Lambley today also opened the six month review of the AMT legislation which was committed to at the time it was passed in June last year (terms of reference attached).

“Given this is an entirely new system it is important to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the Act and the way in which it facilitates access to treatment by people who repeatedly misuse alcohol,” Mrs Lambley said.

“The purpose of this review is to evaluate the legislation and will also take submissions on instances of serious misuse of alcohol which do not currently fall within the ambit of the Act.

“I welcome feedback from all stakeholders and the community as the Government looks to strengthen and enhance the system. Only the Country Liberals are willing to take the tough steps to curb alcohol abuse in the Territory.

“The Country Liberals Government has a comprehensive range of supply, demand and harm minimisation measures in place as we tackle the Territory’s alcohol problems.”

Quarterly reports and information on the six month review can be found on the Department of Health’s website (AMT link). Submissions for the review close on 14 February and can be sent to alcoholmandatorytreatment.doh@nt.gov.au
The following are real life case studies. To ensure the privacy and integrity of the persons involved, identities have been removed.

1. Top End male
A 50-year-old man from a remote Top End community, who had been taken into protective custody 81 times in the past 12 months, was admitted to the Darwin Alcohol Assessment and Treatment Service (DAATS). During assessment, the man told caseworkers he had not seen his family for two to three years and wanted to get better and return to country. He wanted to go fishing and hunting and eat bush tucker. Following his three month treatment at DAATS, the Indigenous Liaison Officer and case manager took the man back to the community where he was able to reconnect with both his family and the land. He participates in alcohol counselling at the local clinic.

2. Top End female
A blind woman, aged in her 50s from a remote community in the Katherine region, was admitted to DAATS for mandatory treatment. She had been in protective custody 16 times over the past 12 months. During her time at DAATS, she admitted she hadn’t been in touch with her family for years and stayed in the vicinity of Katherine, drinking in the long grass. The Indigenous Liaison Officers at DAATS found the woman’s family who thought the woman had died and had previously issued a missing person’s report. On completing her mandatory treatment order of three months, the woman was assisted to return to her community where she was reunited with her family and is now cared for by her nieces.

3. Central Australian male
A 45-year-old man who had been placed into protective custody 13 times over the past 12 months was taken to the Alice Springs facility. During his first episode of treatment there was no positive response. The client avoided caseworkers and program activities and after graduation he relapsed immediately. Two weeks later he returned to treatment with a complete change in mind set. He participated in the program, asked for help, and admitted that he saw no chance in staying away from harmful alcohol use whilst in Alice Springs. He requested assistance to travel so he could reconnect with his family interstate. He was placed on a comprehensive after care plan in which the family features as the main support with help from AA and community centres. The client is now returning to his community to reconnect with his mother and son and to concentrate on his music and art and is supported through an aftercare plan.

4. Central Australian female
A 64-year-old hearing impaired woman was admitted to the Alice Springs facility, Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Programmes Unit (CAAAPU), in a confused state. The client is a talented artist and the money she earned from her ability to paint high quality paintings was being used to buy alcohol. After sessions with a case worker, she expressed a desire to return to her community. She was facilitated to return to a healthy lifestyle and address her hearing and dementia issues. The woman is back in community and can now concentrate on her art, which she really loves. Her relatives have reported that she feels safe and happy now.

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