Media Release

John Elferink
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Legislative changes for tattooing and intimate body piercing of minors

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Tattooing and intimate body piercing of minors could soon be illegal in the Northern Territory under proposed changes to the Summary Offences Act.

Under the proposed legislation, a person must be over the age of 18 years to obtain a tattoo or intimate body piercing, or have the consent of a parent or guardian if they are aged over 16 years.

Attorney-General John Elferink said the laws will create certainty in an industry which is currently self-regulated.

“The changes will see minors who present to a tattoo or piercing parlour be refused service if they do not have the appropriate approvals; something which will come as a great relief to many parents,” Mr Elferink said.

Mim d’Abbs of Darwin City Tattoos supports the introduction of a minimum age limit for minors.

“This is about ensuring that people make sound decisions about something that is supposed to be permanent and cannot be easily removed,” she said.

“Additionally, it will provide parents with peace of mind that without their knowledge, no person is able to tattoo or provide an intimate body piercing to their child without their consent and knowledge.”

Mr Elferink said the Northern Territory Government wants to stamp out ‘backyard’ services which are often unhygienic and dangerous for clients.

Any person charged with tattooing or performing an intimate body piercing on a minor could face up to 12 months imprisonment.

Non-intimate body piercing of a minor will also require the consent of a parent or legal guardian, under the proposed legislation.

The proposed changes will bring the Northern Territory into line with other jurisdictions in the country which have similar legislation.
The *Summary Offences Act* defines ‘body piercing’ as the penetration of a person’s skin or mucous membrane for the purpose of inserting a foreign object.

‘Tattooing’ is defined as ‘a procedure where the purpose is to make a permanent mark on the skin of a person or something similar, and includes the procedures known as scarification, branding, beading and tongue splitting.

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