Robyn Lambley
Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation

**Changes to Alcohol Mandatory Treatment**

30 October 2014

Minister for Health Robyn Lambley will today update Parliament on enhancements to the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment program and announce amendments to the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Act.

The changes, which will go before the Legislative Assembly in the November sittings, will increase referral pathways for chronic drinkers and drop the offence provision for absconding from a treatment facility.

Alcohol Mandatory Treatment (AMT) is helping problem drinkers get the treatment they need to turn their lives around.

Previously, problem drinkers could only be referred to mandatory treatment after being taken into protective custody three times in two months.

The amendments mean Emergency Department doctors and other health professionals will now be able to refer chronic drinkers into Alcohol Mandatory Treatment. In addition, people currently excluded from AMT because of charges resulting from their drinking, will be eligible to access this treatment.

Mrs Lambley said Emergency Department doctors and the Police are at the frontline of alcohol abuse and they have called for this change.

“These amendments to the Act will also include the removal of the offence of absconding from an AMT facility,” Mrs Lambley said.

“I am happy to say that absconding is no longer an issue within any of our facilities in the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment program.

“We are now treating clients in three very secure treatment facilities, and clients are participating well in their programs which they regard as a health service.

“When I visited our new Stringybark facility in Darwin last month, I talked with clients about their treatment.

“They are embracing the chance to get well and get off the grog.
“At CAAAPU in Alice Springs they are doing some great work with their clients.

“For many years, alcohol abuse has been a major concern for Alice Springs residents and the wider region as it affects families, neighbourhoods and businesses.

“I am proud to say that Alcohol Mandatory Treatment is helping to re-connect people with families and communities, as well as training and employment.”

These changes are part of the Phase Two rollout of Alcohol Mandatory Treatment, which includes new services in Darwin and Tennant Creek, providing a total of 150 beds.

**Media Contact:** Jack Cranwell - 0428 574 943