PERMIT SYSTEM CURBING ALCOHOL ABUSE ON GROOTE EYLANDT

The Northern Territory Government’s two day Community Cabinet meeting on Groote Eylandt kicked off today with a first hand briefing on the success of the liquor permit system.

The Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister met with the Anindilyakwa Land Council and representatives from the community, police and licensees today to see how effective the system was working.

“This is a great example of how successful Government and community partnerships can be,” said Ms Martin.

“The Territory Government is committed to working with all communities in developing local solutions to local problems – and breaking the cycle of alcohol abuse.

“There have been clear and positive results including a 60% reduction in alcohol related violence on Groote following the introduction of the permit scheme in July 2005,” said M Martin.

Other positive indicators include:

- fewer police callouts, especially to the Aboriginal communities in the evenings;
- fewer ambulance callouts;
- reduced absenteeism at GEMCO; and
- reduced overtime payments to police officers in Alyangula.

Minister Stirling says the permit system is part of a greater alcohol management plan implemented by the Department of Racing, Gaming and Licensing.

“We have put in place an effective tool to stop people with alcohol problems buying takeaway liquor,” said Mr Stirling.

“Residents must have a permit to purchase takeaway alcohol, and those people are registered with their two local licensees.” He said.

Eligibility for a permit was determined by a committee, which includes representatives from the Anindilyakwa Land Council, each of the three Aboriginal community councils, police, health, the mining company GEMCO, and the two liquor licensees.
The Territory Government is implementing the following reforms to fight alcohol abuse:

- A re-write of the entire liquor act to ensure it is relevant and effective for the Territory today and into the future;
- No new takeaway licenses for 12 months, and after that only in clubs and hotels;
- New license conditions have been introduced in various towns, including the Nguiu club which is only allowed to have mid-strength beer, Tennant Creek which has new hours of operation and restrictions on products;
- Alcohol courts to help break the cycle between anti-social / offending behaviour and drinking;
- Public Dry Areas legislation allowing public areas such as neighbourhood parks to be declared dry is expected to be introduced to Parliament in the next sittings;
- Private Premises legislation allowing people to declare their own residences alcohol free came into effect on 1 July
- A study of the Mitchell St precinct to determine the optimum number of licenses

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