TIME TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC

New figures in the Police, Fire and Emergency Services 2007 Annual Report show yet another substantial increase in the number of people being taken into protective custody, says the Territory Opposition.

“"The fact that 26,448 people were taken into protective custody in 2006/07 compared to 16,450 in 2002/03 highlights the failure of the Labor Government’s alcohol policy,” says Terry Mills, Opposition spokesperson for Alcohol Policy.

“The latest available figures for alcohol consumption confirm that Territorians are drinking more and more – pure alcohol consumption in the Territory jumped from 38.32 million litres in 2001-02 to 43.82 million litres in 2004-05.

“Too many people are getting blind drunk in public and that has a direct impact on the quality of life of too many other Territorians.

“I am very concerned about the continued surge in violent assault and a persistent problem with anti-social behaviour, which are largely fuelled by alcohol abuse.

“Last year, the Labor Government imposed a moratorium on the issuing of new licences for takeaway sales of alcohol – well after the horse has bolted.

“I believe we need to take a more direct approach to the issue of alcohol abuse and its effect on law and order.

“Firstly, we need enough police on the beat to ensure public disturbances can be dealt with in an effective manner.

“People playing up – drunk or sober – are best bought into line by the timely arrival of a police car. The people of Darwin deserve to know a police car will attend when they are being subjected to thuggish, hoonish anti-social behaviour.

“The courts have an important role to play here – too many have no fear of appearing before a magistrate because of lenient sentencing.

“We also need to divert young people away from drug and alcohol abuse before it becomes a ‘way of life’.

“Wilderness camps for young offenders are desperately needed to give tomorrow’s offenders another option today.”

Further comment : Terry Mills 04188 33594