Alice women’s shelter backs tough grog laws

Andrea Johnston

ALICE Springs women are spending fewer nights in crisis accommodation than in previous years, thanks largely to the town’s tough alcohol policies.

The Alice Springs Women’s Shelter annual report has indicated the number of nights slept in crisis accommodation by Central Australian women is dropping.

The report attributes this to the introduction of point-of-sale intervention at bottle shops.

“Comparing the crisis accommodation statistics from 2012-13 to 2014-15 financial year shows there has been a 30 per cent drop in the number of nights of accommodation provided to women and children experiencing domestic violence,” the report stated.

It said the number of people the ASWS supported remained roughly the same, but the type of support needed had changed.

More than 1500 women and children had accessed its services in the past year.

Families stayed for shorter periods or received crisis intervention that didn’t include accommodation.

The 30 per cent drop was reported to be “similar” to the drop in alcohol-related assaults recorded by NT Police.

In addition, fewer intoxicated women presented to the service and the shelter was full on fewer occasions.

The shelter’s outreach service, which includes court support, counseling, and men’s behavioural change programs, led to a further 800 occasions on which ASWS was accessed.

A Remote Outreach Service is also under way, which the report calls an “exciting development”. Four communities will benefit from the service which will be funded to the same level as crisis accommodation for the first time.

People from 85 communities across four states accessed services provided by the shelter in the last year, with 97 per cent of crisis accommodation residents identifying as Aboriginal.

Despite some positive news, demand still continues to outstrip supply. But change could be afoot on a national level.

In the executive officer’s report, Dale Wakefield asked whether we would look back on 2015 and be able to pinpoint it as the year the country decided to take violence against women seriously.

“The fact that 220 people turned up to hear Australian of the Year Rosie Batty speak was an ‘extraordinary number’ for our small town,” Ms Wakefield said.

She said, “It shows this is an issue our community cares about.”

Ensuring our rights

THE 2015 Northern Territory Human Rights Awards ceremony, The Fitzgeralds, was held at the Supreme Court in Darwin on Friday night.

Thirteen people and organisations were recognised with six highly commended and seven winners across the four categories.

One Centralian program took home a gong, with the Fitzgerald Youth Award going to Tennant Creek High School’s Stronger Sisters Program.

The program works with young women to instil leadership and life skills.

The awards have been named in honour of the former anti-discrimination commissioner, Tony Fitzgerald.

Current commissioner Sally Sievers said 51 nominations were received for four awards, acknowledging those who work on a day-to-day basis for human rights in the Territory.

Cheaper parking at airport

UNDERCOVER parking at Alice Springs Airport is dropping in price by $2 a day thanks to the “great” return on investment provided by solar energy.

The original price of $19 per day for long-term, undercover parking is now $17 per day.