Alcohol abuse high

Political parties search for formula to stop scourge

Jim Robertson

TEMPORARY Beat Locations and the Banned Drinkers Reg- isters remain the top political is- sues around Alice Springs in the lead up to the NT election on August 27.

Part-owner of the busy Gap View Hotel Di Loechel spoke exclusively with the Advocate to give the public a view from the frontline of a contentious battle over alcohol control.

“We’ve always been the crash test dummy of sorts when it comes to this sort of stuff,” Ms Loechel said.

“When the TBLs (Temporal- ary Beat Locations) came in it was bad for our business and quite detrimental to other businesses in town, so yes we found a few things frustrating. We’ve always thought that perhaps there were other things that could be done that would be more beneficial — having said that they’ve prob- ably made some difference to the general public.”

The Country Liberals’ al- cohol policy for Alice Springs includes expanding alcohol mandatory treatment, keeping alcohol protection orders, pro- viding more training for health workers to deal with drunks and keeping TBLs in the town full time.

Under Territory Labor, TBLs will be transferred to the control of police, who will de- cide what times to station offi- cers at bottleshops, while the Banned Drinkers Register (BDR) is also set to be reintro- duced.

Ms Loechel said she was in support of the BDR returning.

“We had the BDR here pre- viously and it does seem a fairer system — everyone is put through the same process.”

“The scanners we had dur- ing that period accepted licens- es from every state and territory, international licens- es, passports and also proof of age cards. If something came up on the system we would just decline the sale and explain to the person that we couldn’t serve them legally — it was a very smooth process.”

Alongside the reintroduc- tion of a technological solu- tion, Ms Loechel said she would like to see the BDR ex- panded to become a more ef- fective tool. “I think some form of electronic system, whether it be fingerprint or license scan- ning would work.”

Coroner recounts how dry community descends into dreadful chaos when illegal grog arrives

Tom Volling

THE availability of alcohol in the NT is one of the most sig- nificant factors impacting Ab- original women and children, a coronial inquest has heard.

“You go into dry communi- ties as a visiting magistrate and see the spike of domestic viol- ence that occurs when there is a ship load of illegal grog that arrives the day before,” NT Coroner Greg Caravanagh said.

“Everything has been peaceful, but then the grog flows for a night or two, then suddenly the black eyes, the bloody noses and the aggra- vated assault files.”

The inquest into domestic violence in Alice Springs heard from NT Police Assistant Commissioner Jeanette Kerr, who recently completely a thes- is on domestic violence in Ab- original communities at Cambridge University.

Her research showed al- cohol outlet density and avail- ability of packaged alcohol impact the wellbeing of Abor- ignal women and children.

“Research shows that the vi- olence in Aboriginal com- munities becomes more prevalent and crime-harm be- comes more when alcohol be- comes more freely available,” counsel assisting the coroner Kelvin Currie read.

NT Police Assistant Com- missioneer Kate Vanderlaan told the inquest alcohol was a factor in 66 per cent of dom- estic violence assaults and per- haps had the biggest affect on crime statistics.

She said violence, particu- larly in Alice Springs, Kather- ine and Tennant Creek, decreased when efforts were made to reduce alcohol supply in 2012-13.

“At the height of the intro-