February 4th, 2013

Health-based approaches to rehabilitation for problem drinkers is the preferred approach of the Northern Territory Government, the Minister for Alcohol Policy, David Tollner, said today.

Mr Tollner said he agreed with the findings of a new study by Deloitte Access Economics released today which found state governments save more than $110,000 every time an alcohol, or drug-addicted Aboriginal offenders was ordered into rehabilitation, instead of being sent to jail.

“The Government is working on a health-based approach to rehabilitation of habitual drinkers, rather than putting people through the justice arena,” Mr Tollner said.

Mr Tollner said the Government’s new legislation – which is expected to be ready in the middle of this year – will include a tribunal that will direct a person at risk to undergo mandatory rehabilitation.

“Problem drinkers will face clinical assessment before they go before the tribunal,” Mr Tollner said.

Today’s Deloitte’s report also confirmed the over-representation of Aboriginal people in jail, the relationship between drug and alcohol addiction and crime; and the high rates of recidivism among Australia’s indigenous jail population.

“This Government is committed to introducing mandatory rehabilitation and the means of addressing problem drunks in our public places,” Mr Tollner said.

“The best way of rehabilitating drunks is to get them in to jobs and we will be focussing on employment outcomes.

“There is no better rehabilitation than being required to get up in the morning and go to work.

“This will take time but it is about working with all service providers in developing and supporting a sustainable framework to tackle a problem which impacts significantly upon community harmony.”

Mr Tollner said the Government had dismantled the flawed system put in place by the previous Labor government – including axing the impracticable Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal, and the ineffective banned drinkers’ register.

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