

Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review
c/o Department of Health
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Dear Review Manager,

Submission to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Northern Territory (NT) Government's *Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review*. This review process provides the NT Government with an important opportunity to implement comprehensive reforms to strengthen the regulation of alcohol and reduce alcohol-related harms in the NT.

In the Northern Territory, 38.6 per cent of people aged 12 years and older consume alcohol at rates that place them at risk of short-term harm and 28.8 per cent over consume alcohol at levels that place them at risk of long-term harm, including chronic disease and illness.¹ This is significantly more than the proportion reporting such consumption nationally (25.7 per cent and 17.6 per cent respectively).² The NT also has some of the heaviest consumption rates in the world. The latest data shows that consumption in the NT is 11.9 litres per capita.³ This means that if NT was a country it would be in the top ten countries with the heaviest consumption rates.⁴

Alcohol is too readily available in the Territory with one licence for every 353 people aged 18 years and above.¹ Too many people are affected by alcohol-related harms. Alcohol is responsible for more than 9,000 emergency department presentations and associated with nearly 65 per cent of all family and domestic violence cases where the alcohol status is known. In some areas of the NT, this figure is more than 80 per cent.⁵

About AADANT

The Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies NT (AADANT) is the peak body for the Non-Government Alcohol and Other Drugs sector in the Northern Territory. We are an independent, membership-driven, not-for-profit association. We work with our members to support and strengthen Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) service delivery for people who experience harmful substance use in the NT.

Our mission is to build and maintain a strong, sustainable and culturally diverse AOD sector that works together to reduce alcohol and other drug related harm across the Northern Territory.

Representation and Advocacy

The Association of Other Drug Agencies NT and its members welcome the review of the Alcohol Policies and Legislation. We embrace the review and implementation of strategies that reflect a harm minimisation approach, one that addresses the issue of; availability of alcohol, restrictions on

¹ Based on the number of licensed premises as at 8 July 2016 and the Northern Territory population of 180,970 aged 18 and over at 30 June 2015 [Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) 3101.0 - *Australian demographic statistics, Dec 2015*. Population by age and sex tables]

advertising, building on knowledge and research and supporting local actions. We support approaches that involve the whole community and the local action groups who have long lobbied for change in the way we view alcohol and its use in the Northern Territory. We support Community consultation and local answers for local problems, and look forward to working with the Government and the Community on this important issue.

AADANT Recommendations

AADANT supports the implementation of the Banned Drinker Registry (BDR) and recommend evaluation of the progress of this initiative to commence as soon as practicable.

AADANT would also like to state that we support the recommendations of FARE in its comprehensive submission to this review, and provide the following as a summary of thoughts and recommendations from our membership for consideration.

Supply Reduction

1. Recommendation: The introduction of control measures such as the unit pricing of alcohol (minimum price per standard drink)
2. Recommendation: Consideration to further restricting trading hours for hotels and clubs and bottle shops where take away alcohol is available.
3. Recommendation: Restricting the sale of high concentrate alcohol (shots) in venue after 1 am.
4. Recommendation: Further investigation into the impact of high-density take away liquor outlets and continue the freeze on licencing new outlets until findings are completed.
5. Recommendation: Consider amendments to the Liquor Act to restrict advertising of cheap alcohol (such as bulk purchase of cleanskin wines).

Demand Reduction

1. Recommendation: Provide targeted information campaigns that educate the public on harms associated with alcohol abuse
2. Recommendation: Provide funding for evidence based culturally safe alcohol and other drug treatment across the NT.
3. Recommendation: Funding of specific youth AOD treatment services, including support to time out/withdrawal services/ youth rehabilitation
4. Recommendation: Provide support to community led alcohol awareness initiatives through increased funding for health promotion activities
5. Recommendation: Involve sporting clubs in the Good Sports Program through the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF).
6. Recommendation: Ban advertising of alcoholic products on public billboards, public transport and sporting events that are currently promoted as healthy activities of youth and family participation.

Harm Reduction

1. Recommendation: Develop models of care and ongoing support initiatives to help people return to their homes / communities after exit from treatment, hospitalisation, or prison. Alternatives need to be found for those who exit prison and require AOD treatment rather than entering residential rehabilitation.

2. Recommendation: Develop affordable housing options for those who are coming out of treatment/prison or are homeless.
3. Recommendation: Develop or initiate evidence based longitudinal drug and alcohol education in schools building resilience and problem solving skills in young people
4. Recommendation: Fund and expand the range of non -residential treatment options for those wanting to access Alcohol and other Drug services. Referrals currently made to residential rehabilitation when another AOD service may be more appropriate if available. Day programs for example to address client needs while on parole, working, studying or caring for children.
5. Recommendation: Provide further funding to the AOD sector for workforce development to ensure workforce has the capacity to work with people with alcohol related brain injury and mental health issues. Currently there is limited opportunities for workforce development. The AOD workforce in the NT requires professional development funding. There is little provision for access to training for the AOD workforce and this has resulted in a growing underdeveloped sector.
6. Recommendation: Increase provision of AOD services in prison and on release, develop programs for AOD prisoners on release or parole which includes specific alcohol management plans and treatment requirements.
7. Recommendation: The NT Government should support cross-sectorial training and skills development such as mental health, housing, AOD staff working together for the benefit of clients and community.
8. Recommendation: That the Department of Health make funding available to support AOD sector training, and develop a professional development plan over a 5-year timeframe. This should include the whole AOD sector where possible (Remote, Departmental staff and NGO's.) This may be done in partnership with other stakeholders such as the Primary Health Network NT.
9. Recommendation: Provide skilled staff within the court system who can provide AOD advice and assess the suitability of treatment options for individuals. This would result in less inappropriate referrals to services and expedite the client's progress.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these important issues with you.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Michell Executive Officer
Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies NT (AADANT)

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2014). *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2013*. Retrieved from: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs/data-sources/nds-shs-2013/>

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2014). *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2013*. Retrieved from: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs/data-sources/nds-shs-2013/>

³ Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. (2016). *NT wholesale alcohol supply for 2008-2015*. Northern Territory Government. Retrieved from: <https://justice.nt.gov.au/attorney-general-and-justice/statistics-and-strategy/wholesale-alcohol-supply-data>

⁴ World Health Organization (2016). Global Health Observatory data repository. Recorded alcohol per capita consumption, from 2000 Last update: May 2016. Retrieved from: <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.A1026?lang=en?showonly=GISAH>

⁵ Northern Territory police (2017). *Statistical publications*. Retrieved from <http://www.pfes.nt.gov.au/Police/Community-safety/Northern-Territory-crime-statistics/Statistical-publications.aspx> on 6 June 2017