

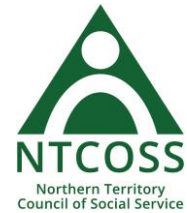


Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT)

An alliance of the Central and Northern Land Councils and
Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory



North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 October 2018

NT coalition of health, justice and social services wholly rejects calls to reinstate Alcohol Mandatory Treatment and to scrap the floor price on alcohol

AMSANT, APO NT, Making Justice Work, NAAJA and NTCOSS wholly reject calls from Independent MLAs Robyn Lambley and Terry Mills to reinstate Alcohol Mandatory Treatment (AMT) and to scrap the floor price on alcohol.

The organisations strongly condemn the NT Opposition for abandoning its bipartisanship on the Riley Report recommendations. It is disappointing to see politicians step away from a strong evidence base under the influence of popular opinion.

The coalition of health, justice and social services reiterate their support for the Riley Report recommendations which are based on evidence and data, and include an evaluation of alcohol reforms. The organisations commend the Northern Territory Government for its comprehensive, broad ranging and whole of community approach to reducing alcohol harms.

The solutions possible under the Riley Report reforms are a once in a generation opportunity to stem the Northern Territory's world leading and ever escalating human and economic costs of alcohol harms.

The failed AMT policy ignored problem alcohol use in the broader community and was an abuse of Aboriginal peoples' human rights, the evaluation proved this. AMTs were expensive and locked people up for being drunk; the policy was about punishment, not treatment.

Initiatives that criminalise harmful alcohol use do not work. Criminalisation of public drunkenness is contrary to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which stated that imprisonment of Aboriginal people should be the last resort.

The price of alcohol is a critical lever in reducing alcohol harms in the community. A floor price on alcohol is not about stopping people from drinking. It is an evidence based, harm minimisation approach that is about people drinking less, and not as often. This approach is supported by the Australian Medical Association. The introduction of an alcohol floor price targets cheap alcohol products and will reduce alcohol related hospitalisations and deaths.

Evidence makes clear that the cheaper the price of alcohol, the more people drink. Young people and heavy drinkers are particularly sensitive to alcohol price, the heaviest drinkers are more likely to seek out cheaper alcohol than moderate drinkers.

Alcohol is not like other food and beverages, it requires a level of Government regulation and intervention that most other products are not subject to, nor require. The social harms from alcohol misuse have been assessed as costing the Northern Territory \$642m per year. This equates to \$4,197 for every adult Territorian, compared to \$943 nationally.

While the Commonwealth Government remains uncommitted to reforming a defective alcohol tax system, which drives the spread of cheap alcohol, it is incumbent on the Northern Territory Government to find options to stem the harm and cost of alcohol. Setting a floor price on alcohol is one way to stem these costs, and the Riley Report provides additional measures.

It is straight forward to calculate the price of alcohol under a floor price. These calculations are available to the public on the NT Government Alcohol Reform website – consumers can do their own sums to work out the cost of their favourite drink – and check that retailers are not putting up prices under the guise of the alcohol floor price.

ENDS

Media comment

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