



MEDIA RELEASE

Call for NT Government to Trial Managed Alcohol Programs to Mitigate Harms of Alcohol Consumption in Public Spaces

29 September 2020

The Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies NT (AADANT) is the peak body for non-government Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) treatment services in the Northern Territory (NT).

We represent over 20 organisations providing drug and alcohol treatment and support to families and clients throughout the NT.

Recent discussions in the media have centred around the proposed changes to alcohol consumption at East Point Reserve. Currently, alcohol can be consumed at East Point Reserve from 5:00p.m.-9:30p.m. Monday-Friday and 12:00p.m.-10:30p.m. on public holidays and weekends. NT Police are calling on the City of Darwin Council to reduce the hours of consumption of alcohol with cessation at 7pm. The recommendation has been made by NT Police in response to increasing rates of anti-social behaviour in the area resulting from the consumption of alcohol.

AADANT is supportive of appropriate, effective amendments to liquor consumption rules, however, there is a clear need to manage issues relating to public alcohol consumption in a strategic, sustainable manner that doesn't interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of public spaces by the broader population.

In 2017, the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review (Riley Review) recommended Managed Alcohol Programs (wet houses) be trialled in an appropriate location in the NT with a comprehensive independent evaluation.

These programs provide safe spaces for people to consume alcohol and are carried out in many forms globally. They are adapted to the needs of the people who want to use them and offer opportunities for engagement and the provision of support services.

The recommendations made by the Riley Review (4.1.1 and 4.2.2) were supported in principle by the Northern Territory Government through their Position on Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review Final Report's Recommendations. To date, there has not been a trial of a managed alcohol program in the NT.

Managed alcohol programs are at the core of harm reduction. They provide a managed location for the consumption of alcohol, reducing the risk of harm to individuals from injury and/or assault and reducing the potential for social disruption by intoxicated persons. The provision of a controlled space further reduces harm by providing access to water and safe shelter for people who consume alcohol and by providing a safe working space for providers of support services and first responders.

The Riley Review's recommendations provide a potential solution to reduce social disruption caused by the excess consumption of alcohol in public by people without an alternative private residence. By providing a safe space to consume alcohol, we offer an alternative option for individuals who choose to consume alcohol without enforcing abstinence. There exists a consistent population of people in the NT who choose to consume alcohol and do not wish to cease but for whom there is no appropriate service available. This cohort of people, and the broader NT community, would significantly benefit from the provision of a managed alcohol program.

AADANT calls on the NT Police and Emergency services, NT Government and Department of Health to support a trial of a managed alcohol program.

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