



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Call for NT Government to ensure continuity of funding for drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs**

16 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.

The NT has made significant gains in reducing harms related to AOD use over the last few years following implementation of measures recommended through the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review (Riley Review). To date, there has been considerable emphasis on the implementation of supply reduction measures such as the Banned Drinkers Register, Minimum Unit Price and use of Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors. To maintain and build upon these gains, it is vital a comprehensive harm minimisation strategy is supported that includes a sufficiently supported and resourced AOD treatment sector.

On 31 December 2020 the COMMIT Program, funded by the Department of Attorney-General and Justice, is due to cease. This program constitutes an investment of over \$2M per annum to eight non-government organisations that provide a range of AOD rehabilitation and support services to the NT population. The cessation of this funding will result in a significant reduction in the level of service capacity of the sector.

Withdrawal of the funding will result in a 37% reduction in residential rehabilitation bed capacity in the Barkly region and a 10% reduction for the Darwin region. These reductions will place further stress on a sector that is already operating beyond capacity with a previous existing estimated shortfall in demand for services of 15%.

The loss of the COMMIT Program will also result in the cessation of a support program in Alice Springs that provides after hours rehabilitation and support services for approximately thirty clients on community corrections orders. With the end of the program there will be no alternative option but to return clients currently under court orders to prison. The financial cost of incarceration is multitudes higher than the cost of supporting clients through the current program.

Additionally, the highly prescribed Family Circles program that offers support for families of people who use AOD will lose funding. This program is unique in the NT and due to the success of the model it is now being replicated across the country.

The cessation of this funding will also result in the loss of jobs for Territorians.

Failure to maintain and grow the treatment sector as part of a comprehensive model will greatly undermine the effectiveness and purpose of the introduced supply reduction measures and will risk a reversal of the gains made to date.

AADANT is calling on the NT Government to reverse this projected funding shortfall and ensure the AOD treatment sector is sufficiently resourced to ensure the integrity of a comprehensive drug and alcohol management model.

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