

# Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

An alliance of the CLC, NLC, CAALAS, NAAJA and AMSANT

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Bite the bullet and drop the Bill—and talk now!**

**13 June 2013**

The Northern Territory Government should immediately withdraw its proposed Mandatory Rehabilitation Bill and get down to the evidence rather than tinkering with a fatally flawed approach to alcohol abuse, John Paterson, spokesperson for the Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT) said today.

“The Chief Minister and his colleagues have been pursuing a path that has no evidence, and no credible support,” said Mr Paterson.

“The amendments released by Minister Lambley this morning fail to address many of our concerns, and will only serve to prop up a scheme that is fatally flawed. This legislation affecting Aboriginal Territorians has too many unanswered questions.

“The welcome intervention by the Northern Territory Branch of the AMA yesterday made it spectacularly clear.

“To quote AMA President Peter Beaumont:

*The whole thing is meant to be a health pathway, and it's funny that the path leads to criminality if people don't abide by it.*

*This is about illness and addiction; it's not about crimes, other than the fact that some people do commit crimes.*

*But the ordinary courts of law can handle those; we already have laws for those.*

“From the recent letter from Prime Minister Gillard to our Chief Minister, it is clear that the NT cannot simply take over the RDH medi-hotel—on that basis alone it leaves the NT’s proposals in tatters.

“And it’s clear the NTG are doing all of this on the run – with little regard to how it will affect people in the Territory.

“We call on our Chief Minister to bite the bullet and drop the Bill, and call an urgent summit to discuss ways forward, beginning with point of sale controls. Without addressing supply issues, we will not tackle alcohol abuse.

“That summit should include health experts with real world experience, along with Aboriginal organisations and other stakeholders – people that have sadly been ignored throughout this whole process.

“Adam Giles should also agree to the Prime Minister’s call to work with the Commonwealth on a comprehensive approach.”

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