

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

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

MEDIA RELEASE

17 months on and still no independent evaluation of the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment legislation

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Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT) calls on the NT Government to deliver on Minister Lambley's promise to consider and implement a full independent evaluation of the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment (AMT) Scheme.¹

An independent evaluation of the AMT Scheme is needed to ensure the aims and outcomes are being met and to ensure that Aboriginal people are not being unfairly discriminated against.

"The Review of the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Act was too limited. It looked at the legal process, not the big question: whether this scheme delivers what the government says it delivers", said APO NT spokesperson, Priscilla Collins.

"Our people should not be subject to a very expensive experiment that deprives of them of their liberty without any guarantee that it will be to their benefit. What is urgent is finding out whether there is evidence that the scheme is working. If it's not, it needs to go.

"We need a full independent evaluation of the operation of the scheme, and its outcomes.

"The public deserves to know what is really happening under the scheme, and how the government is measuring outcomes.

The Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Amendment Bill will be debated in Parliament today. The Bill includes the removal of the absconding provision, which criminalised people leaving the treatment centre.

"We welcome the amendments removing the offence provision for absconding. Provisions essentially criminalising a health problem should never have been included in the legislation.

"We want to know what happened to our sector's other recommendations, which sought additional safeguards for the vulnerable people dealt with under the scheme and an independent evaluation", Ms Collins concluded.

For further information/ Media inquiries:

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¹ 'Mandatory alcohol rehabilitation: Health Minister Robyn Lambley defends its worth', ABC News, 16 January 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-16/lambley-on-mandatory-grog-rehab-scheme-costs-and-effects/5203090>