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POLICY

ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOL  
RELATED HARM

# ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOL RELATED HARM

1 Territory IS COMMITTED TO THE AVAILABILITY OF ALCOHOL IN OUR COMMUNITY FOR PERSONAL CONSUMPTION.

THE COMMUNITY DOES NOT EXPECT AVAILABILITY OF ALCOHOL TO BE WITHOUT QUALIFICATION. THE COMMUNITY EXPECTS GOVERNMENT TO MANAGE ALCOHOL AVAILABILITY AND CONSUMPTION ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE AND WITHOUT REGARD TO VESTED INTERESTS.

1 Territory WILL LEGISLATE AND OPERATE A SCHEME WHICH BALANCES ACCESS TO ALCOHOL WITH MEASURES WHICH WILL ADDRESS PROBLEMS CAUSED BY ITS OVER CONSUMPTION.

1 Territory'S AIM IS TO PRODUCE A SITUATION WHERE THE AVAILABILITY OF ALCOHOL WILL BE SUBJECT TO A REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT WHICH:

- PUTS THE SAFETY OF THE COMMUNITY AND ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS UPPERMOST;
- HAS AS ITS PRIME PRIORITY, A REDUCTION IN ALCOHOL RELATED HARM;
- ENDS MARGINALISATION AND EXPLOITATION OF THE WEAK AND VULNERABLE;
- GIVES FAMILIES AND CHILDREN A CHANCE IN LIFE;
- ENDS ALCOHOL CAUSED OR CONTRIBUTED TO VIOLENCE

1 Territory ADVOCATES THE RETURN OF THE BANNED DRINKER'S REGISTER, NOT TERRITORY LABOR'S OLD ONE, BUT SOMETHING NEW AND INNOVATIVE WHICH HAS BEEN THOUGHT OUT, WITH STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION, AND HAS REGARD TO NEW TECHNOLOGIES NOT PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE.

BUT FIRST, SOME HISTORY.

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From 1 July 2011, the then Territory Labor government introduced and rolled-out its inspired and groundbreaking "Enough is Enough, "Safe Territory" initiative".

It was responding to high and increasing levels of alcohol caused or contributed to crime. 60% of all assaults and 67% of all domestic violence incidents across the Territory were alcohol related.

Its intention was to prevent, by bans, problem drinkers from purchasing, possessing and consuming alcohol and to require they submit,

if asked, to mandatory treatment. It was devised to provide a direct health intervention to problem drinkers without criminalizing alcoholism.

A Banned Drinkers Register supported by photo ID scanners, was rolled out to take-away alcohol outlets to help enforce problem drinker bans.

Treatment services were to be expanded to help problem drinkers get their lives back on track.

Banned Problem Drinkers included people who committed alcohol-related crime or violence;

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people taken into protective custody three times in three months; and people who committed high range drink driving (DUI) or repeat drink driving offences.

Forms of accepted government issued photo ID included NT or Other Australian Driver's Licence, Passport, Evidence of Age Card and the NT Ochre Card.

A database of Banned Problem Drinkers was established.

Photo ID of a purchaser was scanned at all Territory take-away alcohol outlets. Those on the register (Banned Problem Drinkers) were refused service.

Anecdotal, the BDR became widely and very well accepted.

In August 2012, 14 months after its introduction and the day after its election to government, the Country Liberal Party abolished the BDR. It was fulfilling its election promise. Perhaps some of its supporters could not abide the double whammy of losing their licence for driving drunk, and the humiliation of being refused service when they wanted to buy more takeaway alcohol.

The decision to abolish the Banned Drinker's Register was condemned by the Territory Labor opposition, and by federal leaders from both sides of politics. It was widely condemned in the Northern Territory community. There was widespread community dismay.

It soon became apparent that the abolition of the BDR was a part of a bold, deeply cynical, but unsurprisingly successful plan by the CLP to recapture the aboriginal vote for the 2012 NT general election.

The CLP bought the aboriginal vote at the cost of returning the Territory to its pre-BDR alcohol caused chaos.

14 months after its commencement, and at a stroke of the CLP's pen, the 2,500 people on the BDR, many of whom lived in central Australia, were free to buy takeaway alcohol again.

Among other things, alcohol-related hospital

emergency admissions to the Alice Springs Hospital increased by 80% after the register was scrapped. However, they did not decrease while the register was in place either.

In the wake of the removal of the BDR in July 2012, alcohol-related emergency admissions to NT hospitals rose from 300 per quarter (in July 2012) to as high as 550 in March 2013, and then began to fall, reaching approximately 425 by about November 2013.

The more complete picture can be found on ABC Fact Check at [www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-19/did-the-northern-territorys-banned-drinkers-register-work/5315286](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-19/did-the-northern-territorys-banned-drinkers-register-work/5315286).

Dr John Boffa who works in public health in Alice Springs and is the principal spokesman for The People's Alcohol Action Coalition, which originated in Alice Springs ([www.paac.org.au/about.html](http://www.paac.org.au/about.html)) advocates working towards reducing the impacts of alcohol-related harm including the following strategies:

Developing constructive reforms to the sale of alcohol;

Advocating controls on public consumption; Advocating responsible service of alcohol; and Promoting healthy lifestyles.

The PAAC did not seek prohibition, but supports people's right to drink in a responsible and safe manner.

1 Territory is aware of the huge successes PAAC has achieved in Alice Springs in promoting the introduction of floor prices for wine in Alice Springs. They are aware of the efforts made by the CLP dominated Alice Springs Town Council to reverse the exciting changes and improvements brought about by the PAAC.

1 Territory supports the PAAC in its endeavours.

1 Territory believes that the work of the PAAC in Alice Springs should operate as a template for its policy on reduction of alcohol related harm throughout the Northern Territory.

It will take time, and require wide community support, but 1 Territory will work closely with PAAC and other stakeholders to reduce alcohol

consumption in the Northern Territory so that the community as a whole becomes safer, and there are significant reductions in alcohol-related harm.

## **THE COMPLETE FAILURE OF TEMPORARY BEAT LOCATIONS**

After abolishing the BDR, and then finding its mandatory treatment alternative impossible, the CLP ordered the police in Alice Springs to introduce Temporary Beat Locations (TBL) where at all points of sale of takeaway alcohol, a purchaser of liquor was asked when and where it was proposed the drink be drunk. If the answer was in a restricted area, the alcohol was seized and tipped out.

### **Positives**

A reduced supply resulted in reduced domestic and other violence and anti-social behaviour, and a downturn in hospital admissions. The precise numbers which would enable the public to measure the results of TBL's are withheld by the Giles CLP government.

Similar trials were conducted in Tennant Creek and Katherine with similar results.

It was not trialled in Darwin because there were not enough Police to cover the 70 odd outlets where takeaway liquor was sold.

### **Negatives**

Police officers have been forced to work in circumstances where there is no internal policy in place for single officer patrols. The TBL program in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine tied up 65 police positions. That's 65 police who not available for all the other important work of police.

Of great concern is that each TBL has only been able to be staffed by one officer. This has led to those unsupported officers being placed in a high degree of vulnerability to the behaviour of angry deprived drinkers unable to obtain alcohol. Attacks and injuries to police in such circumstances have been reported. Fortunately no police officer has been seriously hurt in these circumstances.

Whilst TBL's have been operating, Police have had to find \$1.0 million in overtime costs annually out of the Police budget. This has resulted in \$1.0m per annum which is not available for other normal policing.

Rank and file police hate the TBL's with a passion.

The complete absence of TBL's in Darwin has had the effect that this beautiful city is now plagued by problem drinkers, just as it was before the BDR was first introduced.

The government has claimed that reduced supply has reduced the problems of alcohol. However, no empirical data has been produced to support this claim.

There is no evidence to support the occurrence of any meaningful rehabilitation.

### **Other Negatives:**

Taxpayer cost in the last financial year was average \$180-200,000 per annum per TBL police officer, or roughly \$11.7 million.

65 police officers were diverted from other vital policing duties and has resulted in fewer resources within NT Police for its other functions.

## **ELIMINATING ALCOHOL RELATED HARM**

1Territory recognizes that a Banned drinkers Register based on the 2011 photo ID system will not in the future be as effective or comprehensive as new technology, now available, and proven.

However, new biometric recognition technology to minimize alcohol-related harm, not only exists, but is already privately deployed in the Northern Territory with spectacular success.

Such a system has been operating in Discovery Nightclub for over 3 years now. The once Darwin HQ for drugs, alcohol and violence, is now Darwin's best, safest and most trouble-free nightclub. It reaches its 1000+ capacity on most weekend nights without any violence, with long queues of patrons seeking entry, and has a reputation of being both for patrons and

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for staff, particularly security staff, the safest place in Mitchell Street's drinking and partying precinct to work.

Discovery's system can best be described as based on fingerprint and facial scans of patrons as a condition of entry, and monitoring of patron behaviour while on or in the street outside its premises.

Eligibility to enter Discovery requires a fingerprint and facial scan of each patron who enters. This applies to first time entrants and a fingerprint scan would normally be sufficient on each and every subsequent entry.

It is a register which identifies those who are eligible to enter and party on the Discovery premises. Those ineligible are refused entry permanently. They have to go elsewhere.

Misbehaviour of any sort – drunkenness, drugs, violence, other trouble-making results in immediate and permanent withdrawal of the privilege of entry. Under Territory law, there are other places they are permitted without such restriction to go to.

1 Territory will roll out the new scanning technology to all premises in the Northern Territory which are licensed to sell takeaway alcohol.

It will be for pubs, nightclubs, and other clubs to decide whether to install the scan technology. But if they do so, the public will be more likely to be considered safe places to drink.

1 Territory is closely associated with these developments and in government will insist on its adoption in all pubs, clubs, stores and licensed entertainment premises.

1 Territory will introduce biometric scanning technology to provide greater than ever privacy and accurate recognition of those on the banned Drinker's Register. The technology is portable, and will be located into every takeaway liquor outlet. TBL's will be a thing of the past.

This policy is 1 Territory's initiative. Its members and supporters are in favour because they seek to make a difference and reduce alcohol

related harm and disadvantage in the Northern Territory.

## **IN SUMMARY**

**1 TERRITORY WILL RE-INSTATE THE BANNED DRINKERS REGISTER.**

**1 TERRITORY WILL REDUCE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL BY PROBLEM DRINKERS**

**1 TERRITORY WILL FORCE RESPONSIBLE SALE AND SERVICE OF TAKEAWAY ALCOHOL AND WILL INTRODUCE VOLUMETRIC CONTROLS, TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE, BINGE DRINKING AND, IN PARTICULAR, TO ELIMINATE EXPLOITATION OF THOSE IN THE COMMUNITY WHO ARE LEAST ABLE TO AFFORD IT FINANCIALLY, AND IN ORDER TO CREATE A BETTER, SAFER FUTURE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF ALL IN THE TERRITORY.**

**1 TERRITORY WILL REDUCE AND HOPEFULLY OVER TIME ELIMINATE ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE, ALCOHOL-CAUSED ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS, DEATH AND INJURIES, AND FOETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME RELATED DISORDERS.**

**IN ITS PLACE, THOSE WHO ARE MOST AFFECTED AND EXPLOITED BY ALCOHOL WILL HAVE, OVER TIME, A FAR BETTER FUTURE.**

**THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH A VOTE FOR 1 TERRITORY AT THE NEXT TERRITORY ELECTION IN ABOUT AUGUST 2016.**

**1 TERRITORY IS UP FOR IT. IT HAS GOOD CANDIDATES, AND A LOT OF SUPPORTERS.**

**WILL YOU, THE VOTER, GIVE 1 TERRITORY THE CHANCE TO SOLVE, ONCE AND FOR ALL, THE NORTHERN TERRITORY'S ACHILLES HEEL – THE CONTINUED EXPLOITATION OF ITS WEAKEST AND MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND THE HARM TO THE WHOLE TERRITORY COMMUNITY CREATED BY THE OVER-USE OF ALCOHOL.**

**VOTE 1 1 TERRITORY.**

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