

# Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

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

Ms Cindy Bravos,  
Director-General of Licensing  
and  
Ms Anna McGill  
Director of Policy and Strategic Direction

Via email: [Cindy.Bravos@nt.gov.au](mailto:Cindy.Bravos@nt.gov.au) and [anna.mcgill@nt.gov.au](mailto:anna.mcgill@nt.gov.au)

**Wednesday, 15 May 2016**

Dear Ms Bravos and Ms McGill,

**RE: Draft NT Alcohol Action Plan**

I write to you on behalf of the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory (APO NT) to provide a response to the Draft Alcohol Action Plan. APO NT also supports the recommendations in AMSANT's detailed response.

APO NT is an alliance comprising the Central Land Council, the Northern Land Council, the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and the Central Australian Legal Aid Service and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory. APO NT has been operating for five years for the joint interests of our members.

APO NT is disappointed with the lack of concrete strategies in the Action Plan to address the harmful use of alcohol in the community. Alcohol misuse is devastating the lives of too many Aboriginal people and families in the Northern Territory. It is a central driver of community and family violence, makes it difficult to get kids to school, and is a huge barrier to engaging in employment. It destroys health and families.

It is concerning to read that the Draft Alcohol Action Plan is premised on an opening statement (in the 'Alcohol and the Territory' section) that displays a sense of resignation regarding prevailing attitudes in the Territory whereby "alcohol is expected to be part of almost all social events." There is no consideration of challenging this fundamental truth, and whether we have to accept this norm. There is no invitation or encouragement to engage in a broader conversation about where alcohol sits with the Territory image. These statements are consistent with an ongoing unwillingness at an NT executive level to take alcohol seriously as a social issue or try to change the status of alcohol as an apparent core social value.

APO NT recommends that concrete approaches should be set out in the Draft Alcohol Action Plan. The practical approaches raised by People's Alcohol Action Coalition (PAAC) could be included, relating to floor prices and supply reduction.

In Alice Springs we have also observed an increase in alcohol outlets. It is problematic to retain an environment where alcohol continues to be sold at a greater number of outlets (including at primary school fetes), and without any minimum price measures to restrict access to and damage done by cheap, high volume alcohol products. These factors are not making alcohol harder to access.

If alcohol is accessed, there can be dire consequences, such as someone being issued with an Alcohol Protection Order or being required to enter mandatory treatment. There is an inherent inconsistency between the government's readiness to introduce punitive measures, and reluctance to take measures to reduce access to alcohol.

The 'Reduce Supply' section is severely lacking in practical steps. It does not include steps to reduce supply, or a point of sale identification system. Supply reduction must be effected in a sustainable way appropriate to community expectations, following proper consultation about how to achieve this in a way that is sympathetic, fair, humane and preserving of the relationship between police and the community.

The 'Reduce Harms' section in the Draft Plan refers to Alcohol Mandatory Treatment, however we are unaware of an evidence base to support this initiative. CAALAS and NAAJA have concerns about the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment scheme as it effectively criminalises alcohol dependence. APO NT would be interested to see the outcome of any evaluation of AMT.

APO NT provided a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, Inquiry into the Harmful Use of Alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in April 2014 and a submission to the NT Select Committee on Action to Prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in June 2014. APO NT strongly recommends the Alcohol Policy Unit to consider both submissions and the recommendations provided. These submissions are attached.

For further information relating to this submission, please contact the APO NT Coordinator, Brionee Noonan via email: [brionee.noonan@amsant.org.au](mailto:brionee.noonan@amsant.org.au) or via phone (08) 8944 6672.

Yours sincerely,



Eileen Van Iersel

On behalf of the APO NT CEO's

<b>John Paterson</b> CEO, AMSANT	<b>Joe Morrison</b> CEO, NLC	<b>David Ross</b> CEO, CLC	<b>Priscilla Collins</b> CEO, NAAJA	<b>Eileen Van Iersel</b> CEO, CAALAS
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