



# Framework for Addressing Alcohol Issues in the Northern Territory

## PURPOSE

Alcohol brings a range of personal, social and economic benefits to the Territory. Unfortunately its abuse and misuse brings levels of personal harm and public inconvenience and intrusion that are not acceptable. The provision and consumption of alcohol are legitimate activities, but they need to occur in ways that are responsible and in keeping with community standards.

The Northern Territory Government's approach to alcohol issues is designed to guide the development, implementation and coordination of strategies that complement and extend those already in place to deal with problems. It provides the structure for government, community and industry to work together to manage alcohol in the Territory.

## GOAL

The goal is to reduce risky patterns of drinking and the negative impact these can have. This goes beyond just how much people drink. It looks at where and when drinking takes place, the activities associated with drinking and the social values placed on drinking. This approach recognises there are social and health benefits associated with limited consumption and that the risk of harm can vary across gender, age, cultural groups and situations. This focus will reduce per capita levels of consumption by targeting those who present the most risk.

## OUTCOMES

A range of outcomes will be delivered, including:

- less harmful drinking and lower rates of alcohol consumption;
- reduced alcohol deaths, injuries and diseases;
- reduced social disorder, family disruption, violence and other crime arising from alcohol;
- reduced financial costs to the Territory taxpayer; and
- a broader culture of responsible alcohol consumption.

## APPROACH

A number of elements are involved:

### Whole of Government Activity

Structures and processes are to facilitate greater coordination and integration across all government agencies and funded services. There is a shared commitment to address alcohol issues wherever possible and duplication is to be removed.

### Active Partnerships

Government is providing leadership and engaging the active participation and support of the community, the liquor industry and other commercial interests. Constructive partnerships and collaboration are being built across government, business and the broader community.



## Local Input and Regional Action

Local planning and action are supported. Communities are being encouraged to devise practical and suitable plans that will address their particular circumstances.

## Changing the Drinking Culture

It is important to reduce the social acceptability of risky drinking and ensure that the supply of alcohol does not add to abuse and misuse. A culture of responsible alcohol use and supply is being encouraged.

## Expanded Treatment and Support

People with drinking problems often need help to recognise those problems and find solutions. An effective and accessible system of treatment services and interventions is being developed for people with drinking problems. Steps are also being taken to protect families from the risks and demands that drinkers can impose.

## More Responsible Management of Alcohol

The supply and consumption of alcohol is governed by a range of laws and policies that are enforced by the Northern Territory Licensing Commission, police and other regulatory agencies. The regime of legislation, regulation, policies and related processes and procedures involved in the control and management of alcohol supply and use are subject to continual review and enhancement.

## Staying Informed and Focused

Monitoring, research and evaluation are vital for setting the right directions, putting in place the best strategies and determining what works. Government is committed to these activities and sharing the information as part of its accountability.

## UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Actions are based on:

### A Strong Evidence Base

Policies and practices are to be guided by the available evidence about what works to reduce alcohol-related harm. This evidence can be derived from local, national and international sources. There will be evaluations of significant initiatives, a commitment to research and the development of improved information systems.

### Enhanced Coordination and Collaboration

Priority is being given to actions based on a coordinated approach to planning, development and delivery of alcohol-related programs and services. As far as possible, collaboration is being sought between stakeholders within government and across the community and industry sectors.

### A Balanced Approach

With no single strategy able to address all alcohol-related problems, a balanced mix of policies is set to target supply, demand and harm reduction. A mix of long-term and short-term strategies are to be aimed at the whole population, particular groups and settings, as well as individuals and families at risk.

### Cultural and Local Sensitivity

Effectiveness depends on sensitivity to local circumstances and cultural needs. It is recognised that communities and regions have differing issues, resources and expertise and that responses will vary according to cultural considerations. In partnership with government and non-government agencies, communities are to play a central role in responding to local alcohol issues.

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