

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

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

MEDIA RELEASE

Communiqué

ALICE SPRINGS GROG SUMMIT: OUTCOMES

From 30 to 31 July 2013 a summit on alcohol policy and its impact on Aboriginal people and communities was held in Alice Springs, sponsored by the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory [APO NT]. The summit was attended by around 100 people. This summit followed a similar grog summit sponsored by APO NT in Darwin in November 2012.

The summit heard from a number of speakers from Aboriginal communities and organisations across the Territory including: Anyinginyi Health Service; Central Australian Aboriginal Congress; Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Programmes Unit; Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit; Western Aranda Health Aboriginal Corporation; Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council; Borroloola; Ntaria, Papunya and Beswick.

The summit heard also from expert speakers including Associate Professor, Ted Wilkes from the National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Committee; Professor Dennis Gray from the National Drug Research Institute and June Oscar, Emily Carter and Professor Elizabeth Elliott AM, who have been involved in the successful Fitzroy Valley recovery plan.

The summit delegates agreed that there was an urgent need for action and better evidence to address alcohol related harm both in Alice Springs, and across the NT. All delegates of the summit were concerned about the children's future and the need to act now. The summit agreed on a number of priority areas for action including:

- **Reducing supply as a critical 'circuit breaker' in the fight against alcohol harm:** The summit supported stopping the flow of cheap grog through a floor-price and/or volumetric tax, banning alcohol advertising/sponsorship in sport, stronger enforcement of licensing conditions, and encouraging individuals to take a personal stand against grog running.
- **Focusing on holistic approaches in treatment, including addressing underlying causes:** The summit encourages further measures to support Aboriginal community controlled services providing treatment and other AOD programs; the important work needed to address underlying issues of alcohol misuse; need to increase services out bush; addressing social determinants of health which result in people drinking; examining holistic ways of treating alcohol misuse; focus on early childhood development; supporting development/evaluation of culturally appropriate treatment programs and promoting strong cultural identity as a means of preventing alcohol misuse.

- **The need to act now to address FASD:** The summit calls for more work on prevention, education and raising awareness of the condition; seek recognition of FASD as a disability, and enabling early diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders; and
- **Building stronger community-based approaches to addressing alcohol related harm:** The summit requests a greater focus on supporting local community responses; ensuring alcohol management plans are representative of the whole community and driven by the community; investing in prevention rather than prisons; and engaging children and young people in education and solutions.

On 26 June 2013 APO NT called for a joint Territory/Commonwealth government Board of Inquiry into Alcohol in the Northern Territory to provide the evidence needed to create a roadmap for action so all sectors can work together to solve the problems of alcohol related harm in the NT.

On 31 July 2013, the Alice Springs Grog Summit delegates endorsed the call for a Board of Inquiry, and the proposed Terms of Reference framed to provide the data and evidence that is needed to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based blueprint for tackling alcohol harm. These will provide for the development of recommendations that include effective alcohol supply controls as well as strong preventative and early intervention measures that address harm minimisation and the need to reduce the demand for alcohol consumption.

APO NT will be producing a full report on the summit outcomes.

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