

Plan to tackle problem drinking



Overview

The Northern Territory continues to face the highest rates of alcohol consumption and risky drinking in Australia, alongside the nation's highest rates of hospitalisations and deaths linked to alcohol misuse.

According to the 2022-23 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 40% of Territorians reported drinking at levels that put their health at risk - above the national average of 31%.

Excessive alcohol use is closely linked to antisocial behaviour, family and domestic violence, assaults and other crime. Targeted and coordinated measures are needed to reduce public drinking, curb antisocial behaviour, and minimise alcohol-related harm.

Our vision is to make the Territory safer, stronger and more liveable by reducing crime, tackling problem drinking and cracking down on anti-social behaviour.

Addressing problem drinking requires a united, whole-of-community effort, but also clear consequences for behaviour that puts the community at risk. We are taking decisive steps to support health and treatment services that address the underlying causes of harmful drinking, strengthen local controls, and clamp down on inappropriate public drinking. This includes working closely with NT Police, health and community services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, local government councils and industry partners to deliver practical, place-based solutions that have an impact.

Our plan is for Territorians to feel safe again and have confidence in their community.





In October 2024, new nuisance public drinking laws were introduced to support safer public places by giving NT Police powers to fine, charge and arrest people for nuisance drinking in prohibited public places.

The offence reinstated enforcement options that had not been available since changes under the *Liquor Act 2019*, including on-the-spot infringement notices to help respond to nuisance drinking and antisocial behaviour.

Further changes in November 2025 provided for the extension of BDOs to 28 days length, rather than the previous 7. People caught drinking alcohol in a prohibited public place are issued with a 28-day Banned Drinker Order restricting their ability to continue to publicly consume takeaway alcohol.

This plan sets a clear direction for government and our partners to continue working together to:

- Reduce alcohol-related violence and crime
- Hold individuals accountable for alcohol-fueled offending
- Decrease inappropriate public behaviour
- Improve community safety and wellbeing
- Reduce alcohol-related deaths and injuries

We will be monitoring and evaluating progress to make sure we are achieving success across our focus areas, and delivering on our commitment to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore the Territory lifestyle. A safer Territory supports local businesses, attracts investment and drives economic growth.



Plan to tackle problem drinking

Strengthening consequences

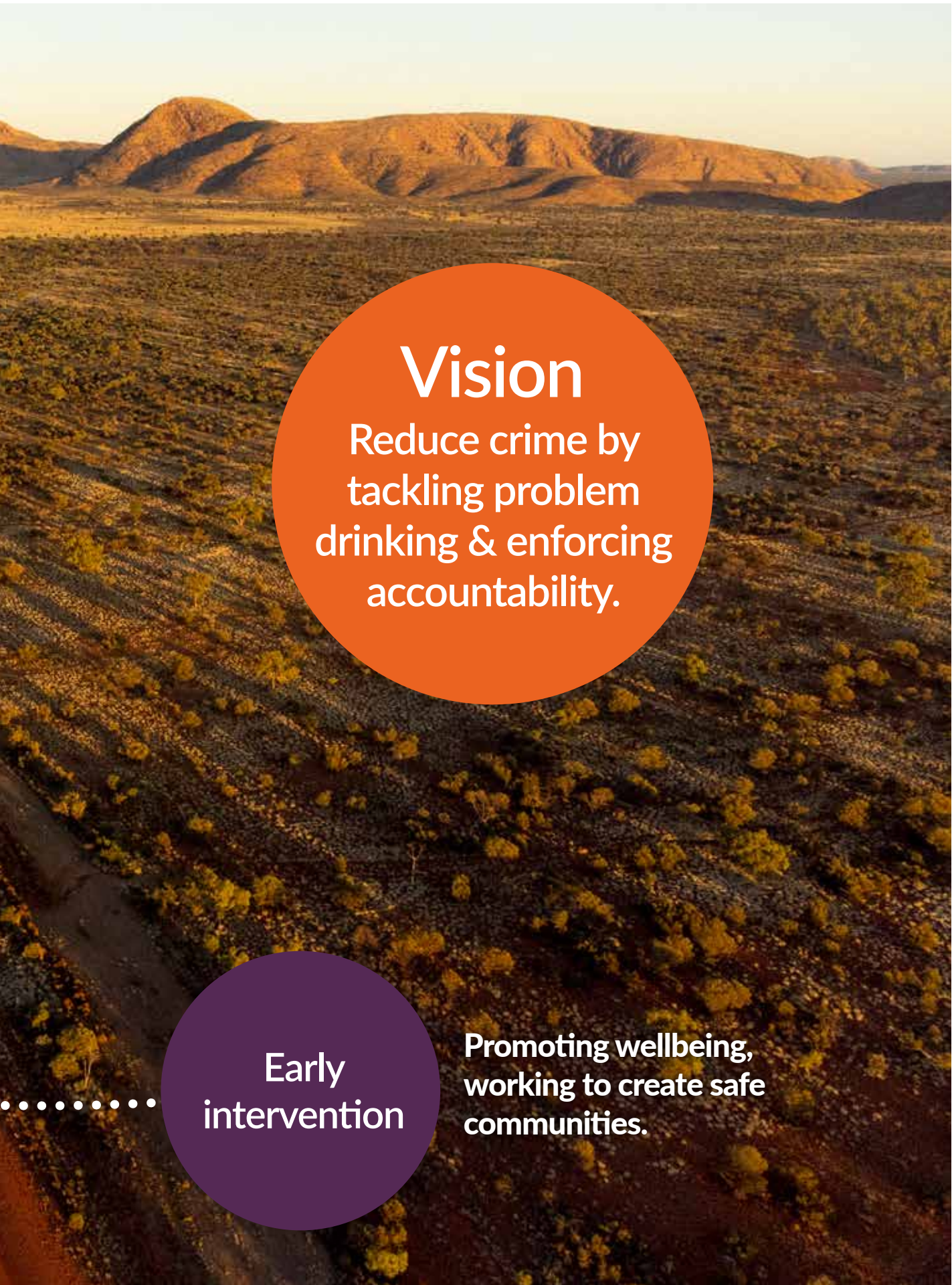
28 Day BDOs, Compulsory treatment for domestic violence offenders.

Stop turning a blind eye to inappropriate public drinking. Include community led initiatives and curb secondary supply.

Taking control of public places

- Support closer to home.
- Active referrals into treatment.
- More referrals to the BDR.

Driving change



Vision

Reduce crime by tackling problem drinking & enforcing accountability.

Early intervention

Promoting wellbeing, working to create safe communities.



Early intervention

Focus area 1

Addressing the root causes of alcohol misuse will prevent problems, but early intervention must be matched with clear expectations and accountability for behaviour. The foundations for preventing alcohol related harm are strong communities and families; along with access to education, housing, and employment. Making the Northern Territory a vibrant place to live, work, and invest where opportunity and public safety go hand in hand.

Initiatives

- We are increasing community-based alcohol treatment options including short-stay, day programs and reach and connect services.
- We are supporting targeted community-led initiatives that focus on individuals who misuse alcohol, while using culturally responsive approaches that promote healing and wellbeing.
- We are investing more in Aboriginal communities to enable community safety by promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing and encouraging healthy choices.
- We are strengthening our response to preventing neurodevelopmental disorders, including Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, by increasing community awareness, streamlining assessment, and interventions.
- We are investing in and supporting communities to develop place-based and community-led solutions to reduce alcohol-related harm through local leadership and community action.
- We are intervening early if a child's wellbeing is at risk and holding parents and families accountable, to prevent escalation to statutory child protection and youth justice intervention.
- We are prioritising the neurodevelopmental assessment of youth in juvenile justice settings to prevent re-offending.



Driving change

Focus area 2

Helping people to change harmful behaviour requires individual support, but also clear consequences when behaviour puts others at risk. Services and programs have to be accessible and delivered by an appropriately skilled workforce. Incentives can also be a powerful tool to support people in changing their alcohol related behaviours, particularly when combined with integrated support to employment and education opportunities.

Initiatives

- We are increasing rehabilitation and treatment options to combat alcohol and substance abuse in the community and our prisons.
- We are strengthening access to treatment and support including case management, counselling, mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing services - so Territorians get the help they need, when they need it.
- More supports closer to home.
- We are helping people build strong foundations as individuals move from alcohol and other drug treatment programs back into their communities, reducing the risk of relapse and supporting long-term recovery.
- More referrals onto the Banned Drinker Register and connecting people on the register with treatment and support options that encourage lasting change.
- We are designing targeted programs for parents and young people that build skills, strengthen family connections and support safer, healthier choices.
- We are increasing referrals to treatment from sobering up shelters and emergency departments.
- We are enhancing access to alcohol and drug programs in prisons.
- We are providing direct investment into community drug and alcohol services, including compulsory alcohol treatment for those who continue to cause alcohol-related harm.



Taking control of public places

Focus area 3

We are no longer turning a blind eye to inappropriate public drinking. With the rollout of Police Public Safety Officers there will be dedicated Police focused on tackling antisocial behaviour and problem drinking in public places. We will continue to give Police the tools they need to take action, remove offenders and restore safety to our communities. The Government will support community led initiatives that are targeting problem public drinking and reducing secondary supply. Industry must maintain responsible service obligations to allow people to enjoy the Territory lifestyle while working with communities, licensees and agencies to keep the community safe.

Initiatives

- We are rolling out Police Public Safety Officers dedicated to tackling antisocial behaviour and problem drinking in public spaces, public housing, public transport and across the community.
- We will ensure alcohol restrictions enabled by Interim Alcohol Protected Areas remain in place and do not expire.
- We are developing Community Alcohol Management Plans so that communities can implement ways to reduce harms and consider options for regulated supply, including permit systems and community clubs.
- We are supporting Local Liquor Accords between licensed businesses, police and local governments to deliver place-based solutions in our larger regional settings.
- We are using data and co-ordinating operations to stop the flow of secondary supply into prohibited communities.



Strengthening consequences

Focus area 4

Alcohol use that contributes to Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV), antisocial behaviour and crime will not be tolerated and will be met with strong consequences, that are swift, certain and visible.

Initiatives

- We are introducing compulsory programs for people on remand or serving custodial or community-based sentences for alcohol-related domestic, family and sexual violence offences.
- We are continuing to place people on the Banned Drinker Register to prohibit individuals that cause harm to others from purchasing, possessing or consuming alcohol.
- We are continuing to address nuisance public drinking and reducing antisocial behaviour in public spaces.
- We have increased the length of 7 day Banned Drinker Orders (BDOs) issued by police from 7 days to 28 days, so individuals have additional opportunities to connect with support services.
- We are holding parents and families accountable for their contribution to a child's behaviour, ensuring that parents address their own needs to improve their capacity to care for their children.
- We will continue to enforce the laws and where necessary tighten them further to ensure community safety always comes first.



Key indicators of alcohol-related harm

The following indicators are used by the NT Government to measure alcohol-related harm. The datasets are regularly updated on the alcoholpolicy.nt.gov.au website:

- Overall consumption rate
- Drink driving offences
- Alcohol-related emergency department presentations
- Alcohol attributable instances of serious road injury and death
- Alcohol-related assaults
- Domestic violence alcohol-related assaults
- Alcohol-induced deaths
- Banned Drinker Register monthly reports



