

Addressing substance abuse

On Friday 12 April, Arafura MLA Marion Scrymgour addressed the Criminal Lawyers Association (NT) dinner on issues relating to substance abuse. Ms Scrymgour is also the Chair of the NT Legislative Assembly's Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community. This report is taken from her speech notes used at the dinner.

Marion Scrymgour wants to know if it's time to take some radical steps in the battle against substance abuse by young Territorians.

Outlining the work ahead for Parliament's Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community at a CLANT dinner, Ms Scrymgour said priorities for the Committee's inquiries have been set.

"Alcohol, cannabis and petrol sniffing will be the focus of our attention over the coming months," she said.

Ms Scrymgour told the dinner the Committee had much work to do and she didn't want to pre-empt its outcomes or recommendations.

"But I want to discuss some ideas, and ask you to consider whether it is time to take some radical steps," she said.

"The Queensland Government announced this week that it is removing the ability of Aboriginal community government councils to sell alcohol or run canteens.

"Liquor licenses, under the new scheme, will be transferred to community based

boards, with members appointed by the Government.

"That Government has identified that damage caused by alcohol abuse in terms of domestic violence, health and community welfare and has decided that radical measures are required.

"Some leaders are concerned about this approach because it takes the control from the community councils.

"Other Council members and commentators, including Noel Pearson, have supported the move, because they can see that elders and council members will no longer be scared about having to enforce community laws," she added.

"The plan also includes strict controls being placed on hotels and roadhouses that are near Aboriginal communities. Anyone who has seen the alcohol restrictions in Tennant Creek in action will recognise how important that is.

"So perhaps it is time for similar steps in the Territory?

"There is evidence that sniffing leaded petrol creates more health problems than unleaded petrol.

"Should we ban the sale of leaded petrol



Above: Arafura MHR and Chair of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community, Marion Scrymgour, addressed the CLANT dinner.

on communities? And place restrictions on its sale and supply from nearby roadhouses?"

Ms Scrymgour also urged the criminal lawyers to put forward their views on issues such as Criminal Code amendments to address substance abuse issues. ①

Contributors wanted

The NT and ACT are editing the October edition of the Alternative Law Journal and contributors are needed.

The theme is *Outside the Paddock*, as in articles on any country "bordering" Australia (ie PNG, East Timor, Indonesia, New Zealand etc) will be gratefully accepted.

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