

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**WRITTEN QUESTION**

Mrs Lambley to the Chief Minister:

**Crime in the Northern Territory**

**Why is crime out of control in the Northern Territory and what is the Government doing?**

All Territorians deserve to feel safe and all Territorians want their homes and businesses to be safe and secure.

There are a number of factors which create crime in the NT and alcohol is a major contributor. Some 60 per cent of police work is a direct result of alcohol.

Failure to invest properly in Police, cutting funding for youth services, education, remote housing and health are other contributing factors.

This is exactly what the CLP did and it resulted in more crime. Our crime problems have also been compounded by the Federal Government's destructive changes to the Community Development Program.

As a government we have listened. Unlike the former CLP government, of which you were a member, we are delivering short and long-term strategies to drive generational change and make the Territory safer than it was when we came to Government.

Central to our strategy is more police and a targeted plan to tackle the Territory's biggest problem ... alcohol abuse.

We made a promise to deliver 120 more Police during this term of government and we have already increased Police numbers by more than 90.

We expect to deliver on our promise of 120 extra police by mid-2020 through our current recruiting plan.

In addition to the 120 extra Police we are also delivering 75 Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors to work at takeaway licensed premises in Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

The CLP forced fully-sworn Police officers do this job. Our PALIS free up experienced officers for front-line duties - a far a better use of their time.

There are currently 39 PALIs on duty: 27 in Alice Springs, 10 in Katherine and two in Tennant Creek. The PALIs were introduced to Alice Springs in September last year. We know the PALIs work. The community tells us that. So too do Police. Initial statistics support our initiative.

Figures provided by the Department of Health show that for the month of December 2018 there was an amazing 46.5% reduction in alcohol-related admissions to Alice Springs Hospital.

There are currently another 23 people training to become Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors - 12 of them are assigned to Alice Springs, nine to Katherine, and two to Tennant Creek.

When all 75 PALI's are in place later this year, it will make a big difference in Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

In addition to the PALIs, we have introduced a new 12-member Alcohol Policing Unit - eight of whom are in Darwin and four in Alice. They have already begun their work targeting secondary supply and licence breaches.

The additional police, the PALIs and the Alcohol Policing Unit are starting to make a difference, which will become more pronounced once all additional personnel are in place.

We have also given the Police Commissioner the power to shut down pubs, clubs or shops for 48 hours if they do the wrong thing. We have already seen these powers used to effect. Police say the closure of the Tennant Creek Hotel had an obvious impact in that town as did the action against the Katherine Hotel.

Importantly, we are also giving police the resources and tools they need with more body worn cameras to capture evidence, more CCTV cameras and a new and improved information technology system.

Aside from more police with better resources, we are also blocking the supply to alcohol to problem drinkers.

The Banned Drinker Register, which the CLP scrapped and we reinstated creates a barrier to problem drinkers getting their hands on alcohol. This is one of a raft of measures working together to limit the supply of alcohol to problem drinkers.

We are also giving financial incentives to business to help them improve their security.

We stepped into the breach in Tennant Creek after the town was neglected by the previous CLP government. Our decisive action, including alcohol restrictions and a coordinated whole-of-government approach has seen crime, particularly alcohol-related domestic violence reports falling dramatically.

Again, this stands in contrast to the previous CLP government that had no plans to tackle alcohol fuelled crime, violence and anti-social behaviour.

Territorians tell us they are sick of anti-social behaviour which is why we launched a five-point anti-social behaviour plan for Darwin and Palmerston and again, local business and Police are telling us this is having a positive impact by getting people off the street and onto a better path.

We have an ASB plan for Darwin and Palmerston. This has seen four extra four Larrakia day patrol vehicles introduced to get vulnerable people off the streets and in many cases, back to homelands. Shamefully, the CLP scrapped the only Larrakia Day Patrol vehicle when they were in Government.

Our ASB plan also saw the Sobering-Up Shelter hours extended to 24-hours, seven days a week and includes visible policing, more short-term accommodation and Better Pathway Centres. It too is starting to work. While this all helps right now, if you want real improvement you need to invest in generational change which takes time but is the smart thing to do and the right thing to do.

That's why we have invested in reforming the Youth Justice system because we want to get kids onto the right path and away from a life of crime.

We currently have 36 Youth Outreach Re-engagement Officers (YOREOs) working with about 350 young people across the Territory to get their lives back on track.

We are also giving courts more diversion and sentencing options through the newly announced Back on Track program that will ensure each of these young people take responsibility for their actions and understand the consequences of their behaviour.

When youths are incarcerated, it needs to be done in a facility that is equipped to make them better people, not better criminals. That's why we will build a new, modern, secure youth justice facility in Darwin and Alice Springs that helps get kids on the right path. We have seen around the world that modern facilities with modern educational and training programs get better results. The 'lock-em up and throw away the key' approach simply doesn't work.

When you were former CLP Treasurer, you cut funding to youth services which saw a spike in youth crime and condemned countless young Territorians to difficult lives, including lives of crime. The CLP's appalling approach to young people forced the Federal Government to initiate a Royal Commission and we are now responding to the recommendations to rebuild a broken youth justice system.

Youth crime is a long-running issue in the Territory. That's why we recently introduced a Palmerston youth crime plan which focuses on intervening in the most dysfunctional families and before kids do the wrong thing, making sure there are consequences for those who have done the wrong thing and engaging all young people in Palmerston to be part of a strong community.

In Alice Springs we have already created a working group from government departments to focus on the most dysfunctional families and their kids and we will announce further plans to continue tackle youth crime soon.

We are currently finalising a remote policing strategy to deal with crime in the bush. The law and order concerns of bush communities were simply neglected by the former CLP government.

We are providing additional funding for key community groups like Neighbourhood Watch to assist with crime prevention and personal safety strategies.

Alcohol affects communities, destroys families and individual lives and costs the Territory hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

For decades, the Territory has had a serious problem with alcohol-fuelled crime, violence and anti-social behaviour. We have adopted a targeted plan to tackle alcohol and alcohol-related crime head-on.

We recognise there is still more to be done to stop alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour but we are starting to see progress because we have made tough but smart decisions.