

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Health:

Sobering Up Shelter

Please advise if it is possible to fund a sobering up shelter in the bush for the Night Patrol to take intoxicated people to, rather than dropping people home to their communities in the middle of the night.

The Department of Health funds sobering up shelter services in each of the five main urban centres in the Northern Territory; Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy.

East Arnhem Regional Council is funded \$396 801 per annum to deliver the sobering up shelter service in Nhulunbuy. The service commenced in 2007 and is located outside of the town centre in Bottlebrush Avenue. The shelter has six beds and operates Tuesday to Friday from 6pm to 7am. Clients are taken to the shelter by Night Patrol or Northern Territory Police and they can self-refer.

Clients enter sobering up shelters voluntarily and can elect a preference to the night patrol to be returned home. The patrol or shelter staff cannot insist the person is admitted to the shelter against their wishes.

There is ample capacity at the Nhulunbuy sobering up shelter to accept more clients each night. Currently the Night Patrol refers 78% of clients to the shelter, with police referrals making up the remainder. 89% of clients were picked up in the urban area of Nhulunbuy, with the remainder from Marngarr and Yirrkala.

The Department of Health has commissioned Price Waterhouse Coopers-Indigenous Consulting to conduct the review of sobering up shelters as an action from the Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan. It is expected this review will identify improvements and options for SUS services throughout the Northern Territory.