

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**WRITTEN QUESTION**

Ms Carney to Minister for Justice and Attorney-General

**NT Correctional Services**

1. Please advise when violent offenders convicted for bashing women will have as a condition of their release that they have participated in and completed a domestic violence program whilst in goal.

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Northern Territory Correctional Services (NTCS) has commenced work to scope options for the compulsory treatment of violent offenders, and those who have committed an alcohol related and/or a sex offence.

These discussions have identified a range of issues that need to be addressed prior to introduction of such measures, including the identification of relevant offenders.

Sex offenders entering custody are identified as such in the Integrated Offender Management System (IOMS) and sentence management planning undertaken accordingly. This includes assessment for participation in therapeutic programs.

However, it is not currently possible to identify through IOMS, or related court data, an offender who has committed a domestic or family violence offence. This is because there is no offence of domestic or family violence, and offenders are generally convicted of assault or other related offences. Only an interview or assessment with each violent offender will enable NTCS to identify those who have committed an offence against a partner or family member. A similar situation exists in relation to alcohol related offences.

However, it may be an option to amend relevant legislation to allow the courts to sentence an offender to custody and to participate in a program while in custody, requiring identification of relevant offenders prior to sentencing. NTCS will work with the Legal Policy division of the Department of Justice to further explore this option. Advice from Legal Policy will also be required on the issue of whether legislation can or should be amended to make an offender's release conditional on such participation.

Additional issues that will be addressed during the scoping phase include:

- sanctions for those who refuse to participate in programs in custody;
- staffing and other resources needed to support increased service delivery;

- legislative amendment to compel attendance versus use of the prison classification system to support attendance i.e. that offenders not progress from maximum to minimum security unless they participate in programs;
- the management of short term offenders, given the high number of Northern Territory offenders serving a custodial sentence of less than six months;
- an exploration of how mandatory treatments works in jurisdictions in which it has been implemented; and
- reporting on and evaluating mandatory treatment, in order to provide clear evidence of its effectiveness in reducing offending and increasing community safety.