KATHERINE
ALCOHOL
MANAGEMENT PLAN
A PLAN FOR EVERYONE
2007

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May 2007
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Katherine region has a population of 19,079 people and over 200,000 tourists pass through our town each year, eager to visit the natural wonders and experience our rich cultural heritage.

In the consultation undertaken for the development of this Alcohol Management Plan, members of our community have commented that Katherine is an attractive place to live and work, we have highly skilled professionals, good quality schools, health services and an abundance of sport available for all age groups.

These attributes keep our local economy strong and promote the steady growth needed for us all to enjoy our “Top End” lifestyle.

But Katherine is also known for its “hard drinking culture” and the statistics of alcohol consumption per person, indicates our region is more than double the national average. The displays of public drunkenness and antisocial behaviour are part of a much deeper seated problem that must be addressed if we are to continue to enjoy our unique lifestyle.

To tackle the problem, we need a sustained effort to educate the community and the support of the Northern Territory and Australian Government to provide the infrastructure and services to assist those afflicted with alcohol addiction.

There is no one easy solution and we must all work together to achieve the balance of supply control, harm and demand reduction that we’ll need for Katherine to maintain its status as a vibrant, attractive and safe place to live, work and visit.

I encourage everyone to actively participate and support the key initiatives in this Plan.

Michael Berto
Chairman
Katherine Region Harmony Group
February 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Katherine Region Harmony Group (KRHG) has a leadership role in fostering the development and implementation of projects and initiatives designed to address social issues, with particular emphasis on substance misuse, youth, itinerants and prevention of crime.

The KRHG was formed in 2003. Its membership comprises representatives from the Community, non Government organisations, Local Government, the Northern Territory and the Australian Government. The KRHG has a large stakeholder group and a number of working parties that provide advice to the Executive. This advice will be crucial to the implementation of the strategies and actions contained in the Alcohol Management Plan for Katherine.

Katherine is the fourth largest town in the Northern Territory (after Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs) is located approximately 310 kilometres south-east of Darwin on the Katherine River. The township of Katherine covers an area of 526 square kilometres and had a population of 9,481 at the Census conducted in 2001. It is also the hub for a region that covers approximately 350,000 square kilometres with a population of 19,079. This figure includes 7,834 Indigenous people living in Aboriginal communities, some in quite remote parts of the region.

Katherine as the regional 'hub' attracts regular visitors from the outlying communities, as well as an influx of tourists visiting the region. This gives rise to a number of challenges in relation to the management of alcohol.
2. BACKGROUND

Alcohol Management Plans are developed under the auspices of the Northern Territory Government's Alcohol Framework. Recommendation 17 of the Alcohol Framework states:

"The Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination should promote and support the development of Regional and Local Alcohol Management Plans. It should work with the Inter Departmental Committee on Alcohol Policy to ensure that all relevant Northern Territory Government agencies participate fully in the planning processes".

Katherine Region Harmony Group successfully applied to the Northern Territory Office of Alcohol Policy for grant funds to engage a consultant to develop an Alcohol Management Plan in March 2006. Success Works Pty Ltd were engaged in June 2006 and undertook this project in three phases:

**Phase 1:** Examination of existing written materials and documents

**Phase 2:** Consultations from 21-25 August 2006 with service providers, business, residents and Aboriginal people living in the long grass – A report summarising the findings was completed in September 2006.

**Phase 3:** Consultations from 18-22 September 2006 with key stakeholders which focused on ideas and solutions for consideration – A Final report was completed in October 2006 outlining 32 Recommendations.

The consultation process established the following:

- Katherine is a desirable and attractive place to live.

- While public drunkenness and associated 'antisocial behaviour' are amongst the issues impacting on the town, they are not the most significant issues for
those who live and work there. The relative isolation of the town and region and the difficulty in attracting and retaining staff, lack of diversity in shops and high prices are all considered to be more significant.

- The factors underlying the alcohol misuse in Katherine include systemic factors such as racism, the hard drinking culture in the NT and lack of alternative activities; community factors such as lack of strong community leadership, peer pressure and dispossession from land, culture and family; and individual factors such as grief, loss, depression, boredom and loss of pride and self esteem.

- A range of strategies have already been tried to control the supply and use of alcohol in Katherine and the Katherine Region with limited success. The Kalkaringi Social Club and licensing restrictions were identified as being reasonably successful. Limited success was also ascribed to the demand reduction strategies at Venndale Rehabilitation Centre, the Katherine Harmony Intervention, Transport and Outreach Service (KHITOS) program, the Community Patrol operated by Kaleno and the Sobering Up Shelter operated by Mission Australia.

- Most indicate that while public drunkenness involving Aboriginal people living in the long grass is an issue that needs to be addressed, alcohol misuse and abuse is a problem for a broad cross section of the community. There was a strong feeling that the Alcohol Management Plan for Katherine should not single out or further stereotype Aboriginal people.

- Recommended strategies for the future include many directed towards additional supply control measures together with others directed at reducing demand and reducing individual harm. People felt that the strategies that would make a real difference included building capacity and economic potential in the outlying communities; focussing on keeping young people engaged with schooling; improving the level of service integration and targeted service delivery and increasing respect for and pride in the Aboriginal heritage and culture of the area.
3. KATHERINE ALCOHOL MANAGEMENT PLAN VISION

Katherine Region Harmony Group's stated mission is to improve the quality of life and social harmony of Communities in the Katherine region.

The vision for the Katherine Alcohol Management Plan is to reduce the level of alcohol related harm for both individuals and the Katherine community.

4. FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIES

The key initiatives outlined are directed towards achieving a balance of supply, harm and demand reduction measures.

4.1 SUPPLY REDUCTION

4.1.1 Establish a 'Dry Zone' over a limited portion of the central business district of Katherine.

The Katherine Region Harmony Group will work in partnership with the Katherine Town Council to develop a proposal for a portion of the Central Business District (CBD) of Katherine to be declared a 'Public Dry Area' under Part 8 of the NT Liquor Act. This measure will prohibit the consumption and possession of alcohol within the area (apart from transporting liquor through the area) and will assist in the reduction of public drunkenness and antisocial behaviour.

4.1.2 Liquor Accord

The liquor accord is a new initiative of the licensees in Katherine and establishes a united and consistent approach from participating licensees to the responsible sale and consumption of alcohol on licensed premises. Members include Kirby's Hotel, RSL Katherine, Crossways Hotel, Katherine Country Club, Katherine Stores, Riverview Caravan Park and the Red Gum Caravan Park.

4.1.3 Improved Patrols

The coordinated effort of the NT Police, Kalano Community Patrol, Katherine Town Council, Youth Beat and Community Harmony programs will be crucial to supporting the 'Dry Zone' initiative and the ongoing need to maintain a highly visible presence in Katherine.

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Well developed protocols utilising the NT Police Social Order Strategy will continue to address the incidences of anti social behaviour and complement other harm reduction strategies.

4.2 HARM REDUCTION

4.2.1 Meet the needs of short term visitors

The need to address significant numbers of itinerants in Katherine is a high priority for the Katherine Region Harmony Group. Options to accommodate the short term needs of regional visitors from outlying communities will be examined to find culturally appropriate alternatives to alleviate camping in the public spaces of Katherine.

The examination of a cost effective transport system to give outlying communities access to services will also be explored.

4.2.2 Targeted case management of at risk individuals, encompassing demand and harm reduction

This initiative will provide a focus on intervention for at risk individuals requiring referral and case management to treatment programs utilising the Sobering Up Shelter as a key intervention point.

4.2.3 Court ordered interventions

For those members of our community with alcohol dependence who come before the Justice system, treatment, ordered by the Court as part of pre-sentencing, bail or sentencing can be effective in addressing that individual’s alcohol issues. To be successful, the treatment service system will need to be robust in both capacity and capability.

4.3 DEMAND REDUCTION

4.3.1 Implement an effective healing pathway for alcohol dependent

The development of ‘Healing Pathway’ will establish the linkages necessary for case management between services provided for people afflicted with alcohol addiction. The initiative provides a formal structure linking early intervention with access to withdrawal
and rehabilitation services and the step down or post discharge programs necessary to sustain long term abstinence from alcohol.

4.3.2 Responsible drinking campaign

An education campaign to promote responsible drinking behaviour and raise awareness of the risks to personal health and safety will also be part of the overall demand reduction strategy of the Alcohol Management Plan. This will include a school based education campaign to influence our younger members of the community.
Acronyms

ABA – Aboriginal Benefit Account
AHL – Aboriginal Hostels Limited
DEET – Department of Employment, Education and Training
DHCS – Department of Health and Community Services
DLGHS – Department of Local Government Housing and Sport (Territory Housing)
DOJ – Department of Justice
DPI – Department of Planning and Infrastructure
ICC – Indigenous Coordination Centre
KHASM – Katherine Health and Substance Misuse Group
KRHG – Katherine Regional Harmony Group
KSUG – Katherine Sport User Group
KTC – Katherine Town Council
NGOs – Non Government Organisations
NTG – Northern Territory Government
OATSIH – Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
RGL – Racing, Gaming and Licensing

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