

New anklet for NT offenders enable authorities to track blood alcohol

By Sally Brooks Updated 10 May 2016, 3:18am

For the first time in the Northern Territory some problem drinkers will be fitted with electronic ankle devices as part of a multi-million-dollar expansion of the monitoring system, the Correctional Services Minister has announced.

Minister John Elferink said \$4.2 million would be spent over the next two years to track people on parole or bail using three different anklets, including a device called a Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitoring or SCRAM.

Mr Elferink said the ankle device had been successfully trialled in the Territory and would be rolled out later this year.

SCRAM works by reading a person's blood alcohol content every 30 seconds, and the information is downloaded on a regular basis to determine if a person has been drinking.

If the connection to the skin is lost the device sends an alert to authorities.

"It's up to the courts themselves, a person on an Alcohol Protection Order may not be subject to a court direction, the courts will use these systems as well as the probation and parole system," Mr Elferink said.

Rollout said to be cheaper than keeping people in jail

A spokesman for the Minister said the technology was also used in Victoria.

In addition to the bracelets, Mr Elferink said the money would be spent on expanding the use of two other devices, the Solo, which uses GPS technology, and the Personal Identification Device (PID), which uses radio frequency.

"It means the courts have a number of systems which they can rely on in terms of monitoring people in our community," Mr Elferink said.



Photo: The new SCRAM Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitoring (SCRAM) bracelets. (ABC News: Sally Brooks)

Key points:

- \$4.2 million extra to be spent to expand electronic monitoring program in NT
- Expansion includes rollout of bracelets for problem drinkers
- Government says cost of bracelets less than \$20 per day

“Recently we changed the legislation in the Youth Justice Act to enable the courts to also place these [anklets] on youth offenders and youth suspects so that we are able to track the ‘frequent flyers’ that so often cause problems in our community.”

Deputy Opposition Leader Lynne Walker said Labor had supported the use of electronic monitoring devices, including on young people, but criticised a “lack of detail” in the rollout of SCRAM.

Mr Elferink said the SCRAM devices cost between \$15 and \$20 per day, and the other two cost less than \$5 a day, which was cheaper than the cost of keeping offenders in jail.

He added that there were currently 108 offenders in the community on electronic monitoring plus more than 90 in work camps.

Electronic monitoring devices made headlines last year after convicted murderer Peter Kamm, broke his off and triggered a manhunt in Alice Springs.

The Government said it had made improvements to the system since that incident.