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SA urged to adopt NT drug rehab scheme

Independent South Australian MP Nick Xenophon says SA should adopt a drug rehabilitation program that has been successful in the Northern Territory.

At a drug summit in Adelaide yesterday, representatives from the NT's Mount Theo drug program spoke on ways to combat petrol sniffing and abuse of other substances.

Mr Xenophon says there are lessons to be learnt from the program.

"There are people dying in this state, destroying their lives because of petrol sniffing and we haven't adopted the Mount Theo program and to me that is nothing short of a disgrace," he said.

"We can learn from the community at Mount Theo, not just for the AP lands in the far north, but for our entire community and non-Indigenous communities."

Mr Xenophon says the Mt Theo project demands that children get help to combat their addictions.

"Our system doesn't work like that," he said.

"What is happening should be the norm rather than the exception when it comes to tackling drug abuse in the community."

Susie Low, from the Mt Theo program, says it is responsible for changing young people's attitudes to drugs.

"Because we've been going so long now there is no sniffing in Yuendumu, it's quite remarkable," she said.

"What has actually happened is that the dominant youth culture in Yuendumu, which was sniffing, no longer exists.

"It's no longer cool to sniff, so people tell us as soon as there is a visitor in town who's sniffing, they go straight to Mt Theo and the problem is over."

The South Australian Government says it has programs in place to deal with petrol sniffing, some of which use similar elements to the Mt Theo program.

<http://abc.net.au/news/australia/nt/alice/200510/s1493775.htm>