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Staying on right track

THE Territory is a small and isolated community. That means we have to play to our strengths, use our assets to full advantage.

One of those assets is the Darwin-based Menzies School of Health Research.

It has an enviable reputation for excellence in medical and scientific circles.

The Territory Government has signed a three-year agreement to use Menzies for research. This is an astute move.

The first task given to Menzies researchers is to investigate the effectiveness of government alcohol management strategies.

These strategies should not be confused with the regime imposed by Canberra under intervention legislation — such as the absurd Territory-wide \$100 ID scheme.

No, Menzies will look at NT Government grog policies in Alice and Tennant. These cover everything from restrictions on trading hours and certain products to Thirsty Thursday.

There is a feeling among some Territorians that the Government's only response to alcohol abuse has been prohibition of one sort or another. This may be true.

But Aboriginal leaders have said that the only way to stop many indigenous people drinking themselves to death is by making it nigh on impossible for them to buy alcohol.

The only trouble is that everyone else suffers from the restrictions, too.

Menzies has been given until early next year to investigate the present regime and, one assumes, make suggestions of its own.

If researchers can assess and solve the Territory's grog crisis in that time, it will be a miracle.

But at least they will be able to give an independent, intellectually rigorous judgment of whether the Government is on the right track.