



Chairperson

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

28 July 2015

Dear Chairperson

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to the Inquiry by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement related to Ice. The inquiry into Ice by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement is timely and welcome.

Cape York Partnership (CYP) pursues an Indigenous-led reform agenda that sees the devastating issues of substance misuse impacting on Cape York people as reflecting a breakdown in social norms influenced by passive welfare practices. We have over many years helped to lead efforts that champion reforms that respond to substance abuse as a 'cause', not just a 'symptom' of dysfunction. Effectively tackling substance abuse has been seen in Cape York as a fundamental first step to achieving other vitally important outcomes such as improving school attendance and performance, and reducing crime and violence.

From 2002, Cape York people and the Cape York Partnership have sought to prosecute a Cape York Substance Abuse Strategy that has focused on the following six key strategies:

1. Rebuild a social, cultural, spiritual and therefore legal intolerance of abuse
2. Control availability and supply
3. Manage money
4. Manage time
5. Treatment and rehabilitation
6. Fix up the home and community environment.

There is no doubt that Cape York Indigenous leaders perceive a growing threat of the use of Ice in their communities. Some of those leaders see this threat as existential. Moreover, in responding to the threat, CYP and Cape York leaders consider that an effective law enforcement strategy is a vital component and that there is a great deal more that could be done by police to respond to the emerging Ice issue.



A law enforcement strategy cannot only address Ice. A holistic approach is needed that also responds to the concerning use of other illicit drugs such as marijuana and to excessive alcohol abuse which remains a matter of the highest concern to CYP because of the high levels of associated violence and health impacts. Based on the work of many Cape York leaders and old people, including many Cape York women, CYP has maintained a longstanding position of promoting law enforcement policies and practices geared at rebuilding functional, harmonious and productive communities. Alcohol Management Plans have been developed by communities in Cape York and have had a positive impact until a review by the Queensland Government caused uncertainty about their future. They must be revived as part of a broader response to the challenge posed by illicit drugs such as Ice.

The threat that Ice poses to Cape York communities was recently addressed at a Cape York Summit in May, involving 200 Indigenous leaders and community representatives. At this Summit Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Apunipima) facilitated a session looking at the prevalence and issues connected to Ice. The Summit offered space to draw from considerable on-the-ground knowledge and information from participants, and provided glimpses into the emerging ice related issues as experienced by families and communities.

CYP has also been otherwise actively engaging with Cape York people and service providers to seek out their views about the threat of Ice. The feedback has been consistent that Ice is an emerging issue in communities. Leaders and service providers are worried that it could become a major threat. Moreover, there is concern that other drugs such as marijuana have already taken hold and a culture has built around such use that could expand to Ice. Finally, most of those interviewed were worried about the capacity of the police to be able to enforce the law in relation to substance misuse, including Alcohol Management Plans.

Leaders of our communities across Cape York and the directors of regional organisations that support them, such as CYP and Apunipima, have articulated a very clear message that they do not want Ice to spread in their communities and are keen to see a joint Indigenous and government response. There is great potential for future collaboration to build an effective response to prevent the emerging Ice issue becoming an epidemic. It is our strong view that there must be willingness for law enforcement agencies to build and implement a strategy with the Cape York Indigenous leadership on a regional basis and in a way that empowers Cape York Indigenous people. The Empowered Communities initiative, which was the subject of a design report to the Australian Government in March, provides one possible framework through which this could happen.

We are happy to expand on the matters outlined in this submission at the Committee's hearing on 30 July where our Head of Policy, Mr Brian Stacey, will appear by teleconference.

Yours sincerely

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