



Australian Government
Office of the Coordinator General
for Remote Indigenous Services

Mr Ian Holland
Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Mr Holland

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2012 inviting me to make a submission to the inquiry into Low Aromatic Fuel Bill 2012

Let me firstly note that I am very supportive of any measure to effectively reduce substance abuse in remote Indigenous communities, particularly petrol sniffing which has such debilitating long term effects. However, I am also on the record that effective efforts to address substance abuse must deal with both supply and demand issues with a heavy focus on investing in preventative measures.

Reducing supply of an abused substance provides a brief window of opportunity to address the issues which led to the substance abuse in the first place, before most users will revert to another form of substance abuse. Therefore, supply restrictions must be accompanied by a multi-faceted approach to provide effective alternatives and rehabilitation and counselling services.

Further, as has been demonstrated in Central Australia, it is not sufficient to restrict fuel supply just at the community level. To ensure that sniffable fuel is not available, low aromatic fuel must be the only fuel available regionally. The cost therefore is substantial, and without the focus on preventative measures and reducing demand, I am not convinced that just restricting supply would be the most cost effective means of addressing the issue.

It is not clear to me whether this Bill is part of a multi-faceted approach to addressing petrol sniffing. If that were the case, and it were to be accompanied by a number of other measures to address demand, then I would strongly support it. However, if it is designed to be a stand alone approach, my support would be qualified.

I am happy to elaborate further on these points if the Committee so wishes.

Yours sincerely

Brian Gleeson
Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services
11 July 2012