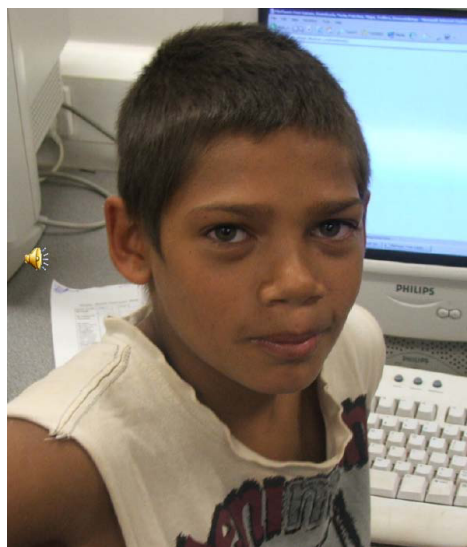




Petrol sniffing makes people die and kill people and hang themselves and they fight and it makes them sick and make them hurt, really hurt from sniffing.

(Dale, Class 6/7, Luurnpa Catholic School, Balgo, WA).



It makes you get brain damage and it makes you mad, it makes you want to do bad things. They can burn a car or burn your house down or break in.

(William, Class 6/7, Luurnpa Catholic School, Balgo, WA).

***Disadvantage. Poverty. Hunger. Violence. Hopelessness. Despair.
Desolation. Disability. Disease. Death.***

These words have echoed over the decades and throughout so many inquiries and reports into substance abuse by Indigenous people. They are also the words used extensively by witnesses to this inquiry.

In the 21st century, many Indigenous people suffer a diminished and purposeless existence in a developed and wealthy country where other Australians take opportunity, education, good housing, clean water, good health and meaningful employment for granted. That this is the case is both shocking and shameful.

Petrol sniffing diminishes further an already disadvantaged existence. It robs young Indigenous people of their future. It brings violence and even death. It undermines the social fabric of communities and plunges them into crisis.

Communities in crisis face complex problems but may not have the capacity to seek the support required from government to develop and implement solutions. That a community is in crisis does not mitigate against the responsibility of government to deliver basic and essential services that are the right and expectation of all Australians.

Communities are entitled to be consulted about, and engaged in, the delivery of services they receive. It is for the benefit of all – the individual, the community and government – that community capacity is developed, community engagement encouraged and government and communities work together to seek ways to overcome petrol sniffing.

The Committee does not want the recommendations in this report to be added to those which have already been made and discussed but not fully implemented. The Committee sees its recommendations as pointing a way ahead: a way to harness the commitment that exists in Indigenous communities and in government to address the problem of petrol sniffing and its underlying causes.

This must be the turning point. All Australians must be able to say that they live with hope, dignity, purpose and opportunity.

Senator Claire Moore, Chair
ALP, Queensland

Senator Gary Humphries, Deputy Chair
LP, Australian Capital Territory

Senator Judith Adams
LP, Western Australia

Senator Andrew Bartlett
AD, Queensland

Senator Trish Crossin
ALP Northern Territory

Senator Helen Polley
ALP, Tasmania

Senator Rachel Siewert
AG, Western Australia

Senator Ruth Webber
ALP, Western Australia