

Having worked as a health worker in central Australian remote indigenous community and witnessing the problem 1st hand, I feel compelled to submit to this inquiry.

1. Communities are presently part of the problem. Whilst a large proportion of the community exhibit addictive behaviours i.e. chronic alcohol abuse, gunja, endemic gambling. Petrol sniffing is one more addiction and whilst maintaining lip service to the problem, they are generally powerless, and lack the commitment to do anything about it, as often their own children are sniffers. Petrol sniffing has to be understood in the wider context of drug and alcohol abuse and addictive behaviours. In the community where I worked alcohol continued to have more immediate devastating effects, but everyone was still pointing the finger at the petrol sniffers. (scapegoating) Petrol sniffing must not be seen in isolation from the myriad of problems facing communities, which seems to stem in large part from welfare dependency and boredom.

2.. non- sniffable Opal petrol is a return to the bad old days of Avgas when petrol was illegally brought in to communities and sold for \$100 per litre. Another revenue raising source! Understandably there was lots of corruption then. Some parents even selling/giving to their own children who demanded it, as many have difficulty saying no to their children.

3. Bush survival training camps have had some success with petrol sniffers where young people are taken out in the bush for a reasonable length of time, to learn and actively engage in bush survival skills such as setting up camps, hunting and cooking foods, learning about their culture, workshopping, counselling, getting fit, educating... etc.etc

4..Implementation of nutritional feeding programmes for children in the communities is an issue which needs to be addressed. Aboriginal children have the lowest birthweights and greatest failure to thrive rates in the country. there is some thought that there is a correlation between failure to thrive children having greater propensity to becoming petrol sniffers. (petrol is ? appetite suppressent)

5..incentives to go to school and stay at school..Non mainstream operational hours may be necessary ...In some of these communities, children stay up late at night as do many in the community due to heat of the day.

Breakfasts at school. First class of the day can involve the discussion, preparation and eating of food. there is much educational benefit involving language -( oral & written), mathematics, science and health..as well as children getting a meal, which helps their ability to learn.

6..regulate gambling in communities so that money can be raised to fund initiatives such as above.

5..Garner Ideas from the people themselves on how they can meaningfully generate their own income, not the presently menial tasks presently performed in the name of CDEP. Assistance is needed to create genuine community spirit and co-operation. Training in motivational leadership, and a sense of real community.

6..serious training programmes eg in housing building and design offering prizes and conferring of awards etc.. Inappropriate housing currently built at exorbitant costs by outside agencies who offer little/no training to locals.

7...Councils need to be transparent & more accountable for their actions and what government money is spent on. Outcomes need to be properly monitored.

8 Alternative sources of recreation besides the local canteen (pub) where people can hang out.e.g. sports & recreation hall. A commitment by the people to operate and manage these and necessary training provided. Incentive awards offered. Job sharing. Overall aboriginal youth need to be engaged in activities to alleviate their boredom and create some positive meaning in their lives. Sport is only one, more are needed.....M. Toner