AUSTRALIAN SENATE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL AND REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

MEDIA RELEASE

Senate inquiry into Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities

The Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities today tabled its second report.

The report makes 11 recommendations, two of which relate to the BasicsCard, introduced as part of the NTER income management measures.

The committee found that some roadhouses that had refused to sell non-sniffable Opal fuel in the Petrol Sniffing Strategy Zone in Central Australia had been licensed as BasicsCard merchants to sell fuel. The committee recommended that these roadhouses be prevented from being licensed unless they agreed to sell Opal fuel.

The committee also found that some communities did not have access to a licensed store and were therefore unfairly required to travel long distances often at great expense to access their income managed funds. The committee recommended that alternative arrangements be made so that people in these communities can access their income managed funds more easily.

The committee also found that there was no system in place to record whether or not people were spending income managed funds on food, and that estimates of how much was being spent could not be verified.

Other recommendations include:

- increasing funding to Homemakers Centres
- improving access to drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities
- increasing the transparency of decision making and better communications by the Commonwealth government in relation to its decision to prioritise funding and other services in 26 communities around Australia
- a review of the Magistrate's Court Circuit on the APY Lands of South Australia
- increasing access to basic literacy and numeracy training in Indigenous communities
- tackling the extraordinarily high rates of incarceration in the Northern Territory
- a review of the number of deaths as a result of family violence and the unmet need to address this problem.

Members of the committee:
Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion (Chair)
Senator Trish Crossin (Deputy Chair)
Senator Judith Adams
Senator the Hon David Johnston
Senator Claire Moore
Senator Rachel Siewert

Media contact: Committee Secretary, Toni Matulick 02 6277 3113 or 0419 292 755