



Inquiry into the harmful use of alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs has announced an inquiry into the harmful use of alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Chair of the Committee, Dr Sharman Stone, said that ‘The Committee is not singling out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the only group that have problems with alcohol. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to abstain from alcohol than non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However we are concerned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who do consume alcohol, drink at riskier levels which has a greater impact on their health.’

Dr Stone said ‘while there is no doubt that alcohol abuse has a significant impact on families and communities right across Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are between four and five times more likely to be hospitalised, and between five and eight times more likely to die as a result of harmful alcohol use¹.’

‘Statistics such as these are of great concern. The Minister has supported the Committee’s determination to identify the social and other determinants of high risk alcohol consumption. We will also identify the strategies and programs which may have had some beneficial outcomes, comparing international experience. The prevalence and impacts of FASD and FAS will also be given a particular focus. We wish to hear from specialists and communities about what is working and why and submissions are now being called for.’

The Committee will inquiry into and report on:

- Patterns of supply of, and demand for alcohol in different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, age groups and genders
- The social and economic determinants of harmful alcohol use across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Trends and prevalence of alcohol related harm, including alcohol-fuelled violence and impacts on newborns, eg Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
- The implications of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders being declared disabilities
- Best practice treatments and support for minimising alcohol misuse and alcohol-related harm
- Best practice strategies to minimise alcohol misuse and alcohol-related harm
- Best practice identification to include international and domestic comparisons

The Committee invites submissions to the inquiry by Friday 17 April 2014. For the full terms of reference and advice on making submissions see the Committee’s website at www.aph.gov.au/indigenousaffairs or contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4559.

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair Dr Sharman Stone MP on (03) 582 1 5371. **For background information**, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4559 or indigenousaffairs.reps@aph.gov.au

¹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2012 Report, p. 105.