



CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

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2 July 2012

Dear Senator Moore

The Central Land Council writes to you in your capacity as the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs to express our support for the proposed legislation to mandate the use of low aromatic fuel (Opal) in strategically important sites.

The Central Land Council is a representative Aboriginal organisation for the southern half of the NT. Our communities and constituents know well the damage that petrol sniffing has caused our region.

The CLC acknowledges that the voluntary roll out of Opal fuel has seen a dramatic decrease in the prevalence and incidence of petrol sniffing in our region. d'Abbs and Shaw (2008) estimated a 94 per cent reduction in the prevalence of petrol sniffing in our region as a result of the introduction of Opal fuel.

However, in our region the clear benefits of Opal fuel are compromised by a small number of retailers who still refuse to stock low aromatic fuel. Most recently, outbreaks of petrol sniffing in our region have occurred in Papunya, Titjikala and Alpurrulam. In these cases, fuel is likely to have come from Tilmouth Well Roadhouse, Maryvale Station Store and Urandangi Roadhouse respectively, because they refuse to stock low aromatic fuel. Whatever reasons these retailers choose not to stock low aromatic fuel, it does not justify the unacceptable consequence of preventable damage being caused to nearby communities. It should not be left up to these retailers to decide whether petrol sniffing continues in nearby communities. The proposed legislation would target these specific locations and enable the full benefits of Opal fuel to be realised in our region.

Further, the legislation would provide extra incentive to retailers in our region who are voluntarily stocking Opal. The extraordinary uptake of Opal over the past five years could potentially be undermined at any time. For example, if one retailer in Alice Springs decided not to stock Opal, it is highly probable that other retailers would follow suit. The proposed legislation would deter retailers from this option.

The CLC supports the more detailed submission from CAYLUS, MT Theo and NPY Women's Council on this issue. We recognise that Opal fuel is no silver bullet, but it has made a big difference to many communities in our region. When implemented alongside youth programs, including those run by CAYLUS, MT Theo and NPY Women's Council, substantial and long lasting cultural change is

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possible. The Central Land Council urges the Senate Committee to recommend this legislation be passed.

Yours sincerely

~~David Ross~~
Director

Phillip Wilyuka
Chairman