

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Topic:** Opal fuel

**Senator:** Senator Rachel Siewert

**Question reference number:** 272

**Type of Question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 11 July 2014

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

1. What are the latest figures in the outbreak of petrol sniffing?
2. How close is the Darwin storage facility to finalisation?
3. Can you provide update on number of retailers who refuse to stock non-sniffable fuel?
4. Have you commenced negotiation with the states to enforce mandatory support of non-sniffable fuel?
5. Please provide update on negotiations.
6. If no negotiations have taken place why not?
7. What work or actions have you undertaken in implementing the Low Aromatic Fuel Bill?

**Answer:**

1. In 2011 and 2012, the Menzies School of Health Research identified 276 people sniffing petrol across 41 communities with most of them located in the Top End, Katherine and Barkly regions of the Northern Territory (NT) and the Western Australian (WA) Goldfields region. A report released in January 2014 shows that across fifteen communities with trend data from 2005-2012; the total number of people who sniff has declined, from 546 in 2005-07 to 160 in 2008, and 97 in 2011-12.
2. The Darwin storage facility is under construction and is due to be completed in October 2014.
3. There are currently six retailers who have declined a request to stock low aromatic fuel. Three in NT, one in Queensland (QLD) and two in South Australia (SA).

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4-6. In March 2014, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Nigel Scullion, wrote to the Ministers for Indigenous Affairs in SA, QLD, WA and the NT to seek their cooperation in establishing a consistent legislative approach to regulating volatile substance use, including petrol sniffing. To date, responses have been received from Ministers in the NT and WA. Responses are being pursued from other jurisdictions.

7. The correspondence with state and territory government Ministers is the first step towards implementing the *Low Aromatic Fuel Act 2013 (Cth)*. The Department is preparing advice for Minister Scullion on the potential next steps towards making a designation of a low aromatic fuel area or fuel control area.