

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

An alliance of the CLC, NLC, CAALAS, NAAJA and AMSANT

Low Aromatic Fuel Act Consultation
Health Branch
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via Email: lowaromaticunleaded@pmc.gov.au

Monday, 12 October 2015

Dear Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory (APO NT), to strongly urge that you use your powers under the Low Aromatic Fuel Act 2013 to designate particular areas as 'low aromatic fuel areas'.¹ APO NT supports the recommendations in the Central and Northern Land Councils' submissions.

APO NT is an alliance comprising the Central Land Council, the Northern Land Council, the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and the Central Australian Legal Aid Service and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory. APO NT has been operating for five years for the joint interests of our members.

APO NT provided a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Low Aromatic Fuel Bill in July 2012. In this submission, APO NT noted that the roll out of Opal Fuel was one of the year's significant wins in Indigenous health, which was due to the large number of communities where Opal had been rolled out, the high volumes of Opal sales and the evidence of the reduced incidence of petrol sniffing.²

While APO NT congratulates the initial roll out, we are still concerned that there are many regions where Opal is not being supplied. Community groups in Katherine have been fighting for the roll out of Opal fuel for many years, but these groups have been frustrated with the lack of progress.³ APO NT is also concerned that the supply of Opal is being treated as an opt in/ opt out model. In Tennant Creek for example, two out of four retailers have voluntarily opted out to use Opal. This will not address the problem and will not act as a deterrent for those who can access fuel at the next service station.

¹ These areas are outlined in the Central Land Council Submission and the Northern Land Council Submission.

² APO NT, 'Submission to Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Low Aromatic Fuel Bill 2012', July 2012. For a copy of this submission, please contact Brionee Noonan on (08) 8944 6672.

³ NACCHO, 'Submission to the Inquiry into the Low Aromatic Fuel Bill 2012' and 'It's time to act on Opal', *Katherine Times*, May 23 2012, <http://www.katherinetimes.com.au/story/251614/its-time-to-act-on-opal/>

APO NT believes that enforcement is critical, because refusing to stock the fuel 'does not justify the unacceptable consequence of the preventable damage being caused to Aboriginal people and their families'.⁴

APO NT has seen these devastating impacts associated with petrol sniffing in the Northern Territory. It 'hurts the community, is dangerous for our young people and causes immense pressure and stress on Aboriginal families'.⁵ Bringing Opal to Katherine and Tenant Creek would reduce the risk and prevalence of petrol sniffing in these towns and in nearby communities.⁶

APO NT understands that Opal Fuel won't fix every problem in communities, but it is a start to curtailing the problem. Opal fuel has made a big difference to life in many communities, especially when implemented along with other measures such as community education and youth programs. These programs are very important in the community and as such require adequate support and recognition and funds alongside the rollout of the low aromatic fuel so the solution is captured and addressed holistically and on a collective front.⁷

APO NT believes that it is critical for you to 'use your powers to ensure the compulsory and comprehensive roll-out of low aromatic fuels' across the Northern Territory.⁸

For further information relating to this submission, please contact the APO NT Coordinator, Brionee Noonan via email: brionee.noonan@amsant.org.au or via phone: (08) 8944 6672.

Yours sincerely,

John Paterson

On behalf of the APO NT CEO's

John Paterson CEO, AMSANT	Joe Morrison CEO, NLC	David Ross CEO, CLC	Priscilla Collins CEO, NAAJA	Mark O'Reilly Acting CEO, CAALAS
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⁴ Central Land Council, 'Low Aromatic Fuel Act Consultation Submission', 15 September 2015.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ NACCHO, 'Submission to the Inquiry into the Low Aromatic Fuel Bill 2012'

⁷ For an example, see the preventative services provided by the Central Australian Link Up Service (CAYLUS) and the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council.

⁸ Ibid, n 4.