

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Ms J Carney

to Minister for Family and Community Services

Tiwi Islands - Petrol Sniffing

Minister on 25 May 2005 you raised concerns in the media (ABC radio) regarding the arrival of petrol sniffing on the Tiwi Islands. This is a sad development:

1. Given that the *Volatile Substances Act* now exists
 - (a) how has banning the sniffing of petrol at this community been enforced? and
 - (b) what programs and facilities have you put in place to support the intention of Parliament in passing this Act?

ANSWER

On the Tiwi Islands a small number of young people are sometimes involved in petrol sniffing and there appears to be a relationship between the supply of cannabis and 'sniffing' – when cannabis is more readily available sniffing by these young people decreases and when it is more scarce some choose to sniff.

Centacare NT provides its Family Coping Strategy on the Islands, which is supported by the Department of Health and Community Services' Alcohol and Other Drugs Program, Community Education and Training Team. This Strategy is responsive to the needs of the community and is flexible in that it can target those substances which are causing problems – including volatile substances. Families and the person 'sniffing' are ~~encouraged-referred~~ to participate in this program ~~from the clinic, mental health team and other community people.~~ ~~The Family Coping Strategy strengthens the family to decrease harm for all the family members which~~ provides skills to ~~avoid manage the problems or~~ ~~and assists the sniffing family member~~ to move away from substance misuse.

This approach, which focuses on the family and provides support over the longer-term, is particularly appropriate as sniffing is episodic and involves a relatively small number of people.

The Department of Health and Community Services is working with other government bodies and community agencies to develop the regulatory, administrative provisions and service systems which are required under or will otherwise support, the *Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act*. When these are in place the Tiwi Islands and other communities will have further tools to respond to petrol sniffing.