



Australian Government

Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination

Mr Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
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Canberra ACT 2600
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Dear Mr Humphery

It has come to my attention that I may have unintentionally misled the Senate Petrol Sniffing Inquiry on 27 April 2006 on two matters in my evidence.

On Page CA85 of the Hansard I stated, "I was at Mutitjulu for about 18 months and lived in the community for about half of that time". There was a shortage of housing at Mutitjulu and, along with a number of people from outside of the community who were working there, I had an apartment at Yulara which is close by. I resided there and commuted to the community regularly from early September 2004 until early February 2005. We then moved to Alice Springs. My wife found the human rights abuses that she witnessed at Mutitjulu too much to bear. She had to leave Uluru for medical treatment and was advised not to return there for residence. My employers subsequently arranged for us to move to Alice Springs, from where I commuted to Mutitjulu weekly. Of course, the nature of my work meant that I also had to visit Darwin, Canberra and other cities on occasions.

The Hansard on page CA71 states that I said the NT Coroner "did not call for a universal regional roll-out of OPAL". What I meant to say was, the Coroner did not call only for a universal regional roll-out of OPAL. I was trying to convey to the Senate Committee that OPAL by itself would not solve the problem. The Senate Committee members would be aware from having read the Coroner's findings, that he stated "although I do not hold Opal Fuel up as a panacea, the evidence is there that comprehensive coverage of the region with un-sniffable fuel ... will substantially reduce petrol sniffing and its associated harms". Senate Committee members will also be aware that the Coroner made four major recommendations: (i) that suitably qualified youth workers be employed in remote communities and that they be selected and managed by professional agencies; (ii) the Australian government roll-out OPAL ULP universally in the Central Deserts Region; (iii) the Mutitjulu Working Together Project continue over the long term, an evaluation of it be conducted, and the lessons learned be considered in other communities; and (iv) adequate treatment and rehabilitation facilities be provided immediately for sniffers in Central Australia.

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In my submission to the Coroner, I recommended a regional roll-out of OPAL. Indeed, as reported by the Coroner in his findings, the roll-out of OPAL across the entire Central desert region was “strongly supported by all parties at this inquest”.

Please accept my apologies for any unintentional ambiguity that I may have created.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Andrews". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'G' and 'A'.

Gregory Andrews
Assistant Secretary
Communities Engagement Branch
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination

19 July 2006