

## Question on Notice

No. 1521

Asked on 5 October 2005

MR LINGARD asked the Minister for Energy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (MR MICKEL)—

### QUESTION:

With reference to Opal or 'unsniffable' petrol –

(1) Will he recognise the devastating impact of petrol-sniffing and extend the 8.3 cents/litre fuel subsidy to Opal fuel for the benefit of Indigenous communities across Queensland?

(2) What is the estimated cost of extending the fuel subsidy to Opal fuel for introduction into Indigenous communities?

### ANSWER:

Petrol sniffing is a serious concern for some remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In a measure to combat petrol sniffing in remote communities, on 17 October the Premier, Deputy Premier and Minister for Finance and I announced that the Queensland Government is addressing the problem of petrol sniffing in some remote Indigenous communities with a 15-month OPAL fuel trial.

In this trial, remote Queensland communities registered under the Australian Government's Comgas Scheme will now be able to receive OPAL fuel at a similar price to regular unleaded petrol, provided that the petrol retail outlets in those communities are registered with the Queensland Fuel Subsidy Scheme. We are expanding the Queensland Fuel Subsidy Scheme to include OPAL fuel. Following the trial, the Queensland Government will consider the continuation of the fuel subsidy for OPAL fuel.

The OPAL fuel trial is in line with the Queensland Government's commitment to address both alcohol and drug abuse and emphasises the importance of simultaneously addressing supply and demand issues in Indigenous communities. The introduction of OPAL is not a cure all but is part of an overall package of addressing petrol sniffing and other substance abuse in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

I have previously called on the Commonwealth Government to work with States and local Councils to establish an agreed priority list of communities to receive OPAL fuel. Each community has different needs and priorities, but where petrol sniffing is identified as an issue and communities feel this fuel will assist, we should be prepared to work jointly towards supporting their efforts.

Under the Meeting the Challenges of Substance Misuse Strategy, the Beattie Government has already allocated \$12 million to be spent over four years to strengthen families and target the economic, social and cultural impacts of harmful and hazardous substance abuse. The program includes a range of measures such as a community grants program for suitable initiatives; delivery of services in response to identified needs; skills development and resources for community development.

The inclusion of OPAL fuel in the Queensland Fuel Subsidy Scheme compliments this strategy. It also reinforces our commitment to tackling alcohol and substance abuse and encouraging communities and individuals to share responsibility for dealing with these issues.