



Australian Government

APPROVED RESPONSE
TO THE
REVIEW REPORT OF THE
CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN PETROL SNIFFING STRATEGY UNIT

JUNE 2010

APPROVED RESPONSE TO CAPSSU REVIEW REPORT

JUNE 2010

Introduction to response

As a response to Recommendation 4 of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee reports on Petrol Sniffing in Indigenous Communities: *Grasping the opportunity of Opal: Assessing the impact of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy* the Australian Government commissioned in mid-2009 an independent evaluation of the Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy Unit (CAPSSU).

The review report has identified several opportunities for enabling CAPSSU to draw on the full range of resources available in the community in achieving a better-integrated implementation of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy (PSS). These include:

- addressing the barriers to cooperation and collaboration, to reaffirm CAPSSU's role as the body with oversight of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy in the Northern Territory and across state and territory borders;
- better aligning CAPSSU's work with parallel activities within the broader volatile substances area; and
- strengthening the governance arrangements and program frameworks within CAPSSU, to provide greater transparency, program logic and accountability in relation to the work of the unit.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) welcomes the key findings and recommendations of this review report. These have informed the next phase of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy, building on the Strategy's significant outcomes to date in reducing sniffing rates in remote Indigenous communities.

Role of CAPSSU

Recommendation 1

The role of CAPSSU should be to oversee the whole of government implementation of the Eight Point Plan, with authority to seek information regarding activity across all state and territory borders, as the conduit between implementation of the Plan and the PSS Senior Executive Service Steering Committee.

Response

Supported. FaHCSIA, in consultation with other PSS partner agencies, is currently considering the implementation of a number of proposals to support an enhanced whole of government role by CAPSSU.

Recommendation 2

CAPSSU should continue to identify and implement strategic projects for, and ensure coordination of, the Eight Point Plan in the NT and the tri-state region.

Response

Supported. Further work on developing tri-state relationships is underway, coordinated by CAPSSU.

Recommendation 3

A model be agreed between CAPSSU and stakeholders to enable CAPSSU's oversight of coordinated responses to incidents in communities.

Response

Supported. CAPSSU has worked with local agencies in Central Australia to develop and draft a rapid response protocol, based on the protocol operating in the East Kimberley Region.

Scope of Activity

Recommendation 4

The scope of CAPSSU's role should be broadened to include other volatile substances in addition to petrol.

Response

Supported. In recent times the scope of CAPSSU's work has included other volatile substances. In practice, agencies and stakeholders are already responding to incidents of misuse of volatile substances other than petrol, which remains its first priority.

Recommendation 5

FaHCSIA National Office should address the implications for the PSS of the recommended expansion of CAPSSU's role to include other volatile substances.

Response

Supported. See previous recommendation.

Recommendation 6

CAPSSU work with NT and Australian Government officials to ensure an alternate and appropriately skilled response is available in response to suicide in remote Indigenous communities.

Response

Supported, noting that CAPSSU has a coordination role in circumstances where volatile substance use is a factor.

Location

Recommendation 7

CAPSSU remain co-located as an independent unit within the Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) in Alice Springs.

Response

Supported. CAPSSU will remain co-located as an independent Unit within the ICC in Alice Springs.

Recommendation 8

Reporting lines be reviewed, led by FaHCSIA National Office, to ensure governance of CAPSSU supports the Unit's role.

Response

Supported. FaHCSIA is currently reviewing reporting lines to ensure governance of CAPSSU supports the Unit's role.

Transparency

Recommendation 9

In any future funding rounds an information session should be held which sets out the procurement process, the requirements of the particular round, and probity issues.

Response

Supported. Information sessions for the Youth in Communities funding round were held in Darwin and Alice Springs in December 2009.

Recommendation 10

FaHCSIA National Office support the implementation of a simple and transparent program logic framework for CAPSSU's work under the PSS.

Response

Supported. The current program logic has been developed in the context of the PSS Evaluation Framework. A more specific program logic for CAPSSU will now be developed to take into account the implementation of the other recommendations of the review, as well as recent work to refine the PSS Evaluation Framework, including through a PSS Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

Recommendation 11

All recommendations for expenditure made by CAPSSU should be linked to the program logic.

Response

Supported. See response to recommendation 10 above.

Recommendation 12

FaHCSIA National Office ensure that the evaluation framework developed for the PSS is embedded into all aspects of the Eight Point Plan, and the funded activity in particular.

Response

Supported. Work is currently underway to refine and update the existing Evaluation Framework which responds to each element of the Eight Point Plan. Program documentation also reflects the Eight Point plan.

Communications

Recommendation 13

CAPSSU be assisted with communications expertise to develop a communications strategy in relation to the Eight Point Plan, and progress against the Plan and the Unit's role, with a detailed plan of what, when and how the strategy will be actioned.

Response

Noted. Considerable communications work is taking place in the context of the strengthened roll-out of Opal fuel, and FaHCSIA has recently released the CIRCA report, published on the FaHCSIA website at <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/Pages/default.aspx> which discusses PSS-related communications issues in two sites in Western Australia.

Recommendation 14

CAPSSU map the critical relationships across all sectors that are required to deliver on the role recommended in this review. A formal mechanism for establishing, strengthening and maintaining each relationship should be identified.

Response

Supported. Three CAPSSU staff attended stakeholder engagement training in August 2009. Work has commenced on mapping relationships and developing a stakeholder engagement strategy.

Recommendation 15

The Eight Point Plan Forum purpose and agenda be reviewed in light of a communications strategy.

Response

Noted. CAPSSU has undertaken significant stakeholder engagement activity in order to strengthen stakeholder relationships in Central Australia since September 2009. On 7 – 8 June 2010, a *Petrol and Other Inhalants Workshop* is being held in Alice Springs, which will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to come together to discuss key issues and priorities. In relation to a communications strategy, please refer to the responses to Recommendation 13 and 14 above.

Funds and Resources

Recommendation 16

CAPSSU should be resourced to deliver the recommended range of roles.

Response

Noted.

Recommendation 17

A dedicated PSS budget should be allocated to support flexible, timely and community-driven solutions to volatile substance use, across states and territories.

Response

Supported, noting that funding for the PSS is now ongoing, and assured to 2014. CAPSSU has developed a tool (the PSS SharePoint List) in conjunction with service providers in Alice Springs that can be used to collect and report on data related to volatile incidents and outbreaks. This tool will be used to collect data to inform evaluation activity being carried out by both FaHCSIA and the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) under the PSS.

Recommendation 18

Guidelines be developed to inform the types of expenditure that can be made under such a 'discretionary' budget, reflecting the timely and tailored responses to communities delivered in NT communities to date.

Response

Supported.

Data Reporting and Monitoring

Recommendation 19

A common volatile substance incident recording protocol and tool should be agreed across jurisdictions for use in recording incidents, validation, and responses.

Response

Supported. CAPSSU has developed a tool (the PSS SharePoint List) in conjunction with service providers in Alice Springs that can be used to collect and report on data related to volatile incidents and outbreaks. This tool will be used to collect data to inform evaluation activity being carried out by both FaHCSIA and DoHA under the PSS.

Recommendation 20

CAPSSU should be responsible for collating data gathered through the common reporting tool, and providing advice on trends to the PSS Senior Executive Service Steering Committee.

Response

Supported. See above response to Recommendation 19.

Recommendation 21

The detail of the data collection should be agreed in the context of parallel Indigenous data collection strategies.

Response

Supported. Data collection will be available to relevant agencies and available for consideration and benchmarked against 'Closing the Gap' initiatives.

It will also be used to inform ongoing evaluations carried out under the PSS Evaluation Framework, including in the context of the strengthened roll out of Opal fuel.

CAPSSU contact details:

Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy Unit (CAPSSU)
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Ph 8959 4253 Fax 02 6200 9633