



Abbott praised for listening to blackfellas

The nation's peak Aboriginal health body has praised the federal Health Minister for taking note of its urgent requests to roll out non-sniffable Opal petrol in Alice Springs, saying many lives and hundreds of millions of dollars will be saved by the minister's actions.

NACCHO Chair, Henry Councillor, said Mr Abbott's initiative in brokering the introduction of Opal—and the banishment of regular 'sniffable' unleaded petrol—was a great response to the requests of NACCHO and thousands of Aboriginal people, especially in Central Australia.

"The minister has shown that he's not afraid to listen and learn from blackfellas and act in the best interests of all Australians when an issue as serious as 'petrol sniffing' needs to be sorted out," Mr Councillor said.

"Mr Abbott is showing that he is willing and able to consult with Aboriginal people at an organisational and grass-roots level, and that he's not afraid to take good advice."

NACCHO called on Canberra to act on the Opal roll-out in December last year when two Aboriginal youths died as a result of petrol sniffing in Oenpelli, Arnhem Land.

Mr Councillor said hundreds of people have died or been permanently incapacitated in recent years, causing great dysfunction and disharmony in some remote communities and costing the health system hundreds of millions of dollars in life-time care and treatment of 'petrol sniffers'.

"Mr Abbott knows that we've got an open-door policy here at NACCHO—we're always pleased to have a yarn with him and help direct him in his crucial portfolio."

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