

Mr N Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Legislative Assembly of Queensland  
Parliament House  
Alice and George Streets  
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 15 May 2003 forwarding a copy of a petition tabled in the Parliament on 14 May 2003 concerning the display and sale of solvents to people under the age of 17 years.

Chroming is a nationwide problem that presents with common patterns of risk factors, which includes social isolation, school absence/exclusion, unemployment, family conflict, violence and abuse.

Community forums and research identifies that a collaborative and integrated response to volatile substance misuse is required. This response should include government departments such as Health, Education, Police, Emergency Services, Justice, Youth Affairs, Local Government and Housing as well as community-based agencies and the business sector. The Department of Families is one of the key agencies in addressing volatile substance misuse, particularly as it relates to child protection and youth justice issues.

The Department of Families has committed \$111,250 from April 2002 to June 2003 under a Joint Inner City Homelessness Response between the Department of Housing, Brisbane City Council (BCC) and the Department of Families to the Brisbane Youth Service to contact young people involved in "chroming".

On 21 January 2003, the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) hosted a Volatile Substance Misuse Forum for Retailers and Service Providers. At this forum, the leading retailer associations committed to collaborating with the CCYP in developing a voluntary code of conduct in relation to the supply and access of paints and other volatile substances to children and young people.

Additionally, the Department of Families in Townsville is currently leading a cross-government working party to develop strategies to respond to the issue. In particular, the Department of Families and the Queensland Police Service are attempting to address crisis response issues, specifically, crisis accommodation and medical issues.

The Townsville working party has developed a Retailer's Kit, based upon a kit developed in Western Australia. This kit has been forwarded to Crown Law for their legal opinion. A number of key agencies have provided advice on this kit including Queensland Police Service, Fair Trading, Department of Premier and Cabinet and the local Council.

It is intended that this kit will be widely distributed, funded by the Townsville City Council, and that training for retailers will accompany distribution.

Several large retail chains (Crazy Clark's, IGA, Mitre 10, Treasure Kingdom) have supported the process and have reduced accessibility to chroming goods eg. paints. While there is no specific treatment for volatile substance misuse, specialist alcohol and drug services offer a range of interventions, such as assessment, individual and group counselling, relapse prevention, education and referral that assist substance abusers.

One of the major factors in reducing the use of inhalants is the provision of alternative activities programs, especially for young people, such as recreation programs and arts programs. In addition, developing co-ordinated local employment and skills training strategies has been shown to have a positive impact in reducing volatile substance misuse and reduce associated social disruption.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

JUDY SPENCE  
**Minister for Families and Minister for Seniors**