



PETROL SNIFFING

Petrol sniffing is a very serious problem in many Indigenous communities and the problem also exists in Alice Springs. Only a small percentage of Arrernte children sniff petrol but the damage it does to their health is very serious.

The chemicals in lead based petrol affect the nervous system and can damage the brain, the way a person walks and talks and can cause them to do violent or dangerous things without realising it.

In the *Us Mob - "Sniffer"* story, Della begins sniffing petrol after she is teased at school and accused of stealing by her grandmother. Many Arrernte parents say that children sniff petrol because they are bored or angry or because they want to rebel against their family or society. Most children do not understand how much permanent damage petrol sniffing can do to your health.

In central Australia there is a place called Intjartnama which runs a program to help petrol sniffers and troubled youth. Intjartnama is about 100km west of Mparntwe Alice Springs and was set up by an Aboriginal woman and her non-Aboriginal husband. Local courts can send young people to Intjartnama instead of sending them to detention. Although it does very good work, Intjartnama is not given much support or money from the government and this limits the help it can offer.