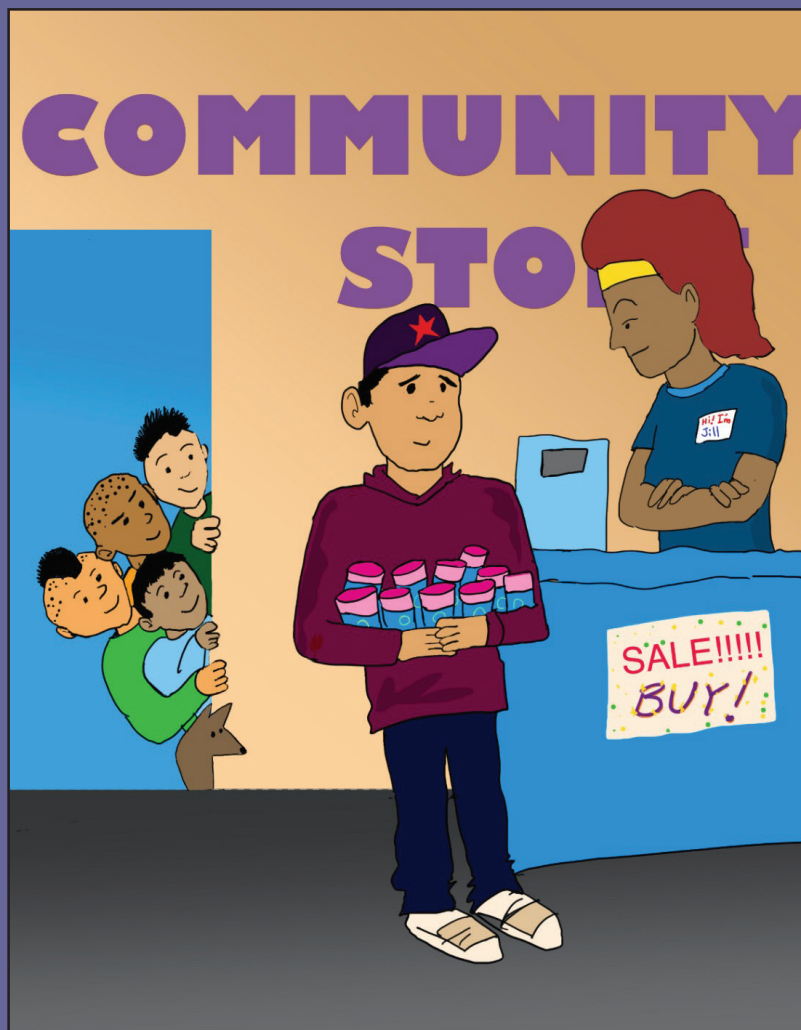


Retailers Responsible Sale of Solvents Resource

Central Australia, Northern Territory. Published September 2021



This resource is designed to help retailers:

- take measures to assist in reducing volatile substance misuse (sniffing)
- identify products that may be misused
- display and sell products in a way that reduces access or makes inhalants less attractive to misusers
- reduce trouble relating to volatile substance misuse in and around the store

DO NOT SHOW THIS PAGE TO PEOPLE WHO MIGHT SNIFF

Volatile Substances These are examples of products that could be misused

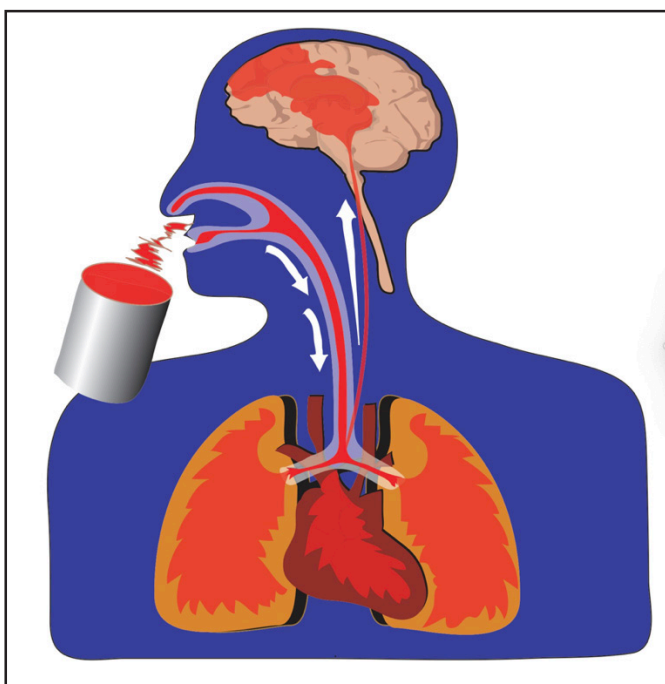


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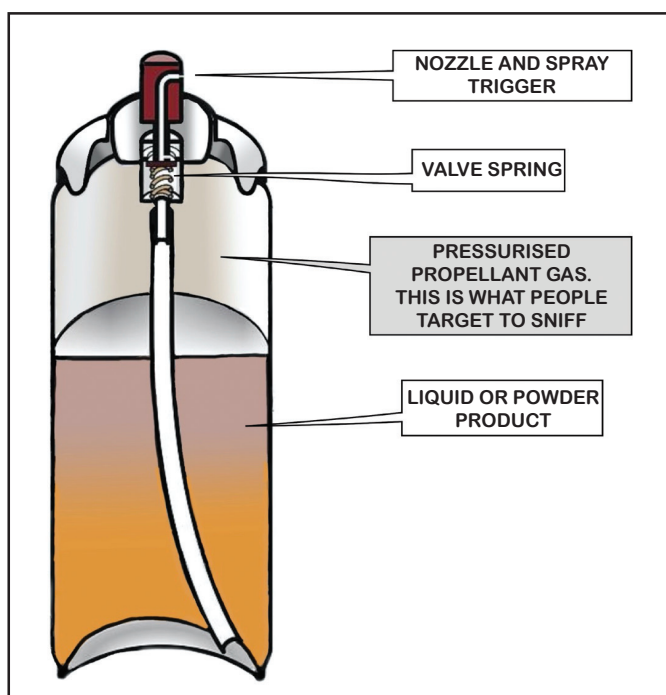
Volatile substances

Sniffing is a general term used to describe inhalation of vapours that cause intoxication. This is a very unsafe practice, with potentially fatal outcomes on any occasion that the inhalation occurs through a condition known as Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome. This causes heart failure if the intoxicated person is suddenly stressed.

Sniffing sends dangerous chemicals into the lungs, the blood and the brain



The chemicals change the way the brain works



The intoxicating fumes also cause permanent brain damage which the brain may be able to compensate for by regrowing brain cells around the ones destroyed by the sniffing.

Which products can be sniffed?

any products that have a strong smell or give off a vapour or use aerosol sprays

Targeted spray products mostly contain hydrocarbons as the propellant. The propellant is what gives people who sniff the "high" they seek, rather than the product itself.

Other substances that contain volatile inhalants such as some glues, paint thinners, etc. are also sometimes targeted by people who sniff, and may need to be managed in a similar fashion.

Which products are volatile substances?

- Any products that have a strong smell or give off a vapour or use aerosol sprays.
- The most common are spray products such as deodorants, petrol, and contact glues (eg. Kwikgrip, some builders' products). Glues, textas and white-out are more solidified products which are sometimes targeted for sniffing.
- Some other high risk products are spray cooking oils, thinners, whipped cream bulbs, some cleaning products, fly spray, and occasionally, white-out and permanent marker pens.

sniffing is not a crime, it is dealt with as a medical problem

Solvents are poisonous if misused, and can slow down the heart, brain and breathing. They can cause loss of balance, slurred speech and disorientation effects similar to being drunk. People that are sniffing can have fits or hallucinations and even black out. Solvent abuse causes sneezing, coughing, salivation and red eyes. Long term effects include serious heart, liver and brain damage – losing control of limbs and speech, losing memory. In Central Australia in the past some people have become wheelchair bound due to sniffing.

Sniffing causes intoxication, and can reduce feelings of fear, hunger, pain and cold, as well as causing hallucinations. It is not thought

to be physically addictive, but can become a habit or behaviour pattern that is hard to break. People “come down” from inhalant misuse quickly, often within 15 minutes, but the damage done can require weeks or months with no further sniffing for a recovery.

Sniffing is done in a number of ways. Most commonly, aerosols are sprayed into a container and the vapour sniffed, or a sock is placed over the end of an aerosol and the spray filtered so only the propellant emerges which is then inhaled. Glue is often squeezed into bags and the vapour inhaled. Petrol is sniffed from any container.

Glue and bag used for sniffing



Bags with glue deposits from sniffing



The NT Volatile Substance Misuse Prevention Act

NT Volatile Substance Misuse Prevention Act provides powers to police, families, health staff and other authorised persons to deal with sniffing including actions in relation to individuals and community-wide actions.

The act provides help to people who sniff using the health system. They will not be charged or be given a criminal record for sniffing.

Specifically, the act provides powers to:

- force people who have a proven and ongoing sniffing problem to attend rehab
- allow communities to create a Community Management Plan, these set rules around how risky products must be managed within a declared zone: eg. contractors might have to store glues and sprays in a locked box
- protect the identity of anyone who supplies information to police regarding an offence under the act.

Section 52 of the legislation Unlawful Supply of Volatile Substances states that:

- a person (the first person) must not supply a volatile substance to a second person if the first person knows or ought to know the second person intends:
 1. (a) to inhale the volatile substance;or
 2. (b) to supply the volatile substance to a third person for inhalation by the third person or any other person.

Maximum penalty: 200 penalty units (or \$31,600) in 2021 or imprisonment for 2 years.

Signs of sniffing, missing nozzles and crusty deposits on outside of container



Strategies that retailers have used in Alice Springs to prevent inhalant misuse

- Moving targeted products to a cage or locked cabinet to prevent shop lifting. This is the most effective type of management. CAYLUS can supply cages or funds for caging products.
- Moving targeted products to the front of the shop where they can be under constant surveillance by staff.
- Moving targeted products behind the counter or out of sight to prevent shop lifting.
- Destocking the product if the management is too much trouble.
- Stock safer options if they exist such as roll on deodorant instead of aerosol, or low toxicity spray paints.
- Putting security labels on products to activate store alarms when stolen.
- Having empty containers or laminated pictures of the product on the shelves, or a note directing the shopper to the counter. CAYLUS can help create this sort of sign.
- Having a register to record the names of all people who are purchasing targeted products – this is often enough to discourage people who are planning to misuse, or who are being pressured to purchase for others. To be effective, records should be taken of every customer that requests a sniffable product, whether the sale is made or refused. It records sales and refusals over time so that staff can see who has been sold to and who has been refused recently. It highlights suspicious sales and can be used by police in investigations.
- Having store policies that apply to all customers eg. 1 container per day, or no ID no product.
- Using security to support staff who are controlling the sale of dangerous products.

At the point of sale, using judgement to decide whether there is a danger that the product will be misused, eg. when people attempt to purchase many cans of deodorant at one time, or they seem intoxicated, or are purchasing too regularly for normal use, such as a can of deodorant every day. As long as you make the decision based on what you observe in that specific instance, you are protected from being charged with discrimination. In Alice Springs, retailers have been using their discretion in this way since 2003 with no charges of discrimination.

Staff awareness is crucial. Because of frequent staff turnover, CAYLUS can deliver training sessions whenever required.

These sessions take about 30 mins and can be organised during staff meetings or any time of convenience.

FREE!! Retail Staff Training Program

A short in-store retail staff training program is available free of charge. Retailers can have regular or one off staff training sessions on the responsible sale of solvents, to alert staff to the issue and to assist them with making appropriate responses to customers and avoiding complaints of discrimination.

Stores have the right to refuse entry, or to refuse sales to anyone they suspect of misuse of a substance, theft, or intent to damage premises or threaten staff. This is not illegal or discriminatory.

Contact CAYLUS, Tangentyere Council, on 8951 4279 or 8951 4236 to arrange training.

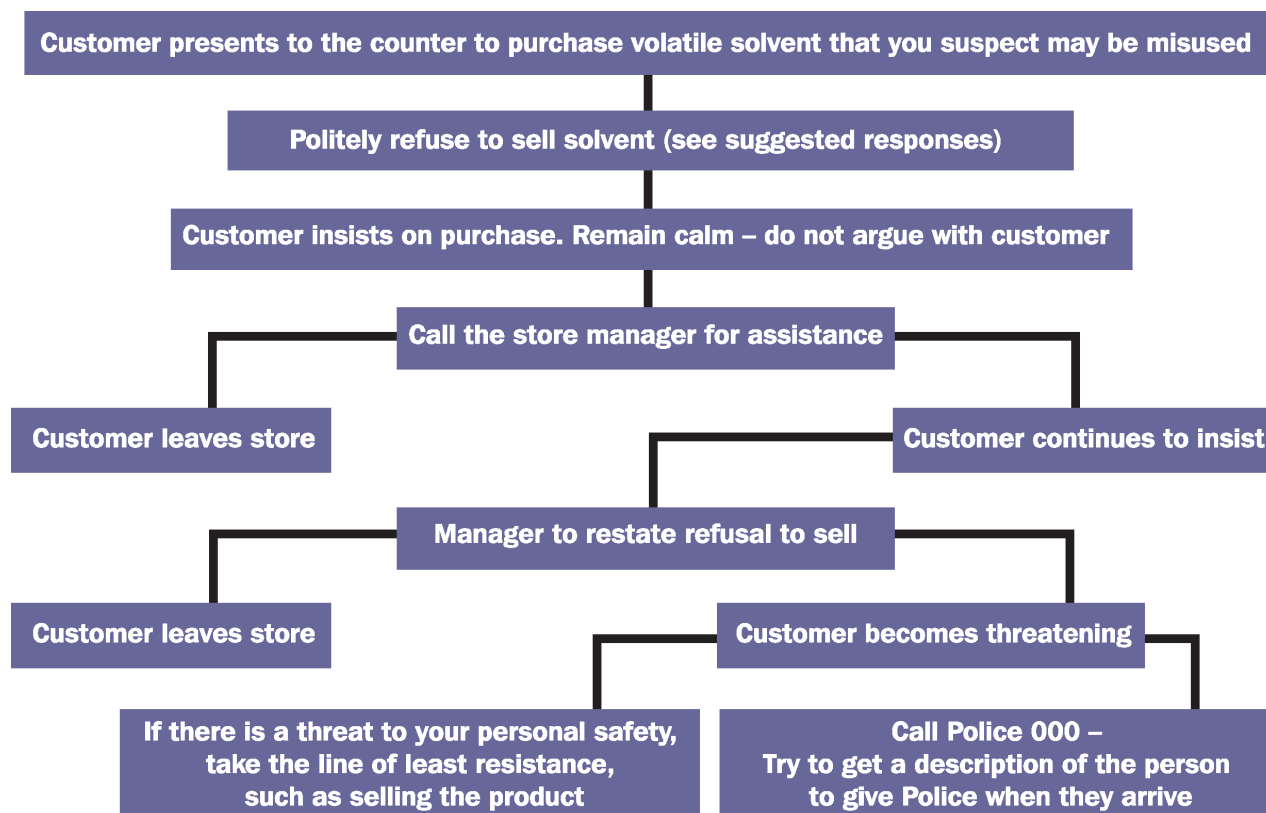
Email contact is supplyreduction@caylus.org.au



Sniffed cans found around Alice Springs before supply reduction measures had been fully implemented



Suggested procedure for dealing with customers who you suspect may be purchasing volatile substances to sniff:



1. Remain calm and friendly. It's best not to argue with the customer; just restate firmly the company and government policy. Most customers will accept this approach and leave the store.
2. Use 'we' not 'I'. Don't take direct responsibility for this policy. Telling a customer: "we can't sell you this product" indicates that it is not your fault, but a management or government decision. This makes it harder for the purchaser to blame the individual sales person.
3. Owners/managers have an obligation to ensure a safe workplace for their staff and customers. Where violence is or might be an issue, stores need to develop plans for this with management and sometimes police.
4. If a customer appears intoxicated, exercise caution and remember safety of all customers and staff is the first priority.

Suggested responses to customers

- You can't refuse to sell to me; I'll have you up for discrimination.
"We're sorry, but we do have the right not to sell this product to you, or anyone else. Would you like to speak to a manager?"
- Groups of teenagers standing around areas where solvent products are displayed.
Ask if you can help them. If they do not want to purchase ask them politely to move on. If they refuse, call the manager, store security or police. Stores sometimes refuse entry to large groups of young people and ask them to enter the store one at a time.
- Frequent purchase of solvent-based products from the same individual.
"We're sorry but there are restrictions on the sale of this product."
- Adults possibly buying for younger people.
The store is obliged to refuse sales to avoid prosecution under NT VSAP Act.

Why is there a need for retailers to implement inhalant management?

- In the NT, retailers, community members, local organisations and governments have been working together for many years to reduce the harm done to young people from sniffing petrol, spray products such as deodorants, paints, glues and other volatile products. This has been very successful with a 94% reduction in sniffing in Central Australia. The help of local retailers is an essential part of this work.
- Sniffing volatile substances is a big problem in Australia. According to a recent Australian Government Survey survey 4.8% of Australians have tried sniffing or inhaling solvents or volatile substances at some time in their lifetime and this number is increasing.
- Many young people in the NT have died or become brain-damaged due to the effects of sniffing spray products, petrol, glues and other volatile substances.
- Sometimes other people will buy products for other people to sniff. This can be for a range of reasons such as making money or feeling pressured to do so.

Lockable inhalants cabinet



Benefits of good inhalants management

- Reduce theft of stock, and subsequent insurance claims.
- A reduction in trouble around the store generally as sniffing often takes place close to the source of products.
- A reduction in the number of intoxicated people entering the store.
- Your store will be viewed as being socially responsible and community minded.

What are our Legal obligations?

- The NT has legislation which obliges retailers to refuse a sale if they know or ought to know 'that a product will be used for sniffing. It is the retailers responsibility to decide if a buyer may be intending to inhale the product or sell/supply it to someone else.

This is the wording from the NT Volatile Substance Misuse Prevention Act 2005.

Division 1 Offences

Unlawful supply of volatile substances

A person (the first person) must not supply a volatile substance to a second person if the first person knows or ought to know the second person intends:

- (a) to inhale the volatile substance; or
- (b) to supply the volatile substance to a third person for inhalation by the third person or any other person.

Maximum penalty: 200 penalty units (or \$31,600 in 2021) or imprisonment for 2 years.

Locked inhalants cage for targeted products



Indications of Misuse – Customer

- Stains or white powdery residue around the nose or mouth or on hands or clothes.
- Sore red eyes, sores on nose or mouth.
- A strong smell of deodorant, paint, or petrol coming from the person.
- Frequent or large sales of the product to the same person - child or adult.
- Unusually nervous or anxious behaviour.
- A drowsy, vacant or glazed expression in their eyes.
- Appearing to be drunk, staggering, falling over.
- Excitable, giggly, manic, aggressive.
- Unlikely answers to questions as to the reason for the purchase – eg. 'to paint a house', or hesitation about giving a reason.

Things to look for:

- Empty spray product containers and stained socks or t-shirts found near or behind the store premises. Socks/t-shirts can be used as a way of filtering the propellant from products.
- Buyers going straight to the risky products and not accepting sales staff recommendations for substitute products.
- Several people entering store together and using distraction techniques to steal products.
- Some young people ask other older family members or older strangers to purchase spray products or solvents for them.
- Young people hanging around outside or behind the shop or nearby, waiting for the products to be bought.
- Both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people are known to buy or steal inhalants and solvents to sniff and sell/give to others.

Won't people just move to sniffing a different product?

- Generally most people stop sniffing if they can't get the product they like or know best.
- A small proportion of people with the most chronic issues will continue to look for other products and this reduced number can be identified and sent to rehab.
- Over time the products that are targeted do slowly change, CAYLUS works to identify these changes and support retailers in keeping up-to-date.

Using an inhalants Sales Register

Some stores elect to track the sales of inhalants. This makes it easier for staff to know if specific individuals are purchasing unusually large amounts of inhalants, and can support a decision to refuse sale. An example is on the last page.

What about anti-discrimination legislation?

Many Aboriginal people experience racism, discrimination and prejudice every day in NT. The NT Anti-Discrimination Act provides important protections against discrimination and a path for making and investigating complaints.

While people from all backgrounds are impacted by sniffing in Australia and across the world, in Central Australia Aboriginal people especially have been affected by high rates of sniffing.

- NT retailers are not liable for complaints of discrimination if their refusal to sell the product is based on a 'reasonable belief' that the substance may be used for inhalation or may be supplied to another person for that use. Refer to the signs of inhalation or possible sale for inhalation to others (see above). If, after

referring to those signs, the retailer believes that the buyer may either use the product themselves for inhalation, or may supply it to another person for inhalation, and that is the primary or main reason for refusal of the sale, the store will be protected from complaints of discrimination under NT legislation.

- Whatever actions a retailer takes regarding refusal of sales, and management of products needs to be applied equally to all customers requesting that product, regardless of race, age, gender etc.

Requesting an individual to leave your store

A store manager has the right to ask any individual to leave the store, particularly if an individual appears to be behaving unusually or has been known to steal from the shop in the past.

Can sniffing cause death?

Yes. People can suffocate on the fumes of whatever substance it is they are inhaling. This can (and has) happened the first time a person tries sniffing.

Crusty deposits on the outside of can



People also can die from respiratory failure or pneumonia caused by long term damage to the lungs. Most deaths from sniffing are caused by accidents that occur during the period of intoxication – getting lost, being burned, having car accidents, or committing suicide while intoxicated. Some young people have died from Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome, where sniffing petrol makes the heart unable to respond by speeding up when there is increased physical activity (eg. playing football, running away from Police, etc.), leading to cardiac arrest and death.

Sniffing large amounts of solvents too quickly can cause an 'overdose' resulting in a person having heart problems or a 'blackout'. This can be very dangerous, especially if the person is alone with no one to help.

Should anyone collapse in the store call 000 immediately.

Who sniffs inhalants?

People who sniff solvents can come from all backgrounds and income levels. Both males and females misuse solvents in the NT.

People who sniff fall into 3 main groups:

- Experimental: Mostly young people under 18 years, 4.8% of all Australians have misused volatile substances at some point on their lives.
- Occasional/Regular: Mostly young people who sniff with their peers.

- Chronic: Users who may be socially isolated, have emotional problems or difficulties at home. These people are sometimes 'ring leaders' who may encourage others to join them.

Why do people choose to misuse solvents?

For many of the same reasons that people drink or use drugs: people that sniff are looking for something that changes the way they feel, such as wanting to feel 'out of it' or drunk. Sometimes people are hungry, bored, angry or lonely and may feel unloved and unwanted – inhalant misuse blocks the uncomfortable feelings. Sometimes people are influenced by peer pressure and have a need to be part of the gang. They choose solvents because they are cheap or free and easily available.

Does sniffing affect behaviour?

Sniffing can cause agitation and hallucinations, both auditory (sound) and visual (pictures, patterns). Sniffers may not take any notice of anyone when they are still 'high'. The 'high' from sniffing is very fast – 5 to 10 minutes and passes quickly once sniffing stops. In order to stay intoxicated the person needs to continue to sniff at regular intervals. Long term sniffing can increase aggression and paranoia. It can cause mood swings, anxiety and depression. People's behaviour can be threatening and unpredictable.

Contacts in Alice Springs for information, or for support

Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS),
Tangentyere Council

Ph: 8951 4236

Tangentyere Night Patrol/ Youth Patrol:
Weeknights and Weekends only.

Ph: 1800 133 110

Alcohol and other Drug Services Central Australia (ADSCA):
Weekdays only.

Ph: 8951 7580

Alice Springs Police

000 if assistance required immediately,
or 8951 8823.

A SALES REGISTER

TANGENTYERE COUNCIL

Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS)

Ph 8951 4236 or 0427 181 727

Northern Territory Police

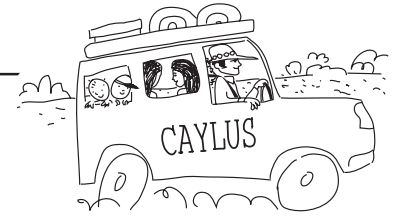
Northern Territory Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act Division 1 Offences

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INHALANT SALES REGISTER at _____ Alice Springs					
DATE / TIME	AMOUNT	PRODUCT	REASON FOR PURCHASE	NAME / LICENCE NO.	CASHIER

Please fill out the form for all customers of purchasing targeted products (to avoid possible anti-discrimination complaints).

We thank you for your cooperation.



WWW.CAYLUS.ORG.AU