

The impediments

Education

- 6.1 Education is not only an issue for remote areas as the lack of education was also a key issue for Indigenous urban youths in Alice Springs:

... not necessarily because it is not available to them but because there are a lot of other factors in their life, such as their culture and peer pressure, which is a big one, which stop Aboriginal kids from continuing on at school. There are a lot of factors that cause them to leave school early and be virtually unemployable.¹

- 6.2 There is a lack of awareness within communities as to where an education can take people.² Aboriginal children have a problem linking education with employment outcomes and a lot are leaving in year 9.³ The Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation found the key to be an understanding of the need to have numeracy and literacy skills.⁴

1 Mayor Fran Kilgariff, Alice Springs Town Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 12.

2 Mr Lester Davis, Manager, Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 35; Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 5

3 Mr Warren Mundine, Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Native Title Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 36.

4 Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 25*, p. 2.

Numeracy and literacy

- 6.3 The fundamental issue that was raised throughout this inquiry was the frustration of employers attempting to meet targets and skills shortages and the need to provide literacy and numeracy training for potential Indigenous employees.⁵ Without basic numeracy and literacy skills there are basic occupational health and safety issues if people are unable to read warning signs.⁶
- 6.4 It is unreasonable to expect the private sector to pay for systemic literacy issues.⁷ Why does industry have to pay twice, through taxes for education and through direct education for their employees? Due to poor literacy levels, Argyle Diamonds has paid for Indigenous employees to undertake a literacy program at the local TAFE at a cost of \$1 300 per person.⁸ Further, Rio Tinto has found that publicly funded training is 'neither timely nor targeted'.⁹
- 6.5 The Federal Government is working on numeracy and literacy skills for employment which will enable employees to read signs in the workplace.¹⁰ There is a need for adult literacy training in a way suited to Aboriginal people.¹¹ The Workplace English Language and Literacy programme integrates this training with the vocational training to meet their employment and training needs.¹²

A leg-up

- 6.6 Young Indigenous people should not be ignored until they are at risk. Young Indigenous people with potential may also benefit from appropriate support which should be given not only to those who are

5 See also Ms Simone Haynes, Executive General Manager, Human Resources, Voyagers Hotels and Resorts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, pp. 10-11; Voyages, *Submission No. 52*, p. 2; Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 26; Mr Lester Davis, Manager, Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 38.

6 Mr Lester Davis, Manager, Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 38; Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 16.

7 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, pp. 4, 16.

8 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 16.

9 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 16.

10 Mr Bob Harvey, Manager, Indigenous Employment and Business Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 5.

11 Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 26.

12 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 107*, p. 13.

borderline but also to the talented and gifted.¹³ Appropriate assistance should be available to ensure they are able to reach their full potential. Rewards that acknowledge achievements could be beneficial:

One of the things I notice in a lot in western New South Wales is that it is a kid who has played up who gets the trip to Sydney, because we are trying to correct their behaviour. The kids who have not played up seem to get ignored in Aboriginal communities. I have seen a lot of young Aboriginal kids who are doing quite well. They get to a certain stage and they need that little bit of a leg-up, a little bit more support, but, because they have seen the ones playing up getting the trips, the culture care and things like that, they fall over as well. We are losing those types of kids. We need to start focusing on how we can encourage kids who are going to perform and do better.¹⁴

- 6.7 Funding is aimed at the long-term unemployed and assistance should be available to those that may need support to change their career paths.¹⁵ For those in employment there needs to be career development and support.¹⁶ Mentoring and support may enable people who make it anyway to get there sooner and be less angry, less frustrated and have a different outlook on non-Indigenous people.¹⁷

Labour Market Programs

- 6.8 Participation in and completion of Labour Market Programs has been found to lead to better employment outcomes for Indigenous jobseekers.¹⁸ There was also some evidence that the involvement of Indigenous people in service delivery may be beneficial and that there

13 Ms Lynette Riley-Mundine, Director, Operations, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 3.

14 Mr Warren Mundine, Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Native Title Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, pp. 36-37.

15 Ms Lynette Riley-Mundine, Director, Operations, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 27.

16 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 44.

17 Ms Lynette Riley-Mundine, Director, Operations, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 12.

18 Centre of Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 3 citing Hunter B, Gray M and Chapman B, 2000, *An analysis of data from the longitudinal Survey of ATSO Job Seekers: Labour Market Programs for Indigenous Australians*, Report to the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, CAEPR, ANU.

were better completion rates if the training component was in the form of a series of shorter accredited courses.¹⁹

- 6.9 There were varying opinions on the effectiveness of wage subsidies in increasing Indigenous employment. The Centre of Aboriginal Economic Policy Research found that wage subsidies have been the most effective form of assistance in improving employment outcomes.²⁰ Wage subsidies have been helpful as they allow the employer to spend time training the employee.²¹ The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry believes that for most employers, financial assistance is secondary to the need to find skilled staff to fill the vacancy and potential Indigenous employees are seen as another resource.²²
- 6.10 The Aboriginal Employment Strategy also argued that wage subsidies lower the self-esteem of the employee and that they want businesses to employ Indigenous people for the right reasons.²³
- People just want to be respected, including Aboriginal people.²⁴
- 6.11 People with special needs may require substantial long-term assistance to become work ready.²⁵ The Great Southern Development Commission also called for Indigenous employment subsidies to be available for a longer period as trainees often take three years training at TAFE to be job ready.²⁶ In situations where a young Indigenous person has had a number of issues in their life, it may take an 18 months or 2 year program to have a successful outcome. This longer

19 Centre of Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, pp. 3-4.

20 Centre of Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 3.

21 Mrs Kathleen Boyne, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 9.

22 Mr Dean O'Neil, National Manager, Indigenous Employment and Training, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 4.

23 Mr Richard Estens, Chairman, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 20; See also Mr Richard Estens *Imagine the Future by Learning from the Past - Aboriginal Employment Strategy: Working together*, Speech to the 2005 Communities in Control Conference convened by Our Community and Centacare Catholic Family Services, June 2005, p. 12; Mrs Cathy Duncan, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 November 2003, Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous communities, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, p. 1386.

24 Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Submission No. 40*, p. 1.

25 Tangentyere Council, *Submission No. 69*, p. 12.

26 Great Southern Development Commission, *Submission No. 68*, p. 4. See also Tangentyere Council, *Submission No. 69*, p. 12.

timeframe is not seen as getting runs on the board quickly and is therefore not seen as politically acceptable.²⁷

Indigenous specific employment

6.12 The major challenges to be addressed include the reluctance of companies to provide real jobs, the lack of informed, comprehensive, and appropriate approaches to job placements and a lack of resources to prepare and implement a major project strategy.²⁸ Rio Tinto believes that Indigenous employment must be firmly embedded in the business and not just 'bolted on'.²⁹

6.13 Mrs Shaw from the Institute for Aboriginal Development commented that:

We have a policy for the employment of Aboriginal people – and that does not throw out the door the merit principle of having the best person for the job, because ultimately we have a responsibility for outcomes. If you employ an Aboriginal person for their skin colour alone you are doing them a disservice because you are putting them in a situation that they cannot handle and you may knock back their confidence for about another four years.³⁰

6.14 Miss Jane Lawton believes that in creating Indigenous identified positions, it is essential that organisations value their contribution and not just use it as the statistic on Indigenous employees.³¹

... there should be a quota put on public sector Indigenous people in mainstream and that departments should be held accountable in that context rather than in the number of Indigenous people who are employed in identified positions – that is easy to do – and then left to sit there and rot and not be developed and those sorts of things.³²

6.15 It was suggested that in order to achieve greater success in employment outcomes, other improvements should include:

27 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 4.

28 Northern Land Council, *Submission No. 103*, p. 7.

29 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 5.

30 Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 8.

31 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 61.

32 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 61.

- a better fit of government programs to major projects;
- ensuring skilled people are available;
- adequate time to prepare and place people;
- adequate resources for preparation and implementation and quality information;
- reduced time to obtain DEWR agreement and excessive government administrative compliance; and
- a holistic co-ordinated approach.³³

Community Development Employment Program

- 6.16 CDEP has provided employment for many in regional areas but has not been without issues. The Committee was told that CDEP does not provide clear linkages to mainstream vocational outcomes and this can disadvantage school leavers who do not have incentives to move to full-time employment.³⁴
- 6.17 ACCI argued that the transition to full-time employment from CDEP could be assisted by better links between CDEP, industry and group training organisations and access to industry based skills and nationally accredited training.³⁵ Skills required by industry in remote and regional areas need to be matched to create pathways for Indigenous jobseekers and the ACCI suggested that progress could be made by developing partnerships between industry and the Indigenous Employment Centre to maximise VET funding.³⁶
- 6.18 The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) told the Committee that despite having jobs on 'country' that people have the skills and capacity to undertake, they still lose workers to CDEP and the dole.³⁷ It can be too easy to remain on or return to CDEP and this can work against fulltime employment. The Indigenous Pastoral Project in the Northern Territory has 1200 jobs and cannot fill the positions.³⁸

33 Northern Land Council, *Submission No. 103*, p. 7.

34 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission No. 64*, p. 4.

35 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission No. 64*, p. 4.

36 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission No. 64*, p. 5.

37 Mr David Galvin, General Manager Indigenous Land Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 48.

38 Mr David Galvin, General Manager, Indigenous Land Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 49.

Disincentives for leaving paid employment were flagged by the ILC as necessary to increase retention levels.³⁹

- 6.19 The Waringarri Media Aboriginal Corporation told a similar story. Mr Colin Cameron knocked on scores of doors of previous employees but none were willing to return to the radio station:

Listen, mate, why should I go back there and work when I can get the same money here sitting on the veranda with a can in my hand ... CDEP is crushing their incentive.⁴⁰

- 6.20 Many young people remain in CDEP in areas where the mining industry has a demand for employees.⁴¹ There is a skills gap between the long-term unemployed and those required in the mining industry and this is difficult to overcome.⁴² CDEP programs do not adequately prepare participants for mainstream employment.⁴³ Strategies to assist people moving from CDEP to mainstream employment may need to be regionally specific.⁴⁴
- 6.21 The Toor-Rong Aboriginal Corporation CDEP expressed concern at the introduction of the 12 month requirement for CDEP participants and argued that Indigenous young will not be job ready within 12 months.⁴⁵ The model they are working with has a three year program with one year to get them TAFE ready and it is not until Certificate Level 3 that they are job ready.⁴⁶

Conditions of Service

- 6.22 An important point that was raised on a number of occasions throughout this inquiry was the disparity in the terms and conditions of public service employees who reside in the community and those

39 Mr David Galvin, General Manager, Indigenous Land Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 48

40 Mr Colin Cameron, General Manager, Waringarri Media Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 July 2006, pp. 3-4.

41 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 14.

42 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 14.

43 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 14; Yulella Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 37*, p. 3.

44 Mr Jack Pearson, *Submission No. 102*, p. 6.

45 Mr Perry Wandin, Chairperson, Toor-Rong Aboriginal Corporation Community Development Employment Program, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 51; See also Mr Bob Mahony, Administrator, Community Development Employment Project, and Manager, Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 July 2006, p. 8.

46 Mr Shane Charles, Coordinator, Indigenous Learning Pathways Project, Swinburne Technical and Further Education College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 55.

that are recruited elsewhere. One pertinent point was that of housing not being provided for local employees and in some situations transport costs where these are provided for employees recruited from elsewhere.⁴⁷

- 6.23 The Committee believes that a more equitable approach would encourage appropriately qualified Indigenous people to return to their community to take up government positions. This would have a number of additional benefits compared to filling these positions with people from other areas including the income remaining locally and role models.

Recommendation 11

- 6.24 **The Committee recommends that the terms and conditions offered to all Government employees in communities not disadvantage local employees compared to those recruited from elsewhere.**

Lead time

- 6.25 In some circumstances employment requirements are known well in advance. This lead time means that the relevant training can be provided for specific jobs to overcome skills shortages.⁴⁸ It is about industry knowledge and information to recruit people for those positions.⁴⁹ The South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy can provide Indigenous people with a list of resource industry skills requirements until 2014.⁵⁰ There will be preliminary training and education for a start up date of 2008.⁵¹

47 Informal discussions, Horn Island, Torres Strait, 16-17 May 2007.

48 Mr Barry King, Manager, Employment and Training Unit, Northern Land Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 48; Northern Land Council, *Submission No. 103*, pp. 2-7.

49 Mr Murray Coates, General Manager, East Kimberley Job Pathways, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 10.

50 Ms Stephanie Walker, Native Title Officer, South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 27.

51 South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy, *Submission No. 89*, p. 2.

Industry sector views

- 6.26 Skills shortages were the overwhelming concern for the minerals sector, as they are negatively impacting on production levels and expansion opportunities.⁵² Although it is not their preferred option Rio Tinto flagged the possibility of employing skilled migrants if the current demand for suitable employees could not be met.⁵³
- 6.27 Rio Tinto outlined the core issues as:
- a lack of available local Indigenous people with employable skills;
 - potential employees remaining on CDEP and not graduating to paid employment;
 - companies ‘cherry picking’ skilled employees from each other, particularly from the government agencies into the more lucrative mining sector;
 - limited childcare facilities making it difficult for Indigenous women to work;
 - government agencies not providing appropriate or coordinated services, particularly in the area of education:
 - ⇒ poor literacy, with relatively few candidates meeting year eight literacy levels;
 - ⇒ publicly funded training ‘neither timely nor targeted’; and
 - ⇒ limited quality assessment for accredited training certificates; and
 - health services needing to be aligned with employment, to ensure that people are ‘fit for work’ (which includes being ‘drug and alcohol free’ while at work).⁵⁴
- 6.28 In summary, increased mining may be creating employment opportunities but individuals need the skills to participate. Both Rio Tinto and the MCA argued that governments are primarily responsible for social services and they need to ensure that people are ‘work-ready’ and supported to stay in employment.⁵⁵

52 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, p. 1; Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 15; Matilda Minerals Ltd, *Submission No. 67*, p. 2.

53 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 11.

54 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, pp. 14-22.

55 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, p. 3; Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 15.

Work-readiness

6.29 In areas where mining companies operate there is a limited pool of work-ready Indigenous people.⁵⁶ In the Pilbara, Rio Tinto believes that every able-bodied person who wants a job has one but there are many people there who are not work-ready.⁵⁷ The East Kimberley Job Pathways estimated that there are 10 per cent of Indigenous people who are unlikely to work, 50 per cent who are not aware they are interested and 40 per cent who are interested and need job readiness training.⁵⁸ Mr Dick Estens commented that:

... generally about 30% of Aboriginal people move through life fine; and I thought if we could get the middle third grouped up with the top end of the community it would essentially build a mandate to put pressure on the back end of the community to drive the whole community forward.⁵⁹

6.30 The complexity of the task was highlighted by Manguri Employment Services:

Eighty per cent of our job seekers are highly disadvantaged. A significant number, which are not identified by Centrelink, are not job ready and require a lot of personal support. They have multiple barriers. We have heard them all before: educational, social, cultural, health, housing, lack of skills and even down to the point where they have a limited awareness of workplace culture. For the staff, it is a huge challenge to get our people to motivate themselves enough to feel proud and able to actually contest, compete and participate in those environments.⁶⁰

6.31 There are similar issues in other areas. Indigenous people in remote and isolated areas may be hindered from participation in employment because of low levels of numeracy and literacy, currency of skills and

56 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 14.

57 Mr Bruce Harvey, Chief Advisor, Aboriginal and Community Relations, Rio Tinto Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 33.

58 Mr Murray Coates, General Manager, East Kimberley Job Pathways, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 7.

59 Mr Richard Estens *Imagine the Future by Learning from the Past – Aboriginal Employment Strategy: Working Together*, Speech to the 2005 Communities in Control Conference convened by Our Community and Centacare Catholic Family Services, June 2005, p. 4.

60 Mrs Cheryl Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Manguri Employment Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 2.

work readiness, lack of relevant work experience and low educational attainment.⁶¹

... we found that not many people were work ready for all the reasons that you know: literacy, numeracy, lack of stamina, lack of health, lack of many of the things that we take for granted. These things are often described as cultural, but they are not; they are learned. I am talking about things like regularity, punctuality, sobriety, ability to work in a team, stamina and ability to work long hours. These are learned behaviours. We learn them in our societies and our homes. We of course all grow up in the types of communities where it is taken for granted that you will go to school and you will stay there all day and you will present for all the activities.⁶²

6.32 Those that have been employed have the skills and the need is now to work with Indigenous leaders to develop work readiness in others.⁶³ There are those who do access the opportunities available:

... but then there are the backstreet gang, which I am familiar with. They are my age group now – those who were not too good at school, who fell through the cracks. They are 33 or 34 now. They know that they need to start getting a job because of changes to Centrelink benefits and all the rest of it. They have done 1,001 work readiness type short courses ... Access is one and choice is a second one. The third one is sustainability.⁶⁴

6.33 Mr John Berto from the Northern Land Council referred to the struggles for remote people, particular where there are health issues and low education levels:

It is pretty hard to compare them with their urban brothers and sisters. The standards in urban centres are fairly equal to those of other Australians. It is much easier to get someone job ready if they are in good health and have stable home backgrounds and education levels than it is with someone

61 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 5.

62 Mr Bruce Harvey, Chief Advisor, Aboriginal and Community Relations, Rio Tinto Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, pp. 34-35.

63 Mr Michael Winer, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 38.

64 Ms Eileen Deemal-Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 48.

who has hardly any of that in place. So the remoteness factor is very difficult to deal with.⁶⁵

- 6.34 Mission Australia Employment Initiatives believes that more time is needed to place long-term unemployed and get them job ready.⁶⁶ People need to adjust to the 'rhythm of employment' in getting to work on time, correctly dressed and ready to start.⁶⁷

Few of the job readiness training programs emphasise team building, effective communication in the workplace and occupational health and safety.⁶⁸

- 6.35 Employers want governments to provide a practical framework and services to better facilitate Indigenous employment outcomes.

We are looking for access to mainstream support services to provide work readiness in a culturally appropriate manner. That will require a fair amount of sensitivity and specific tailoring as the cultural needs and expectations are quite different across communities. We are looking for flexible working arrangements, *a la* the recent industrial reforms. These are very important in terms of the work-life balance, which is quite different for non-Indigenous people. As important as it is for non-Indigenous, it is very important for Indigenous people.⁶⁹

Mobility

- 6.36 Historically Aboriginal people moved when there was a drought or during the rainy season and prior to the 1970s, many Aboriginal people were drovers.⁷⁰ The reality is that mobility can be a feature of the lives of Indigenous Australians, whether by choice – to maintain cultural and kinship links – or necessity. This is not new for Indigenous people. As people develop skills and then options, they

65 Mr John Berto, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Northern Land Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 44.

66 Mrs Kathleen Boyne, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 9.

67 Yulella Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 37*, p. 2.

68 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 17.

69 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 3.

70 Mr Warren Mundine, Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Native Title Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 33.

will move in and out of communities.⁷¹ Mr Warren Mundine made the point that when considering employment issues:

It is also about mobility – you cannot expect to live in a small community and believe you are going to be employed continuously.⁷²

6.37 Mr Larry Kickett commented that in areas such as construction, when the local work is completed, culturally they are reluctant to move interstate to find work.⁷³

This forces Indigenous people to move away from what is often traditional country and move into cities for improved prospects of employment. The pressures placed on the community in a cultural context is obvious and speaks to the fragmentation of Indigenous communities, with dire consequences relative to land rights and native title processes.⁷⁴

6.38 Mr Ian Munro commented that:

Aboriginal people affiliate with their country to the degree that there is no possibility of significant mobilisation in search of jobs outside the region.⁷⁵

6.39 Aboriginal people can live in communities as they have done traditionally, but they may need to travel to other communities to find continuous work.

You see that in rural towns across Australia – people are always moving around. That is not to say that people have to move from their communities. They can still live in their communities but they have to be prepared to travel 100 or 200 kilometres down the road to do some work or spend two or three months a year working in Darwin or Sydney or somewhere else. That is the reality of it. We need to work

71 Mr Dennis Bree, Chairman, Northern Territory Government Task Force on Indigenous Economic Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 10.

72 Mr Warren Mundine, Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Native Title Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 31.

73 Mr Larry Kickett, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 41.

74 National Tertiary Education Union, *Submission No. 76*, p. 3.

75 Mr Ian Munro, Chief Executive Officer, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 July 2006, p. 1.

with Aboriginal communities to start looking at those realities.⁷⁶

- 6.40 There has already been some progress. The Federal Indigenous Youth Mobility Program will encourage young people to take up training and employment opportunities in one of ten host locations. Participants will be assisted to stay in touch with their home communities with the view to returning home to take up local skilled positions.⁷⁷

Homesickness

- 6.41 For young people leaving home to work it is too easy for them to return home. One of the reasons for the success of the Boys from the Bush project in Shepparton was that participants were given a one way ticket and had to earn enough money to get home. Some of the participants returned home in cars they had purchased with the money they earned fruit picking.⁷⁸ Young people leaving the community to work can then support others in obtaining employment or can work as leaders in their community when they return.⁷⁹ In many mining operations, Aboriginal people are brought in from elsewhere and are often required to leave their community and need support for their families.⁸⁰ Another initiative was by the Yulella Aboriginal Corporation which is addressing homesickness by drawing up a register of Yamatji people in other areas to act as surrogate families for young people who have to travel long distances to find work of their choice.⁸¹

Community and cultural issues

- 6.42 Tourism is often suggested as an employment opportunity for Indigenous people. Mr Ron Weatherall commented on the time Indigenous people will need to comprehend differences such as the practice of selling rather than giving which may conflict with their
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76 Mr Warren Mundine, Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Native Title Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 31.

77 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 107*, p. 12.

78 Mr Michael Winer, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 36.

79 Mr Michael Winer, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 36.

80 Mr Simon Hawkins, Executive Director, Yamatji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 22.

81 Yulella Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 37*, p. 2.

cultural values.⁸² The Institute for Aboriginal Development commented that:

... it takes a lot of work to get Aboriginal people to feel comfortable in front-line tourism, with people asking questions that you sometimes might not have the right or the knowledge to answer. It can put you in a difficult position.⁸³

6.43 Alice Springs Desert Park have developed non-defensive answers to the 'ignorant, inappropriate and culturally offensive' questions asked by visitors of Aboriginal staff.⁸⁴

6.44 Another issue raised by the Arnhemland Progress Association was the difficulties in employing an Indigenous business manager:

The staff have family and cultural obligations which will always come first, so if they were a manager and one of their family asked them for something they could be duty-bound by their position in the family to give them that.⁸⁵

Discrimination

6.45 The issue of discrimination was raised a number of times during the inquiry as an obstacle to successful outcomes in Aboriginal employment.⁸⁶ The Kimberley Group Training and the Cairns and District Regional Housing Corporation found local employers to be open to engaging Indigenous people.⁸⁷ This was not always the case and the Committee was told that local employers are not always open to engaging Indigenous people. The choice to work can lead to harassment both in the workplace and in the community.⁸⁸ Balranald Shire Council stressed the need to ensure the workforce is aware of unacceptable behaviour.⁸⁹

82 Mr Ron Weatherall, Executive Director, Employment and Indigenous Initiatives, Queensland Department of Employment and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 July 2005, p. 13.

83 Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 4.

84 Alice Springs Desert Park, *Submission No. 84*, p. 4.

85 Mr Alastair King, General Manager, Arnhemland Progress Association Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 54.

86 For example Ms Jody Broun, Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2006, p. 87.

87 Mr John Gummery, Chief Executive Officer, Kimberley Group Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 23; Mr Jack Szydzik, *Transcript of Evidence*, 15 May 2007, p. 15.

88 Balranald Shire Council, *Submission No. 54*, p. 1.

89 Balranald Shire Council, *Submission No. 54*, p. 1.

- 6.46 Discrimination in the labour market can discourage young people from completing their education.⁹⁰ Dr Scutt also made the point that discrimination can often be a factor in Aboriginal people with an education being unable to gain employment.⁹¹ The inability to gain employment on the individual's merits can result in social exclusion and the willingness to participate in the economic system and Australian society.⁹² Labour market discrimination is more likely to be evident in an Indigenous job seeker being unable to find employment than in being paid low wages.⁹³
- 6.47 There is also the issue of being the only 'black face in a white environment' and interracial prejudices from other local Aboriginal people include 'why are you trying to be white', 'You're not one of us ... you do not belong here' and 'what right has a half caste like you got to tell us about culture'.⁹⁴ Mr Lennis Connors, Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron also stressed the difficulties in being the only Indigenous employee but added that the support networks available now have made a difference.⁹⁵ A number of employers commented on the benefits of employing more than one Aboriginal person.⁹⁶
- 6.48 Discrimination can also be indirect, for example inflexibility in tender requirements for government services. Inability to deliver services in accordance with current policies may force some Indigenous operators out of the market.⁹⁷
- 6.49 Discrimination from customers, suppliers etc is a barrier to the establishment of successful businesses.⁹⁸ The Committee was informed that many Indigenous entrepreneurs do not publicly identify themselves as Aboriginal because of racism in the workplace

90 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 5.

91 Dr Jocelyne Scutt, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 81.

92 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 5.

93 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 5.

94 Alice Springs Desert Park, *Submission No. 84*, p. 4.

95 Mr Lennis Connors, Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 20.

96 Ms Sheryl Sandy, Equity and Diversity Specialist, Brisbane City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 July 2005, p. 24; Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 7.

97 Kullarri Network Association, *Submission No. 82*, pp. 1-6. See also Mr Daniel Tucker, Carey Mining Pty Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 42.

98 Dr Boyd Hunter, Fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 February 2006, p. 14; Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 2; Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 6.

and marketplace.⁹⁹ An example of discrimination in business was provided by Dr Dennis Foley:

A classic example comes from about 10 or 12 years ago. A gentleman from Lakemba who had a panel beating shop won a businessman of the year award. Within a short period of time, a lot of his clients had dried up and his suppliers were starting to be very heavy on the credit because all of a sudden they realised: 'He's a blackfella. We can't give him 30 days credit.' In the panel beating business they work on a cash cycle of 60 to 90 days. All of a sudden his credit was down to 30 days, then 28 days, 14 days and 7 days, and he found himself with a big problem. If he had stayed being just another coloured person in the inner west of Sydney, he would have still had a very profitable business. I am glad to say that he has built himself up since then, but for a couple of years he had it tough. He had to change suppliers and all that because all of a sudden he was known as an Aboriginal business. Unless you are in tourism or are selling your culture, it can work against you.¹⁰⁰

6.50 Discrimination amongst potential customers means that it will not be possible to succeed even with drive and motivation.¹⁰¹ Dr Foley made the point that mainstream populations need to be re-educated as this is the main inhibitor to business for both debtors and creditors.¹⁰²

All of the Indigenous participants had experienced discrimination that was either race or gender based. It was so common that it was only acknowledged when it was physical or exclusionary. This is possibly the greatest inhibitor to business success and longevity. Aside from tourism, many did not publicly identify as Indigenous Australian. They believed this would produce negative outcomes within mainstream business.¹⁰³

99 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, pp. 5-6.

100 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 9.

101 Dr Boyd Hunter, Fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 February 2006, p. 15.

102 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 6.

103 Dr Dennis Foley, *Indigenous Australian Entrepreneurs: Successful and Invisible*, Opening statement to the House of Representative Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 23 May 2005, p. 6, *Exhibit 42*.

- 6.51 Racism, while it is by a minority, bullying and intimidation can lead to a 'reverse racism' where Indigenous people can take the view 'What am I doing here? Typical whitefella'.¹⁰⁴

... negative and/or prejudiced attitudes and perceptions of employers towards indigenous people are difficult to overcome.¹⁰⁵

- 6.52 Dr Foley recommended that Indigenous Australian studies be incorporated into school curricula from kindergarten to year 12, and every discipline within tertiary institutions. The New South Wales Government suggested that:

An active campaign countering racial discrimination is required, in conjunction with positive employment initiatives, to challenge such attitudes.¹⁰⁶

Cross-cultural awareness training

- 6.53 The need for cultural awareness training for non-Indigenous staff was raised in a number of submissions to the inquiry.¹⁰⁷ Non-Indigenous staff may not appreciate the need to adapt themselves:

Probably in many places there is a tendency to say, 'Well, they're here now. They've got the job and they've got to be the same as everybody else. What's wrong with them? They should just get on with it.'¹⁰⁸

- 6.54 Mrs Shaw, from the Institute for Aboriginal Development, made the point that if you went to Bali you would look at their culture to ensure that you did not offend them and Aboriginal people must be shown the same respect.¹⁰⁹ Mrs Shaw commented that:

104 Mr Craig Rigney, Apprentice Electrician, Adelaide City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 23.

105 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 6.

106 New South Wales Government, *Submission No. 111*, p. 7. See also Mr Andrew West, Manager, Kaurna Business and Heritage Centre, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 80; Mrs Lynette Crocker, Co-Chair, Kaurna Yerta Inc, Native Title Management Committee, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 77.

107 For example see Little Burning Mountain Aboriginal Cooperative, *Submission No. 8*, p. 2; City of Marion, *Submission No. 28*, p. 1.

108 Dr Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, p. 4.

109 Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 3.

Aboriginal people already have an education and a lifestyle system in their culture and they are very strong on their commitment to their responsibilities, so when you are talking about educating an Aboriginal person who lives a cultural lifestyle you have to acknowledge that their relationship with their kin and their responsibilities to culture come first.¹¹⁰

6.55 It is important to look at how the values of Indigenous people can influence the traditional structure of the labour market and the impact of job creation and economic development.¹¹¹

... non-Indigenous lists would start with a house, car, job and that sort of thing. Most of the Indigenous lists started with culture – ceremonies, responsibilities to kin. Further down there was a house. I am not saying that Aboriginal people do not have the right to a house - they do. But what I found was that in their set of values those material things were lower down the list than spiritual and cultural things.¹¹²

6.56 The example was given of the Kormilda College where positive results were being seen for students from a remote community. The community withdrew the students because of the impact on their cultural values. This was 'a very good example of how we often get carried away with what we believe are our priorities without necessarily listening to the community'.¹¹³

6.57 Employers are demonstrating a willingness to learn and recognise the importance of Indigenous culture by working with communities¹¹⁴ and providing cross-cultural awareness training to non-Indigenous staff.¹¹⁵ . It was suggested that it should be compulsory for all public servants if the majority of their clients are Aboriginal.¹¹⁶

110 Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 1.

111 See comments by Ms Ah Chin, Principal Advisor Indigenous Policy, Office of Commissioner for Public Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 21.

112 Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 10.

113 Ms Ah Chin, Principal Advisor Indigenous Policy, Office of Commissioner for Public Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 29.

114 For example Ms Simone Haynes, Executive General Manger, Human Resources, Voyages Hotels and Resorts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 12.

115 Mr Dean O'Neil, National Manager, Indigenous Employment and Training, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 4; Australia Post, *Submission No. 96*, p. 4; Mr Rod McDonald, Group Manager, Human Resources, Australia Post, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 20; Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27

[T]he very first and most pivotal thing we can do is respect the culture.¹¹⁷

- 6.58 Mission Australia Employment Initiatives called for a national media strategy to create awareness for employers:

There has been national marketing for mature-age job seekers, for apprenticeships and traineeships, and there has been national marketing for other disadvantaged groups, but there has never been an awareness created about the importance of Indigenous employment.¹¹⁸

- 6.59 While there is wide acknowledgement of the benefits of cultural awareness training, this is not without cost. Mr Brian Varcoe of the Adelaide City Council, made the point that workplaces are often limited by time and resource constraints as to how much they can do in this area.¹¹⁹

Cultural leave

- 6.60 There is a perception that Aboriginal are unreliable because they will go walkabout. Australians are notorious for saying 'I'm not a racist but...'.¹²⁰
- 6.61 Some employers did not see cultural leave as an issue provided that you have the flexibility to enable Indigenous workers to balance work and cultural responsibilities.¹²¹ Flexibility and responsiveness are key

October 2005, pp. 20, 30; Mr Lennis Connors, Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 30; Mr Lester Davis, Manager Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 33; Ms Simone Haynes, Executive General Manager, Human Resources, Voyages Hotels and Resorts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 2.

116 Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 3.

117 Ms Stephanie Walker, Native Title Officer, South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 29.

118 Mrs Kathleen Boyne, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 6.

119 Mr Brian Varcoe, Development and Liaison Officer, Human Resources, Indigenous Trainees and Apprentices, Adelaide City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 18.

120 Ms Bernice Kelly, Chairperson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 19.

121 For example see Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 3; Mr Leigh Cleghorn, Manager, Umoona Aged Care Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 64.

aspects of successful Indigenous employment.¹²² Employers can address this through being flexible with industrial arrangements and most organisations have family, recreational leave and rostered days off, time in lieu or swapping days off which can accommodate cultural leave needs.¹²³ Utilising a pool of people to meet the contractual arrangements also provides the flexibility to cover contingencies such as sorry leave and ceremonial leave.¹²⁴ Mr Barry Taylor, Ngarda Foundation, in Port Hedland was reported as saying that the contractors who employ Indigenous people need to be aware that they have cultural practices which need to be factored into work force planning and 'it is not really too difficult'.¹²⁵

- 6.62 While industry and bigger businesses have the capacity to demonstrate greater flexibility, smaller businesses may not have the capacity to implement such initiatives as extensive cross-cultural education or to be able to cover work responsibilities for absent workers.¹²⁶
- 6.63 Also the point was raised that Indigenous people living in urban environments may not have the same responsibilities as someone with a more traditional cultural lifestyle.¹²⁷
- 6.64 While it is appreciated that most employees have difficulty in balancing family and work, this can be more difficult for Indigenous people.¹²⁸ Being part of an Indigenous family comes with many

122 Balranald Shire Council, *Submission No. 54*, p. 1; Mr Murray Coates, General Manager, East Kimberley Job Pathways, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 12.

123 For example see Mr Kelvin Tytherleigh, Manager, Organisational Development and Governance Unit, Caboolture Shire Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 July 2005, p. 40; Alice Springs Desert Park, *Submission No. 84*, p. 3; Ms Simone Haynes, Executive General Manger, Human Resources, Voyages Hotels and Resorts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, pp. 3, 12.

124 Mr Michael Maloney, Human Resources Manager, Tangentyere Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 29; Mr Lester Davis, Manager Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 40; Dr Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, p. 3; Mr Joseph Elu, Co-Chair, Indigenous Community Volunteers, *Transcript of Evidence*, 4 December 2006, pp. 12-13.

125 Mr Jack Pearson, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 11.

126 Ms Stephanie Walker, Native Title Officer, South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 30.

127 Mrs Eileen Shaw, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 7; Mr Ivan Deemal, Senior Coordinator, Community Relations, Cairns Region Group Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 58.

128 Mrs Kathleen Boyne, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 6.

responsibilities and cultural obligations that non-Indigenous people and employers may not readily understand.

- 6.65 Employers and Indigenous employees both have a responsibility to help each other to understand these, sometime competing, obligations and reach effective compromises.¹²⁹ In practice, appropriate staffing arrangements can accommodate these responsibilities and cultural obligations.¹³⁰ The Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron, observed that:

Most of them get into it and want to do it because they have their own families and they want them to have more than what they had when they were kids.¹³¹

- 6.66 Similarly, Ms Cathy Duncan, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, commented on the balancing act of work and cultural obligations:

Every one of us have to make sacrifices. Sometimes we cannot attend every funeral. That is not always a good cultural thing but it is something that we accept when we step into this world of work. We are not turning our back on our people but we have to be aware that we have made a commitment to our employer.¹³²

- 6.67 Cultural practices and customs and extended family responsibilities may have an impact on an Indigenous person's capacity to participate in employment.¹³³ For example, the community worked with the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park to hold a funeral at a time when the show was not being run.¹³⁴ The Park has an absentee rate well

129 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Employing Indigenous Australians Indigenous Employment Strategy, Framework for Industry, Exhibit No. 145*, p. 15; Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 47.

130 Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 46; Mr Lennis Connors, Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 31.

131 Mr Lennis Connors, Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 24.

132 Ms Cathy Duncan, Director, Culture and Reputation, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 9.

133 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 5.

134 Mrs Judy Freeman, Director of Marketing, Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 July 2005, p. 18.

below 5 per cent.¹³⁵ Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park commented that:

The minute that you allow the funeral and the community obligations to close down the business – even for a moment – that business is finished because it would be running along community policy and directives, not commercial policy.¹³⁶

6.68 An approach that some employers have found effective is to showcase their business to the families of their Indigenous employees. This serves to build relationships and foster a greater appreciation by workers, families and communities of the importance of fulfilling work as well as cultural responsibilities.¹³⁷ Families can take pride in these achievements.

We are parents too, just like anyone else, and we want for our children the same as everybody else does.¹³⁸

6.69 There are a range of family and social issues which need to be addressed when assisting Indigenous people to prepare for and make the transition to employment.¹³⁹

I think that support program needs to go further than the individual. You need to look at the family situation and not have it as an isolated sort of picture, so that the family comes into the support structure as well, because that is where a lot of the issues come from.¹⁴⁰

6.70 Childcare is another issue that must be addressed to enhance the participation of Indigenous women in the workforce. In remote regions this may be an issue for Indigenous women who are interested in working in the mining industry, particularly in

135 Mr Don Freeman, Managing Director, Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 July 2005, p. 21.

136 Mrs Judy Freeman, Director of Marketing, Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 July 2005, p. 16.

137 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Employing Indigenous Australians Indigenous Employment Strategy, Framework for Industry Exhibit No. 145*, p. 17.

138 Ms Cathy Duncan, Director, Culture and Reputation, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 15.

139 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 18.

140 Mrs Justine Wardle, Employment Consultant, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 11.

situations where there is shift work.¹⁴¹ Rio Tinto Ltd has child-care and pre-school programs offsite in some locations.¹⁴²

Health

- 6.71 The health status of Indigenous Australians is poor compared to the broader Australian population.¹⁴³ Employment is a major determinant of Indigenous health, conversely health status can also be a key determinant of Indigenous employment outcomes.¹⁴⁴ Many of these health problems are preventable.
- 6.72 The health sector has an important role to play in both providing services to Indigenous Australians and as a source of Indigenous employment.¹⁴⁵ Enhancing the training and employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians in the health services will not only benefit the individuals accessing these, it also has wider implications for improving Indigenous health.¹⁴⁶

Fitness for work

- 6.73 Pilbara Iron listed fitness to work as the main barrier for Indigenous people gaining employment in the mining industry; cardiovascular health, diabetes, drugs and alcohol and numerous other health challenges.¹⁴⁷ Health problems are not often tackled as an integral

141 Mr Bruce Harvey, Chief Advisor, Aboriginal and Community Relations, Rio Tinto Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 39; Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 15; see also Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 5.

142 Mr Bruce Harvey, Chief Advisor, Aboriginal and Community Relations, Rio Tinto Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 40.

143 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Social Justice Report 2005*, Report No. 3/2005, pp. 17-18. Available at: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/Social_Justice/sjreport05/index.html; See also Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 5.

144 See Ms Joy McLaughlin, Assistant Secretary, Policy and Analysis Branch, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Department of Health and Ageing, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 February 2006, p. 17.

145 According to the 2001 census Indigenous people employed in the health sector comprised 10 per cent of Indigenous people in the workforce.

146 Department of Health and Ageing, *Submission No. 35*, p. 3; Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, *Submission No. 101*, p. 2; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Health and Welfare of Australian's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2005*, p. 186. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au>. See also Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Social Justice Report 2005*, Report No. 3/2005, p. 77. Available at: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/Social_Justice/sjreport05/index.html.

147 Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, pp. 19-20.

part of Indigenous job-ready programs.¹⁴⁸ Health was identified as an area where there needs to be greater collaboration:

... we have the fitness for work issues with health, but there is no one place to refer people to. We often have job applicants that do not meet the requirements; they might fail a drug and alcohol test or they might be overweight or have cardiovascular issues. There is no one entity that can help that person to get the help that they need. They might have to go to three or four different agencies.¹⁴⁹

6.74 The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Minerals Council of Australia has state health and education departments involved in terms of health education and awareness:

... making sure that people are capable in the longer term of participating in things like education and training because their health is at a standard that enables them to have a decent life span and a decent quality of life¹⁵⁰

6.75 Substance abuse can be a barrier to employment for Indigenous people and targeted programs are needed, as part of preparing Indigenous people for work, to assist Indigenous Australians to tackle substance abuse problems. Drug education programs for young Indigenous people are critical to educate them about the dangers of drug use and how it can impede career choices.¹⁵¹

Mental health issues

6.76 The issue of mental health was raised in a number of submissions in the context of social and emotional well-being that leads to success in employment opportunities for Indigenous people.¹⁵² Mining

148 Rio Tinto Group, *Submission No. 80*, p. 18.

149 Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, pp. 26-27.

150 Ms Melanie Stutsel, Director, Environmental and Social Policy, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 9.

151 Mr Jack Pearson, *Submission No. 102*, p. 7.

152 See Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Social Justice Report 2005*, Report No. 3/2005, p. 20. Available at: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/Social_Justice/sjreport05/index.html. Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey, *The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People – Summary Booklet*, 2005, p. 8. Available at: <http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/waachs/>. See also Mr Johnathan Link, Community Liaison and Development Officer, Mental Health Program, Royal Flying Doctor Service, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 54.

companies have recognised that Indigenous people may require more focused and individual assistance in this area.¹⁵³

Housing

- 6.77 Census figures from 2001 showed that 30 per cent of Indigenous people lived in major cities, 43 per cent in regional areas and 27 per cent in remote Australia, with the proportion of Indigenous people living in cities versus regional or remote settings varying between states and territories.¹⁵⁴
- 6.78 The housing and mobility patterns of Indigenous Australians can be quite distinct from those of non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous housing experiences are often characterised by limited housing stock and options, discrimination, evictions, high levels of mobility, substandard housing and even homelessness.¹⁵⁵ Dependency on welfare limits Indigenous options when it comes to both rental and homeownership.¹⁵⁶
- 6.79 Overcrowding¹⁵⁷ is a key issue to be addressed in order to improve Indigenous housing outcomes. The impact of overcrowding can be wide ranging, affecting the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals and limiting their capacity to pursue education and employment opportunities.¹⁵⁸

153 For example, see Mr Larry Kickett, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 46; Mr Jack Pearson, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 10; Ms Roberta Crocker, Indigenous Programs Specialist, Rio Tinto Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 37.

154 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Health and Welfare of Australian's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2005*, p. 4. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au>.

155 Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, *21st Century Housing Careers and Australia's Housing Future: Literature Review*, February 2006, p. 2. This report is available at: <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/general/document/index.cfm>.

156 Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, *21st Century Housing Careers and Australia's Housing Future: Literature Review*, February 2006, p. 53. This report is available at: <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/general/document/index.cfm>.

157 Overcrowding is defined in relation to the Proxy Occupancy Standard which is a measure of the appropriateness of housing related to the household size and composition. See Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website: <http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/327448>.

158 See Centre for Economic and Policy Research, *Overcrowding and Indigenous Health in Australia*, Discussion Paper No. 498, September 2005, p. 1; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Health and Welfare of Australian's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2005*, pp. 27, 37-38. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au>; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*, Report, p. 10.1, 5. 10.24-5. Available at:

Home ownership

6.80 For Indigenous people, homeownership represents a step towards independence and provides stability and a foundation on which to build other economic opportunities for their families and communities.¹⁵⁹ Mr Ron Morony from IBA commented that the Home Ownership Program ‘provides stability, security and a stable base for families’.¹⁶⁰

6.81 Mr Warren Mundine informed the Committee that, in his view, homeownership is not:

... a panacea for the ills of the Aboriginal community, but I do want a discussion about it. It is not only about home ownership; it is about having private enterprises and the ownership of a number of assets and how we better use those assets to benefit the wider Aboriginal community. There is no great science to this. If you own your own home – and I have had three generations of it in my family – that then forces you to ensure that you are employed, that you have an income and that you are looking after the house because it is your asset. That change in your behaviour then spreads through the wider community.¹⁶¹

6.82 The federal and state governments have a number of programs in place to assist Indigenous Australians purchase a home.¹⁶²

The desire and ability to own a home is commonly linked to benefits such as stability of employment, improved health and education, flexibility to adapt the dwelling as needs or preferences change and as a store of wealth for future lifestyle decisions and economic independence. Home ownership provides a stronger and more stable base for building social

<http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous/keyindicators2003/index.html>.

159 Department of Education and Workplace Relations, *Submission No. 108*, p. 25.

160 Mr Ron Morony, General Manager, Indigenous Business Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 August 2005, p. 24.

161 Mr Warren Mundine, Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Native Title Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 41.

162 For example see <http://www.keystart.com.au/key/aboriginal.htm> and <http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/services/view.php?id=443> for Western Australian and Tasmanian state programs; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission No. 108*, pp. 24-25.

capital, which in turn can support improved employment outcomes.¹⁶³

Transport

- 6.83 One of the issues for Indigenous people in remote areas can be transport to get them to work.¹⁶⁴ In rural areas where there is no public transport, this can be a significant barrier for those without a driver's license.¹⁶⁵ Vehicles mean access to essential services, education, enables visitation to country and participation in hunting parties and cultural events.¹⁶⁶ In the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) 2002, 55 per cent of Indigenous people in remote Australia reported that they did not have access to a vehicle and 13 per cent could not get to the places they needed to.¹⁶⁷ In cases where vehicles can be obtained many are not roadworthy.¹⁶⁸
- 6.84 Possessing a driver's licence can be a basic requirement for many jobs.¹⁶⁹ A number of programs are being put in place to assist young people to get a license.¹⁷⁰ There are, however, a number of factors

163 Indigenous Business Australia, *Submission No. 104*, p. 16.

164 Ms Simone Haynes, Executive General Manager, Human Resources, Voyagers Hotels and Resorts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 4; Ms Marilyn Smith, Manager, Footprints Forward, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 July 2005, p. 4; Mrs Kathleen Boyne, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 6.

165 Mrs Kathleen Boyne, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 6; Balranald Shire Council, *Submission No. 54*, p. 2; see also Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 5.

166 Fogarty W, 'You got any Truck?' *Vehicles and decentralised mobile service-provision in remote Indigenous Australia*, Working Paper No. 30/2005, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.

167 Australia Bureau of Statistics, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*, 2002, pp. 14-15. See also Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Health and Welfare of Australian's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2005*, p. 14. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au>.

168 Mr Ian Fletcher, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 7.

169 Balranald Shire Council, *Submission No. 54*, p. 2; Mrs Kathleen Boyne, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Initiatives, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 6; Mr Lennis Connors, Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 26; Mr Kevin Dixon, Bega Parks Mowing Team, Bega Valley Shire Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 December 2005, p. 14.

170 For example, see Ms Bernice Kelly, Chairperson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Corporation, Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 18; Mr Ian Fletcher, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Transcript of Evidence*,

which can be barriers to Indigenous people obtaining drivers licenses; lack of awareness of how to obtain a birth certificate,¹⁷¹ inability to pay for handbooks or driving lessons, limited literacy, and lack of access to vehicles to learn to drive and licensed drivers willing to provide driving practice.¹⁷²

- 6.85 Police checks are a big issue.¹⁷³ A common problem appears to be people fined for driving without licenses, not being able to pay the fines. Once an Indigenous person has a criminal record, perhaps for repeat offences for driving while disqualified, they may not be able to pass the police checks that may be mandatory to obtain employment.¹⁷⁴
- 6.86 Programs supporting Indigenous people to attain and keep licences will enhance their capacity to pursue training and employment opportunities and there have been a number of successful approaches.¹⁷⁵ Obtaining a drivers licence can boost the self-esteem of Indigenous people as this is a source of identification, which allows Indigenous people to better access mainstream services such as opening a bank account or renting a flat.¹⁷⁶

27 October 2005, pp. 14-15; Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 21.

171 The Binaal Billa Regional Council of ATSIC would provide grants to cover licence and birth certificate fees.

172 Australian Institute of Criminology, *Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards: Winning Projects 2005*, 10 November 2005, p. 9.

173 Ms Marilyn Smith, Manager, Footprints Forward, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 July 2005, p. 25.

174 Ms Marilyn Smith, Manager, Footprints Forward, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 July 2005, p. 25; Mrs Kerri Colegate, Site Coordinator, Manguri Employment Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 9.

175 Balranald Shire Council, *Submission No. 54*, p. 2; Mr Peter Cowham, CDEP Manager, Tangentyere Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 31; Bloodwood Tree Association, *Exhibit 18*, p. 5; Mr Wayne Gibbons, Associate Secretary, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, *Exhibit No. 52*, pp. 37, 39; Ms Joy Wii, Community Planning and Development Officer, Cairns City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 18; Jones A & Hyslop D, Department of Corrective Services, 'Can't wait to get out and drive past the cops. This time I'll have a licence.' *Pre-release programs in NSW Correctional Centres: Driver Education at Mannus*, Conference paper, October 2001, pp. 3, 5; Australian Institute of Criminology, *Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards: Winning Projects 2005*, 10 November 2005, p. 9; Placer Dome, *Exhibit No. 133*, p. 2; Mr Johnathan Link, Community Liaison and Development Officer, Mental Health Program, Royal Flying Doctor Service, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 53.

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