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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Capacity building in Indigenous communities

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Tuesday, 23 September 2003

Members: Mr Wakelin (*Chair*), Mr John Cobb, Mrs Draper, Mr Haase, Ms Hoare, Dr Lawrence, Mr Lloyd, Mr Melham, Mr Snowdon and Mr Tollner

Members in attendance: Mrs Draper, Mr Haase and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Strategies to assist Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders better manage the delivery of services within their communities. In particular, the committee will consider building the capacities of:

- (a) community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities;
- (b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and
- (c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous people.

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Committee met at 10.05 a.m.

BUCKSKIN, Mr Peter, Chief Executive, Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, South Australian Government

FORREST, Ms Lynda, Acting General Manager, Operations, Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, South Australian Government

CASTELL-McGREGOR, Ms Sally, Acting Director, Aboriginal Services Division, Department of Human Services, South Australian Government

BURTON, Mr Bob, Principal Policy Officer, Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology, South Australian Government

MILLER, Ms Jillian, Superintendent, Aboriginal Education Unit, Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology, South Australian Government

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs into capacity building in Indigenous communities. We have been on the road for a little over 12 months in terms of looking at issues of capacity building in Indigenous communities. We are pleased to be in Adelaide today. I welcome particularly representatives from the government of South Australia. I understand we have representatives here from the Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, the Department of Human Services, Aboriginal Services Division, and the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology. Do you have anything to add to the capacity in which you are appearing?

Mr Burton—I am here today because I am manager of a project which has been designed to rebuild vocational education, training and employment programs in the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara lands.

CHAIR—Thank you for your comprehensive submission. I invite Mr Buckskin to make a short opening statement. We can then have a chat about the issues as we see them.

Mr Buckskin—The government of South Australia is very pleased to make a submission to the inquiry, to which we can respond and are happy to answer questions about. As the Chief Executive of the Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation in South Australia, I am leading the delegation. These are my colleagues from the departments which have made major contributions to the paper you have before you. They can tell you more about what they do in terms of realising the goal of building better community capacity within the Indigenous communities and with individual families.

The South Australian government is absolutely committed to and tenacious about trying to achieve and realise the goal of stronger governance within Aboriginal communities and the strengthening of Aboriginal individuals and families. As units they can build stronger communities and contribute to self-determination and self-management of their lives, and identify and achieve the goals they pick for themselves.

Our submission talks about the framework in which the government of South Australia wishes to work in terms of its commitment to community capacity building. It recognises the relationship between strengthening individuals and families and therefore strengthening the communities. We are very cognisant of the fact that we need to ensure that our systems and the bureaucracies we work within are more open and transparent in terms of the way we wish to do business and more engaging. We still have many challenges in order to achieve that end. We know that we can continue to improve our relationship with Aboriginal South Australians. Our goal is to continue to work on that but we understand that there needs to be systemic change. We wish to accelerate that as we try to deliver our programs.

We understand that there needs to be continual structural changes in our organisations on how we work with communities. We understand that we need to build capacity with individuals, ensure our education systems are providing appropriate education and that our vocational education training and post schooling is effective. That is why we have a very strong component of this report focusing on vocational education and why we have our Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology here today.

We recognise and continue to support the goals of self-management and self-determination within Indigenous communities, ensuring that communities—like governments—are all accountable. Non-government organisations, supported through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services administrative arm of ATSIC, continue to play an important role. In building community capacity we need to acknowledge the role NGOs play in the area of human services delivery in the areas of health and training, et cetera, within the state. I will stop there. I am happy to invite my colleagues to contribute to the discussion and the questions you may put before us this morning.

CHAIR—Did anyone want to make a short statement on anything in particular?

Ms Castell-McGregor—Speaking from a Department of Human Services perspective, we endorse everything the Chief Executive of the Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation has said. We are engaged with the department in a number of quite significant initiatives, which are about governments linking their activities, their planning, their service development and their funding in certain key areas of the state. I am sure that we will be talking a bit more about that soon. In particular, we have embraced the reform agenda in the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara lands in a very committed way. For us, the real challenge is to address the very poor health status in many remote Aboriginal communities, as well as some of the metropolitan areas. We have a number of initiatives in place, particularly around media development and around linking services and programs at a local level to try to address that. All those are explained in the supplementary paper that complemented the cross-government decision. I am happy to talk about that, if people would like me to.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I will lead off with a few general questions. In measuring the issues that we all endeavour to engage, in terms of employment, in terms of health, in terms of education with literacy and numeracy training, what is the basis of your strategic approach? Can anyone tell me what the general level of employment is in South Australia or in particular regions? Does anyone have those general figures in terms of your understanding and how that feeds into your thinking?

Mr Burton—I do not have any exact numbers but it goes without saying that, compared with the dominant cultural or wider society, the employment rates for Aboriginal people in South Australia are far lower than they should be.

CHAIR—In terms of education itself, do we have any measurement of literacy and numeracy? Many of you probably would be familiar with the Collins report from the Northern Territory.

Ms Miller—Yes, we do. We report on literacy and numeracy attendance and retention within our Commonwealth agreement reports yearly. Literacy and numeracy results show slight improvement but at the rate we are going it will be some time before we reach our target—which is to be the same as non-Indigenous—of equity to be achieved in that area. But there are projects within schools which are achieving very good results. We have seen an accelerated jump in results in that area. The education unit I work for is promoting those projects in a wider way with teachers, especially where there are high percentages of Aboriginal students.

CHAIR—In terms of the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara lands and a long history of the AnTEP program, does anyone know the number of Aboriginal teachers now teaching on the lands in schools?

Ms Miller—The numbers are in the submission. There are eight teachers practising and they are all women. One is the director of the Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara Education Committee, Katrina Tjitayi. Katrina is much more qualified than the other teachers and we are negotiating for her to take up a mainstream type of principal position.

CHAIR—Are they full-time or part-time positions?

Ms Miller—I believe all eight teachers are full time.

Mr Buckskin—But, as you know, they have provisional registration to teach in the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara lands only. To teach elsewhere in the state they would have to do an upgrade for that particular qualification.

CHAIR—I am just trying to get a snapshot. This might be in Bob Burton's area—the issue of vocational education and traineeships and apprenticeships. What is the general picture there? What do we have in terms of that?

Mr Burton—The history of New Apprenticeships on the lands was minimal up until a year ago. As part of our project to rebuild vocational education and training programs on the lands, we have had a particular focus on New Apprenticeships. At the moment there are 40 trainees on the lands. They are in areas of clerical administration and retail sales, which are attached to community stores. There are some coming up in land management and there is a group of eight or nine at Mimili who are in construction traineeships associated with a community housing project. We are quite pleased about the way traineeships or New Apprenticeships have been cranked up over the last 12 to 18 months. We have had three graduates since we really started putting in an effort there.

CHAIR—In terms of the wider urban South Australian community, which is Adelaide and a number of regional cities, what is the scene for employment and perhaps specifically traineeships and apprenticeships. What would be the general picture and the focus?

Mr Burton—The participation rates in New Apprenticeships in the wider Aboriginal community throughout the state are less than they are for the wider society. The difficulty with the New Apprenticeships program, of course—which I am sure you are aware—is that it is totally demand driven. If the jobs are not there, if the employers are not saying, ‘Yes, I want a trainee,’ then there will be no traineeships. Because of the nature of the system, you cannot just say, ‘All right, we’ll have a group of new apprentices.’ It does not work like that. A lot of work has to be done by our department, in particular—and it is starting to happen—to focus on employers taking special measures or positively discriminating in some areas with respect to Aboriginal participation in New Apprenticeships.

CHAIR—The last part of this segment is to try and focus on those issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse, in the context of blockage to capacity. Where are we up to, what is our awareness, and what are some of the things we should be thinking about developing in terms of improving the capacity of Aboriginal people? Does anyone want to comment on that? It is a national issue. It is something that we need to talk about a little bit and try and come to grips with as best we can.

Ms Castell-McGregor—The Department of Human Services regards family violence as one of the major priority areas to address. It is very complex because it is the interface with justice and community safety as well. We are finding that, particularly in the remoter areas, we do not have the police presence and the places of safety. Often the response is to take vulnerable women and children away from where they are living to a place of safety. That is a real issue. Regarding the government’s response, there is a cross-government group working on family violence.

A number of forums and meetings with Aboriginal communities are going on now. In the community forums there are local solutions put forward. Ceduna is a very good example; Oak Valley is another one. There has been a recent forum in Oodnadatta where the whole community met with government officials and crime prevention people to look at what the community could do. They came up with a number of possibilities and ideas. I am very happy to provide you with more information, if you do not have that.

The critical thing is, like so many social problems, you have to address it in a continuum. First of all, you cannot ignore the acute end, where people are in acute distress, and you have to respond the best way you can. Having said that, there are all those other concomitant dimensions you have to address, such as supporting families. That sounds trite and it sounds vague but we are reconfiguring the whole service response in Human Services, particularly around Family and Youth Services. So many of our resources have been dedicated to what I call the ‘pointy end’, the tertiary end of child protection, where you have very damaged children that often then hit the system. We know the story there.

We have to start investing a lot more in early intervention and primary prevention. That is also around home visiting, around helping parents. There will always be a few parents where all those efforts will not be enough but there is so much more that we can do. The state government’s

commitment to early intervention, in which a number of us are involved, is about home visitors: people who can help young parents with child-rearing and parenting programs that we are investing in five remote communities now. It is also the investment around early childhood. That is the beginning of the process. You cannot direct all your resources from one end to the other but you have to stop people falling off the cliff. That is where so many of our family support measures are coming in.

Along with that is an increase in justice responses, where you have responsive court systems—a bit like the so-called VIP courts which address family violence in a holistic systems way—where you have Aboriginal courts, Aboriginal people, Aboriginal elders working alongside judges and magistrates so that they are informed about decision-making. Our whole reform of child protection around Aboriginal children has really been predicated on bringing back some of those structures around decision-making that have been so diminished, so that you keep the local knowledge around children, you support some of the women and support women's groups to support the young mothers. I think investment in early childhood, maternal child health, is probably the biggest investment we can make and we are reconfiguring in that way.

Mr Buckskin—You might be aware that Robyn Layton QC did an inquiry in South Australia on child protection—and I will ask Ms Forrest to give you further information about that. That has set the parameters to which this government is responding with a whole of government working group. This group deals with family violence, focusing on child protection, and with the whole range of underlying issues that impact upon South Australian children across the board—whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Within that report is a significant chapter—I think it is chapter 8—on Indigenous child protection issues and dealing with the underlying issues.

We are framing the whole of government response to that. The government is doing some of the things that Ms McGregor was talking about, in terms of immediate intervention in certain communities. However, we are trying to be more strategic in how we do that and ensure that any new programs that we establish will be based on working more closely with communities to get those solutions.

Ms Forrest—The government has responded to the Layton inquiry by forming a cross-government group. The lead minister is the Minister for Social Justice. The lead chief executive is the chief executive for our Department of Justice. Represented on that senior officer group is Education and Children's Services, Department of Human Services, FAYS, various areas from the Justice portfolio, and the Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation. We are recognising that you cannot just look at child protection as being all FAYS; there are the other contributing factors you need to consider in terms of education, employment and health and other welfare issues.

There are probably four or five strategic areas that we are focusing on in terms of recommendations but it has to be a child focused response. It has to be about building family support and the capacity of families, and building community support and community capacity. It was very easy to look at some of the outcomes from that report and think, 'Well, it's about how quickly we can remove children from situations'; we are really thinking, 'Well, no. It's

actually about how we can make families and communities safer places for children to be in,' and where we find that point when we are at the point where a child needs to be removed.

Much of the focus of the cross-government work that I have been involved in—which also is the early childhood initiative that DHS are looking at—is focusing more on early intervention and building the capacities of families and communities to support each other. The interesting part of that is that it always comes back to building capacities of communities to deal with issues. Someone had done a map of our child protection system in South Australia which showed levels of complexity and levels of gaps where children can fall through, because we are looking at that pointy end of critical factors; not getting in early, where you can build the capacities of people.

We are hoping that within the next lot of workshops that we will be holding we will be able to look at it and say, 'This is the system that existed before Layton; this is the system we're proposing now.' It will be a much simpler system that looks at doing the intensive family support work. When you have a child who is at age 11, who has been through the system from age three but now is living on the streets, it takes a lot of intensive support for that child. It would have been better if we had got to that child at age three when the first critical incident or first indicator was there. We are building and saving the family support structures.

CHAIR—There is this elusive word 'capacity'—'early intervention' we would all agree with, but it would be immensely helpful to define the word 'capacity'.

Ms Forrest—The thing called 'capacity building'?

CHAIR—Yes, and what it means. It means a hundred things, no doubt, but it means two or three things which really stand out from time to time. No doubt that is what your workshop will grapple with and develop. Do you have something which talks about the experience and the teaching? The Western Australians are obviously going through something. It has been into every state and territory. It is clearly there but what does it mean? We can define general principles as best governments can. What are the two or three things that experience might teach us at the moment? I will come back more specifically to see whether the Commonwealth has a role to play in terms of value adding because, in this fine federation that we have, there are issues about this jurisdiction—how we best plan things and the COAG trial which you would all be familiar with, particularly Peter; framework agreements with health from about 1999. I want to set it up in terms of specific capacity—those hints that we learn as we go along—and also the Commonwealth involvement.

Ms Miller—I would like to comment on the early childhood capacity building area and the use of Commonwealth funds. In South Australia, the three- and four-year-old Aboriginal kids that attend preschools have increased quite considerably over the last three years. It has been because of the way of allocating Commonwealth IESIP preschool money on a per capita basis to preschools. That does two things: it builds the capacity of the preschool staff to approach Aboriginal education workers and builds capacity to work with Aboriginal families. The enrolment of Aboriginal children in preschool has now risen to almost the same percentage as non-Aboriginal. That is an area where we are closing the gap. It is also an area where we have the highest percentage of Aboriginal employment, not just in Aboriginal focus areas but also

mainstream early childhood workers. Early childhood workers is also one of the areas of employment that has the lowest—

Mrs DRAPER—Lowest paid.

Ms Miller—Yes. The industrial factors around that are dreadful. We need to do something generally about that, but it is an area where many Aboriginal people get mainstream employment.

CHAIR—It picks up the point that early intervention is really changing the face of it in many ways.

Mrs DRAPER—Jillian, I was very interested to hear what you just said about preschool enrolment figures rising, which is very pleasing. When I was in Darwin I spoke to a couple of commissioners there. In the Northern Territory there is discussion and argument about the process of early intervention. Some remote communities were able to initiate and implement child care facilities where children were being cared for, doing the preschool education and things like that.

One of the problems that arose was that some people felt that their capacity for being parents and learning to be parents was being taken away. They saw that as a negative. They also saw it as a negative in terms of culture. Let's face it, in remote communities the culture and way of life is a lot different to the suburban areas. I found it very difficult because the community was fairly well divided on that issue. I do not know how we look at solving that. Would you like to respond, bearing in mind I know you are a South Australian department?

Ms Miller—That is right and the majority of our children are not in remote locations. They are in regional or suburban areas, so the way that we work is different. You could take the situation on the land and you will find that there are Aboriginal people in all of the kindergartens. A lot of the qualified Aboriginal teachers are early childhood focused, so you have that cultural focus that Aboriginal people bring.

Another interesting thing in that area was in 1998 with the strategic results projects that were Commonwealth funded. One of the projects in South Australia was about why Aboriginal parents send their children to preschool and why they do not. That was conducted through the large regional areas—Ceduna, Port Lincoln and Port Augusta—and revealed a lot about what you are saying. Some Aboriginal parents want to be recognised for the way they want to parent their children, so we can have Aboriginal kindies with a very cultural focus, but some parents would prefer to have other facilities to help them parent their kids in a different way in the home.

The facilities for early childhood are zero to four, so before preschool there are those pre-preschool programs. The pre-preschool program on the West Coast is run by an Aboriginal person, so there is that added cultural aspect that that person brings. Certainly, the aspects of ensuring that there are language programs and the encouragement of community people to work in preschools has helped a lot in that area. As I say, most of our children are in suburban schools, and it is the encouragement of language programs—language programs in preschools have increased over the last five years. We still need to build those programs but I think that really

gives parents confidence in preschool when they see that there is a community member delivering those sorts of programs.

Mrs DRAPER—Jillian, I think you said that there are a number of projects that have been assisting in terms of literacy and numeracy. I am very interested to hear briefly about the nature of those projects. In my electorate of Makin I have the Pooraka Primary School, which has a number of Aboriginal children. It is a very multicultural school. We have many different cultures there but what the principal has put in place in order to get the Aboriginal children to attend—a new term I have heard is that we now have non-attendees and attendees—so that they can participate in the lessons is a specific dance and cultural class. That is getting the kids to school. They are enjoying practising at recess and lunchtime, but meantime they are doing their studies. That is turning out to be, almost by accident, a tremendously successful program. What they have been able to do at Pooraka Primary School is turn the group of non-attendees into attendees. It is really successful and working very well, so I am interested to hear about the nature of those programs.

Ms Miller—Across the state in suburban schools where there are 20 or more Aboriginal students, we have AWs. We also have Aboriginal education teachers who help focus the training and development of all the teachers in the school on what works best for Aboriginal students. We have action research projects in schools where there are Aboriginal education workers and Aboriginal education teachers. If you are an Aboriginal education teacher, you take on the responsibility of doing action research which looks at the baseline data of the Aboriginal students in your school and builds programs based on what has been known to work, like pedagogy—the way teachers teach—cultural programs in the schools and ways to involve Aboriginal parents.

What works for different schools may be slightly different but they can be adapted. We insist that Aboriginal education teachers initiate action research and, with the Aboriginal Education Unit's support, that these people write up their projects showing baseline data improvements or, if there have not been improvements, why there have not been improvements. We publish that so that it can be shared. We also hold conferences for those teachers to share that information.

We also had a parent conference for the first time this year in South Australia, about how we are working with students. A lot of the time the education department goes along and things happen but at a strategic level parents are not told or given the awareness that our unit may give to principals and teachers, so in May this year we held a conference for parents. We showed them the data, where we are up to; we talked about the programs that are in schools, the programs that are working and how they can be advocates for their own schools in putting those sorts of projects into place and talking to the principal about, 'Okay, we know that there's a school over there you should visit. They have this going, and we could have something like that as well.' It is building the capacity of parents to be advocates.

Mrs DRAPER—The chairman asked how many Aboriginal teachers we have and I think you said eight.

Ms Miller—Eight in Adelaide and 70 across the—

Mrs DRAPER—A colleague of mine in my former profession, which was nursing, teaches at a Catholic school, so I am interested to hear about what programs are in place in the non-government schools. My former colleague teaches her culture, language and that sort of thing to the students. She is a teacher assistant and enjoys her work immensely, of course, but so do the students. It is not just for individual students, it is for all the children to participate in.

Ms Miller—As far as Aboriginal employment goes, as I said, all schools where there are 20 or more Aboriginal students have an Aboriginal education worker who is an Aboriginal person. There are approximately 70 Aboriginal teachers in the schooling area and 13 Aboriginal teachers in the preschool area. We have about 950 Aboriginal children enrolled in preschool in South Australia. I can send you the exact figures on that as well, because we have just finished our August census. There are other Aboriginal people employed in the department besides in the area of teaching and AWs, and I can supply the statistics on that as well.

Mrs DRAPER—Thank you very much. My last question is for Mr Bob Burton. I am pleased that apprenticeships are being taken up, particularly in the last year or so, but very interested to hear you say that there do not seem to be the jobs there. I pulled out the card of Mr Grant Robinson, who is the apprentice field officer for the Housing Industry Association in South Australia, and would like to know whether or not you have links with the housing industry.

I have a year 11 student and a year 10 student. My year 11 student was offered an apprenticeship at the beginning of this year. In fact, they wanted to take him before he finished year 11, which I insisted that he complete. He has been doing TAFE one day a week and will start his apprenticeship more or less as soon as he finishes at the end of next term. My 15-year-old, who is in year 10 now, has also been offered an apprenticeship. They are quite happy to take them. The reason I mention the year 10 level is because it is difficult for a lot of our Aboriginal students to go through to years 11 and 12.

Are there any links between the department and the Housing Industry Association? What happens with TAFE? Is there any sort of structure in place whereby we can give employers support to take on an Aboriginal apprentice? What is happening in those areas? As far as I can see, if you are doing any sort of renovation—which I have been trying to do for the last two years and have been waiting six months for a carpenter—when you ring they just laugh.

Mr Burton—Is this a question about Aboriginal community capacity building or the capacity of the industry to get your renovation done?

Mrs DRAPER—No. I made the comment because I was interested to hear you say that there are not the jobs out there. I would put it to you that if the department was able to work together with employer groups, there would be more than enough apprenticeships to be able to—

Mr Burton—With respect to Aboriginal housing, there is a very close relationship, particularly with the project I referred to in the lands. There is a very close working relationship between TAFE and our department—of which TAFE is a part—and the Aboriginal Housing Board, which is the Aboriginal community deliverer of publicly funded housing services. They have been very closely involved in the development of the project at Mimili and have been supporting the New Apprenticeships and so on.

In terms of the wider issue of New Apprenticeships and the fact that the system of New Apprenticeships and user choice is totally demand driven, in the creation of our new department—the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology—there has been a lot of work in very recent times to blur what has hitherto been an artificial distinction between vocational education and training and employment initiatives as a consequence of what I would regard as structural anomalies in the bureaucracy employment programs and vocational education and training programs run over here.

DFEEST has just appointed an executive director of an employment and skills formation directorate, which is the first time—certainly for four years—that employment and training programs are going to come under the one umbrella. With that will come all sorts of work with employer groups, work with industry groups of the like that we have not seen in this state before.

Mrs DRAPER—So nothing like that is in place at the moment and has not been done in the past? Is that what you are saying?

Mr Burton—It has been attempted in bits and pieces and the new state minister and the new chief executive of our department are very aware of the problems and have been addressing the structural issues around those anomalies that you were referring to.

Mrs DRAPER—As you say, that process is going on and you talked about the Aboriginal housing programs. What I am interested in is across the board, across South Australia is not necessarily Aboriginal youth being attached to those programs but I feel that there is such a real shortage of people from carpenters to plumbers to builders, anything and everything within those industries, that there would be surely the capacity or capability of moving into the mainstream.

Mr Burton—For Aboriginal people, you are talking about?

Mrs DRAPER—Yes.

Mr Burton—The packaging up of incentives for employers to take on Aboriginal apprentices is something on the table at the moment.

Mrs DRAPER—Okay.

Mr Burton—The incentives have been there in the past but they have not really been pushed hard, have not been comprehensive enough and have not been targeted. They have just been there and if an employer happened to stumble across it, then there were some incentives available, but it has not been marketed well.

Mrs DRAPER—It has not been marketed well from the department?

Mr Burton—That is correct.

Mrs DRAPER—Do we have a time line on this?

Mr Burton—Not yet because—

Mrs DRAPER—Even though it is on the table? I would be very keen, at the end of this year, that for next year we have people moving into apprenticeships and traineeships, rather than talking about projects that are on the table.

Mr Burton—Right.

Mrs DRAPER—That is why I am asking whether there is any sort of time line—

Mr Burton—Would you like me to get back to you—

Mrs DRAPER—Yes, I would. I would certainly appreciate it.

Mr Burton—with some information about what the Department of Further Education, Employment Science and Technology is intending to do about the shortfall of apprentices in the construction industry in this state?

Mrs DRAPER—What I am looking at is facilitating Aboriginal youth being able to work within that industry.

Mr Burton—Right, that is fine.

Mrs DRAPER—That is my focus.

Mr Burton—Okay.

CHAIR—You can take that on notice.

Mr HAASE—It is the end of a very long run. You have answered a great deal of questions and I appreciate it. Mr Burton, you have mentioned a great deal about what is happening to create employment for Aboriginal youth. I am from the building industry and I am from the Pilbara in Western Australia. I recognise only too well the huge gulf that exists between those contractors wanting new employees and the lack of preparedness amongst Aboriginal youth, male specifically, to take on and hold down and be effective and compete in those roles. Is anything being done in South Australia to overcome that great hurdle? It is a job ready question, it is an attitudinal question, it is a motivational question—we all recognise the problem. Does South Australia have any process designed to overcome that problem?

Mr Burton—There is an Aboriginal TAFE program which has some of the highest levels of participation compared with other jurisdictions. The difficulty with the Aboriginal TAFE program is that it has been allowed to become insular. While the participation numbers in accredited training are quite good, the difficulty is that that participation tends to be in an enclave situation within it. I am sure you have seen in the Pilbara that they have been doing that instead of making a real effort to encourage Aboriginal people to take that next step and start participating in the wider TAFE programs, where frankly the pathways and career opportunities associated with higher level qualifications and the range of qualifications are far greater.

Again, the new department, which is 18 months old—and one could well argue things should have been happening far more quickly than they have—has recognised this as an issue and is

about to embark on a major push to encourage Aboriginal people to break out of that enclave in their local TAFE institute and start thinking about and actually participating in the wider program. What that means for the considerable number of Aboriginal people who are employed as lecturers in those enclave programs is that their role is going to have to change radically. In particular they are going to have to start focusing on supporting Aboriginal people in the wider TAFE program to ensure that they succeed once they get in there. Some of the resources we get from the Commonwealth—and the state, for that matter—instead of being used to deliver training to groups of all Aboriginal people in the future will be used to support Aboriginal people in wider or mainstream programs.

The thing about retention in employment and getting young blokes to stay focused and into it is a problem. It is easy for me, as a white fella, to say, 'I think there are elements of cultural stuff in there.' There is the whole level of expectations that come from dispossession; the fact that slowly—particularly in most parts of Australia—the sort of selection of elements of the dominant culture are taken up by individuals and then other bits of the dominant culture are rejected. I think you are saying that it is those elements that are related to employment and career that do not seem to be taken up as quickly or as strongly as members of the dominant culture would like, or governments would like as the representatives.

It is a tough question, a very tough question. From my experience in the lands, I can remember at Ernabella there was an Anangu building company which was responsible for the erection of every major edifice or building on the place. That was in the early eighties or mid-eighties. If you talk to non-Aboriginal people who are working on the lands and explain those sorts of things to them, they say, 'Really? Did that really happen?' There were thriving market gardens in the AP lands, serving fresh vegetables in the store. These things happened. I do not have the answers to the question of why things have deteriorated so much.

Mr Buckskin—Mr Chairman, the government is itself trying to build its capacity to respond to building capacity in communities. As you are probably aware, the Australian National Training Authority does have an Aboriginal standing committee that is chaired by Evelyn Scott. There is a document out that all governments have agreed to and this government continues to support the work of Partners in a Learning Culture. The South Australia government has a VET steering committee. It is trying to build those synergies between training and employment, to drill down into vocational education beginning earlier than just in years 11 and 12.

They have school based vocational education programs. Particularly we have entered into an agreement just recently with the Commonwealth where we are trying to establish vocational education programs within the Anangu schools, targeting the older students from, say, 15 to 18, so that they can get into things like the retail industry and human service types of industries. But, wider across the state, the government has just announced a new TAFE council for South Australia called the new South Australian TAFE Council. I am one of the new members attached to that. Minister Lomax-Smith, as the minister responsible, has given me a clear understanding that my membership is to really drill down and build those relationships to ensure that Aboriginal people are taking up the wider opportunities that are afforded to every other young South Australian.

Mr HAASE—Mr Buckskin, when you talk about this drilling down and investigation, are you talking about the taking up of courses or are you talking about the employment of TAFE trained

individuals? My observation of the whole process is that there is not enough insistency by government on there being a creative nexus between TAFE training and employment outcomes. I mean long-term employment outcomes; I do not mean furphy employment.

Mr Buckskin—Sustainable employment. The fact was that the government established the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology to bring together TAFE and employment. The fact that the minister has created a directorate within it that is going to work between traineeships and then moving into employment—

Mr HAASE—So is the answer yes?

Mr Buckskin—The answer is yes. We are, again, building our capacity to respond to that agenda. The whole TAFE sector is being looked at in terms of its ability and its capacity to deliver on that agenda for all South Australians.

Mr HAASE—Is there anything being done to reverse the process? By ‘reverse’ I mean that we put a lot of effort into preparing agencies with individual packages to take to individuals, to be able to do for the individual what we believe the individual needs done for them. Is there any process whereby the individual is made aware of the requirements for them to fit into employment or into training for employment or into education to get a basis to be able to be put through TAFE to get a job? Is there any role reversal when it comes to getting into communities, even suburban Aboriginal communities, and doing some marketing that indicates to the individual what changes need to take place to be able to fit that mould called sustainable employment and financial independence?

Mr Buckskin—My colleagues in the education and training field can comment on that.

Ms Miller—I can talk about senior secondary education.

Mr HAASE—Doesn’t it start well before that?

Ms Miller—Yes, it does.

Mr HAASE—Does it need to, I mean?

Ms Miller—There are a couple of things. When we start with work experience in year 10 and 11, we find it difficult to find safe environments for our children to do work experience because out in the real world there are a lot of racist people. Building understanding with some employers in the mainstream and memorandums of understanding with them about some of the things that they need to be aware of if they are having an Aboriginal student is difficult. We are doing some of those things. We have workplace learning people in one unit that negotiate with a group of employers in a particular area like, for instance—

Mr HAASE—To convince the employer what the employer needs to do and provide and accept when having—

Ms Miller—We also mentor the Aboriginal students about working in a mainstream environment. While the employer has to be aware of providing a non-racist environment, the

student also has to be aware and supported to work in an environment where there are no other Aboriginal people which, coming from an Aboriginal community, even within a suburban area, our students are not ready to take on. They need to be supported in doing that.

Mr HAASE—That sounds extremely valuable. But what is being done in a primary situation? You see, I am getting a lot of evidence from mainstream Australia and mainstream Australia is where you will rely for the future of Aboriginal people. The anecdotal evidence is very strongly that there is a cultural divide. We accept that. But there is not even a tokenism approach to accept the necessities of the mainstream job environment by Aboriginal people applying for work, and that Aboriginal unemployment will be sustained for the foreseeable future because there is not an apparent preparedness to prepare for the mainstream workplace. We seem to perpetrate that by accepting standards that would not be accepted by mainstream employers in that workplace.

Ms Miller—That is making it look like we are the victim.

Mr HAASE—We are talking about capacity building. We have got to make some assumptions.

Ms Miller—Yes, I agree with that. There is a lot of capacity building from the other point of view about providing non-racist environments for our kids to blossom in. That is still one of the major reasons why our kids do not choose to go into an environment where there is not another Aboriginal person employed.

Mr HAASE—Because it is too tough?

Ms Castell-McGregor—It is alienating.

Ms Miller—It is not safe. Racism causes workplace injury. We are certainly not going to put students into places where an injury can occur. That will put them off working in the mainstream forever, maybe. They are not going to want to do that.

Mr HAASE—They were doing it 100 years ago though. I don't know why they cannot do it today. Our standards are too far at variance with the reality of building a future. I am looking for some indication of where governments in states across this nation have in place some requirement of their departments to have a common standard where people are dealt with in the same way and the same expectations are created.

We spoke very informatively about the changes that are taking place now in child welfare. We have talked about taking those resources away from the pointy end and putting them there on the foundation so the damage is not created that we have to deal with at the other end. That is called maintaining common standards and not making exceptions because individuals are in an Aboriginal situation. We are talking about applying the same standards and if it is not good enough for a mainstream kid, it is not good enough for an Aboriginal kid, and realising that. If we do not do that with an attitude to making job ready Aboriginal children, then we are never going to find that remarkable independence that comes with having a job. Yes, Sally, you want to say something?

Ms Castell-McGregor—A couple of things, because it is a very complex matter you are raising.

Mr HAASE—I do not doubt that for a minute. That is why I raised it.

Ms Castell-McGregor—Certainly, in terms of talking to many Aboriginal families around child protection, the standard that people want for their children is the same as you and I would want for our children. Sometimes the response has to be not a different response but maybe a more respectful response and a more understanding response. Frequently people go in with a very Western mind-set about how things should be, for example, around raising children. As anybody will tell you, with the children in traditional communities, child rearing is different. Yet often people go in making lots of quite erroneous judgments about that. I am not Aboriginal myself but many of my Aboriginal colleagues who I work with and the people who work within communities have aspirations for their children to succeed in life. There was a meeting in Alice Springs just two weeks ago. The overriding sentiment was strong: young people, strong culture, strong language, strong community. Support young people, education, employment, real jobs, not CDEP pretend jobs. Support families; stop the petrol sniffing. It was an immense cry from here about what is happening to so many young people in Aboriginal communities.

In my department, Human Services, we have a statement of reconciliation. One of the critical benchmarks is about raising Aboriginal employment across the department in all its areas. We employ 33,000 people in a big department and we have made significant progress in raising the number of Aboriginal people, such as young graduates, employed in Human Services in real jobs. We are alerting young people in schools to possibilities when they are about 13 or 14. We are going out and talking to young people at school: ‘Who is interested in nursing?’ Nursing was rubbished for a long time because it was seen as a menial job. Many young people thought, ‘Don’t go into nursing. That is bad.’ It lost status. Teaching lost status for many years. Now we are reaping the implications of that.

Now young people are recognising that nursing is a valuable profession. I urge you to talk to Cephas Stanley at Port Augusta at the Pika Wiya Aboriginal Health Service. That was a dedicated learning centre to assist people to make that bridge between maybe missing out on some education and wanting to learn but wanting to do so in a safe environment. Jillian is absolutely right. It can be very alienating having one Aboriginal person in a mainstream agency. I hope we would all be totally non-racist but there are many people out there who are not.

Mr HAASE—If I may, Sally, you mentioned having one person. I would have thought that one of the approaches would have been always to place two in a team situation and that would have been perhaps just a basic mainstay on which to build when placing for work experience, for instance. I see little evidence of those sorts of ideas. The idea of sorry business and funeral attendance is not understood. The problem it creates is not understood or appreciated by Aboriginal employees either, not for a moment. In my experience it is taken as a right and the consequence of unemployment resulting from taking what appears to be an unreasonable period of time away from a job is not appreciated by either party. It is written into Western Australian legislation, for instance, that additional time is allowed each year for Indigenous employees to attend funerals. That is written in but it is not appreciated by mainstream employers, let me tell you. It is resented, if anything.

Mr Burton—Mr Chairman, could we dwell on the issue that has been raised about the obligation on employers to do something about Aboriginal employment, to make some special efforts? In remote areas it is interesting that where Indigenous stakeholders have got something to trade, big employers can actually get on with it and do something. I am talking about native title and Gumala. It has \$28 million in the bank at the moment. They do not know what to do with it. Century Zinc: there is the biggest zinc mine in the world and 30 or 40 per cent of the work force is local Aboriginal. Why? Because CRA and then Pasminco, in negotiating the Gold Communities Agreement, made commitments that you would hope employers everywhere in remote Australia would make. Why did they do it? They did it for their shareholders. Let's not worry about the poor shareholders at Pasminco. At the moment that is not looking too flash. The fact is there is the biggest zinc mine in the world with an Aboriginal work force of between 30 and 40 per cent. Why? Because legally, in the Gulf Communities Agreement, for Pasminco to have access to that ore body and the right to mine, they had to do stuff and they did it. Although Pasminco is not listed at the moment—

Mr HAASE—It is hardly their Indigenous employment program that brought them down.

Mr Burton—That is right. It is still the jewel in the Pasminco crown, the Century Zinc mine. There is absolutely no doubt about it.

Mr HAASE—Do you want me to finish up, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR—No, you are going very well, but Mrs Draper is keen to jump in there, I think. That is all.

Mr Burton—On that comparison, though, it is very interesting to note that, with the exception of Gumala and a couple of the more recent extensions in the Pilbara—the old Hamersley stuff—the participation rates of Aboriginal people in those work forces are way below what has been achieved at Century, simply because the Aboriginal people themselves had something to trade—and it is called native title.

Mr HAASE—Murrin Murrin is an experience that it is valuable to recognise here. Of course, Andrew Forrest made a huge commitment to create the John Forrest VTEC at Murrin Murrin, with the idea of employing, in very genuine operator jobs, Aboriginal people from the area. The whole concept collapsed because there was simply not the number of job-ready local Indigenous people to sustain the program. They were bringing people from Albany and Geraldton to fill that particular program.

CHAIR—As I recall, Mr Haase, not one person came across from CDEP.

Mr HAASE—No.

Mrs DRAPER—Bob, I want to pick up again on what you were saying before. It is recognised, I am sure, by everyone here—as well as the committee—that what you were talking about was the native title experience whereby you can persuade employers to take on Aboriginal people as employees. That is fine, but when I spoke about Grant Robinson and the Housing Industry Association and whether there were links and/or structures in place within the department and those employers on the outside I sincerely believed that there would be

mainstream employers out there willing to take on Aboriginal youth across the industry, whether it is retail or building. All that they need is support from the department in order to do that—and I think mainstream, not just remote rural and region. What I am talking about is across the South Australian population generally. That was my point earlier.

Mr Burton—Yes.

Mrs DRAPER—To come back to Jillian, Sally and my colleague Barry, again I refer to when I was in Darwin. I was there as chairman of the Health and Ageing Backbench Policy Committee for the government. When I visited one of the health clinics, there was just me on my lonesome as a non-Indigenous person and a whole range of different Indigenous people there. It can be very intimidating and isolating, even if you are well-educated and even if you have the status of a federal MP. I was not threatened in any way, of course, but for somebody who is coming in from the outside—an Aboriginal child or youth—who then has to participate in an almost completely white community is really difficult to do and we ask a lot of those students to be able to cope with that. That is all I wanted to say.

CHAIR—I want to make a couple of observations. Bob Collins made the same observation that you did, Bob, about his experience just out of Maningrida as a younger man and the experience of the eighties and how we have allowed a lot of that to slip away. Noel Pearson has a lot to say about the welfare approach that we have. There are a lot of challenges. I do not intend to canvass them, but I certainly invite any comments on that. I am not aware of the status of it at the moment, but in Port Pirie—at the TAFE campus there—there was a very successful building program.

Mr Burton—Yes.

CHAIR—There was a white fellow from over Melrose-Wilmington way—I am trying to think of his nickname—who had a wonderful relationship. They had outstanding orders. It was a terrific example of the sorts of things that can be achieved within TAFE. I made the comment earlier in response to Murrin Murrin and the issues of Anaconda that all the Aboriginal people are employed from outside. They had that capacity—the literacy job-ready approach—which they could bring into the workplace reasonably quickly, but from the immediate area there was just no-one from CDEP. The fact that we are parking people in CDEP has been of great concern for a long time to a lot of people, so the Commonwealth has some challenges there in how we do that.

Mr Burton—In drawing a comparison between Murrin Murrin and Century, I think there was detailed planning by Century and a clear understanding that the company made sure of where the local Aboriginal community was at before they started putting these expectations on them. With respect to Twiggy, I am sorry, I think that is where he got it wrong. You probably know the bloke who was responsible, Ian Williams—a wonderful man, with enormous experience—and he was absolutely right, in my view. It is the benchmark of agreements between mining companies and Aboriginal stakeholders.

Mr Buckskin—Mr Chairman, can I respond and bring it back to a South Australian perspective, so that we can put on the agenda what this government is trying to achieve in terms of realising those employment opportunities?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Buckskin—It is about creating capacity within government, but creating opportunities in communities as well. The state government for the first time, for example, in Port Lincoln has recently announced an agricultural lease. We have been working through the local Port Lincoln Aboriginal organisation and it is a significant contribution—because they cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to purchase—that we were given the lease, working with the community and the local TAFE to build capacity and investing in agriculture type courses with the school, so that Aboriginal kids understand they can be a part of the fishing and agriculture industries of the West Coast. That is not insignificant in the work that we will continue to do there.

The other areas we are trying to open up are in the cultural and heritage context. We have a piece of legislation—the South Australian Heritage Act—and under that there is a whole range of things that need to be done in terms of clearing sites and getting approvals for building and development. You need trained Aboriginal people to be able to clearly recognise sites and to work with the government in identifying those for clearance and for development; things like roads in terms of overtaking lanes. All these things need to be monitored and need Aboriginal people to be employed. That is an increasing line of work for Aboriginal people. It goes to acknowledging local heritage groups and native title claimants and it is a significant growth industry in our area.

The Department of Primary Industries has been working with the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara Land Council in opening up for exploration those areas of the lands that have mineral wealth in terms of creating capacity. The government has just supported a tour by traditional owners to other sites in the Northern Territory to show that you can have mining happening within your lands—

CHAIR—But there is a long history, Peter—

Mr Buckskin—Yes. They want to come down and talk to the government about that, and the Premier is happy to have a meeting with them. South Australia has an Indigenous land use agreement process. It is in our Attorney-General's Department. We call them ILUAs. That is working with the South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy. We have just finished a tour—taking our Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Terry Roberts, and Minister for Primary Industries and Mines, Paul Holloway—to the Pilbara to have a look at that. Minister Lomax-Smith might make a trip there.

CHAIR—Can I interrupt you there, Peter? I need to get two or three questions in and maybe you can work some of that stuff in with it. Going back to the health framework and talking about the Pitjantjatjara, I want to make the observation that it is accepted that there was \$60 million spent by Commonwealth and state and, by consensus, not an outcome that anybody would really be particularly proud of, without going through the litany of why it may be. Did we learn anything from the framework in terms of the health agreement? That was one that was touted as a real breakthrough in bringing Commonwealth, state and communities together. Did we learn anything about how we devolve power from the bureaucratic institutions to the community and vice versa? Did we pick anything up? Can we talk quickly about the framework agreement?

Ms Castell-McGregor—The health framework agreement has been going now for some years. It was re-signed in 2001. The latest agreement expires in 2004. I think it is a very

important mechanism to bring the critical parties from Commonwealth, state, ATSIC and—in our case—the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, which is the overarching umbrella body around Aboriginal health, to the table to agree on key outcomes. We, in fact, have the task in the Aboriginal Services Division to monitor the reports that come back under that agreement around the seven principal outcome areas.

Without going into too much detail—those reports are available and get reported to AHMAC, of course—it is good in parts, in terms of progress. That is why we have the reconciliation statement and the benchmarks attached to that to bolster, in a sense, the obligations under that framework agreement. The framework agreement is about improving access to health to improving health status, mainly directed at mainstream. It addresses questions about Aboriginal employment. It address what health funded units are doing to improved access in a number of ways. It wants to know what efforts are being taken to make health units more Aboriginal friendly in terms of people wanting to go to them and feeling welcome in them. There are seven key areas that are measured.

We are looking at the reports under that agreement and working on this. We want to refine that reporting framework through the AHMAC process. Much of the data we get back is soft data. It is what we call activity reports like, ‘We held six meetings,’ but did not really say what was done. We are going back and saying, ‘We actually want to know what is your benchmark.’ Let’s take, for argument’s sake, Ceduna Hospital: ‘What are you doing around service improvement plans to make sure that your hospital is responding better to Aboriginal people?’ For example, that sort of detail.

CHAIR—You said to me, Sally, that it has had some good and some bad but it has not really—to borrow Peter’s word—drilled that down effectively yet.

Ms Castell-McGregor—There is a long way to go to start delivering hard measurable outcomes as opposed to soft descriptors but there has been significant progress. We should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. It is showing us we can come back and say there is now a senior Aboriginal person in social justice in country who is responsible for Aboriginal service development. Part of her job is to work with hospitals and boards to develop regional Aboriginal health service improvement plans that have measurable outcomes.

CHAIR—Bringing it into the mainstream.

Ms Castell-McGregor—Absolutely. It is about measuring what people are doing so we can say, ‘We have improved. We now have a 10 per cent increase in Aboriginal staff. We now have shortened our bed days by 20 per cent. We have step-down units where we need to help people.’

CHAIR—I will have to stop you there because I have about three other questions I have to get in. Can I talk about the central register of community advisers working in Indigenous communities.

Mr Buckskin—We suggested that as a very good idea. As you are probably aware from your electorates, Mr Haase and Mr Wakelin, the problem with these community advisers is in terms of the basic competencies they need to have in providing social planning and shire clerk type of responsibilities. A lot of these people we have met leave a lot to be desired in terms of

competencies. We are clearly working, particularly with the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara Land Council, at developing core competencies for appropriate employment processes. They need a real understanding of where these people come from. I know people who have left us in AP lands and are now working in Fitzroy. Because I know a particular person in Fitzroy I was able to ring up and say, 'Excuse me, you know this bloke you have just employed into your local X, I think you should have another look at that because we have just said goodbye to him out of the AP lands.' It would be very helpful for Aboriginal communities who have not got the capacity to do that.

CHAIR—Who would do it, Peter?

Mr Buckskin—It would be a very good role for ATSIC and ATSIIS to develop that register. We would be very happy to help them develop that.

CHAIR—Excellent idea. Thank you. I need to come back to COAG. It follows from the framework because there are some general principles in there as well. Sixty million dollars is touted Commonwealth-state and you put a significant amount of your effort in as well, Peter Buckskin. I am interested to have an observation. In the submission it says:

... intergovernment, interagency projects seeking to address the concern that \$60 million of state and Commonwealth government funding each year is not improving the quality of life of the Anangu people.'

Without going back and back, can you make a comment on the current COAG development? What are the hiccups? What is the problem with health and ageing as the lead agency? Is it making some progress? Have you got to a preliminary first base? That is a pretty neutral statement, 'preliminary first base'. Have you got to a point where you feel as if you are starting to come to grips with it? That is the basic question.

Mr Buckskin—As you know, the South Australian government is really pleased to participate in the COAG trial.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Buckskin—We have picked probably the most disadvantaged and challenged area of the state in terms of the indicators of life expectancy et cetera. We had to build an understanding within the AP communities across all the communities in the region to ensure that the Anangu people themselves understood what COAG was and what we mean by 'lead agencies', the role of the Commonwealth and the role of the state. We wanted to get them involved in it. They wished also to agree that it is okay for the premiers of the states to put their hands up and say, 'That part of my state can be,' but you need to get the Anangu people themselves to want to be part of it.

We spent a lot of time, as we do with governance issues on the lands, continuing to improve that. We want to sell this concept of better coordination and building and selling it to them. We are trying to build our capacity in both the tiers of government—being state and Commonwealth—to work better so that that money, the \$60 million to \$80 million, is better coordinated and better understood. We need to pool our resources about developing services. We

had a workshop, which Sally McGregor mentioned we were at in Alice Springs a couple of weeks ago. We are just about to sign off on an agreement.

CHAIR—You are finding it is coming together, basically. You do not have any particular criticisms?

Mr Buckskin—We hope to have before our premiers and before the Prime Minister an agreement and a schedule of projects over the next couple of months. It has taken a long time to get the Anangu people to buy into the process because all they see is that it's another good idea but they ask, 'What does it really mean for me if I'm going to spend my energy on it?'

CHAIR—Exactly.

Mr Buckskin—How does that fit into the health framework stuff, department agreement—

CHAIR—Remember, they have had a whole series of general programs over the years. This needs to mean something which is not a false dawn.

Mr Buckskin—Yes. We are well placed within the state government bureaucracy in terms of what we call a tier 1 framework, made up of chief executives of core departments, that meet on a regular basis with the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara Land Council and now they have done it for health. They have now agreed to include the women's council, so it is getting a broader range of Anangu people involved in working with government and now with the Commonwealth lead agency in health and ageing. That is us building our capacity to respond to those people to say, 'We actually want projects now that are going to lead to sustainable outcomes.'

CHAIR—Thank you. Can I thank you for that wonderful headline, 'Indicators of success in capacity building'. I think it came from the Department of Human Services. It touches on a few of the issues there but in this work it seems to me it is too often too easy to concentrate on the negative. We have to reassure ourselves and strengthen ourselves, talking about those things which are positive because there are many positives happening, even though we might despair a little at insufficient progress in other areas.

I thank you for that. Would you like to make a comment about indicators of success in capacity building? It is a nice way to finish and a pretty important thing we all do to sustain ourselves.

Ms Castell-McGregor—Coming as I do very much from the human rights field and with a lot of work in my past life with NGOs like UNICEF and Save the Children, that phrase used in the supplementary submission about enabling environments and enabling people, at the end of the day we all need some very basic things: we need to be safe, we need to have food, we need to have shelter and we need to have some reasonable aspirations and some hope that we can get on with our lives. They are the things that so often have been taken away, diminished or removed from so many Aboriginal families and communities.

There are some success stories. I have already mentioned Pika Wiya as one. The rising number of Aboriginal people in the government work force is another. A third is some of the local level initiatives that are really taking off. One of those is the Umoona community in Coober Pedy. It

took a long time before the community was ready but we now have a child, family and home support program. What we have done is roll in a number of programs under a total program: alcohol strategy money, parenting money, home maintenance support money, support traditional people in houses, support parents raising their children. It is well worth looking at.

CHAIR—Peter, I invite you to make a closing statement.

Mr Buckskin—I think we have said it all. We are pleased that you have come to an Adelaide and we have had an opportunity to speak to you personally.

CHAIR—Thank you for the submission and the effort that has gone into it. I thank the ministers, it is much appreciated. Hopefully we can do something useful with it in the new year.

MERRICK, Ms Lorraine Susan, Acting Regional Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services

PENBERTHY, Mr Michael, Senior Policy Adviser, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services

WANGANEEN, Commissioner Klynton, South Australian Zone, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

CHAIR—Thank you for being with us today. I welcome representatives of ATSI and ATSI, and particularly Commissioner Klynton Wanganeen. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Commissioner Wanganeen—Yes. While I am talking I will probably refer to ATSI, meaning ATSI-ATSI, because I would rather not talk about the split. I would rather talk about what we do. We do everything together anyway. Each of us will speak briefly on a number of dot points that we have and then enter into discussion on questions you may want to ask. We will be talking about some of the initiatives with regard to capacity building in South Australia that ATSI have been involved in. This presentation will be complementary to a national ATSI submission on capacity building but we will not be making additional recommendations; rather we will enter into dialogue with you.

We will be discussing the outcomes of the ATSI-ATSI initiatives in South Australia and expanding on the issues. In particular, we wish to stress the government's training needs and the support that has to be better coordinated within our community. In South Australia, in the number of years that I have been involved in ATSI and prior to my involvement with ATSI, I have been involved with a number of community organisations. One of the things that I have seen coming up regularly is governance issues with regard to the organisations. Quite often the state legislation that we have with regard to governance with community organisations is nowhere near as strong and supportive as that which we have under the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations. The federal act is quite strong and it enables ATSI to play a greater role in governance issues within communities.

With communities incorporated under the state act, sometimes there are power plays in those communities which impact negatively on them and we as ATSI can be held at the door and they can say, 'We're incorporated under the state act. We don't have to actually have you guys come in and tell us how to run our business.' Meanwhile, there is a bit of a problem. One thing I would like to see happen is the strengthening of the state act to support governance issues in Aboriginal communities. I will say that from the outset.

ATSI has consistently impressed upon the South Australian government the importance of the following issues: the need for a client driven and developmental approach with regard to the issues that need to be tackled at the local community level and that Aboriginal people from those communities need to be involved in the strategies that are developed so that they play a part in overcoming the issues at the local level.

In terms of bureaucracy, ATSIC and other service agencies need to become more accountable to the Indigenous people that they are supposed to serve and provide a service to, rather than spend time being accountable for the amount of dollars spent and where. We would rather focus on outcomes which are beneficial to the Aboriginal community; not to make it an efficient reporting system for a service delivery agency.

I have read many reports in my time; you can make anything sound really good and fantastic, but is it really helping the people on the ground? I have seen glossy reports and plans that communities have developed over the years; they sit on a shelf and gather dust. One of the big problems I have noticed with Aboriginal communities is the fact that quite regularly they are on a year-by-year funding cycle. They are required to develop plans but they have no guarantee of funding for the second, third or fourth year of the plans. Quite often communities have become despondent because of the fact that they could be 1½ years into a plan and then have to change it because their funding has been altered. There is no guarantee for communities to plan on how they are going to deliver services at the local level. When plans are developed they are often just looking at the community—that is not looking at the whole issue around the community.

Most discrete Aboriginal communities contribute significantly to local economies, but there is not the same reciprocity there. The local Aboriginal people have contributed to the shops, pubs and all those places but they do not get employment in those areas. Either they are employed by the Aboriginal community, the state government service agency or the federal government service agency, or they are on CDEP. Rarely do you see them employed in private enterprises which they are supporting in the local area. Not enough planning with regard to the local economy is taken into consideration when developing community needs. They exist side by side, often in a really good relationship—except to the point of employment and participating in local Aboriginal community driven enterprises. Those are a couple of things I wanted to mention.

I noticed you had the state government here. We really need a coordinated and collaborative approach in partnership with communities, rather than service agencies coming in and seeing themselves as the people who know how to deal with the problems. The communities know what the problems are, they have ideas, but they need guidance and assistance. They do not need someone from ATSIC or a service agency to come in and look at how well the accounting is done. They do not need someone to come in and cross the t's and dot the i's. They need someone to provide the assistance necessary for them to take the next step. Quite often funding agencies are focused on how the dollar is spent rather than on what it is spent on and the outcomes it is achieving in the communities.

A problem in the past for communities was the fact that a lot of different service agencies would be competing for the same clients, instead of collaborating and cooperating and coming in and doing a whole-of-government type of approach, similar to what COAG is about. I am sure Peter Buckskin would have spoken about his action zones. Those are the types of things that we are looking at to support as well, because it is taking a look at the whole area and pooling your resources, pooling your energies, and going in and dealing with the issues with the community; not like what happens at the moment, where people come in and have a meeting with the community, do an assessment and start promoting one thing there. Then someone else comes in the following week and does a similar thing, and then someone else comes in. Communities continually have people coming and asking to provide services.

In relation to education and training and with the advent of RTOs—recognised training organisations—they go out and actively approach communities and then two weeks later someone else comes out and approaches those communities. The communities are probably sick of people coming in and looking to provide training for training's sake. We need to do a snapshot of the whole area and look at the opportunities that are in that area, whether it be for the creation of small enterprises for the Aboriginal people or to look at partnerships with the wider community in the area and also to look at employment opportunities. When the kids are getting ready to leave school, they need to know that something is in place. Those people in the communities may be second or third generation unemployed and, at the moment, we are starting to look at fourth and fifth generation unemployed in some areas. That finishes what I was going to say, for the time being. My two colleagues have other things to say.

Mr Penberthy—We would like to use this opportunity to emphasise what we think are the salient points of the ATSIC national submission, from a South Australian perspective. You have read the national submission, so I will not summarise it. The point that we want to emphasise from the national submission is basically the fact that it outlined an integrated framework and proposed that this framework be adopted by all organisations involved in policy, program and service delivery.

The other point we would like to emphasise at this hearing is the reference that the ATSIC submission made to the Harvard project on American Indian economic development. We feel this is particularly relevant to the situation in Australian Indigenous communities. I can see some nods. As I take it you are familiar with the findings of the report, I will not go into too much more detail.

CHAIR—We have a keen interest. We are starting to focus on that.

Mr Penberthy—That is great. I would like to draw your attention to some of the ways in which ATSIC at a state level has been working with the state government to assist in a policy development process. I have no doubt that the state government mentioned the Partnering Agreement in the previous hearing. We have included in the attachments to the submission that we have given you this morning the first annual report of the Partnering Agreement. The agreement has been something that both ATSIC and the state have spent a lot of time working on over the last couple of years. We feel that already there have been some substantial outcomes through that partnering agreement. I will not list them because they are already listed in the submission, but I draw your attention to them.

Another thing we would like to draw your attention to is some of the submissions that ATSIC makes on a regular basis to state government inquiries or reviews. We have included with the submission we have tabled this morning a copy of our submission to the state government's inquiry into poverty in the Adelaide metropolitan area. ATSIC felt that this was a very significant issue, particularly as it related to capacity building—building the capacity of Indigenous families and building the capacity of Indigenous organisations to support Indigenous people.

The main reason I am drawing your attention to this is that that submission in many ways encapsulates the message we have been reiterating to the state government through a number of other submissions: the problem in South Australia is that many services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not Aboriginal controlled or, rather, that control is quite constrained.

The submission also makes the case that there is definitely a need for a joint approach between Commonwealth, state and local government agencies, and that a community development approach needs to be taken to tackle the systemic factors which often, in combination, contribute to acute and chronic poverty amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Crucially, the point that submission makes, as have many others, is that it is important to expand the resources and the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled organisations and initiatives in order that they can improve the level of service they can deliver to Indigenous communities.

On the question of how to improve the capacity of Indigenous organisations, we believe that very much relates to their ability to chart their own course and set their own priorities, much in line with the findings of the Harvard report on American Indian economic development. In a nutshell, that is the guts of what I would like to say. The detail is in the submission and I encourage you to read it at your leisure.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Michael.

Ms Merrick—I would like to draw your attention to capacity building within the Adelaide region. It is also the region for the Papta Warra Yunti Regional Council. One of the things that was done within the region was to convene a community development employment program forum, also known as CDEP. Findings about building the capacity of some of the organisations in our region included: ATSIC grant conditions; the guidelines and funding cycle for the board and the staff, some of which the commission has already touched on; the ATSIC grant condition guidelines and funding cycle; some of the legal requirements of the ATSIC Act; appropriateness of organisations' constitutions; the role and responsibilities of the board and staff; human resource management within the organisations; financial management and project management. We see that within those areas there is scope for us to further strengthen the community organisations. We have engaged a consultant to look at and review the constitutions of some of the organisations within our region.

Another thing we did through the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations was to plan and undertake some training with the organisations in terms of their governance, roles and responsibilities. We continue to build on that and we have some future forums planned as well. We have done industrial relations workshops within the region with community organisations. These workshops were aimed at assisting the CDEP organisations to develop a better understanding of issues such as their employment relationships, rewards and enterprise agreements, the South Australian laws governing employment, minimum standards of leave, other features of the employment relationship, duties of employers and employees, and discipline and termination.

One of the key outcomes we have found by undertaking some of these activities is that there has been a reduction of disputes in terms of industrial relations. That is an area we can continue to work on in conjunction with the organisations, and also in terms of our relationship with workplaces and WorkCover in making information available to organisations about their requirements under workplace guidelines and compliance.

We have had, as I mentioned, organisations updating their constitutions. What we found was that some of the constitutions in some of the organisations have been quite dated. In other areas, in terms of some of the other initiatives, many of those I outlined earlier serve as a practical

example of the sorts of activities that could be supported and coordinated by ATSI and the wider bureaucracy in order to reinvigorate some of the community based organisations. However, if community based organisations are to reach their full potential, even more support is needed with regard to governance training. It is not sufficient simply to educate the boards and staff of the community based organisations about their current responsibilities. Organisations need support to develop constitutions that are appropriate and refer to their purpose and operating environment.

Support with regard to organisational management should be provided on a regular basis because of the turnover of staff and board members. A lot of the time we focus on the boards of the organisations but now, bearing in mind the regular AGMs that occur, it is also equally important to look at strengthening the whole of the community so that people who are potentially future board members can become aware of the roles and responsibilities as they may be the people who put their hands up at the next AGM. That information and awareness raising would be of benefit to the broader community and also to us.

Regarding changes to the bureaucratic policy required in order to create better incentives for Indigenous people to take responsibility and work for the good of that community, as the commissioner has pointed out, the organisations tend to be caught up with responding to the requirements of the bureaucracies as opposed to getting on with business at the local level. ATSI has consistently stated that the Indigenous organisations, to have such incentives, must have independence to set their own directions and primarily be accountable to their own people. Again, that similarly supports the findings of the Harvard project in that we could see better outcomes if the people were involved in the decision making and accountable to their people as opposed to the bureaucracies.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr HAASE—Mr Wanganeen, in your opening comments you made a number of statements about the reasonable aspirations of your people. Specifically you talked about employment opportunities in communities that are very much dependent upon their customers for their income. I am just wondering how strongly you believe that that situation must change, in light of a great deal of evidence where retail outlets in communities and remote towns are owned by Aboriginal councils and have a very strong policy of employing outside and often mainstream employees. With that in mind, can you explain to us how some of the hurdles of local Indigenous employment might be overcome? I am sure you are aware there are reasonable expectations from the owner of the business or the shareholders of the business that they will employ the most qualified, the most competent, the most efficient employee. In a free market situation they go for the very best. I wonder if you can tell this committee how we might make those very best potential employees people from the Aboriginal community?

Commissioner Wanganeen—I was talking more about the rural towns around South Australia—

Mr HAASE—As I am.

Commissioner Wanganeen—rather than some of the more remote Aboriginal communities. Basically I am talking about most of the large rural towns around South Australia that I have

been involved with where there is an Aboriginal community near the town. In those towns you have butcher shops, retail shops, delis and all that. Local Aboriginal community members purchase all their goods there. They do not get an opportunity to apply for the jobs or they feel that, if they do apply, they may not even get an interview where they can show what they have to offer.

In some of the Aboriginal communities where they own their own shops et cetera, and they use an outside person to do it, we have found that sometimes the business does not do as well as it should. If they are in the remote areas quite often the costs of the goods in the shop are a lot more than they are normally, in other areas. Sometimes the person running the shop has certain community members who are friends and they give them access to certain things. They show favouritism in communities and sometimes it leads to conflict, which leads to some of those shops in the remote areas closing down because they are not run effectively. If the Aboriginal community contributes to the local economy of the non-Aboriginal community, the non-Aboriginal community should take that responsibility to ensure that some of those people get an opportunity to apply for jobs.

Mr HAASE—The responsibility of the shop owner is to its shareholders, not to the community.

Commissioner Wanganeen—It depends which aspect you are talking about. If you are talking about an Aboriginal community, then the shareholders are quite often the community anyway.

Mr HAASE—And they employ outside employees and that is incongruous with your request that in rural towns shop owners should employ Aboriginal local people.

Commissioner Wanganeen—They should give them an opportunity.

Mr HAASE—The concept is incongruous until such time as you can give us evidence as to why it should be otherwise.

Commissioner Wanganeen—Sometimes they should be given the opportunity to apply for those positions and they do not even get an opportunity to apply, or sometimes they do not apply because they feel they will not get an opportunity, based on other issues such as discrimination.

Mr HAASE—I will move on. The ATSIC national office submission says, ‘One of the problems is that governments still control resources and determine the mode of service delivery, usually relying on a silo organisation of outputs, thereby perpetuating impediments to holistic whole-of-government activity.’ You are talking about resources; you are talking about taxpayer funds. What is the process whereby we can provide funds to groups to get on with the job of building capacity if we do not have full accountability back to the taxpayers as to the expenditure of those funds?

Commissioner Wanganeen—I do not have a problem with accountability. What I do have a problem with is three or four different service agencies trying to achieve the same thing in a region. They do not talk to each other and they are competing for the same client group. Instead of wasting taxpayers’ money by all trying to run a small program, which is not going to achieve

an outcome, they should wherever possible utilise the ATSIC regional council and come together in a whole approach to make sure the dollars targeted for the area actually reach the area. You achieve a better outcome based on everyone going in and having input, rather than each little group looking after their own turf. This happens quite regularly with agencies—whether you are talking about TAFE, recognised training organisations, the Department of Human Services or Family and Community Services—at a state or federal level. Quite often they do not talk to each other.

Mrs DRAPER—Nothing new.

Commissioner Wanganeen—What we are saying is that—as I am sure Peter Buckskin may have mentioned—if you all come together you can talk about what the issues are in the community and about what you can contribute, and you have to have accountability in there.

Mr HAASE—Okay.

Commissioner Wanganeen—I do not have a problem with that. We, across the board in ATSIC, have been pretty well accountable. We have our own office of audit and evaluation.

Mr HAASE—You made the point that there ought to be more concern about outcomes rather than the phobia about auditing and so forth. I am sure you appreciate that there needs to be a very solid process of audit involved, especially with some of our experiences. But could you give us perhaps a little more data as to what you think the process ought to be? How can we focus on outcomes in a practical way, from an auditing sense, rather than focusing on the process of expenditure of dollars and acquittal of dollars and so forth?

Commissioner Wanganeen—You have to account for your dollars and there should be a simplified process. My two colleagues here who service agencies—and they are responsible for administration et cetera—may go out to a community and look at what the submission is and ascertain what they are supposed to achieve, but they spend a lot of their time focusing on those dollars. They cannot even go out and offer the community advice on how to fill in the form for the submission. That is against the rules and regulations of the administration. They cannot do that. They also cannot give advice on how to consider other options outside their framework. They spend a lot of time looking at what went in, what was spent and how it was spent, rather than providing advice or that type of thing or even offering advice. There should be an opportunity for mentorship in communities where they do not have a capacity themselves so that they can grow into those roles.

Mr HAASE—Is this something that an existing agency might provide, in your mind, or is it something that ought to be created? I too believe in a mentoring system.

Commissioner Wanganeen—The ATSI staff should not be going out to the field all the time to check up on how the expenditure is going and things like that. They should be able to give advice and offer support to the community about how to do things differently, if it is needed, or provide the expert advice that they are or should be experienced in providing. I am not sure how to explain it another way.

Mr HAASE—We have got it on the record.

Mrs DRAPER—Klynton, I want to pick up on what you were saying. I agree with the notion of the ATSSIS services people going out to the communities and offering them support and mentoring, but couldn't they do that anyway rather than fronting up and saying, 'We're here to make you accountable now.' Surely within the organisation the potential is there for that to happen.

Commissioner Wanganeen—I suppose they can speak for themselves. I am sure quite a few people do do that unofficially rather than as an official as part of their role.

Mrs DRAPER—Yes, certainly, I just wanted to touch on that. I have a question for both Lorraine and Michael. I have not yet had a chance to have a comprehensive look, obviously, at the ATSSIC submission to the inquiry that was held by the state government in South Australia. I have a question out of the blue here on those issues. I did have a report from my local state member, who is a member of the Labor government here in South Australia. Issues were raised that are common both to Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal communities—that is, about capacity building in terms of employment and part-time work, where employers are not willing to employ full time with extra securities or a permanent job. From the discussion on employment stemmed, of course, housing issues: the inability to afford housing and/or access any personal finance in terms of a house loan or even a car loan, to get to work. All of those sorts of issues—starting families, parenting issues—came back to employment issues, from the perspective of the Labor member of parliament anyway. For independence and everything else, from my point of view that is what we are looking at, particularly in capacity building for Aboriginal communities.

So I had a question out of the blue, and the reason I thought of it was that Lorraine talked about industrial relation workshops: is there any consideration given to industrial relations and the unfair dismissal laws? That is something that was not spoken about by the state Labor government. What we are looking at federally in other committee work is that one of the biggest impediments to social justice, independence and capacity building across the board in all of our communities is the fact that people are held back from employment because of the current industrial laws, particularly unfair dismissals. Would we then have an opportunity to go to employers and say, 'If that law was not in place, would you be more willing to take on somebody from the Aboriginal community? If it does not quite work out, there are no hard feelings'? Michael, could I start with you on that and then move to Lorraine.

Mr Penberthy—I do not know if I can give you a direct answer. It sounds as though you are asking us whether employers would be more likely to employ Aboriginal people if unfair dismissal laws were removed.

Mrs DRAPER—Very good—that is it in a nutshell.

Mr Penberthy—Is that the question?

Mrs DRAPER—I am asking whether it has ever been considered. As I said, I have not yet had an opportunity to go through the submissions and the other attachment. I want to know if that is something worth considering.

Mr Penberthy—Certainly, as far as I am aware, it is not an issue that ATSIC has looked into at a state level. Lorraine can probably follow on from this. Industrial relations workshops held in Indigenous community based organisations here in South Australia were very much about supporting the ability of those organisations to do the right thing by their employees. That was the major focus. Often those organisations did not really have the expertise to look after their employees as they are required to under the law and that then led to bad workplace relations and problems with the board overstepping the mark or not taking on the responsibilities. That has been our focus.

To answer your question though, probably the view that ATSIC would have and certainly that ATSISS would have—and it was the view expressed in the poverty inquiry—is that the issue of employment is crucial to Indigenous poverty. It is very much a multifactorial role; people who are homeless find it hard to get a job and there are many issues that underpin your ability to become employed. Many Aboriginal people struggle to access the mainstream services for reasons of geography or culture or just out-and-out racism. We would say those issues need to be addressed.

Mrs DRAPER—Sure; I appreciate the complex nature of the other issues related to employment.

Ms Merrick—Trish, the workshops were primarily about minimising the risk in terms of industrial relations. Also, for unfair dismissal claims, it is about supporting the organisations so that they are aware of what their requirements are against the law as opposed to—the reverse of what you were suggesting—about making some changes, if there were some changes made to the law in terms of industrial relations. The other point in terms of the employment, to pick up Mike's comment, is that CDEP is one of ATSISS's major programs. Nationally, there are about 30,000 people employed under that program. It tends to be one of the prime employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, next to the public sector. When you talk about changes to the unfair dismissals, what sort of suggestions were you going to make there? Did you have some ideas in mind?

Mrs DRAPER—No, as I said, I have not had a chance to go through the ATSIC submission at this point in time, but it was central to what came out of the state government's report into poverty—employment was the most salient issue relating to poverty. I was surprised—and I did raise it with some members of the state government in discussions—that there was no reference to the fact that unfair dismissal legislation might be an impediment—particularly, from my point of view from being here today, for Aboriginal people who were trying to get mainstream opportunities of employment. We need to look outside the square and not just rely on CDEP and the public service. We had been talking about training and apprenticeships and traineeships in order for us to get as many Aboriginal people as possible in that area.

Ms Merrick—It highlights that this is another area of expectation that is put on community organisations which more often than not have limited resources, a limited number of positions and expectations placed on them to be fully compliant with the requirements of the mainstream. That certainly comes back to the issue of capacity building.

CHAIR—Klynton, one comment you made earlier was about the state legislation in control of corporations compared to the Commonwealth Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal

Corporations. Could you talk a bit about that. That is a pretty important issue in terms of governance. What I took from your comment is that they were not able to be negotiated or you did not have any impact.

Commissioner Wanganeen—That is right. Basically they could say to us, ‘There is a line here called self-determination. You cannot cross that line,’ particularly because we are incorporated under the state act. Under the state act the Commissioner for Public Affairs does not have the resources that the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations has. Quite often, a lot of the incorporated bodies are operating with constitutions which were designed for sporting associations.

Of course—and Lorraine alluded to this—they have not updated their constitutions and they are outdated. One of the things we have taken on board is how to tackle this. If we go in and say, ‘You need to change your constitution because of this, this and this,’ they will not listen to us. So what we have done is said, ‘We will offer you some training in constitutional matters so that you can review your own constitution and implement the changes that you find are in line with good practice.’ We have found ourselves having to tackle that situation, but we have also met with the commissioner in South Australia in relation to public affairs and corporate affairs and provided him with information on what the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations does and also some of the information on training packages we have available for governance training within the TAFE system. Our community organisations can then start looking at ATSIIC not as an organisation that is wielding a big stick but as an organisation that wants to provide assistance for them to achieve the outcomes of their constitution.

Sometimes they incorporate under the state act because they know we cannot step in when things are not quite done according to proper processes and procedures. I find that very frustrating, as a person who has to get involved and referee when there are disputes over who is the rightful governing body and all that sort of thing, because the state act does not have resources to go in. We are expected to go in anyway. We have to try and play a refereeing role and try to bring them together. We have to do it in a roundabout way to deal with the issues.

Realistically, if the legislation was changed in South Australia and at least one person was employed to deal with communities incorporated under the act, it would make our job and the jobs of the communities a hell of a lot easier. This would also make it easier for the members of those community organisations who continually get frustrated because they are in a conflict. They have board members who are relatives and they do not want to vote to get them out, even though they know they are doing the wrong thing.

CHAIR—Thank you. That is really fundamental.

Ms Merrick—If organisations are registered under the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations and their governance is having difficulties, then we can—as they can, too—seek the support of the registrar in engaging an administrator to the organisation. If there are financial difficulties, then we as ATSIIC can consider the engagement of a grant controller. They are areas where we could look at some more effective support for the organisation, as opposed to the state legislation where there is not much available.

Commissioner Wanganen—When there is a big dispute about, for example, who are the rightful elected members of the governing body often there is no way of sorting it out because some people on one side get lawyers and some people on the other side get lawyers. A couple of times this year it has ended up in the Supreme Court of South Australia. They are incorporated under the state act. We would not have that situation under the federal act because we, as the regional council, can employ an administrator whose first job is to dismiss the board, take control of the operations of the board and facilitate the election of a new board in a proper democratic process. Under the federal act, we can do that. We do not need to do that, but they know we can do it. We will facilitate more discussion and agreement, whereas under the state act we are powerless.

CHAIR—And that is laid down within the authority of the act and also included in the constitutions themselves, which clearly develop that understanding. I am really interested in that. As they say about constitutions, you do not go near them until there is a problem. When you go near them you want to make sure they are right.

Commissioner Wanganen—That is right. One of the problems we do have is training for governance. If you go into a community and train the board, sometimes there is a high turnover because members of the board come under all sorts of pressures within the community. There is often a drop-out and when new people come on they do not have any training, so they are at a different level. That is a continuing cycle that we find is a problem. Having said that, there are members of Aboriginal community boards who know everything there is to know about running meetings and constitutions, and they could teach some of the lecturers how to do their jobs.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Merrick—Continuing on that point, ORAC is working on two things at the moment: looking at accredited training for board management and for committees.

CHAIR—Do you have some comments about the reduction in income due to Centrelink breaches and the community clearly not appealing against decisions? I do not know how many of us are familiar with the terms ARO and SSAT. Quite often people ring the Electoral Office and ask, ‘Have you been to the ARO? Have you gone to SSAT?’ and the answer is, ‘No, we haven’t done that yet.’ This is a common community issue, not just an Aboriginal issue. Do you have any comments about Centrelink breaches and issues about getting knocked off, or whatever?

Commissioner Wanganen—My plain view about the Centrelink breaches is that frequently they are for very minor things that could have been sorted out with follow-up and discussions. People are not able to make an appointment at the time and they do not get around to writing and putting in an apology and making another time, so breaches do take place. When the breaches take place, the individual is often cut off for six weeks, eight weeks, 13 weeks with no income. What do they do? They go and live with their relatives, who then have the extra burden of providing food and everything else for them. Often these people do not go and seek redress because (1) they do not know the process and (2) they think, ‘Why go through all the bother with this administrative process and of trying to fill in all these forms when I couldn’t do that properly the first time?’

Quite often the breaches are for minor things and Centrelink adhere to the policy guidelines too strictly, forgetting that the guidelines are a guide. They think you have to fit within the guidelines and forget that for every rule there is an exception—quite often they do not think outside that rule. I wrote to the minister for education and training this morning and signed a letter to him about a similar case that I am following up.

CHAIR—We appreciate those comments. Knowing your background in training and vocational education particularly, I would really appreciate you making some comments about the future—the transition from CDEP, the issue of how you make it attractive for people to take up traineeships or apprenticeships and the attitude of the employers. They are three or four issues. In terms of the sorts of outcomes you were achieving when you were in that role, I would really value your comments. It is going back into history, but I think it is important.

Commissioner Wanganeen—Yes. In most states there is an Aboriginal education program and an Aboriginal employment program. Those two programs sit outside each other and do not get together and cooperate and work together. That is one of the problems I have found. When an Aboriginal person comes off the street and goes into an employer centre and says, ‘I want to get a job in such and such an area,’ the person who is interviewing him should be able to do a skills analysis, develop a career plan for that person and know what sort of training is available for any chosen career for that person. When they walk in the door they should be able to go through the complete history and give them some sort of direction on where they need to go to get that job.

When you get a person into a job then you have to make sure that there is follow-up and support to ensure that they know the role and responsibility of being an employee. When you are an employee you have to be responsible for a lot of things: being punctual, being regularly in attendance, being part of a team and building up support within the team, and knowing who in the organisation you need to see when you are having difficulties so that you do get support.

In my previous role I worked in an apprenticeship support program. I knew where every Aboriginal apprentice in this state was working, I knew their home address and their phone number for work and for home. I knew when they were going to do their TAFE training and I had personal contact with each and every one of them—there were 96 in all—on a fortnightly basis, either by phone or a personal visit to their home, workplace or TAFE college. If they were having difficulties at TAFE, I would go and talk to the lecturer and sometimes sit in class to ascertain how they were going and then organise tutoring. If I needed to talk to the lecturers about how they were structuring their training, I was able to talk to them.

I had three apprentices from the AP Lands. They were passing their tests but only with about 17 per cent of answers right. Once people started testing them orally they were getting 75 per cent, 76 per cent. They knew the practical work that was required, but they were having difficulty understanding or comprehending the way the questions were asked. Often in TAFE courses for trades the assessments are not written by people who are practically involved in the teaching or have a trade background. They are written by academics who really structure sentences which can confuse a person rather than help a person to comprehend.

I found that it was useful to go around and set them up with someone in the organisation who they could rely on—someone within TAFE that they could rely on and that could provide references to services if they were having problems with their finances, with the law et cetera.

They could provide advice on who to go to and where to go to get assistance and, above all, teach them that if you are regular and prove that you want to be a part of the team then when problems arise people are more willing to help you. If you do the opposite and bury your head in the sand like an ostrich, people will not go out of their way to support you—if you are running away from the problem. Any problem is compounded if you are not attending work, because they start docking your pay; the moment they dock your pay you have another problem because you do not have as much finance as you did the week before. That is just a snapshot of some of the things I was involved in over a number of years. I do think there are ways of doing things better.

CHAIR—I appreciate that. In terms of the appropriate incentives—you have touched on a lot of them—perhaps too often in relation to Aboriginal issues, or issues generally, we set things up in a way that does not offer a strong incentive. We sometimes do not encourage success.

Commissioner Wanganeen—The squeaky wheel gets the oil, so to speak. The organisations that continually have problems continually attract resources. The organisations which are doing well and could be better as they start gaining momentum get a reduction in resources. Really, they should be supported as the shining light and they should be used as an incentive to make the others get their act together.

CHAIR—Thank you. Wonderful comment! There is a very good question in the state government's submission. It talks about a central register of Indigenous advisers. You would be familiar, as many of us are, with the issue of people going from community to community and not being real flash about what they are doing and therefore the suggestion that perhaps ATSI may be able to be part of managing a register. Has this suggestion of the register been canvassed? There are probably implications that we have not thought of, but it is something that has come up this morning.

Commissioner Wanganeen—I would support it, but there would be legal implications, in that if you said something negative about Joe Blow he can sue you.

CHAIR—Yes, it could come back on you.

Commissioner Wanganeen—The other thing that community organisations need is support in recruiting the right people in the first place. We have noticed there are people who show up in two or three communities in South Australia and the next thing you hear is that they are in Queensland doing the same things that they were doing wrong in South Australia.

CHAIR—To pick up your point, I think it is very advisable that initial recruitment—those processes picking up some of that structural stuff you were talking about earlier—is critical.

Commissioner Wanganeen—Yes. I think Mr Haase mentioned the credit process, about giving credit to merit. If you interview and give all jobs on merit, quite often you will only give them on the merit that you based the interview and the application on. Quite often Aboriginal people do not include a lot of their history in their applications and quite often they do not sell themselves in an interview process, because it is contrary to the way that they have been brought up.

CHAIR—Yes.

Commissioner Wanganeen—They do not get out and say why they think they are the best person for you to employ. They will not tell you why they are the best person in a lot of instances because they have not had the grounding on how to do that. The merit process is used and altered regularly through state and federal governments right across the board to suit the needs of the employer anyway. To say you stick strictly to the merit process and the best person gets the job is a fallacy, in my view.

CHAIR—Which raises an interesting issue—and you touched on it earlier—in terms of written questions in, say, testing an apprentice or something. When you go to oral testing you go from 17 per cent to 75 per cent. It is something that Dr Dewar and I were talking about earlier. The Harvard report is also tending to suggest that literacy and numeracy are not always a measure of a skills base. To put it the other way: you would have some thoughts about how you would encourage a job applicant, picking up those clear differences but respecting the skills.

Commissioner Wanganeen—There has to be a process for the people who are on the interview panel to understanding what is required for someone to be the best person for that job. In most trades—if you are looking at the trade areas—the best person in literacy and numeracy, English and maths is not the best person to become a tradesperson. The best person for the trade is the person who has the hands and skills and you can build in the training for the literacy and numeracy after. Most trades only work on, say, three or four formulas anyway. Once you have a formula written down, then you know it straight out. It is really an understanding by the people who are on the interview panel of what is required for the job. The job and people specifications in a lot of areas do not properly reflect that anyway.

CHAIR—I am indebted to you. Thank you for a wonderful presentation. Commissioner, would you like to sum up for ATSSIS?

Commissioner Wanganeen—We are grateful for the opportunity to come here. We are saying what we have said all along: quite often part of the solution is within the community needs—but they need to know how to harness and utilise what is available—but it is also do away with silos so everyone can work collaboratively and in partnership to look at the issue rather than all try to fight for the same client group.

Mr Penberthy—I have a few concluding remarks. I encourage you to read the submission because many of Mr Haase's questions are answered. There were questions about appropriate accountability. We made some references to the findings of the Harvard project—that, in many cases, midstream and after the fact attention to demonstrating what had gone right was more effective than a check list approach. They found a check list approach basically only provided an incentive to meet the check list. It did not really provide incentive for vision and leadership. If the focus was on perhaps midway through a project supporting what was going right and giving an organisation a bit of rope to continue to develop their own direction, those organisations tended to be the more economically successful.

Much of what we have discussed today has been about coordination and breaking down silos. We are very aware that this is not new and it has probably been talked about for decades in government. It is obviously something that is much more difficult in practice than it is in theory.

We are certainly of the view that the level at which the coordination needs to happen is on the ground rather than necessarily at the top. A lot of effort in the past—and certainly at present—in South Australia has gone into high-level committees to coordinate service delivery. All that is valuable and good, but unless resources are directed into allowing for proper coordination on the ground, either through one stop shops in regional centres that deliver a number of services or through supporting field officers to work together, all of the top level stuff is going to be of very limited value.

CHAIR—That is a good comment. These issues are as much a challenge—if not more of a challenge—for government as for governance.

Ms Merrick—In terms of ATSSIS and our accountability with respect to public funds—just to take up the point the commissioner raised earlier—it is about accountability. ATSSIS have certainly had unqualified audits. We are probably one of the most audited organisations in the world. The other thing, of course, is that that accountability works the other way. It is about accountability at the community level and how the service is delivered there and the involvement of the people at that regional level.

CHAIR—That is an excellent comment. I am mindful of the commissioner's comment about funding for 12 months and planning for five years. It is very important to get the thing in sync.

Commissioner Wanganeen—Quite often the service delivery agencies and communities probably need to look at the difference between the two words 'efficient' and 'effective'. You can be efficient at a lot of things, but if your job is to be a plumber and you are efficient as a carpenter you are not doing your job and you are not effective as a plumber. Efficiency and effectiveness really have to be looked at right across the board from everyone.

Ms Merrick—We have always had this juggling act, if you like, as administrators versus community development.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 12.46 p.m. to 12.25 p.m.

[1.42 p.m.]

FULLER, Dr Donald Edwin, Head, Business Economics, Flinders University

CHAIR—I welcome Dr Donald Fuller, who we have had the pleasure of meeting before in Darwin. We agreed that when the opportunity came you would return and spend some time, if that was possible, so we are delighted to welcome you back.

Dr Fuller—Thank you.

CHAIR—These are proceedings of the parliament and need to be treated in that regard. You may like to make a two- or three-minute opening statement and then we can have a discussion, or continue our discussion from roughly December last year, was it?

Dr Fuller—Yes, late November or December. Thank you. I have been involved in research relating to Indigenous economic and human development for about 10 years. Prior to that I was working as a senior government person in the Northern Territory government, both in the Northern Territory Treasury and in the Department of the Chief Minister. In those capacities, as well as my current capacity, I have had extensive involvement with Indigenous people and Indigenous communities in the north of Australia.

I grew up in Darwin so I have extensive networks and contacts with Indigenous people which have been established over many years. Some of those are quite close family relationships. I mention that because I have both a long personal involvement as well as a long professional involvement; therefore, I think my perspectives are grounded in quite a lot of information of both a direct and personal type as well as an academic or research type.

My main focus in this very diverse and complex field has been in the area of economic development and particularly the importance of building microenterprises as a means of reducing welfare dependency and the problems associated with it within Indigenous communities. Such an interest in economic development brings me into contact with a wide range of associated issues such as political and institutional arrangements, health and social issues and legal matters. However, I have tried to focus on the enterprise development as a means of making this an understandable focus.

CHAIR—We welcome your input. We have had the benefit of your submission, which is submission No. 48. We appreciate the time that went into it. I would like to open things up and talk a little bit about your opinion of the Indigenous business organisations known as Indigenous Business Australia—Joseph Elu's group. Do you know the Joseph Elu group, the government funded or government financed Aboriginal group? Do you have a view about that?

Dr Fuller—Not really.

CHAIR—Are you familiar with it?

Dr Fuller—No, I am not really familiar with the operations of that.

CHAIR—Endeavouring to fund Aboriginal enterprise on business principles.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—Basically, as I understand, loan money. It endeavours to foster leadership amongst young Aboriginals.

Dr Fuller—Yes. I must say I am not really familiar with Elu's particular group.

CHAIR—That is fine.

Dr Fuller—But if I can perhaps lead into that. One of the reasons I am not particularly familiar with it is that it bears on some of the things I would like to say. I will take that lead and come at it in a different way.

CHAIR—Yes.

Dr Fuller—That is, the incredibly diverse and fractured nature of what is being arranged and whether or not it is in fact clearly a matter of knowledge and information, both to administrators within communities—and I mean mainly non-Indigenous administrators—as well as Indigenous people who are attempting to construct business opportunities. I have been trying to get funding and in talking to Minister Ruddock's office and also to Minister Nelson's office they said, 'That is a great idea, but there's about 15 organisations that you can approach for this.' One of them may have been Elu's particular group but there were a whole lot of others, too. What struck me was the incredibly fractured nature of it; where I was going to start and how much that was going to cost me in terms of resources in putting together submissions for such a diverse range of groups. I find it extremely difficult, like Indigenous people do, to work out just who is responsible for the area of business development within Indigenous and remote communities.

I have worked in communities in Central Australia, in the Western McDonnell Ranges area; in Ti Tree, north of Alice Springs; at Ngukurr on the Roper River; with the Warai on Adelaide River; and I am currently working with the Tiwi, particularly with a family on Bathurst Island. I have a very wide range across the Northern Territory. Nothing would be vaguer than Joseph Elu's Indigenous push to me and to the people of the Northern Territory. We would have no idea how to access it and we would feel very pessimistic about our chances.

What we have seen as obvious and in front of us for a vehicle on which to construct business enterprise has been the CDEP program. We have looked at the CDEP, worked with it and seen some of the advantages and some of the severe disadvantages of it.

CHAIR—Do you say that the Northern Territory Local Government Authority should not administer CDEP?

Dr Fuller—Yes. Sorry, can I come back to that? I was about to say that CDEP seems to us to be the big program that is there for Indigenous business. It is not operating well in a number of areas. One of the big areas where we found it was not operating well was in terms of the administration of it by the local government authorities in the Northern Territory. We felt that the

quality of the people we saw, often as the town clerks, were way below what was really necessary in that particular area of endeavour; a very challenging area.

CHAIR—Let me just develop a little understanding. In the Northern Territory—and I am not as familiar there as I am here and in other parts of Australia, for that matter—was it only administered by the local government authorities? For example, here you will find CDEP programs which are stand-alone operations. The general philosophy has been, from within ATSSIS, previously ATSIC, from an administrative perspective the larger the better; the more participants the lower the administrative costs. Just to take one other view, I am surprised that you would see CDEP as a business in itself because it is, after all, a Work for the Dole.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—When I talk about small business, I talk about something which is an entity, a stand-alone, sustainable, viable business, which is not what I would regard essentially as a social welfare program.

Dr Fuller—No, but it is clear that out in the communities CDEP, for a start, is a very big program with large resources; over \$400 million spent.

CHAIR—That is right.

Dr Fuller—It has a large amount of potential to employ people—and it does, as you are saying, mainly for the dole. But following the Spicer committee report there were some very significant recommendations about how you should use CDEP in a transitional sense to get people moving from a Work for the Dole program on to a much more business based—

CHAIR—I thought the great weakness was that Spicer made some recommendations which did not very clearly address where there is no job market. It is transitional where there is a job market but where there is no job market it seemed excessively harsh to expect to be in transition if there was no employment there. Certainly I am not aware of being offered opportunities where it could be in transition, which would be much of the Northern Territory experience.

Dr Fuller—My focus has been on communities of 500 or more but I would have thought in slightly smaller communities there is a significant opportunity for business enterprises there that has not yet been seriously engaged.

CHAIR—I agree.

Dr Fuller—A lot of it has to do with the provision of services in a normal country regional town sense.

CHAIR—I could not agree more.

Dr Fuller—My interest and my concern has been about those communities. There are a lot of them in the Northern Territory; they are the predominant communities. There are a lot in South Australia as well. The question that I have been asking is: why are all these people on Work for the Dole CDEP? Why is this huge amount of money going in without the transitional

arrangements, as envisaged by Spicer, which could occur in those particular situations? I am wondering about which areas you are talking about where there are no job markets available. I have always been interested in those areas where job markets are available, although they are pretty small markets.

CHAIR—There is a fair bit of evidence, which I think the committee has seen over a couple of parliaments, where there is a business opportunity available for employment and that transition process might be satisfied but many Aboriginal people seem to get parked, for want of a better phrase, on CDEP. They do not move off.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—Evidence in Mr Haase's electorate is quite overwhelming.

Dr Fuller—The key question is why this occurs. I am not saying CDEP is the answer to everything. I am saying it is a big program with a lot of potential. The question is: what is going wrong with CDEP?

CHAIR—Exactly.

Dr Fuller—Some of the things that are going wrong with it that I have seen are problems of corruption, problems of administration, problems of a lack of support both from the Northern Territory government agencies responsible and the regional ATSIC officers. When we were involved in Ngukurr we would go in and follow the Spicer approach and identify potential business enterprises in a community. That would be on the basis of close discussion and negotiation with community leaders. We might come up with 15 or 20 potential businesses as far as the community was concerned. We would cut that down, on the basis of feasibility studies—as we did in the case of Ngukurr—to around three. We would conduct business plans, financial plans and marketing plans for those—that is, we are providing technical assistance to the community. The question is: why are we doing it? We are doing it because we have funding from the university network or from the Northern Territory government and we have been out energetically getting it.

But where are the government officials that are supposed to be doing this? Where they are is in Darwin in comfortable offices, or they are in Canberra—thanks very much! There are not any of them out there. We are out there because we know the people and because they have asked us to be there. We go through with all of these business and financial plans and marketing plans. Then we keep ATSIC regional office informed, or ATSSIS as it now is. We go to the Katherine office in the case of Ngukurr and we tell them everything we are doing that they should really be doing. Then we say, 'We've done this feasibility study. We've got three businesses here that are generating income. One is a butcher shop that is really turning over a lot of revenue. Another one is a boat transport business linked with some ecotourism.'

CHAIR—And your store.

Dr Fuller—Yes, that is right. We say, 'Righto, here's the business but we've done all that; hasn't cost you any money really. Now we want to go to the next stage. We want to actually set up some joint ventures. Can you give us some additional funding to do this?' It comes to a

complete halt—absolute halt. I guess we have all heard about those people who go out to communities and we see many things started and they never get taken further.

CHAIR—I hear the point.

Mrs DRAPER—Dr Fuller, I am very interested in your background in terms of the school of business economics at Flinders University. You have been talking here about business enterprises and micro-enterprises.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

Mrs DRAPER—I would like to come from the opposite end of the equation. You would be aware that recently the state government held an inquiry into poverty. Earlier we had ATSIC and ATSSIS, who put in a submission to the inquiry into poverty. I attended a meeting where the state Labor person in my electorate of Makin gave a report. It seems that the themes coming together for capacity building, anecdotally in some areas, are that employment is a very important thing for the community in terms of getting rid of poverty and homelessness as well as health and education issues. It all ties together.

What I was absolutely surprised about with the state government's report is that it did not talk about—or make reference to in any way with employment issues—incentives for business enterprises in terms of workplace relations. I am alluding here to the unfair dismissal laws. I would be very interested in your opinion. The other committee work I am doing from Canberra shows that there would be many more employers who would be willing to employ any number of people and even work with people such as yourself to get support systems to employ Aboriginal people. Do you see that as an impediment at a universal level for businesses and business enterprises?

What we are looking at with capacity building is getting Aboriginal people into the mainstream employment as well; not necessarily tied to the CDEP schemes and that sort of thing.

Dr Fuller—Yes, I would definitely see that as a potential impediment. Business's fundamental bottom line is commercial viability, particularly in the mainstream area. Labour is probably an important resource in that process. I do not think business needs to be told when it needs to employ people or not employ them. It does not matter whether people are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. If you put constraints in that process you will definitely discourage employment. It is true that the risks are likely to be regarded by some employers as higher because of a lack of experience, a lack of knowledge and so on. Nobody has really addressed this issue. In that sense, given the risks are higher, the concern would be about such laws.

Mrs DRAPER—The state government's report into poverty came as a huge surprise for me: that issue was not even canvassed. I am surprised that it is not a topic of discussion. In terms of encouraging our Indigenous community into mainstream employment, I see that as the future for getting out of poverty, for capacity building; for being able to have a permanent job, get a home loan and a car loan so that they are able to get to work and those sorts of issues.

Dr Fuller—I agree entirely. That is very important within urban mainstream areas. Within more remote communities—

Mrs DRAPER—I appreciate the difference between the rural, regional, remote and metropolitan.

Dr Fuller—Yes, I am sure. It is interesting that the fundamental problems are essentially (1) the way in which government programs are delivered; (2) access to adequate sources of finance at reasonable levels of cost; and (3) training, particularly vocational education and training. Those three areas are yet to be addressed seriously by governments at the federal or state level. I take your point, particularly in the mainstream markets you were talking about, but within the more remote areas those other three areas seem to be substantial issues of a more significant and obvious nature in a sense but yet to be addressed really.

Mrs DRAPER—Thank you, Dr Fuller. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr HAASE—You bring a bright light to the topic. I have heard a lot of evidence in my travels. I am West Australian, the member for Kalgoorlie—which is an electorate which covers 91 per cent of Western Australia, with 14 per cent of the population Indigenous. The outcome from many long-term and extensively planned economic pursuits is often that traditional owners and local populations generally will sit back and elect mainstream contractors to come in and do the labour associated with these projects. How would you see that overcome? I would like to go further by asking you about your land lease proposal. How much demand would there be for leased land for investment purposes? Could you give us some examples of that?

Dr Fuller—The way current arrangements stand with the way the local government institutional structure works within communities often—and the way the funding is arranged with respect to federal and state agencies—there is absolutely no incentive for an increase in capacity decision making within communities. I would just sit there and say, ‘Thanks very much. You arrange it all. You’ve done it all. What’s the point of me getting involved in this anyway? There’s no incentive for me. Anyway, if I do, the barriers are so high in terms of a number of issues—cultural issues, language issues.’

CHAIR—Are you referring to reward distribution?

Dr Fuller—No. From what I have seen of the way government services are delivered, there is major government failure there. Therefore, I am very much interested in the notion—even though it seems a little bit pie in the sky to some people—of strengthening the local government structure by getting higher quality people there who are better trained, particularly in cross-cultural issues, and can involve Indigenous people seriously in decision making. Even though it is going to be tough, at the end of the day the people affected by the decision-making have got to be seriously involved in that decision making. They have to take responsibility for that decision making.

CHAIR—That is a hell of a statement!

Dr Fuller—It might be, but there is no other way.

Mr HAASE—How do you achieve it?

Dr Fuller—Exactly! The notion of self-management and the notion of ‘We’ll do it all by ourselves’ is absolutely silly. The only way in any developing arrangement that progress in human and economic development occurs is by joint arrangement. With business in the non-Indigenous area, as you know, when it wants to do something it does not do it by itself. It pulls in resources all over the place, whether they be in Australia or overseas. It pulls in technical advice. It does not say, ‘I’m not going to use you, because you come from Canada or because you’re Japanese.’ It goes for whatever resource it can, the most effective at the best possible cost.

Why are we in a situation where we are trying to develop some of the most complex parts of Australia in terms of cost, transport problems and so on? We are saying, ‘You guys stay out of this.’ I cannot understand it. What we really need is high-level technical advice. Guys like me—and there are a lot around—want to get in with the technical support and are keen to. Indigenous people often want that, but I believe the problems that stop them coming together are often in government.

It is really just through my long history of personal contacts that I am able to access as much as I can in the Northern Territory. If I wanted to do it in South Australia, I would be dead, dealing with the agencies and the blockages, because there would be so many hurdles I would have to jump over. In the case of the Northern Territory and in other areas, it is also made difficult for other people, because of the fact that you cannot get access, due to the permit system. Why are we doing this? We should be encouraging people with skills who want to help—

CHAIR—You are intruding on the culture.

Dr Fuller—But those days are gone. When one works in communities, Indigenous people see no difficulty working out which parts of their culture they wish to hold onto, which are going to change and which they are prepared to adapt to—and that is the way of all change. There are vested interests—and often they are not Indigenous people directly on the ground—who claim these barriers. It is interesting, as I say, that it is often the people who are not on the ground; those on the ground are crying out for people to come and work with them and to have access with them.

If we could open that up, I believe there are a lot of people who would work with Indigenous people a lot more. There are a lot of Indigenous people who want that particular networking, a networking that is fundamental to our way of doing business. Currently it is not in place, because it is not allowed to function. There are huge institutional blockages.

Mr HAASE—You will appreciate, of course, that one of the prime motivators for government to underpin Indigenous enterprise is for the purpose of self-esteem and sustainability of individuals within communities.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

Mr HAASE—The very point I make is that often when these enterprises are facilitated the desired outcome is the last to be achieved. My point is that, instead of Indigenous persons being

employed or engaged actively in the day-to-day running of an enterprise, that role is abdicated absolutely to outside mainstream contractors, operators, administrators et cetera. I see that as being negative to our primary cause of creating Indigenous employment.

Dr Fuller—I agree, but I think that happens because, if we take it at the local level, the whole process of the decision making—as to who is going to get the money to do the job—is made, for example, by a local government clerk.

Mr HAASE—When you say ‘local government,’ do you mean local government in the definitive sense—that is, local government, state government, federal government—or are you talking about the local administrators?

Dr Fuller—Let’s say the local administrators, just to generalise it.

Mr HAASE—Okay, but ‘local government’ implies, to me, a specific—

Dr Fuller—In the Northern Territory it is local government, but basically it is local administrators. The local administrators really, as we know, capture the local decision making. They are usually non-Indigenous. They are sometimes of doubtful integrity and doubtful objectives. They see this large stream of money, often, to be a significant advantage for their networking purposes. They redirect it away from the objectives and interests of Indigenous people. We have seen it many times. The amazing thing to me is that it has been going on for so long. One of the reasons it happens is because Indigenous people are not included in the local decision making.

Mr HAASE—Dr Fuller, you would be very interested in a centralised process of administering those administrators that find themselves in remote communities.

Dr Fuller—Absolutely.

Mr HAASE—That is fine. The fact that you are is on record.

Dr Fuller—I would be. I would like to pay them a lot more. I would like to make them of a lot higher quality and I would like to open it up to some of the reputable organisations now working on the subcontracting of jobs for non-Indigenous people, such as the Salvation Army and some church groups.

Mr HAASE—As an agent’s provider?

Dr Fuller—Yes. I see this technical support and also this institutional capacity building as not being well provided by government. I would outsource a number of those important functions. In terms of the provision of technical support, it is what AusAID does overseas, for example.

Mr HAASE—Yes, indeed. It is ironic, isn’t it, that we do it overseas?

Dr Fuller—I am all for doing it here. It is not working within the government structure.

Mr HAASE—The vital question you did not get around to answering was: how much demand would there be for access to lease land?

Dr Fuller—Within the Northern Territory—and that is where my experience is—the three main land based enterprises are pastoral, mining and ecotourism. In our view, there is a very large potential for joint venture arrangements in the pastoral area. It is very unfortunate to see the lack of capacity of subleasing to occur under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, I think largely because—in the Northern Territory—of the unwieldy provisions, which means that the land councils dominate the usage process and often are not sympathetic to joint venture arrangements with non-Indigenous people.

As you would be aware, in Western Australia a number of beautiful cattle stations and pastoral stations have fallen into major disrepair. I would like to reverse that arrangement. In relation to ecotourism I agree with Pearson, from the Queensland perspective but also from the Northern Territory perspective. We found a very significant desire by a lot of tourist operators—some of them very significant, in terms of taking international tourists from America and Europe—such as Billy Can Tours, for example, but there are others very interested in setting up joint venture arrangements to get access to Indigenous land in a controlled way, particularly—

Mr HAASE—For what purpose? Could you be specific?

Dr Fuller—Ecotourism.

Mr HAASE—Yes, but do you want a piece of land as a base, or do you want access to huge tracts of land for tourists to visit?

Dr Fuller—Both.

Mr HAASE—Do you see the land being used as the basis for a bankable document in developing business?

Dr Fuller—Absolutely, if we had a much more efficient process of getting approval for areas of land, which are currently very attractive from an ecotourism perspective, through the land council. Often the local people want it. If they were in Ngukurr on the Roper River, say, there would be a very strong desire from senior Indigenous people maybe to get involved in using some tracts of land for both safari type bases as well as access—

Mr HAASE—You are talking a couple of thousand hectares or something like that?

Dr Fuller—Yes.

Mr HAASE—I thought you were talking about quarter-acre blocks at a community.

Dr Fuller—No. They would be safari tourist base camps. There are a couple operating already, and they potentially turn over, as you know—with Australia being a safe destination—a lot of money.

CHAIR—Do we have solutions? We have the aspirational part. You have talked about corruption, you have talked about access, you have talked about the weaknesses in CDEP and the weaknesses in the local government structure. By the way, you should not be surprised that they are capturing the local agenda, because that is what they are supposed to do.

Dr Fuller—Sorry to interrupt. Do you mean that the non-Indigenous people capture the agenda for their non-Indigenous businesses and they take the Indigenous money to do it?

CHAIR—You also make the point that many of the Aboriginal people do not have the capacity and so the only people with the capacity are the non-Indigenous.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—I am all for intervention and mentoring and using the skills of those who can pass on the skills. I was slightly tongue in cheek when I said you were intruding on the cultural values, but I think we need to get a bit more specific about how we do it. Can we have the answers just a little bit shorter and come to the specific—

Dr Fuller—Yes. Talking to Mr Haase, we touched on a couple of major ones. No. 1 was to outsource a lot more technical support for Indigenous communities, to people such as universities and private enterprise organisations, who would tender for the right to work with Indigenous communities to take forward—

CHAIR—Who would determine that? Who would manage that process? ATSIIS?

Dr Fuller—That was the second point I discussed with Mr Haase. Far more emphasis has to be given to decision making by people at the community level. Therefore, we require far better quality administrators working at the community level, which we discussed.

CHAIR—We are going around in circles.

Dr Fuller—No. I also said to Mr Haase that, in my view, the way you get those guys is to pay them more money. You would be looking to get a town clerk or whatever—an administrator—paid at the old class 4 level in the Commonwealth Public Service. It is not good enough.

CHAIR—In your submission you have cited Trudgeon, and you say that democracy is a foreign idea. And, therefore, the people who will be appointed with the expertise are paid appropriately to deliver better outcomes.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—Who can argue with that? I accept your point about AusAID and all of that. How do you set the structure? If democracy is a foreign idea to these people, how do you get something which—and you have quoted Trudgeon in that regard—

Dr Fuller—Yes, I agree with you. It is foreign. That just means that you do need high-quality people. When we are talking about a local government structure—

CHAIR—Sorry to interrupt, but at the moment you have got a council of some kind, a community council, a regional council, more councils than you can poke a stick at.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—They are charged with the responsibility and they are elected democratically. That is the system which we have imposed, or they have accepted—whichever. I am trying to understand it.

Dr Fuller—If you have a very good mentor there—say, if it were you or me, it would be part of our administrative role; and this happens in federal and local government now—it is an education process, it is a learning process; we are explaining. If we get a top-quality administrator there—and there is one in the Tiwi Islands at present, an ex-politician from Tasmania who is the CEO of the Tiwi structure at present; as part of his role he is educating Indigenous leaders and potential Indigenous representatives about the structure—

CHAIR—What I am saying is: who hires and fires? Who is responsible here?

Dr Fuller—I think that is basically up to the community government councils, but it does need some supervision from ATSI, yes.

CHAIR—We have had a very good submission from ATSI. We have talked about this and where you might support it, stronger constitutions and all the rest of it. I want to try to explore the point in your submission. Trudgeon says that democracy is a foreign idea, and we have councils which have, for better or worse, some kind of semblance of democracy about them.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—The critical part seems to be this relationship.

Dr Fuller—That is a good question. Can I have another bite at it?

CHAIR—Yes.

Dr Fuller—I have to agree that, in an organisation such as ATSI, a federal government body would have to have the overriding interest in setting the guidelines for that and making sure that if there were breakdowns in that structure something would be done about it.

CHAIR—But this is the question: how? You have in place at the moment a grant controller. My experience is grant controllers take a month of Sundays to appoint. They have to have certain criteria. The community has gone so far down the tube, you get a grant controller in, and they will take six months to pick them up again. When they walk away within six months we are repeating this.

Dr Fuller—But they are reporting mechanisms, are they not? If you have ATSI taking some sort of energetic and professional role there, then are we not talking about the reporting mechanisms and the seriousness with which that is done?

CHAIR—I suspect it might lie—and this is winging it a bit—in paying competent people with integrity enough to do it properly. In the Cape York experience, the corporates are doing it gratis. That is part of the corporate responsibilities. It is the competence of those people and the mentoring.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—You might recall an issue you and Mr Snowdon had a discussion about in Darwin—and Mr Haase touched on it: the inalienable land title issue.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—What structure would you have there?

Dr Fuller—In order to free up the—

CHAIR—Yes. Do you remember the example? You may not have been there to hear the debate about the Daly River and people wanting to access the land. You may not be familiar with that example. They tried to set up an enterprise but they were not part of the group. They were being burnt out, run out, harassed at every opportunity. They had probably the best opportunity that anyone had thought of in a generation of getting some kind of viable business going, yet they were just run over.

Dr Fuller—By the land council?

CHAIR—Yes, by the land council, the traditional owners. Do you have something to say about this?

Dr Fuller—Do you mean the traditional owners in Daly River?

CHAIR—Yes.

Dr Fuller—In Daly River there is a big split between those who regard themselves as the traditional owners and so on. That is essentially a democratic question, really. It is a numbers question. It is a different sort of thing to the question of the land councils. You are talking about a community where some people may support something and some may not. That is a normal situation even in a country town, is it not? I do not see that to be a major difference. A major problem is not so much the debates and tensions that occur within communities; it is really whether or not you can get in place mechanisms—in terms of land councils—which enable you to actually proceed with certain enterprises.

It is likely, given that you need the approval of land councils to proceed with enterprises, that there will be certain people who will have a vested interest in starting those sorts of debates within communities. The issue becomes whether or not land councils should have that type of authority. I do not think they really should or, if they do, they have to be a lot more representative.

CHAIR—You would be familiar with the Reeve report and some of the recommendations there.

Dr Fuller—Yes.

CHAIR—I guess you would have supported some of those.

Dr Fuller—Yes. I cannot really understand how you can have, as I said, in Darwin the Northern Land Council, with a chairman who may be far more interested in what is happening in his particular community and the benefits associated with that community compared with one way down in south-eastern Arnhem Land. There is a major problem of representation.

CHAIR—It seems to me, Dr Fuller—and I need to finish on this, because it is something that I would love to spend hours mulling over with you—that we have, as you have quoted Trudgeon, democracy as a foreign idea yet we have (and the Territory is a classic example; the Reeve report suggested some changes, which were rebelled against and, politically, the activists became quite vocal about it) traditional owners who will rule forever, more than any monarchy that the British Crown ever thought about, whether you were a republican or a monarchist. The TOs will rule forever, and any semblance of democracy—let alone control of any kind of enterprise or development that might occur—is challenged by that. They seem to be fundamental questions we still have not dealt with.

Dr Fuller—I do think it is a foreign concept. I agree with what you are saying there. I think that is a key problem.

CHAIR—Based on the native title leverage, corporates are coming in and offering sufficient incentives and capacity, if the profitability of a mine is sufficient. They are the only people at the moment generating that sort of wealth. No-one else is getting a look in at economic enterprise.

Dr Fuller—Yes, but it does show you what economic enterprise can do and how fundamental it is. While it is a foreign concept, it does not mean to say that it will not change, but there has been no effort, really, in terms of the quality of the people that we are talking about operating at the community level, in terms of even basic training as to how these structures are supposed to work.

CHAIR—I perhaps offer a little bit of hope in my concluding comment that Cape York, with its corporate involvement, maybe is offering something there which is for the future.

Dr Fuller—Yes, sure. We did do some work on CDEP, and I would like to table a document.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. We appreciate that.

Dr Fuller—Thank you very much for the opportunity.

CHAIR—That is all right. All the best.

Dr Fuller—I have learnt a bit, Chairman, from those comments. I enjoyed them. Thank you very much.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[2.34 p.m.]

EDWARDS, Reverend William Howell, (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you very much for your time. Do you appear before us as a private citizen?

Rev. Edwards—Yes.

CHAIR—You may like to offer a few words of your experience.

Rev. Edwards—I am formerly a missionary with the Presbyterian and Uniting churches amongst the Pitjantjatjara people in the north-west of South Australia. I was then a lecturer in Aboriginal studies at the South Australian CAE and the University of South Australia. I remain an adjunct lecturer at the university. I have a prepared statement with about six copies, if you would like to have one.

CHAIR—Yes, wonderful, thank you.

Rev. Edwards—I could read this, if that is your desire. I may comment on parts of it, but it will fill you in on the background.

CHAIR—Yes, thank you.

Rev. Edwards—And I will make a few comments.

CHAIR—Could you take no more than five minutes?

Rev. Edwards—I will probably take a bit more than five but I will hurry through what I can.

CHAIR—I think we can endure that.

Rev. Edwards—Having completed studies at the University of Melbourne in arts and education, and at the Presbyterian Theological Hall in theology, I was ordained as a Presbyterian minister. I was appointed as assistant to the superintendent of Ernabella Mission in the far north-west of South Australia from May 1958. During my period of undergraduate studies there was no opportunity to learn about Aboriginal culture or history. Anthropology was not taught at the university.

However, during my years at university I had a growing interest in Aboriginal affairs, reading about the Presbyterian missions, reading some books about Central Australia, meeting the Ernabella choir in Adelaide in 1954, when the Queen was here, visiting Alice Springs in 1955 with a church work party, being involved in ABSCHOL at the University of Melbourne and hearing the late Sir Douglas Nicholls at Melbourne University in 1957, following the Western Australian controversy.

Having arrived at Ernabella in May 1958, I became acting superintendent in September, as the superintendent and his family left for health reasons. Ernabella had been established in 1937 on a policy of respecting Aboriginal culture and encouraging staff to learn the Pitjantjatjara language. I was immersed in a variety of tasks as the person responsible to the Board of Missions in Sydney and for the supervision of all aspects of the mission station. Ernabella, with a population of approximately 400, had a staff of seven—in contrast to today.

As superintendent I attended to correspondence, ran the small store, did the financial statements, supervised a kitchen-dining room, supervised the garden, butchery and maintenance, conducted church services and catechism classes, and trained the choir, plus a few other things. Three male staff supervised the sheep work, mechanical repairs, power—two 32-volt lighting plants, Southern Cross YBs—and shared the driving on fortnightly trips of 320 kilometres each way to the railway siding at Finke for supplies. One female staff member conducted the school, with the assistance of two or three Aboriginal assistants. Another female staff member, assisted by two Aboriginal workers, ran the clinic, with in-patient ward, midwifery ward and infant welfare section. She did such a wonderful job I married her! The third female staff member supervised the craft room.

At that time, Commonwealth finance was unavailable for Aboriginal work. The Presbyterian Board of Missions provided staff salaries—which were fairly low—and occasional extra funding for development work, such as fencing, well sinking et cetera. They also provided a budget in 1958 of \$9,600 for general running expenses. The South Australian government provided some rations for children, nursing mothers and aged persons. Child endowment was paid to the mission as a lump sum and used to provide meals for school and younger children.

The craft room brought in some income. In following years, men were employed in gardening, fencing, shearing, boring, brick making, building and other employment. Younger men were often employed as stockmen on nearby stations. Men without such employment were encouraged to hunt. Older couples were employed as shepherds. Women were employed as school and clinic assistants and in staff houses and in the craft room. During these years Ernabella was a place of relative peace and purpose. All children attended school regularly and the clinic provided good or adequate medical services. There were few social problems.

As Ernabella had grazing rights over 2,000 square miles and little use had been made of the southern area, in 1961 Fregon was established as a cattle out-station of Ernabella, with a staff of four and a population of approximately 100. This area appealed to people who recognised the sandhill country as their traditional lands, and the cattle work was attractive to younger men. Over the 1960s, pensions were introduced; child endowment paid to the mothers; staff numbers at Ernabella increased gradually to approximately 12, with the employment of a mechanic, builder, extra teacher, business manager and occasional employment of tradespeople, such as plumbers and electricians. Following the 1967 referendum, Commonwealth finance become available. Although limited at first, it enabled building projects such as the community centre, preschool and new store, with the employment of more men.

At the same time, there were changes in the air in relation to Aboriginal policies, with the Presbyterian Board of Missions leading the way in its advocacy of self-management in incorporated Aboriginal communities. In 1972 I transferred to Mowanjum in north-west Western Australia to oversee this transfer from mission to community, as a prototype for this

development. The same change took place at Ernabella and Fregon on 1 January 1974. I returned to live at Fregon in 1973 as the Pitjantjatjara parish minister.

In 1974 I studied in Fiji; in 1975 I lectured in Aboriginal studies at the South Australian CAE. At the request of the Pitjantjatjara people I returned to the area to reside at Amata from 1976 to 1980 as parish minister. During this period I acted as minutes secretary and interpreter for the Pitjantjatjara Council in its land rights negotiations. During this period I observed a deterioration in the social conditions of the Pitjantjatjara people, with the escalation of petrol sniffing, increased alcohol abuse and violence. These problems have since become extremely serious. The hopes of the new policies have not been realised. One of the difficulties is that these changes took place in a time of tumultuous change in the wider Australian and other societies.

In 1981 I again took up a position as a lecturer in Aboriginal studies at the Adelaide College of the Arts and Education and remained there through its transitions. I taught in the areas of traditional culture, Pitjantjatjara language and land rights. From 1981 to 1984 I interpreted for the Maralinga people in their land rights negotiations. When I officially retired at the end of 1994 I remained there on part-time contracts until 1996 to maintain the Pitjantjatjara program. I am now an adjunct lecturer, giving occasional lectures and conducting annual summer schools in Pitjantjatjara language.

During this time in Adelaide I have written widely on Aboriginal culture, land rights, religion and education, health and politics. There are a few samples here—just a small sample—of some of the writings. Since coming to Adelaide I have interpreted in courts, hospitals et cetera. This demand has increased dramatically in the past three years, with 162 assignments in 2002. I have had nine in the past five working days. This is largely due to the deteriorating social and health conditions in the Pitjantjatjara lands.

I visit the lands each year, for various reasons. The most recent visit was for four days, from 9 to 13 September this year. On this visit I noted the appallingly low school attendance rate—when I was at Ernabella they said it was 20 per cent on that particular day—and the almost total lack of involvement in meaningful work on the part of young men, in contrast to the situation four decades ago.

I sat in sorry camps with families grieving the loss of young people in motor vehicle accidents. While I met many old friends, I found that many of their children and grandchildren had died or been seriously affected by substance abuse, diabetes and motor accidents. The highs of the visit were observing the continuing work in the art centre—the longest continuing Aboriginal art centre in Australia—and working with the Ernabella choir, which I trained when there. They sang in Alice Springs last Sunday week at an open desert song festival.

In 2002 I interpreted for a select committee of the South Australian Legislative Council on a visit to several communities. At Amata we were shown the construction of several houses. I think there were 17. I was concerned to note that, whereas under the mission building construction was undertaken by local men under the supervision of one or two builders, no local Pitjantjatjara people were employed on this project. It should not surprise us that the boys showed little interest in school attendance. Surely financing of such projects must be made contingent on local training and employment.

In recent years I have observed a marked increase in the non-Anangu population on communities with much of the meaningful employment undertaken by these non-local people. I have been increasingly concerned about the marginalisation of the core Anangu people in their own land. Perhaps there should be more supervision of the employment of non-Anangu people on the lands to ensure that those working for communities are doing essential work and they are training local people wherever possible. I think this follows the comments of my predecessor.

A problem of great concern is that the gap between the skills required to service the increasing bureaucratic structures and the financial and physical developments in communities and the skills attained by the local people is increasingly widening; that gap between what the people are learning and what the demands are. Whereas formerly Pitjantjatjara men, while being under the discipline of traditional law, also developed habits of work skills and discipline through school, station work and regular employment at Ernabella, most young men today have not gained this discipline in either traditional or work spheres. Because of this lack of purpose they are prone to become involved in one or more of the varieties of substance abuse: petrol sniffing, excessive alcohol consumption or marijuana.

Another more recent problem is the attraction of gambling facilities, such as the Alice Springs casino and poker machines. There is anecdotal evidence that this is becoming a serious problem, with reports of some community leaders being involved. I do not have the space to comment at length on the contemporary situation of the Pitjantjatjara people. Writers such as Pearson, Sutton and Trudgen have drawn attention to the urgent problems from experience in other regions. The situations are critical. Effective solutions will not be easy. They must be comprehensive, controversial and painful and will require careful negotiations, planning, communication and commitment.

CHAIR—Well done, thank you, Bill. You have said it all in the task before us. It is pretty hard not to put a bit in the contemporary discussions about successive governments and the whys and the wherefores and the welfare state and all that, but here we have the situation from 40 years ago to now, and the contrast is quite profound. I get criticised for using that word, but this one is profound.

We might as well head to where we might try and solve a few things—those last statements, those last words and any other things you might relate back to. I loved having this, because it just sets it down in a way that no-one else has done that I know of, certainly in the time I have been in the parliament.

Comprehensive, controversial and painful, careful negotiations, planning, communication and commitment. Could we talk a little bit about what that might mean? Certainly the language will be part of that—which is your great skill. Could we talk a little bit about that? I want to ask the questions: what sort of negotiations, what sort of planning, and how do we communicate? As to commitment, what sort of commitment? Can we talk a bit about that?

Rev. Edwards—The period I worked up there was a time when people who went into that work had a fairly deep commitment and that reflected our age—I think post war and post Depression—it was the kind of era many of us went through. To some degree that is lacking now. We cannot completely get back to that, but we need people who have a concern for the people's future and the willingness to spend time. One does not learn much about this until one

has been there for a few years. I used to say, with teachers and so forth, that their first three-year term at Ernabella was a period of learning, their second three-year term was a period where they would be fairly effective teachers, and if they went back for a third term they were very effective teachers. It takes quite a while to gain the empathy, the understanding and skills that are needed. So we need people with a long-term commitment who are willing to sit down and listen.

My visit two weeks ago was with several retired Uniting Church ministers. One had been there and heard concerns that people felt the church had deserted them because we handed over to them. We went up there just to sit and listen. We need to do more of that and hear what the problems are. That is only half of it. That can lead to a moribund situation where nothing happens. From there we need to work out some very clear and attainable goals, perhaps through a church group—the previous speaker suggested maybe the Salvation Army. I think World Vision are working in some communities amongst the Warlpiri people. Groups should have a very clear goal—maybe related to petrol sniffing or training of some people in a building enterprise—to get those things achieved and to keep reflecting on them, discussing them with the people.

It was easier in my time because we had a monolithic structure where everything came under the one organisation—school or hospital—and you could get coordination in the work. These days, from what I see of the communities, it is very difficult to get the health people to talk to education people, TAFE to talk to other education people and the mechanics in consultation with the others. The communities are fragmented, as you said before. There is amalgamation not only of different family or clan groups but also of different interest groups from outside. That exacerbates the problem.

CHAIR—You will appreciate the irony of this, Bill: at the moment there is high level ministerial Commonwealth-state and region negotiation—including the community—to endeavour to bring it together. The monolithic structure has returned, but the genie has escaped.

Rev. Edwards—Yes. As I found previously, even when state governments had progressive policies, bureaucracies have a knack of undermining, if I might suggest such. That has often been a problem, too. People are schooled in certain approaches and you cannot change their approach overnight.

I have used an analogy in those last terms and have been interpreting a few times with cancer victims; one died here last Saturday and I have been seeing his son in court this morning. The son does not yet know that the father has died because the family cannot let him know while he is in a cell. I am in the midst of some very particular personal problems. Cancers need very invasive surgery. I would suggest here again that the demands of these communities may be invasive in some ways. I think there is a sense of real malaise, of trying to relate that to what the invaders—the invasive ones—can do. They will have some skills and expertise to bring those together.

I have been out of administrative work for years and I have no magic answers to that. There needs to be more emphasis on communication in the languages—Kriol, Pitjantjatjara; whatever it is—and bringing all the parties together, as you suggest, is happening to some degree.

Mrs DRAPER—I was very interested in your comments when you said you went back to visit after the people you were meeting with expressed their concern and dismay about the fact that they had been abandoned after getting self-management. Could you elaborate on that for us, because what we are hearing from different sections—which you probably have no doubts about—is that there is a call for more self-management and autonomy. I guess we come back to the skills and the training, but there is perhaps some room for other communities which need assistance. How do we look at the problem from that point of view?

Rev. Edwards—I am talking about a particular situation where for 14 years I was the parish minister, as well as being superintendent. Then I went to the community just in the role of parish minister. The church grew quite markedly during that time, over a wide area. I had a parish that was 600 kilometres from west to east, with several communities—from Indulkana to Wingalina. It was a decision of mine to withdraw, partly because I felt that people were being dependent on me and the church, too, sensing the wisdom.

One man had asked to be trained. He trained in Darwin for the ministry. A couple of years after I left he was appointed as the minister of that parish. We saw this as the right way to go. I took some pride in the fact that I was probably the only one in a position to withdraw and allow an Indigenous person to take my place. That has not happened in many areas of the Aboriginal work. We tended to leave the church structures very much to their initiative, but some of the problems that come up are the fact that they are not very democratic; there are clan groups so you get rivalries and a lot of pressures. An individual suffers a lot of pressure in that situation, so it did not work out as well as it might. That man was getting on anyway and he retired; elders carried on the work.

One of the problems we face is that so many other groups saw the area as if it was a needy place. We had other religious groups going in, other Christian groups—charismatics—who saw this as a heathen field, not realising that most of those people would have professed to be members of the church. There were differences between younger people, who had a different style of doing things, and the older people that I had trained, as happens in churches here. Some of the older people now think, ‘You walked out and left us.’ Although we felt that we had set up the structures, they were obviously not comfortable with the structures. From that point of view, somebody went back and heard the story and so others have gone back. We are trying to re-establish links without taking over.

If I could use that as analogy: I guess they see in other ways, in other aspects of work, that more white people have come in. That is one of my points. There are far too many non-Anangu people. It is not only white people; there are people from other groups as well. I have pointed this out in the journal there. The people sit back and see this parade of people passing.

This anecdote just occurred to me: a lady died of cancer in the Adelaide hospital here last year, about 18 months ago. This lady had just left school when I went there in 1958. She had been taught in the school, worked in the craft and had become the leader of the women’s council—which is a strong movement. She died of cancer in the Adelaide hospital last April. One of the former staff, who had been a teacher of hers in the school, went to see her. This lady was trying to get out of hospital because she wanted to care for her grandchildren because her own children were petrol sniffing. She was keen to get back to care for them. She was crying; she was praying with this woman. She was talking about all the problems of today. In the end this woman said to

her, 'What is different today?' This lady, who was about 60 then, said, 'When you were here'—and this was the small staff of about seven—'you worked with us, you taught us. We could see what you were doing, but now there are all these white people. We can't see what they are doing. They are not working closely with us and we don't know what's happening.' I thought that was a very insightful statement. I hope the lady who heard it—I do not want to steal her comment—will publish that.

CHAIR—Very worthwhile.

Rev. Edwards—I have found in my training of people up there—and I have often made the comment—working with the people, that their whole mode of education is so different. It was by imitation, by observation, not by learning from paper, especially with the adults. The mode of learning that worked was what I called the 'apprenticeship model'. It is now a white person, or whoever it may be, with an Aboriginal person, working together on a task. These church elders took over that task. The man who died two years ago, for whom the Ayers Rock climb was closed—and you will remember that incident—was one of my church elders for many years. He went out on trips with me. It was the learning that he got through going out, sharing the task, which made him an excellent preacher and church leader.

The Ayers Rock people—they were given Ayers Rock and felt that they were not able to cope with these councils and new organisations—saw what he was doing and asked him to come, because his story line had a link, a vague link, with Ayers Rock. He went there and people have honoured him as one who took a great role, both traditionally in the church and in the administration of Ayers Rock. That was very much an apprenticeship.

To me, you can send TAFE teachers and have lots of classes, but nothing much eventuates. You need people who have the skills, as a previous speaker said, but ensuring, as I have indicated here, that there are people working closely with them, gradually giving them the responsibility and allowing them to take over.

Mrs DRAPER—Mentoring.

Rev. Edwards—Yes. I do not know whether I have fully answered all of your question.

Mrs DRAPER—That is good. Thank you, Reverend.

Mr HAASE—The mentoring issue is an interesting topic. I cannot for the life of me understand, when nothing else seems to be working on a sustainable basis to develop capacity within communities, why we are not making more of a mentoring program. A previous witness mentioned that our overseas experience through AusAID has some strategies that appear to work and yet we do not seem to have the foresight or gumption or whatever it takes to adopt them here. In Indonesia, I know that Australian contractors, if they win contracts there, must have a system of training local people to take over those jobs within a set time frame. I do not know why we do not provide the resource to allow a mentoring system within our communities and, where we have people employed, we employ somebody to back the employee. You are obviously speaking in favour of such an idea. We seem to have little evidence to support that, generally speaking.

That is not a question, but I do have a question, believe it or not. At the community of Ernabella—which I confess I am not familiar with but I am interested in knowing about—was there mix of language groups that were attracted there when the mission was first opened?

Rev. Edwards—The mission opened in 1937. It is on Yankunytjatjara country, but many of the Yankunytjatjara were attracted by the station, the food available further east. The writers Tindale and so forth refer to drought in the twenties and thirties, so there was some movement from the west to the east.

When a white person first started a small sheep station there in the early thirties, there were Pitjantjatjara people who had come from further west. They are closely related dialects and the people intermarry, but they are different dialects. When I was there, the main group of people were Pitjantjatjara, although it was on Yankunytjatjara land. There were some Yankunytjatjara. Gradually some Yankunytjatjara came back from the stations as the station work ceased so it became a mixture of the two, but the languages are very similar. The language we worked in was basically Pitjantjatjara and that made it an easy task, compared with some places such as Aurukun, another Presbyterian mission in Cape York, where there were about 13 dialects.

Mr HAASE—You would say that basically they were a natural group.

Rev. Edwards—Yes.

Mr HAASE—They were not an artificial group thrown together by the availability of first—

Rev. Edwards—They came from the one logical cultural bloc. They shared ceremony.

Mr HAASE—The reason I raised the issue is that so often we hear that the justification for social disruption, lack of harmony, poor living standards, substance abuse, et cetera, is all down to the artificial throwing together of language groups and tribal groups generally.

Rev. Edwards—Yes.

Mr HAASE—You have reported that, on your return, you find social disruption and disharmony. You could not put that down to artificial throwing together of groups?

Rev. Edwards—Not of those major groups. There is some influence of other people who have moved into the area.

Mr HAASE—In more recent times?

Rev. Edwards—In more recent times. Some of these people are related to people who left the area a generation or two ago, that moved right down. They may have had progeny around Port Augusta or Marree, even mixing with Adnyamathanha people in the Flinders Ranges. Some people from those areas have come back to the lands. They have a fairly tenuous link but they can establish a grandmother or somebody as a link. Sometimes groups like that bring other associates with them and so there are several people who have moved in to the land, even a few white people at times who have liaisons with Aboriginal women and I am called upon in Family Court at times, to interpret because of problems that arise from this. Sometimes the problems

come from some of these groups. It has been reported often that these people bring in the marijuana and sometimes the alcohol. There is some disagreement between the core Pitjantjatjara group and some of these people who are on the margins.

Mr HAASE—You say that, whilst you were there in the first instance, tribal law was strong.

Rev. Edwards—Very strong.

Mr HAASE—I guess you would concede that tribal law today is less strong.

Rev. Edwards—Less strong.

Mr HAASE—Is it a basis for the breakdown of general social structure?

Rev. Edwards—To some degree. The old men do not have the same control. They can exercise that control in their smaller camps. There was one method whereby in the early morning, if a young fellow who had broken the taboos, an old man in a loud voice would just talk about, and say, 'So-and-So better watch out or he'll suffer.'

Mr HAASE—Not to him but of him?

Rev. Edwards—It went around the whole crowd.

Mr HAASE—You might come across it still in some of the country.

Rev. Edwards—That was a very powerful force. Now people are living in houses, with motor cars and diesel engines and that is lost. But it has happened in other ways, too. There are some people who have moved in who do not respect those older authorities. There are all these reasons for that breakdown.

Mr HAASE—Perhaps we could list the numerous reasons. Mobility would be a strong one, wouldn't it; the ability for people to be in one location and the next day somewhere else?

Rev. Edwards—Yes. Several Pitjantjatjara people are now living down here in Adelaide to get away from the problems, but then they come across other problems.

Mr HAASE—Then they go back and tend to take new problems with them.

Rev. Edwards—They take new problems with them, yes.

Mr HAASE—We should not find it so remarkable that what worked—

Rev. Edwards—Forty years ago.

Mr HAASE—in the thirties, does not work today, even though we believed we had a lot of solutions in those days. It is universal; you would appreciate that.

Rev. Edwards—I appreciate it. As I said, it is because of the changes in our own society and the freedoms and so forth that are more common now.

Mr HAASE—You mentioned the traditional owners' ability to discipline. I imagine there would have been a degree of discipline maintained from the staff's perspective in the community.

Rev. Edwards—In our day we used largely traditional discipline. If anything happened with a young fellow I would generally call the older brothers or an uncle to administer some punishment on the spot. That fixed it. Police only visited every three months then and it was more or less just to check the dogs or something. Fairly rarely did we have to report any offence. Now, of course, if something happens the cases are not dealt with for one or two years and people forget what they were about. They could be dealt with just by some traditional discipline. Using the older brother was the main way of doing that.

Mr HAASE—That discipline opportunity does not avail itself today?

Rev. Edwards—It has problems, as it does with discipline in our own families today. Society's attitudes have changed towards all this. We had very few problems of discipline in that way. In the sixties I was accustomed to taking people like Don Dunstan, Nugget Coombs and Bill Wentworth around Ernabella with pride. Dunstan wrote of Ernabella as the best example of a mission in Australia. It was a place of purpose but now, when people visit, they do not find that same things.

There are still things with the craft; there are still some good things there. Kenmore Park is a cattle station just to the east of Ernabella. One of the men—he was a boy at school when I went there—has established quite a good little community there and that is worth looking at.

Mr HAASE—You briefly touched on the idea of being accused of 'walking away, leaving unprepared'. What would you say to the charge that is so often levelled these days that the outlying communities under the supervision of missions endured a paternalistic administration that left people ill equipped when that service walked away. Would you address that particular charge? I am sure you have heard it made.

Rev. Edwards—Yes. It is part of a stereotype. Just as Aboriginal people have been stereotyped, missions have been just as much stereotyped. An anthropologist, Ken Burridge, has written an excellent book on this. Missions varied across the whole spectrum, from those that were very paternalistic and rigorous, to one such as Ernabella. My feeling is that the people had more independence then than they do now from white people. There was a small group of us; each one had a coterie of people they worked closely with.

People say, 'You used to make the decisions.' There was a lot of interaction between the sheep man and the men working with him, or the sister and her people. There was a lot of consultation going on. We had limited budgets and I had to make decisions based on that. But on the whole, the view that they were all paternalistic and that the missionaries were making decisions is a stereotype.

I am now undertaking postgraduate studies on the history of the Moravian missions, which were in Victoria and Queensland. This is one of the issues that I am tackling because they too were accused of being dictatorial. The anthropologist Peter Sutton mentioned to me recently that one man accused of this was the Reverend Bill McKenzie, who spent 42 years at Aurukun. He and his wife had no family; the people were his family. They called him 'papa' or 'father'. He has, like some of the anthropologists, been accused even in his physical treatment—he was a first war veteran.

Peter Sutton mentioned recently the men who have stuck and who are still strong were the McKenzie men. The people who did not respect his discipline are the ones who have fallen away. He said that Bill McKenzie treated them the way they expected to be treated by their own people. There was something of stern discipline. Peter Sutton may have been very critical 30 years ago doing his early research work, but he has come to appreciate that there was something in that old method. That view of a paternalistic approach is stereotyped. There is a whole spectrum in missions across Australia on that point.

Mr HAASE—Did you have anything to do with Warburton?

Rev. Edwards—I visited there in 1959 and again in the late seventies.

Mr HAASE—Do you know Noel Blythe?

Rev. Edwards—Noel Blythe I know, yes.

Mr HAASE—He is a proper brother cousin.

Rev. Edwards—I met Noel over there in the Kimberleys.

Mr HAASE—Thank you for your evidence.

CHAIR—You have mentioned budgets, that you had constraints upon you and that you went to Finke every fortnight or so to get your supplies.

Rev. Edwards—Yes.

CHAIR—You have mentioned the amount of money. Was it \$9,600?

Rev. Edwards—It was £4,800—in my first couple of years that was the annual budget.

CHAIR—You would be aware, no doubt, that the figure quoted at the moment is \$60 million for the sort of outcomes that you have talked about and you know better than we do. If I was sitting where you are sitting, I would be staggered, absolutely appalled, that the Commonwealth and the state could inject that much money in there for so poor a return and poor result, compared to someone that ran it for \$9,600. I am just asking for a general comment. You do not measure things in dollars but you do—

Rev. Edwards—The then state minister for Aboriginal affairs was claiming, in my early years, that when he came into office the state budget was about £350,000 but now he has

brought it up to £700,000. The law I devised then was that the effectiveness of government work amongst Aboriginal people was in inverse proportion to the amount of money spent on it. That has to be what is at stake but I think it is the way money is used. It is the same as poverty: it is not so much what people have but how they use the available resources.

There is a need for careful supervision of the spending and to have people, as the previous speaker was saying, with commitment and abilities to supervise proper spending. We all hear the legion of stories about corruption and how white people have set bad examples, so Aboriginal people themselves are becoming involved and a lot of money is being wasted. Certainly money is needed but the spending of it has to be severely watched to make sure it is effective.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That is very much appreciated.

[3.16 p.m.]

BIVEN, Mr Andrew, (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Biven—I am appearing as an independent person. I work with the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council of South Australia, but I prepared my submission as an individual. I did not discuss it with my work initially, but I subsequently have and they agree with what I am saying. It was my passion for a few of the issues which I raise which is why I put pen to paper for this inquiry.

CHAIR—Thank you. I need to remind you that these proceedings are regarded as proceedings of the parliament. We welcome your input. You might like to have two or three minutes for an opening statement and then we would like to have a chat about how you see it.

Mr Biven—The major point that I want to make is that working particularly in remote communities is one of the most difficult jobs in Australia, yet we sometimes employ the least capable and the least skilled people, for a whole range of reasons. That is an area we have to address. I am talking about both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. If you look at, say, the schoolteachers that we put into remote schools, you will see that they are usually recent graduates, yet it is a really tough job out there. We need to somehow try and attract some of the more competent people.

The other area I have highlighted is that there is no professional development for people in remote communities. There is no sense of this being a career and something that you can make a life of. It is like you serve your time out there and then you come back. That is another area we should try and address, to make the whole area more attractive in which to work. That is all I want to say.

CHAIR—Thank you. The suggestion has been made about a register of advisers. You were not here before, but if you were you would have heard the ATSIIC commissioner say, ‘Yes, that sounds like a reasonable idea.’

Mr Biven—A register of community advisers?

CHAIR—Yes. You would be aware of the criticisms of the practice of some moving from one community to another and not necessarily creating the best outcomes as they go, to put it politely. How do you feel about that?

Mr Biven—I would say more than a register, which sounds a bit punitive and a bit controlling: I would say an institute, a professional association, be developed in that way rather than just as a controlling mechanism.

CHAIR—It would be a requirement to have that accreditation and—

Mr Biven—Yes, so it becomes a registered profession and people have a career path. There is peer support and other things that happen with a professional association.

CHAIR—We have a phrase ‘effective service delivery’. It has to be effective. What would you regard as major obstacles in terms of the effectiveness? You have already mentioned one clearly, but what are some others?

Mr Biven—The infrastructure in which any service sits is lacking in many communities. There is no infrastructure of support. You do not have other people around you that you can bounce ideas off. It is not easy to access the simplest tools, mechanisms and other things. Whatever you do often is very much in a vacuum. If you are in the city, you have a whole infrastructure to operate within that you do not even recognise.

CHAIR—What about education?

Mr Biven—That is very important. It is critical. If there is ever to be effective community control within our communities, we have to have people who are able to effectively manage what are very complex organisations.

CHAIR—You have given some ABS figures here, you will recall, of completion rates.

Mr Biven—Yes.

CHAIR—That would not tell the whole story necessarily about literacy or numeracy rates, would it?

Mr Biven—I think completion through to the end of high school is incredibly important. I do not know what the literacy and numeracy rates are.

CHAIR—I can give a very approximate guide of what Bob Collins thought in the report. Are you familiar with Bob’s report in the Territory?

Mr Biven—No.

CHAIR—I think it was down around four per cent of a standard which would be regarded as necessary to be competent in today’s world. That is but one challenge.

Mr Biven—One of the great difficulties is that families do not want to be broken up. They do not want to see their kids go to Darwin or Adelaide to pursue schooling. Because of that strong bond within the family and within the community, there is a real pull on the kids to stay. It is not like a vision of providing the kids with a future through education; it is more like, ‘The most important thing is that we stick together as a family.’

CHAIR—You would have heard this quote many times, ‘Misfits, missionaries, madmen and megalomaniacs.’

Mr Biven—It is a bit harsh, but sometimes true.

CHAIR—It is one that is commonly used. I have been hearing it for years. What I am curious to get your view on is why would that be said and on what basis? It seems to me that it is harsh, but it seems typical of this whole issue. As Bill Edwards was saying earlier, it is stereotyping and what is needed is a steady commitment, with a high degree of competence in very difficult areas. I am curious to hear any other view that you might have about why we end up with this sort of comment around it? It is a complex area, but I thought you might want to offer—

Mr Biven—I can only say because it is a reality. Too often it is a reality. There are some wonderful people working in a lot of places as well—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—and we should not overlook that. There are some outstanding examples of people who should not be there as well and they tend to create a lot more havoc than just their individual presence warrants.

CHAIR—Can we talk a little bit about this word ‘culture’. I have a view that it is legitimate, but it is grossly misused and some of the fundamentals of this issue are sometimes hidden behind the word ‘culture’. Do you have a view about that?

Mr Biven—Whether we like it or not, the culture is changing. It has changed very rapidly and we cannot go back to what it was, as we cannot in many other developing societies. You cannot walk back to how it was before, because there are so many fundamental changes within it. I think Aboriginal communities are struggling to find a new identity for their culture which combines everything they want from a modern Western world, but preserving something from what were the old traditional ways. I do not think that is an incredibly difficult thing. I have been in a number of other countries around the world doing exactly the same thing, with the dominance of Western culture—the power of it—and trying to maintain some integrity for their own language, for a start, in the face of how universally English is used.

Mr HAASE—Your experience is valuable. The evidence certainly is of interest to me. There was an idea put up by the witness before last about the possibility of some of our charities that are getting involved in all manner of contractual work around the country these days—for instance, the Salvation Army—being involved in tendering for and winning contracts to supply administrators to remote communities. Would you care to comment on that? I have in mind something whereby there is a contract for X number of years to provide the services of an individual, with backup facilities, very much in the manner that pseudo professional bodies provide management services for community stores these days. Do you have some comments on that, please?

Mr Biven—As you were saying it, I was thinking, ‘No, I would prefer to see an independent professional association—people who make career choices to go and work in remote areas—where there is enough attraction in the work to encourage people to do it as a profession.’

Mr HAASE—How do we weed out, however, the madmen, megalomaniacs, murderers et cetera?

Mr Biven—Again, I think if the incentive is right and the support is adequate it should attract adequate people to it.

Mr HAASE—You do not see those services being provided by an institution as being a great asset to allow the fall back to be able to rotate through et cetera? You do not think it would be the salvation to provide fresh blood and ongoing commitment and increase the survival rates?

Mr Biven—I suppose anything is worth a try. Pilots in communities are worth a go, yes.

Mr HAASE—What do you think of the current COAG arrangements that are providing whole of government attention to a number of areas around Australia? Are you familiar with it?

Mr Biven—Yes.

Mr HAASE—What do you think of it?

Mr Biven—I think it has to be continued. That is the only way to go, when you see different government departments in communities all working in their own ways and not communicating. You can go to a community and the school does not talk to the health service. They do not talk to the people who are providing essential services and in some communities they have almost their own compound with high walls around it and they focus within that. To me, it is crazy—when it is a difficult place to work—that we are not all working together and supporting each other.

Mr HAASE—We have spoken briefly about the aspect of culture and how highly it ought to rate in the future. I know there is a huge argument—and I think the jury is still out—as to whether or not Aboriginal people will survive into the future if more attention is not given to the necessity for culture and cultural teaching and that it should be institutionalised almost. The other argument is that there will be no success without total integration and less accent placed on culture. What is your opinion in that regard?

Mr Biven—There has to be the development of an adapted culture.

Mr HAASE—Can you cite international examples?

Mr Biven—Yes. Japan is an interesting example. It is a very modern society but still maintains some of the integrity of traditional Japanese culture.

Mr HAASE—Business-suited samurais.

Mr Biven—Yes.

Mr HAASE—The annual get together of descendants of American tribes is something that may, on one point of view, find its parallel in Australia at some time in the future.

Mr Biven—Yes. I would hope so.

Mr HAASE—Are you comfortable with that?

Mr Biven—Yes. We should not romantically hold on to visions of the past. It is tragic to say these things because there is such a huge amount of richness in Aboriginal culture. In looking at what is happening all around the world, every culture has to adapt. Because of the

communication we have now, we are forced to adapt to a global community. If we can maintain some integrity within our own individual cultures, that is as much as we can hope for.

Mr HAASE—How do we keep people down on the farm when we bombard them at the same time with cheap American videos? It is a huge problem, is it not?

Mr Biven—Yes. Much more so in an Aboriginal community, when you look around and you have got devastation, and you look on the TV and you have Florida Keys or something like that—American sitcoms.

Mr HAASE—You commented at the outset about your interest in substance abuse and drugs in communities. Is there a single line that explains why it is so? Is it just our culture generally today that creates a problem in terms of its weight?

Mr Biven—For Aboriginal communities it is a response to feelings of hopelessness within their communities. There is not a vision of what life could be like which leads to any sort of hope for them. The response to that is to dull yourself out, to bomb yourself out ‘because I really can’t see my future’.

Mr HAASE—How would we, in a practical sense, present that sense of renewed vision and hope into communities? I know that is a hell of a big question.

Mr Biven—That is what this committee is about, isn’t it?

Mr HAASE—I know that is what it is about but do you have a one-liner? What should we do—get smart, more COAGs?

Mr Biven—There is no simple answer. If there were easy solutions we would have found them years ago.

Mr HAASE—We all get a bit tired talking about it though, don’t we?

Mr Biven—Yes. Some of what Noel Pearson has to say is quite valuable but what he does not say is how we make a transition from welfare dependence to independence. You cannot just take the welfare benefit away from people who have become totally dependent on it. There have to be steps to get to that.

Mr HAASE—That is a process we ought to develop, do you think?

Mr Biven—Definitely.

Mr HAASE—I am done.

CHAIR—A quick question from Mrs Draper.

Mrs DRAPER—My other hat is that of chairman of the health and ageing committee, a backbench policy committee for the federal government; and also the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs. You might be aware that we just handed down the report, *Road*

to recovery. I have a couple of questions on drug issues, and if I could digress to child sexual abuse issues which are not brought up a lot but are something I want to ask you about in your work with drug and alcohol service delivery and in Aboriginal health. It has been reasonably widely reported that that is a problem within the communities. Of course, as you say, we have our young people numbing themselves out with drugs because there is no future or no hope. I am interested in your opinion about whether that is one of the major problems or whether we have people coming in from outside the community abusing the children, or whether it is in a familial sense.

Mr Biven—I do not have any direct information because it is very rarely talked about. There is a lot of shame associated with it. It is only recently that people have been prepared to start to discuss it. It has been in the background. People have talked about it for many years. My experience is really derived from the non-Indigenous experience. I have worked in heroin treatment programs for years and in those you could say, almost inevitably, you would know that all the women who came into the community had been sexually abused as young kids or as teenagers. I would say probably over 50 per cent of the blokes had been sexually abused. It was a high correlation. Until you get to know those people really well, most of them were not prepared to talk about it at all. It was always there under the surface. No doubt there is that within Aboriginal families as well.

CHAIR—Can I ask two difficult questions. Simply put, with drug and alcohol abuse, which Mrs Draper has touched on, you have a background in that sort of work. What is the contemporary scene and what is the main methodology of management at the moment? Indeed, do we have an effective rehabilitation process?

Mr Biven—Are you talking about within the Aboriginal community?

CHAIR—Within the Aboriginal community, yes, and particularly within urban and immediately suburban.

Mr Biven—In the last 12 months we have done a survey of injecting drug users in South Australia. We were looking at a sample and in our sample we got 300 people, so that is 300 out of the population within Adelaide. That was probably 10 per cent of the Adelaide population, so that was huge. Those 300 people had something like 450 dependants, kids, that they were looking after. You can see how it spreads out as well.

CHAIR—Were they actually looking after them or were their grandparents doing it?

Mr Biven—A variety. Most of them were looking after them but in an extended way so that they would be able to dump them on granny or grandpa and do what they needed to do and take them over again. In a nutshell, the problem has been getting worse over the last 10 to 20 years, as it has in the general community. Despite everything we are throwing into it, it is getting out of control. That is what our surveys are showing. Is there an effective rehabilitation? From time to time there are but it is more on an individual basis—one individual interacting with another—rather than on programs working. All the time we have got to go back to looking at the underlying causes, the structural determinants of what drug use, unemployment and all the other issues are about. It is a common cause and we have to go back to looking at the structure of our societies, rather than bandaiding up individual problems. We have to do that for those

individuals concerned but unless we are looking at the underlying things, we are going to be throwing bandaids and more bandaids.

CHAIR—There is a debate about that. I understand Mr Pearson may have a slightly different view to that.

Mr Biven—Yes. I do not think he can just ban alcohol in communities because what happens is half the community leaves, and it is usually those in the productive ages. They go and live in town and spend most of their time in town. They leave their kids at home so their grandparents are trying to look after the kids. The kids then get into all sorts of strife because the grandparents cannot look after fit, young, active kids. Either that or there is a lot of alcohol running back into the community. What is not happening is we are not teaching people in any way how to handle alcohol. We are just saying, ‘Don’t have it.’ That has not worked. Somewhere along the line we have got to start to introduce ideas of the more responsible consumption of alcohol. We are not doing it.

What banning does is encourage people to binge drink. You get as much alcohol into you as quickly as possible because it is banned. You either do that in town or you do that in the communities.

CHAIR—A lot of what you said is challenging what was conventional wisdom. It may not necessarily be but it is hard for the two to be compatible. The view of a few years ago was that Aboriginal people tended to be less involved in substance abuse but those who were tended to be more likely to be binge drinkers.

Mr Biven—Yes.

CHAIR—You are almost challenging that to a degree, are you not, with some of those statistics you are talking about?

Mr Biven—I am saying that the circumstances often force that on them. Also it is their pattern of consumption since time immemorial. They have always been in situations where consuming what you had as quickly as you could was encouraged. In prohibition times that was what you did. You did not want to get caught so whatever you had, you got rid of.

CHAIR—But naturally because it is available as well.

Mr Biven—Yes, exactly.

CHAIR—Very practical.

Mr Biven—There is an interesting example. I was up in Maningrida recently and there they have an alcohol committee. I thought it was an interesting process that they are doing now, in that you can apply to this committee—and it is quite a large committee of Balanda people and Yonngu people.

CHAIR—We were there in December, yes.

Mr Biven—Did you see their alcohol protocol?

CHAIR—I do not recall it.

Mr Biven—You apply to the committee to be able to drink and this committee considers your application as an individual. They look at issues like domestic violence issues, employment, family stability—those sorts of things—and if they think it is okay then you start off with an allowance. You are allowed two cartons of light beer a month as your initial one for three months. If you go okay with that, then you can go on to heavy beer. If you get into trouble, if there is any violence, if you are sharing your alcohol with people—those sorts of things—the committee will review it and there is a stepped type of sanction as well. They have problems with it, of course, but that sort of approach is starting to teach people about responsible consumption rather than binge consumption.

CHAIR—Maningrida reminds me of another criminal case you might recall.

Mr Biven—Sorry?

CHAIR—The criminal case about the murder and rape—it was very interesting—about traditional culture and the view from the judge and the magistrate.

Mr Biven—Right.

CHAIR—Were you familiar with that issue?

Mr Biven—No.

CHAIR—I will not go there but this whole cultural divide got really challenged. That is where the evolution of the culture is, for most people, essential. I have two quick questions. One is about petrol sniffing. Have you come across that and does anything particular come to mind?

Mr Biven—Yes. I have had a lot to do with it. I wrote a manual about petrol sniffing which is distributed around Australia. I have done an evaluation with a few other people on Comgas, the avgas scheme.

CHAIR—How is the manual standing up?

Mr Biven—It has been very successful. It has been distributed and we have reprinted it several times and it has been welcomed. As I say, we are in the process of doing the evaluation of avgas.

CHAIR—Our staff will get a copy?

Mr Biven—Yes, definitely.

CHAIR—Sorry I interrupted you.

Mr Biven—The outcomes of the evaluation of avgas is that that is proving to be a very valuable intervention. What we are finding is that with petrol sniffing, by and large, we are seeing quite good reductions in the Top End and in the Pitjantjatjara areas where avgas has been taken up by communities. There is another group of communities in the central west, Kintore, Yuendumu and out that way that have not ever had avgas and that is where we are seeing continuing problematic petrol sniffing.

CHAIR—My last question is about major barriers to health service provision for Aboriginal people living in Adelaide. All the time on this committee we are trying to strike a balance between urban—

Mr Biven—Major barriers?

CHAIR—Yes. The basis of the question is the balance between urban, regional and remote areas. We have talked a lot about Pitjantjatjara today and that is appropriate. We have also visited the block, for example, at Redfern. There is quite a difference between those situations. I am interested about the barriers in Adelaide specifically. I deliberately mentioned the rehabilitation centre before—Murray Bridge is really the only facility; there are one or two others perhaps—which offers some opportunity for rehabilitation. Then you will get into the debate about the value of these facilities, et cetera. What are the barriers?

Mr Biven—The barrier is finding adequate, well-trained staff who are supportive. I made that point. At the moment if we get good, trained Aboriginal people—you were talking earlier with Bill about mentors and taking people through—the problem is that, as soon as someone gets all those skills, then they have an incredible market. They can go to lots of organisations; they are in huge demand. We can do all of that and then suddenly—

Mrs DRAPER—They are gone.

Mr Biven—And good luck to them. That is great for them but often, and particularly in communities—I do a lot of work out Murray Bridge way—people leave from there to come here and they will work in a government bureaucracy in town and then they might go to Canberra. That is great for them but we need the skills back home.

CHAIR—Do you have a concluding statement?

Mr Biven—No. Good luck.

Mr HAASE—Chairman, just before we go, I would like it on record that we are talking about the social aspect of drinking as opposed to binge drinking. I recall that at Lombadina—after the very successful introduction of the Lombadina Social Club under the chairman there, Basil Sibosado—there is now an allowance of up to six open cans of mid-strength beer per evening, and it is very stable and a system that is working.

Mr Biven—Yes. Again, that will work in stable communities with strong leadership.

Mr HAASE—That is right.

Mr Biven—Most things will work in stable communities with strong leadership.

Mr HAASE—That is about it, yes.

CHAIR—Good comment. Thank you very much.

Mr Biven—Thank you.

[3.49 p.m.]

AGIUS, Mr Alfred Parry, Executive Officer, Native Title Unit, Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement

SKYRING, Ms Sally, Manager, Policy and Programs, Native Title Unit, Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement

CHAIR—Welcome. These are legal proceedings of the parliament and should be treated in that regard. Would you like to make a short opening statement.

Mr Agius—Our presentation to the committee is to show what can happen when you bring about unity and the ability for people to come into a single room to look at a single issue; how that issue is debated and how a group of people then make decisions to look at their future relating to that process. In South Australia we have done this in relation to native title. We have 20-odd different traditional groups who have each lodged a native title claim over land they assert to have native title on. Those 26 groups have been brought together to consider a state-wide approach to negotiating native title issues in South Australia. It has never been done before to this extent and I am not sure if it has been done in any other part of Australia, so this is a first.

It has proved to be a successful approach to building up the capacity of the Aboriginal people involved in this process, to sit around the table as equals in negotiating their interests and to progress their matters. They are making use of consultants and experts rather than the other way around—that is, the experts and consultants directing Aboriginal people in what they should or should not be doing.

That is our opening statement, Mr Chair. I would also like to hand out a pictorial that I normally use to present things in a way that people can understand. We have our written statement also. What you see there is a pictorial that clearly shows how we have come from nothing to where we are now, which is quite significant. It should not be seen as a mickey mouse approach; it should be seen as a real live experience. It is a critical issue affecting all Australians. The past and present governments have assisted in making this process work, as well as the peak bodies who also have a significant interest in this issue. Listening to your comments and questions to your previous witnesses has demonstrated to me that we are on the ball, where Aboriginal people are in a position to make decisions, be accountable for those decisions and own those decisions.

CHAIR—Good comment. Thank you. I seem to run into a great weariness around local government—federal government has certain responsibilities, as does state government, in the regional communities. Could you make a comment about what appears to be the antagonism towards local government—or, indeed, whether you believe there is—and about the status of local government and its capacity to interact and bring forward and further develop the issues related to Aboriginal matters.

Mr Agius—Local government in terms of Aboriginal relationships is showing a particular interest in native title matters. As you will see the front page you have there talks about missions

and rural or remote reserves, right up until 1975 when self-determination came in and all the superintendents disappeared and we had community advisers come in. Then moving from there to here, to native title, we are seeing the interaction between councils and native title groups on the ground. They have to come together and talk. They have to come together and deal with the issues they are faced with. That is compared with when they were not there as much; the Aboriginal Heritage Act was there and it dealt with matters related to heritage and freehold and general title properties. Native title has come along and encouraged the communication that needs to occur.

Both councils and Aboriginal groups are realising that, if they want to progress and they want to go somewhere together, they need to sit down and talk about what issues are really affecting them. That is exactly what is happening now in this process. The state-wide process has brought together what we call a pilot group with four councils in one region. They are addressing the issues that those four councils in that particular group are experiencing in relation to native title and council related matters.

As a result of that we may end up having a potential agreement that could be seen to go across all of South Australia, relating to local government and Aboriginal issues. Native title is not only talking about native title matters; it is going much wider. It is talking about the recognition of Aboriginal people at the local level; for example, names of streets and parks. It is quite interesting in that sense. This bringing together of groups is going to look at how Aboriginal people can be involved in government decision making, how Aboriginal people can be involved in the election of council members, how they can be involved in the decision making of developments and so on. This process is looking at all that intricate business of council.

CHAIR—Relationships are there that were not before.

Mr Agius—Aboriginal people are being introduced to the business of local council and vice versa. You have to actually see it working.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr HAASE—In the submission you say, ‘The pilot projects for ILUAs are going to be completed in June 2003.’ That is this year. Have they been completed?

Mr Agius—No. Like all projects, you have a timed program and there are always delays. With the three pilot projects we have going at the moment, one is on exploration issues. We hope that will be finished in November. We were hoping it would be finished in June. With the pastoral issues we are dealing with, the pilot project is testing out particular issues and we are hoping for that to be finished by the end of the year. We have what we call a Federal Court callover that is monitoring this particular process or pilot project and expecting a response back to the court by 9 October, which is a date we are working to. The local government agreement is the one I have just finished talking about.

All three agreements have come a long way from having no Aboriginal structure to represent the voice of Aboriginal people to actually having Aboriginal people run the meetings and negotiate the issues. In that period of time we have come from nothing to something. Let us hope that we will get some positive results in the future.

Mr HAASE—Do you suggest that those pilots will all be tidied up and reported on by the end of this year?

Mr Agius—Yes, we do.

Mr HAASE—Mineral exploration and access to land for exploration generally is a vexed question, especially amongst the small exploration companies. As you are involved with the native title process, I wonder if you are familiar with the miners' experience in getting access to land. I wonder if you could comment on the issue of disruption caused by money changing hands—and often changing hands with inappropriate people—and the question of identifying the TOs and that whole issue of the negotiations process where funds are involved and payments to a loose list of people are involved. I am talking about the whole issue of people missing out, people perceiving themselves to be in line and not receiving and that usually being an undeclared negotiation. Can you comment on that, because it is something that is a real problem in my area?

Mr Agius—It is an issue that we experience and hear of in the other states. We also got that here in the early days of native title. Now we have organised native title to match the way that the Native Title Act has been amended. You will see a document with a big circle with a lot of little dots inside it. The little dots are the Aboriginal people. The circle itself is the law that says, 'Describe who the claimant group is.' The people have to decide to lodge a native title claim, not just one person. It is the people who decide, under law, who will be what we call the named applicants that sign the official documents and do the official business.

We have taken one step further. On the document you will see the bottom pink square, which is what we call a native title management committee. That is made up of the representatives of the whole group and the named applicants. That group manages the affairs of the native title group, which includes negotiations with miners, explorers, developers and so on. Previously it was done by one or two people and problems did exist. This process has encouraged full-blown traditional decision making and full-blown involvement of Aboriginal people in this process.

This system was brought about by the state and the South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy negotiating a template across the board that all parties would use—Aboriginal people as well as explorers. In that process it will define the parameters and define who does what. It will define how things will be done. It will define when things will be done. It will define what to do if you have a dispute or a problem within the agreement. That currently exists in this process we are working on. We are trying to eliminate the sorts of things that you have identified in your opening comments. With this process here we hope to see a more managed and streamlined approach.

Mr HAASE—Is it descriptive as far as amounts are concerned? Is there a recommended scale perhaps, or an upper limit? Does it give advice as to what a rational amount of money might be for access to a given area of land or a mentioned resource or some such thing?

Mr Agius—The agreement covers what we call benefits. Those benefits could be a range of benefits; it could be in kind, it could be money—those two particular areas. One agreement has been negotiated specifically for that particular group, just to test it out. It has shown that the

explorers could see a lot of savings in what has been done if they used this agreement process compared to the other way of doing things.

Mr HAASE—So your comment is that they are happy with the progress.

Mr Agius—Yes.

Ms Skyring—I might just add, Mr Haase, that part of the attraction for explorers is that the work has already been done, so their initial costs of negotiation are not going to be nearly as great. The South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy has participated in the negotiation of this template and so they will not have to start with a blank page every time. That has certainly has an impact on their costs.

Mr HAASE—Thank you.

Mr Agius—There is another interesting point about the template. If the explorer looks at it then he can choose to sign it, because the claimants have already signed it. If he wishes to participate then he signs it, otherwise he goes back to the current system, which is part 9B under the South Australian Mining Act where you go through a full-blown negotiation process.

CHAIR—I do not have any further questions. Would you like to make any concluding statement?

Mr Agius—Yes, Mr Chair. I want the committee to have a good look at the South Australian approach. I am using the term that the committee is using—that is, capacity—the capacity to build people's confidence and build people's involvement in the process, which has demonstrated clearly that this is getting results. Like all negotiations, you negotiate and you barter, you walk away and you come back and you walk away until you feel you have got what you wanted to achieve. That process is what Aboriginal people are experiencing. They are experiencing direct negotiation as compared to, in the old days—or what I call the old days—consultation. You are consulted, your views are heard and then goodbye. In this particular approach, people are seen as equals across the table. Everybody's interests in that sense are clearly heard, clearly articulated—from old men and old people being at the table to young people being at the table, with me and other experts on the site providing information so that people can make an informed decision. I encourage the committee to look at the South Australian model. It has the ability to demonstrate to the committee that, if things are done right, you can improve people's ability to make informed decisions and be accountable for the decisions they make.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Agius and Ms Skyring.

[4.09]

BOULLY, Dr John, (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome to this public hearing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee. I am required to remind everyone that these are proceedings of the parliament and should be treated with due regard. Over to you, John.

Dr Bouly—I am representing myself in this situation, but I suppose I also represent many of the people that I have worked with over many years in many different situations. I am a medical practitioner and I grew up in South Australia. My initial experience was in 1973 when I went to live at Yalata mission for three months as a medical student. I learnt some very important things at that time: health was a disaster but the system did not seem to know how to begin to deal with it. I also learnt some principles—that health was much more than the medical model; it was a multifactorial thing.

That experience basically informed me and led to ongoing experiences from there where, for instance, in 1976 I was involved in starting the medical service in Port Augusta—the Aboriginal Medical Service. I actually was quite young when I got into this field—following my experience of Yalata, where I was quite moved by the situation. My drift, I suppose, was to try and bring medical services to Indigenous people and to help build a network of medical services—from the cities to the country towns and to the more remote areas. It—my experience—has that particular health focus. I worked in Port August in 1976; then for several years in Redfern and was involved in starting the Durri Aboriginal Medical Service in Kempsey, New South Wales. These services are considered as success stories these days.

In 1978 I went to Darwin. I was asked to try and assist the community there to establish its own medical service. That attempt was not successful, but I believe it did lead to some rethinking on behalf of the NT Health Department. As well as working with medical services, I have worked with health worker education. My particular interest these days is to try and instil the best medicine I can offer, which I believe are methods of planning to occur at the local level amongst groups of people.

I have travelled around a lot and been in many different places. In 1994, I think I was still the only doctor that could be found to go to Armidale in New South Wales to start that health service and, for the last 21 months, I have been involved with the Umoona Tjutagku Health Service in Coober Pedy, trying to assist that service to grow stronger. It is that particular experience which has provided the context for me to provide some input into your inquiry where you are talking about trying to discover whether the partnerships governments are building with Indigenous communities are genuine partnerships. The comments that I have made, as I say, relate to particular circumstances I have experienced on the ground over the last 21 months. This is not my inquiry: perhaps we can open it up to questions.

CHAIR—As you probably know, John, the framework agreements of the Commonwealth-state and regional community basis, of which you have become a part in the last 21 months, was something that Michael Wooldridge when minister started and tried to develop

with all the states and territories over the period from about 1999—perhaps earlier, it might have been closer to 1998. My questions are related to those issues you have brought out in the inquiry and the recommendations that you make. I will just go through them: accept that incorporated bodies have a right to exist; provide support for incorporated bodies; address the need for good secretarial capability; insist on proper procedure for partnership committees; ensure adequate financial resources and accountability.

I will quote what I thought was most important in the issues that you and I have talked about:

An open and honest committee is one in which the membership is clear, members have the right to contribute agenda items, there is a proper discussion before decisions are made and decisions are voted on after motions are clearly worded. These basic rules are a foundational requirement.

That is the summing up, as I understand your submission. The issue comes back to this framework agreement and the intention of it. It is two willing partners—there should be three or four willing partners but the Commonwealth and state are key players.

Coming from the Commonwealth, I have a concern that the Commonwealth tends to be seen as the cash cow and the states have actual responsibility; they have jurisdictional responsibility. The Commonwealth is all the time playing this game of providing the cash and the states finding ways of how to use the Commonwealth cash. The structure that comes to the community which you are talking about—in this case Umoona—is what I would like to talk about and what you found. Should the Commonwealth be insisting before money is forthcoming that these sorts of structures, which you would think are common courtesy, commonsense, be in place and there should be some leverage which insists on this happening? If it does not, then you are not going to get the outcome you aspire to, or that we all should aspire to. Does that sum up your position? Can we talk about that?

Dr Bouilly—Yes. It has been a bit of a quagmire really. If we talk about the Commonwealth Regional Health Services Program money, about three years ago—I am in my mid-50s; not in my 20s any more—I thought I would have another go. I thought, ‘What are the strategies, and how do I find out where to put my effort so that it actually means something?’ I knocked on all the doors in Port Augusta but really could not find any opportunity for myself. I went back to Sydney, rang up Canberra and was told, ‘No, we just give out the money. The states decide how it all gets allocated.’ So I went searching for the office or the personnel or the section where the real policy is decided. It is a bit hard to find.

I subsequently found, by being invited into Coober Pedy, that I was suddenly on the ground in the midst of a circumstance where a medical practice had been funded and put into Umoona community as part of the Regional Health Services Program. In fact, the medical practice was said to be under the ownership of Umoona Health Service, but the small print said it was to be managed by somebody else. There was a memorandum of understanding which provided the foundational agreement upon which this whole thing was developed.

There is a lot of terminology in terms of Commonwealth-state relations. I gather where people get money there is talk about ‘outcomes based approaches’. If we analyse the true outcome of the Commonwealth Regional Health Services program, I am very concerned that a lot of money has been spent and the actual outcome is that Umoona does not have a GP. There are a lot of

details that I perhaps will not go into, but it is a bit of a quagmire and it does come down to language. One of my concerns was that here was something clearly worded which said this could be reviewed after 12 months.

Come the time of 12 months, this memorandum of understanding was not reviewed; it was summarily executed, without consultation with the signatories, who were informed that it would be replaced by something called the Implementation Management Framework whereby some of our people, if we continued to participate, would be responsible for managing the Regional Health Services. Under the terms of this, it seemed that the role of Umoona Health Service was defined in this paper as a key participant. I do not believe that being invited to be a participant is a very strong position, because it does indicate that someone else is setting the rules, someone else is setting the agenda. I think this is partly why it has fallen apart.

There is a paper here that does summarise the paradigm. I talk about paradigms in my paper, but the paradigm is the way we assume things to be from our background. We all have different paradigms. In this complex area, there is the Indigenous paradigm and the non-Indigenous paradigm. I work at the intersection between the two somewhere. That is why I talk about 'proper process'. I live between worlds where there is an overlap. We must have some rules to be guided by. I look to something like this to provide some guidance. Here we really have a summary whereby the Commonwealth was to send funds to the region—the Northern Far Western Regional Health Service—and then the whole thing was to be determined through a steering committee.

I am wondering whether this is still the paradigm, because the whole program seems to have disappeared. There does not seem to be a continuing dialogue about where we go from here. We did walk away from this—when I talk about 'we' I mean Umoona Health Service—because it just became impossible to see any capacity building for our organisation. I am concerned that, as I say, a lot of money has been spent. If we look at the medical outcome, we have two overseas trained doctors who have been recruited into the area—one of them is not even working there—and now the hospital budget is being committed to one particular doctor based in Port Augusta. So money committed to Coober Pedy is not even being spent in Coober Pedy. There are a whole lot of issues that really we do not have time to go into here.

CHAIR—A number of us are interested in what we call the Harvard approach to international Indigenous issues. That talks about exactly the issues that you are touching on—the empowerment-ownership issue. This seems to me a classic example where the Commonwealth is the cash cow and the state has another agenda. It raises at least two issues: what is the supervision by the Commonwealth and officials and the insistence by the Commonwealth executive to say, 'Is that money being spent in accordance with that policy?'

Reaching back to that issue, I talk about Harvard. We met with a group who talked about the real success in Indigenous issues. We are told and the evidence over a long period of time is that, through that principle to which I am so attracted, you genuinely give authority to the community and you negotiate that. That is where real progress can come from. I am interested to hear it and listen to it, because I think it is important that we challenge the Commonwealth and the state to ask, 'Where was the community authority respected?'

Dr Bouly—Yes. I think that is a very important word. I raised the same issue the first week I was working in Umoona. On the third day I was there, I raised that very issue with the university, which had been funded \$20 million over five years to do all this whiz-bang good stuff. They did not want to answer any of these questions. You referred earlier, Barry, to this agreement between the Commonwealth and the state.

CHAIR—The framework, yes.

Dr Bouly—In fact, I have a clause here I would like to quote because there is an issue about whether this clause is seriously stated. If it is, I do not think the state is taking any notice of it. You are aware of the Generational Health Review in South Australia?

CHAIR—I should remember the man's name. It is well known to all of us. It is a household name.

Dr Bouly—John Menadue.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Dr Bouly—I have been reading that and trying to discover what it means now for Indigenous health services. The Generational Health Review is very vague. What it does say is that the state is committed to regional governance and Aboriginal health advisory committees. The Aboriginal Health Advisory Committee that meets in Port Augusta does not reach Coober Pedy's issues at all.

It seems that the Generational Health Review says that we could get Indigenous participation—again, that word—so that they had true representation on the regional board of the Northern and Far-Western Regional Health Service—maybe an extra member. That seems to be defined as community control, whereas what the Commonwealth said here was:

This agreement recognises local, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control as a culturally valid process for delivering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific health and substance misuse services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health and substance misuse services therefore provide a legitimate form of health care and have a responsibility, as do mainstream health care services, for the provision of a range of culturally appropriate and effective health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

It seems on the one hand we have this and on the other hand we have a state health system that is committed to regional governance through the DHS mechanisms and will invite us to come and participate. That is where we are stuck. Our funding is the same this coming year as it was last year and it seems that the model makers basically have used the Indigenous health service to, as you say, get all the money and initially put a couple of doctors into Umoona. It seems they want to control all the incoming money and then look after the hospital and then utilise Medicare to get extra funds through the whole system and have us participate and manage that for them. At the moment we have walked away because I do not think that is going to meet the comprehensive primary health care needs of the Indigenous people that are wandering the streets in Coober Pedy.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr HAASE—I have been spending a lot of time listening there. It is an eternal problem, isn't it? It is a stand-off between the provision of funds by the Commonwealth and the distribution of those funds by the states and whose priority is going to take precedence; whose agenda is going to take precedence. There you are, in the middle, just wanting to see improvements on the ground. You have a very thorough criticism of what is going on. Do you have solutions to the problems? I note your recommendations and I think they are very solid recommendations. I note one thing; that you seem to be very committed to the knowledge that is on the ground. You seem to be in favour of local wisdom.

Dr Bouilly—Yes.

Mr HAASE—I dare say that is what you know most about and you know how good that is. Do you have any information for us as to how you might see some of these recommendations achieved in a practical process?

Dr Bouilly—We need to be discerning about who gets all the funds. For instance, when I say yes, I do believe that local knowledge and expertise needs to be built up, that is what capacity building is. That means that, really, I am not comfortable with consultants. Consultants are coming in on all sorts of issues, building regional plans of this and regional plans of that; bringing their existing biases and their preconceived knowledge and their higher degrees and everything; giving good advice and collecting thousands of dollars for a nice booklet and then disappearing. That would be something practical—to be more discerning about who gets the funds. I believe in the role of facilitator, rather than consultant; someone who is prepared to stand with the people and facilitate a change process, not just fly in and fly out. Are you familiar with the term fly in, fly out?

CHAIR—Yes.

Dr Bouilly—I have seen a lot of it. I have done budgets—

CHAIR—The bane of regional Australia.

Dr Bouilly—of people that fly in and out of this community, for instance. It is about \$2,000 a round trip for someone to come up from Adelaide to Coober Pedy, with airfares and staying at the Mud Hut Hotel and all the rest of it. I think there is a lot of money being wasted in this higher level of management of government, or interdepartmentals or whatever. Probably it relates to what some of the former speakers were calling for.

In fact, many years ago when Brian Dixon first got his job I went to see him and he had a piece of paper he showed me. In the middle of it was the word 'community'. Out on the left-hand corner were about 10 different lines pointing to all the different Commonwealth agencies that are operating in Indigenous communities, all operating out of separate agendas, processes, personnel and aeroplane trips. Out the other side was a whole stack of other lines of all the state bodies that were impacting on each particular community. It would be worth doing an exercise to find out who they all were—if you did it now—and to look at their budgets.

Then we have local realities like funerals and kinship obligations and ceremonies and different things. It is all energy, it is all dynamic, and there is a lot of money being expended. That one

piece of paper backed up my perception that what needed to happen was that the community needed to be assisted in creating a comprehensive strategic plan, a proper plan that makes sense, whereby it is facilitated so that the community around whatever focus—maybe many foci—can develop a step by step strategy to building up their infrastructure, building up their services, whatever they need to do. Then all those different supporting agencies could then come to support that. That would be of great benefit. The Regional Health Service Program, which over the past couple of years has produced a poor outcome despite considerable expenditure, may have turned out differently if, instead of being invited in as participants in someone else's agenda, those personnel could have turned up on our doorstep and said, 'Look, we're interested. What are you dealing with and how can we support you?'

Mr HAASE—What is your agenda?

Dr Bouly—But that never happens.

Mr HAASE—We were talking with a previous witness—and I think you were in the room at the time—about the necessity for some support body, almost a registration of advisers for communities. It strikes me that a lot of our discussion today has been about the lack of professional persons to provide guidance, assistance, the secretarial ability that you refer to in your recommendations. It dawns on me that perhaps something this committee ought to take note of is your recommendation that the training for this body of people that might provide this service—in a better resourced manner with a peak body and support services on an ongoing basis to facilitate in communities these shortcomings that you have identified—would go a long way towards a mentoring service that would provide some long-term real capacity building. Would you loosely agree, or disagree?

Dr Bouly—I can loosely agree with that. I suppose I react a little bit to peak bodies. When you say 'peak bodies'—

Mr HAASE—Support groups. It may be a bad choice of word. A fellowship, a group to which these people may belong and interact and hold the conventions and share information and ideas and ideals and be of ongoing support to each other.

Dr Bouly—I think there is a lot of that happening.

Mr HAASE—I do not see it. I have 91 per cent of Western Australia and a lot of communities and I do not see it at all. I see it as a disjointed organisation of individuals—the madmen, murderers and misfits—doing the grand tour over a lifetime across all states and eventually doing everyone in the eye. To have that as a more regulated professional group, providing internal support to each other, would be a great asset. I have no idea whether the rest of my committee members agree with me or not.

CHAIR—And of course the key thing is that John is wary of the peak body. He has just described the peak body that sort of gave them the flick and did not consult them. That vital principle of the community being keen—

Mr HAASE—I accept that, yes.

CHAIR—Certainly the issue of the community being able to access a competent group, or having access to a competent group, a pool of support, is something useful, but also the principle of the community having the authority, that authority being respected and the Commonwealth strongly supporting that. We like it in a lot of other ways. When we fund roads we like the idea of the money going straight to the local government. Not only do we think we get a little bit better political recognition but we have to fight the states for that, which is a blatant political issue. But there is this issue of respect for the community.

Dr Bouilly—But you have to be serious, too, that you are not just supporting any community with any dodgy procedure. I talk in here about a commitment to proper governance et cetera.

CHAIR—Yes, good comment.

Dr Bouilly—It is not just the Indigenous people in communities that need support; it is also the non-Indigenous people who are there crossing the t's and dotting the i's. In fact, language is a key to all of this. There is so much in the language about best practice and similar jargon that there is almost a crucifixion of language, really. As I say, I react to these things like 'agreed outcomes' as if you get the outcomes before you get the money. This is just good theory but it is not reality based.

When I walked into Umoona, for instance, I picked up one of these agreements and I read it. This was a service agreement between our health service and the university that had been implemented but never signed. When I read into it, it filled me with alarm. You need people also with a critical analysis that are able to go in some sort of depth; not just take this superficial view of what appearances are. There are levels. It is the service providers out there who are doing a courageous job. There are very courageous people all through the interior, doing the best they can. But what worries me is this sort of managerial class: when people get to go to conferences and stay in hotels and fly around in aeroplanes become removed from the difficulties on the ground and become a bit privileged. There is another gap that needs to be addressed. How do you actually bring people down to deal with the realities right on the ground?

I worked with a bunch of people once who talked about how there are different sectors in society. On the one hand we have the establishment—these are basically people who are fairly comfortable and well off and we are all probably part of that; we are all doing okay—and on the other side we have the disestablishment, or the anti-establishment, or the group that are dispossessed that might want to challenge or protest or are not happy. There is a gap between them. Seriously, how do we begin to address those gaps? I do not think people can do it from a position of privilege only.

Are people prepared to stand with the people on the ground and advocate for them? I think we all understand both dynamics there but how do we construct a system that is going to seriously address that gap of disadvantage?

Mr HAASE—Would you agree that missions in the past filled that gap between and interacted between the two, went from one culture to the other and were prepared to do the hard yards and provided a great service?

Dr Bouilly—Yes. Many of them did. I actually lived on a mission in 1973 and that was quite an experience for me. People read about the missionary days but I actually was three months on a Lutheran mission and I saw a lot of issues there that made me think a lot. The Western Pitjantjatjara at that time were the people who were sort of bombed out from Maralinga lands and were still hunting and living in camps and speaking language. The missionaries were really keen that they should become Lutherans. I was not quite happy with this either because it was a human thing. There were so many issues.

CHAIR—Which of course is a debate that Bill Edwards took us through an hour or so ago—exactly that. That was the whole society that was endeavouring to deal with it, including the missionaries themselves. It has been a valuable thing to say. It has given us something to take to our senior bureaucrats and say, ‘Well, what is the scrutiny? What is the genuine commitment? What is the authority of the Commonwealth?’ They might say, ‘Well, we hope for the best.’ We might say, ‘We don’t think that’s good enough. If the Commonwealth is giving money, surely we can expect our own outcomes which are not defined by somebody else. Then we might get the community more involved.’ If we believe that the community are the vital part to the solution, or an improvement, then we should at least try. You have given us something on the record to offer to our bureaucracy and to our ministers.

Dr Bouilly—In relation to Coober Pedy and the particular circumstance I have been deeply involved with lately, we do not have a GP at Umoona and up until now we have been told, ‘Oh, no, Umoona can’t have a GP because that would be a threat to the practice that the hospital has.’ I have funded myself to come to this part of the country from a Sydney base. Am I going to go up there and start all over again to try and start a medical service in Coober Pedy, where basically I do not feel I get any support whatsoever? It is almost like a hostile climate.

It is now 2003. I would have thought something as basic as a medical and dental service for Indigenous people in this part of the country should be worked on and not be held back because of the mindset of particular key individuals. I do not know who they are or where they are—those who hold the reins over policy and practice; as I say, that is why I say there is a lot of secrecy in this arena. There is a lot more in what I am saying than I really want to go into but I do want to express some concern. I have been in this field a long time and I do not see why still, at this stage, it has to be this hard when you are looking for something as basic as a medical service.

CHAIR—I have one question that is totally away from this part of it but it is relevant. You mentioned training of Aboriginal health workers. I am interested in Aboriginal doctors, Aboriginal professionals. What could we most usefully do to encourage the future Aboriginal doctors or the current Aboriginal doctors or those who are in the system at the moment, as limited a number as they would be? Is there anything in particular that comes to mind?

Dr Bouilly—I think work experience out in a real situation would help. Just because people are Indigenous does not mean they are interested in working in Indigenous health. They could be plastic surgeons or psychiatrists or all sorts of people. I am a white fella but I have worked in Indigenous health as a primary interest. Just today I read something where GPs here in Adelaide met on 5 June and they are approaching OATSI about a GP network to support each other. Aboriginal health workers need to work together with people who are in work practice on the ground. That is the best education. I do not want to see people going off into institutions,

necessarily. My experience of living at Yalata for three months really changed my life. There was something in that experience that changed me and I am still working today in the field. I do not know that there are many doctors who have been around for nearly 30 years in this field. That was my initial exposure. Something like that is needed to take them out of their comfortable world; not give them too much; try to challenge them to shift a bit and to have a new experience outside the square, so to speak.

CHAIR—John Bouilly, thank you very much.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Haase**, seconded by **Mrs Draper**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 4.42 p.m.