COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

WEDNESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2000

PERTH

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard**

To search the parliamentary database, go to: **http://search.aph.gov.au**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Wednesday, 1 November 2000

Members: Mr Lieberman *(Chair)*, Mrs Draper, Mr Haase, Ms Hoare, Mr Katter, Mr Lloyd, Mr Melham, Mr Quick, Mr Snowdon and Mr Wakelin

Members in attendance: Mrs Draper, Mr Haase, Ms Hoare, Mr Lieberman, Mr Lloyd, Mr Melham, Mr Quick, Mr Snowdon and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The present and ongoing needs of country and metropolitan urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Among other matters, the Committee will consider:

1. the nature of existing programs and services available to urban dwelling indigenous Australians, including ways to more effectively deliver services considering the special needs of these people;
2. ways to extend the involvement of urban indigenous people in decision making affecting their local communities, including partnership governance arrangements;
3. the situation and needs of indigenous young people in urban areas, especially relating to health, education, employment, and homelessness (including access to services funded from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program);
4. the maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in urban areas, including, where appropriate, ways in which such maintenance can be encouraged;
5. opportunities for economic independence in urban areas; and
6. urban housing needs and the particular problems and difficulties associated with urban areas.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 8.53 a.m.

GOODA, Mr Michael Lloyd, Manager, WA State Policy Centre, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

WYNNE, Mr Eric, Commissioner, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

CHAIR—I declare open this public meeting for the committee's inquiry into urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As many of you will know, the committee is conducting this inquiry because the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Senator John Herron, has asked us to seek people's views about the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is the second of a series of meetings. We have met already in Kalgoorlie, Murrin Murrin and other smaller communities over the previous two days. We intend to consult as widely as we can with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. We will also be holding hearings of course in other states and territories. Our plan is to provide a report to the House of Representatives later next year. This meeting of course is open to everyone. Anyone who would like further details about the inquiries should ask the committee staff who are here today. With these remarks I now invite the ATSIC commissioner and his assistant for Western Australia and the south west to join us at the table. I welcome you.

I will now make a general statement made by all chairs of hearings of parliamentary committees throughout Australia. Although the committee does not require you to speak under oath, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Commonwealth parliament and that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Before we ask questions, Eric or Mick, do you have an opening statement that you would like to make?

Mr Wynne—This is the first for me.

CHAIR—Okay. Take your time and relax. You do not have to make an opening statement; it is an option for you.

Mr Wynne—I am actually looking forward to some of the questions and hopefully the answers will suit the questions.

CHAIR—Just to kick off the record, is this your first term as commissioner?

Mr Wynne—Yes, it is.

CHAIR—When were you elected?

Mr Wynne—I started in December as a commissioner.

CHAIR—I understand you have had extensive experience in education for the Western Australian Department of Education, which is of great interest to the committee.

Mr Wynne—Yes.

CHAIR—You have worked as a liaison officer as well in various communities?

Mr Wynne—Yes.

CHAIR—What communities were they?

Mr Wynne—I was based at the Fremantle education office. It covered about 80 to 90 schools. In total, there were about 900 Aboriginal students. My major focus was to ensure that Aboriginal kids were getting a good education in the state education system and to ensure that they were staying on and going on to year 12 and, hopefully, employment afterwards.

CHAIR—We are very interested in that area. The deputy chair, Harry Quick, wants to ask some questions initially, and Mr Wakelin will be second.

Mr QUICK—I am from Tasmania, so I do not have a clue where the south west is. Can you give us a rough idea of how big the area is, and what sort of number of communities that you are responsible for?

Mr Wynne—Probably Mick can tell you the number of communities or how many Aboriginal organisations that we deal with. The area comes into Lancelin, right across to Southern Cross and down to Ravensthorpe, which is a couple of hundred kilometres before Esperance, and then all that in between. So that is the south-west zone. It covers Albany, Bunbury, Merredin and Perth itself and, in total, close on to 30,000 Aboriginal people.

Mr QUICK—So you have a pretty daunting task trying to get around and to understand all their needs and aspirations?

Mr Wynne—Yes, that is right.

Mr QUICK—The educational opportunities would vary from the city out to remote communities. How do you see yourself actually getting around and having the opportunity to listen to what everybody is on about? They are all after money; they all have projects that they want to see up and running. You obviously have to prioritise them, and there is only a certain amount of money that you have been allocated. So, since December, you have had nine months as ATSIC commissioner—

Mr Wynne—Yes. With ATSIC, we have two regional councils, two regional chairs and about 11 or 12 councillors on each council. They come from different wards, which cover the whole of the south-west area. For instance, I am based in the Bibra ward, which covers that side of south Perth right down to Kwinana at Thomas Road, Narrows Bridge right down to Carousel at the Thomas Road turn-off and Nicholson Road that goes down to Thomas Road. All of that area, right down to Thomas Road, is the Bibra ward; so all that right down to Fremantle is the Bibra ward. There are only two councillors for that ward—just me and Kevin Fitzgerald. Some wards have three councillors and some have two. The country councils have a different set-up again. They are set up something like the shires, but they just come within those wards.

Mr QUICK—How does the structure work? They obviously have meetings on a regular basis.

Mr Wynne—I attend the regional council meetings. Sometimes community groups put up submissions for funding. The community says ATSIC has not done much in the last nine years. That is a fair statement. When we look at what has been set up we have not got any outcomes or anything in place for Noongars.

We are just starting to get our way back into the government agencies with MOUs. We had a meeting with Police Commissioner Barry Matthews. He is very interested in doing a partnership arrangement. We have other agencies coming on board like Family and Children's Services and the Department of Employment, and Workplace Relations. We are doing something with the education department. We are very keen on establishing this partnership arrangement. I have noticed at ATSIC regional council meetings how ATSIC or taxpayers' money goes really quickly because we are by ourselves. We are looking at the type of arrangement where it is dollar for dollar with other agencies that want to join ATSIC and say they are achieving the same outcomes.

Mr QUICK—I am an ex school principal. In the area of education have you set goals to say 20 or 30 per cent of kids achieve retention rates to year 12? Are you looking long term at that sort of thing with the education department in Western Australia?

Mr Wynne—We are very keen on establishing good results for the year 12s. It has not been very high. We know that. The Aboriginal community is quite concerned about the number of Aboriginal kids. At one stage there were about 1,300 kids starting. When they reach year 12 about eight of them complete TEE. It is a huge drop-out.

CHAIR—That is so.

Mr Wynne—That is why we want to get involved with education at ATSIC. We want to establish a good working relationship with people who are based in district offices. They are called Aboriginal education coordinators. We are very keen to ensure that Aboriginal kids are encouraged to go on to year 12 and university or employment. It has not happened much before but we want to stay focused on achieving those outcomes.

Mr QUICK—Are some schools better than others?

Mr Wynne—Yes, some are better than others. Some schools have six kids and their priority for tackling Aboriginal education is not very high. Some have 100 kids. Hamilton Senior High School in my area has 100 Aboriginal kids. They have a school based traineeship going on. They have started working with Red Cross, which I am a part of, as a representative of the ambassador's program for literacy and numeracy. I am one of the ambassadors for that as well. There are four of us for Western Australia. May O'Brien is one, Joe Ross is another and Arnold Hunter is the other one. May and myself are more or less the southern half of WA. We are quite concerned about the literacy and numeracy stuff as well.

Mr Gooda—Last year I was involved in a review of the Aboriginal education part of the state education system. You asked about schools. One of the district directors, Ms Shirley Grundy, and I went all around the state. I think everyone would agree the literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal kids in this state are fairly horrendous, but you find pockets of successes. Up in your electorate, Barry, hardly any kids passed the year 3 literacy testing about

two years ago, yet in the East Kalgoorlie School, which has 98 per cent Aboriginal enrolment, every kid passed. We ended up going and talking to the young teacher who was there and she was doing a terrific job. The successes that are around are based on personalities rather than systemic culture within the organisation to address the issue.

We did not go in and look at too many of the strategies that were in place but we looked at the management systems that were in place in education. We agreed there were fairly good strategies around. But in terms of the management of it, principals were getting money in September of the school year and then they wondered why it was not being spent. They wanted systems in place to make sure that they got the resources in this area well and truly in advance of the school year. It is a fairly big ask to tell a school in September that there is some money here and they have a couple of months to spend it and come up with these outcomes of improved education for Aboriginal kids.

Mr QUICK—How do we attract really good teachers who have had 10 or 15 years under their belt to go out into the Aboriginal schools, rather than teachers in their first or second year out who only do their two years and then disappear back into the system so you are continually underselling the kids as far as educational opportunities go?

Mr Gooda—To give you an example, Kiwirrkurra is probably one of the most remote schools in Australia and we ran across a teacher from there who was a mature age student when he completed his education degree, so he was a little bit more aware of the issues that would happen up there. But he said that, when he arrived in this community, for the first semester he learnt more from the kids than he taught them because it was a new environment for him, in the middle of the year they did a bit of learning and then at the end of the year it was just too hot so kids were not coming to school. When you look at that, the kids up in that school were getting a third of the education time that kids down here would get—and we wonder why they are pretty terrible results.

To answer your question, we looked at that issue and we thought that there had to be a package put together to attract people to those areas. You will find one or two, like that guy who actually must have met up with his future wife out there. The only reason he was not there at the time was because she had a baby and they were waiting for the baby to get to about three or four and they would apply to go back up there.

Mr LLOYD—Where was this school?

Mr Gooda—Kiwirrkurra. It is up in the central lands.

Mr HAASE—The most remote school in Australia.

Mr Gooda—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—Not far from where we were yesterday, I gather.

Mr HAASE—A bloody long way.

Mr LLOYD—We were on the edge of the lands area yesterday.

Mr HAASE—Yes, but it is far again.

Mr LLOYD—I mean geographically.

Mr HAASE—Near to Alice Springs.

Mr LLOYD—We have some idea of what you are talking about from where we were yesterday—the isolation.

Mr Gooda—Bernie and Linda Ryder are up in the Karratha-Roebourne area. They have both worked in the education system for years. Linda said she was speaking to these teachers who were going out to the communities for the first time and she said to the women, 'Take a razor to shave your legs and take your make-up, and don't worry about anything else, because you just want to feel good about yourself.' These people just did not know what they were in for. To go to the most remote school in this country is a fair bit of a culture shock.

Mr QUICK—In terms of the teacher training regime and Aboriginal cultural awareness, do teachers in their four years of preparation get out and practice in any of these schools? What is the education department's role in all this? Obviously they have got a key role.

Mr Gooda—I think it is a fairly limited involvement at the moment. I live beside a young woman who was studying to be a teacher a couple of years ago over in North Perth. She went to Meekatharra and lasted two months. I said, 'What happened?' She said, 'I just couldn't handle it.' It was a remote area; she was bought up in Perth and had never been outside Perth in her life. Meekatharra is fairly isolated but not anywhere near as isolated as Kiwirrkurra.

CHAIR—Mick, you said you spent 12 months or so last year as part of a team doing a review.

Mr Gooda—It was about three months.

CHAIR—Could you provide us with a copy of your report?

Mr Gooda—I think I could get a copy.

CHAIR—What is the report called?

Mr Gooda—It is funny how the names of reports can change a focus. Cheryl Vardon, who was the director-general of the education department, got us in to do it because she was concerned about these things. It was a 'review into Aboriginal education'. We changed the title slightly so that it was 'to review the education of Aboriginal children in the system' and it just changed the focus.

CHAIR—We would be grateful if we could have a copy.

Mr Gooda—I could get a copy. This is a dilemma in Aboriginal affairs and, I suppose, to a certain extent with ATSIC as well, if you take it to the top level: everything in Aboriginal affairs

gets sent over to ATSIC eventually—education, employment, health. People see ATSIC as this mob you go to. In the education system, the Aboriginal Education Unit is seen to be given the responsibility for the education of Aboriginal kids. Well, it is not. A statement up front had to be made that the education of Aboriginal children is the responsibility of everyone in the education department. Sure, there are resources that can go in but they are on top of other resources that are there that every other kid gets. I think a culture change had to come into that organisation—and probably into most organisations that deal in this way. There is the age-old question of whether you are marginalising Aboriginal people more by putting these units in, because everything gets referred to them, when in fact the people in the Aboriginal Education Unit are not teachers—

Mr WAKELIN—Can I pick up about the culture change in ATSIC? Do you mean a culture change regarding people's awareness of what ATSIC can do?

Mr Gooda—No, in the education department—that thing about everyone being responsible for the education of Aboriginal children. Like I say, we did not look at strategies because it is systemic stuff. Management systems need to be put in place. We wanted to make principals responsible for outcomes. We looked at the measures that the education department has. It gets money from the Commonwealth under the IESIP funding and there are also measures contained there. We counted something like 15 measures. So you can go through and say, 'I've employed all Aboriginal people in the school,' or 'I've got the best participation rate of parents in our program,' but if, at the end of the day, kids cannot read and write, you have not achieved anything.

We recommended that they cut all that stuff out and go to about four measurements, which were literacy, numeracy, participation and completion rates. Look at those four; say to principals, 'This is what you're going to be measured on.' You give them resources and a fair bit of flexibility in how they use those resources. But you have got to put some parameters around it, such as provision for a position on every school council for an Aboriginal person. With a certain number of students, you will use some of this money to employ Aboriginal education workers. You give it to them, and off they go. When we spoke to principals, they said, 'We'd love to have those sort of resources given to us with the flexibility, and we wouldn't mind being measured.' At the moment, without getting into semantics, sometimes you get the strategies mixed up with the outcomes. To me, parental participation in Aboriginal education is a strategy to achieve an end, and the end should be kids coming out with some sort of educational standards.

CHAIR—This report is fascinating and I think it is going to be a good one for us to look at. What is the status of the report now? Firstly, has the Western Australian minister announced a response to it? Secondly, has ATSIC got a battle plan to promote the introduction of the ideas in the report? What stage are we at in ATSIC taking a leadership role in advocating the report's recommendations?

Mr Gooda—I was not working for ATSIC.

CHAIR—No, I appreciate that.

Mr Gooda—I only came back to ATSIC about four weeks ago. Following on from what the commissioner said, it is recognised that ATSIC is a supplementary funder. We do not fund education or health, and probably they are two of the biggest issues facing Aboriginal people. If we can improve those, we will be a fair way down the track.

My focus at the moment has changed from being a state manager and an aligned supervisor for all the regional managers. They are now managed out of Canberra. My focus will be developing ways of ATSIC and particularly the elected arm influencing other agencies. One of the things we want to do with the education area is start talking to the minister. That is the level we will be targeting our discussions to start off with: with Colin Barnett, the minister here who is, by the way, very receptive to addressing the Aboriginal issues in a few of his portfolios. I think we will have a battle plan. We have a meeting next week, the state advisory committee meeting. It is made up of all the regional council chairs, of which there are nine in this state, and four commissioners. We will be starting to say, 'How can we influence the mainstream agencies?'

CHAIR—On this report?

Mr Gooda—On the whole range of things, whether it is health, whether it is education, whether it is a provision of infrastructure to remote communities, whether it is water, power and so on.

CHAIR—By implication in your answer, you want ATSIC to stop trying to deliver and change into an advocate to the deliverers? Is that the subtle change that you want?

Mr Gooda—I have sat on the fence for years; I used to work for ATSIC previous to going over to the state government for a while. I also realise that money is power and you do have a way of influencing people with money. I guess that is the balance that we have got to come to. Where is the balance between having money to influence other agencies and what is, in real terms, the political power that the commissioners and regional council chairs have to influence people? That is where we have got to target. We will be talking next week with the SAC about how we target the commissioners' and regional council chairs' involvement. They should not be involved at officer level discussions between, say, myself and Ken White, who is the head of Aboriginal education in the state. They should be involved with either the CEO or the minister, and influencing from that level.

Mr HAASE—We are talking about this report. The report was done for the education department for Commissioner Varden. That position has now changed. Peter Browne is involved now. You are not saying that ATSIC has even adopted or is intending to adopt the findings of that review. This is a separate review called for by the education department. It may or may not even be considered by ATSIC. Is that a point that you can clarify?

Mr Gooda—It has not been considered to date because our involvement in education has been rather limited. That is what we want to do now—increase our involvement. There are commissioners now like Commissioner Wynne here, who has come in with a whole new set of skills and experiences in the education department. Obviously that is a focus they would want to have. That review will probably be a good place for us to start.

My experience of bureaucrats, having been one for 25 years, is that if someone is outside looking at you you generally do something about it. That is a role we want to get to with the elected arm of ATSIC. I must say the education department has been fairly receptive to the idea that the district directors go to the regional council and say, 'These are the targets we want to achieve and we'll come and report to you on a regular basis on how we're going.' It is not a bad way of getting the elected arm involved and influencing a major department.

Mr HAASE—I would love to have your point of view on something we were discussing yesterday elsewhere: the question of language in schools. There is the question of teaching English as a second language, or teaching a dialect. It might happen, as is suspected by many Aboriginal people, that in fact Creole will be taught. There are some deep seated feelings out there, I can assure you, about which languages are taught. I would like to hear Commission Wynne's opinion as to which track he might go down.

Mr Wynne—Language is very difficult. I am not really up to date with the language. I know the Noongar language has not had very much impact. We do not have many elders who speak Noongar language, and not many people speak Noongar language at all. It is just one of those things that, since becoming urbanised, we have tended to lose touch of. Every now and then we might speak it, but we are not fluent and we might lose some of the words. Part of the culture is that, if they maintain their identity and maintain their language, it helps their self-esteem. Their language is totally different to ours. They should maintain it because it is part of their culture. How they teach it, though, is really up to the elders in those communities to get a working partnership with the education department, because they can achieve the same outcomes speaking their language out there as they can here.

Mr Gooda—During the review, we went to schools where the only place English, as we speak it, was spoken was at the school. It was not very relevant to kids once they walked outside the school gate. Like Mr Haase said, it is a mixture of the Creole, unless you get out to the more traditional areas where they probably speak three or four different languages. When I said before that we did not look at strategies, the education department have a strategy for teaching kids from non-English-speaking backgrounds but they were not even adopting those strategies with Aboriginal kids. There is a bit of resistance there within the education department to do that. Even if you did not speak the language but you adopted the strategies that you use for teaching kids from non-English-speaking backgrounds, it would help.

Mr WAKELIN—Commissioner, you have mainly worked in the Fremantle region. Have you had any experience in the regions at all as a liaison officer in education?

Mr Wynne—Yes, I have worked as a liaison officer for close on nine years. I stepped away from the position and worked at something else and came back to education. I have found it exciting, because I wanted to see kids achieve quality outcomes such as going on to university. That is why I have tapped into funds in other agencies like DETYA that gives out funding.

Mr WAKELIN—But have you only worked in the metropolitan area?

Mr Wynne—Yes, in the metropolitan area.

Mr WAKELIN—I am particularly interested in the regional areas as well. It has already been acknowledged that literacy and numeracy issues are even more profound in the regions than in urban areas. I do not know whether that was your own experience or whether it came out in your report. What sometimes strikes many of us quite profoundly is that mission education did seem to have a capacity to have great success in literacy and numeracy. There would be great debate about the methodology and the philosophy behind it, but in the general work that has been done, have we learnt anything from the mission experience? I am not suggesting it can be reapplied or reinvented, but can we learn anything from the mission experience for future management strategies? Do you agree with me that there was significant literacy and numeracy gains achieved in that era?

Mr Wynne—From my experience as a Queenslander transplanted over here, if you look at the Queensland result of the mission experiences, Queensland would have probably the highest rate of completion rates of education in the country. You look at people like Noel Pearson, who comes from Hopevale. Noel is not the only person in that community with a degree; there would be any number of people with degrees. There is another woman from Hopevale—Henrietta Fourmile—working over here at the moment who has a degree in some environmental science discipline. From my experience in Queensland, there have been good results from the mission system in that state.

It is completely different when you look at it over here. You do not have the big communities that you have in Queensland, although one or two of them may be. We are talking of 2,500 people in some of these communities in Queensland, with a fairly structured education system in those. We have towns over here that are not as big as some of the missions over in Queensland. I suppose that if there was one flaw in our review it was that we did not have a look at the private education system, and I guess that is where a lot of that stuff was done, particularly with the Catholic Church, up around the Kimberley. It had a lot of involvement in education. We did not look at Catholic education, for instance, so I would be at a little bit of a loss to provide an answer.

Mr WAKELIN—I did not expect an answer. What I wanted to highlight was an instinct that many of us feel, that mission education has achieved some very positive things in literacy and numeracy. Yesterday we were with Aboriginal people who acknowledged that very clearly. They had very clear views about the young generation, as you would expect: we older people tend to have clear views about what works well or does not. They were articulating it very clearly. Mount Margaret was mentioned. One lady had experience there and she was articulate and had literacy and numeracy. Her concerns were about—and you have highlighted some of these things—the capacity of the management of our system, particularly in regional Australia. In metro Australia it is not as good as we would like it to be, but in regional Australia it is not good at all. You mentioned the private system. It seems to me that we should have an open mind about what could be achieved with different methodologies and private lessons from the mission, because clearly at the moment the state system is struggling—and I am not critical of that. It is struggling for all the reasons that you know better than I. I am just trying to seek one or two common threads that might help us work with the states to make it work better.

Mr Gooda—I used Hopevale as an example. Before it became a state run mission, it was a Lutheran mission. You still find that connection today. The Pearson boys were educated at a

Lutheran school in Brisbane. Even though they have gone out of that system, there is still an involvement, so it says something, I suppose.

Mr WAKELIN—I want to move on to those people, as limited as the numbers are, who are able to get through years 10, 11 and 12 and some kind of pre-voc. There are at least two categories. There are those who would be able to cope academically but I would suggest that there is a much larger group, whether white or Aboriginal, for which the principles would be similar in many ways. What can we do in what we call 'pre-vocational education', something which came very clearly to us in the last couple of days? Are there some lessons in there—perhaps there are just one or two points that you might like to offer—about how the states or the Commonwealth might do that better? What are the key issues in maintaining interest and attendance levels, even thinking in terms of pre-voc? You can pick an academic track if you like or the trades or traineeship track. What is happening there?

Mr Wynne—With the education department, even though they have a director of education, they also have executive directors and the director general. I do not think Aboriginal people will have much of an input as to where the money goes. It is not within our power to get involved with those people's decisions. Someone else is making the decisions for us, on our behalf, without us getting involved. When you look at the core issues, you see that Aboriginal people want to get involved from the very beginning. They want to get involved in making decisions, directing the traffic and seeing that outcomes are achieved. They want to be involved.

Mr WAKELIN—Do we have enough evidence to suggest how much they would like to get involved? There is some evidence that maybe that involvement is suggested. What evidence do we have that the Aboriginal people will consistently want to be involved? It requires that long-term commitment, doesn't it? Do you think that we need a greater commitment at times from Aboriginal people in that actual day-to-day management?

Mr Wynne—Yes, we do. Working in the system, we continuously hear Aboriginal liaison officers and coordinators say that is their decision that we have to fit into. Instead of them working in partnership with us, we have to work under and fit in with them, instead of working beside them. It was a desire for us, even as ALOs, to work alongside non-indigenous people and achieve these outcomes even in the schools. You have principals somewhere along the line having a final say on how the funds for ASSPA—that is, Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness—are being spent. That is wrong. The parents should have that greater involvement with the principal in seeing how the funds are being spent.

Mr Gooda—I think it is recognised that parental involvement in children's education is a fairly big factor in kids achieving. We looked at those sorts of things in our review. There is a whole range of reasons why parents do not get involved, right from their own experience at school not being all that pleasant, so they feel their kids will just go there to fulfil some obligation under the law. The only time they get called up to a school is when the kids are in strife so why would they want to be involved? We have had principals say to us, 'We wish we could have NAIDOC Week every week because the parents actually got involved in it.'

I think it needs a bit of commitment from the Aboriginal side. I did not see too much of that, I must admit, to be perfectly frank. There needs to be some effort in marketing education to Aboriginal people. We have people out there who make us eat at McDonald's as opposed to Hungry

Jacks. Surely there are people out there who do that sort of stuff. There is the parental involvement. I have worked with a lot of people. I worked with a woman whose father was a professor and her mother had a PhD, and it was not even stated that she would go to university. That expectation can only be built up over generations. My kids have gone on to more education than I have and hopefully there will not be any question about their kids going on to university. At the moment, I think if you looked at the education system, particularly at the tertiary level, the number of mature age students would by a fairly big margin outweigh the number of kids graduating from year 12. Very few kids graduate from year 12 and go on.

CHAIR—In the context of what you are saying, I ask for help on the question of parental involvement. It is presumptuous of me, as a non-Aboriginal person, but I would be very grateful for advice from you two on how policies could be developed to increase the role of Aboriginal parents in the education of their children. I do not necessarily mean you to answer that now. Could you give us some submission giving the bones anyway, if not more detail? To me, increasing the involvement of Aboriginal parents in education and achieving the potential that could achieve is a major issue. I would like your advice on that.

Mr Gooda—I think we ignore education at our peril. Any studies around the world that you look at about involvement in crime say that the more people have access to education, the less they are likely to be involved in crime somewhere in their life. Have a look at some of the longitudinal studies done in America in some of the ghettos about the amount of money spent on crime prevention. That includes building jails and all that. Look at the amount of money spent on education of kids. In the 20 years some of these studies go on, you are going to get far greater results in the reduction of crime by spending money on education.

CHAIR—Yesterday we had a graphic comment from a very senior Aboriginal woman that she saw some very young Aboriginal children one evening in her community virtually running amok. She suddenly realised their anger, but then she also realised that they were lost souls, and the reason they were running amok was that the parents were not anywhere around. I have been reflecting on that overnight. I think she was touching a button that might need to be explored. In a cultural sense, I would like your advice on this issue.

Mr WAKELIN—The Aboriginal liaison officer—this is a statewide network?

Mr Wynne—Yes, it is.

Mr WAKELIN—And they would be in the regions in the same way as in metropolitan areas?

Mr Wynne—The same way, yes.

Mr LLOYD—Commissioner and Mick, thank you for your time today and for your frankness. It has been very informative for me to be able to sit and talk with a commissioner. I was disappointed that we were unable to speak at length with Commissioner Thomas. We did meet with the Wongatha Council but, unfortunately, he was not able to be with us until the end of the meeting. I was disappointed about that. Did I hear you mention that Joe Ross was on the—

Mr Wynne—Yes, on the literacy and numeracy—one of the ambassadors.

Mr LLOYD—That is good—Joe is my brother-in-law so I know Joey pretty well. He gets on most of these committees and does a great deal of good work for Aboriginal people. With education, do you see English as being a priority for Aboriginal people?

Mr Wynne—It depends where you are. In Perth, it would be, but in Kiwirrkurra it would be secondary. As I mentioned before, language is part of the culture. To be able to lift someone's self-esteem up and maintain it, if you can stick to their culture, it would be good. We have lost most of our language here in Perth and we are trying to fit it back into the schools. We should have been maintaining it.

Mr HAASE—Shouldn't that be the responsibility of parents and not the education department, which is preparing people for a job?

Mr Wynne—Yes, but it has been urbanised so much. It was not our fault that we have lost the culture; it is because of everything else coming in around us that has changed us to the way we are. We cannot help the way we are. If it were up to us, we would have been talking our language, going hunting and doing all of those things we used to do. But parental responsibility is definitely one of the—

Mr Gooda—But it is hard when the parents do not speak the language any more. It is about two generations since any real language was spoken in the household.

Mr LLOYD—I accept what you are saying about the cultural need in isolated communities to speak their language. I am concerned about that. I have made these comments before in places like Yirrkala, Nhulunbuy and those areas where they are saying, 'We want to speak the cultural language and not English.' My own view is that it is a great disadvantage for those communities insofar as if they want training, education or apprenticeships, if these people are going through the school system and, at the end of it—we are talking about results—they have no English or limited English, in a country such as Australia, I feel it puts them at a great disadvantage. I would like to hear your comments on that, Commissioner.

Mr Wynne—I suppose when you look at the opportunities that they have regarding employment—long-term goals in those areas—you will find that most of them will not move from there. They will stay there. If you come in a little bit further, to Kalgoorlie, Southern Cross and Merredin, they will take English as the first language, no worries, because they look at employment opportunities. The employment opportunities are in the mining industry and in industry itself, education—

CHAIR—Tourism.

Mr Wynne—Tourism, you name it. It depends on what they want to do in the long term. I attended a year 9 camp which came here to the city. I asked the kids at the year 9 camp—there were about 40 Aboriginal kids—what they wanted to do when they left school. None of them had any idea what they wanted to do. These camps encourage them and get them thinking about what they want to do in the long term. Take them to universities; take them to places of employment; and look at the long term. Some of the kids have gone on to university since then.

They are in second year and third year university. Some are studying to become doctors. It is because someone else had the time to invest in them, and they need to have a vision as well.

Mr Gooda—At the risk of sounding like a bleeding heart, people will not do something unless they can see something in it for them. When you have kids turning out of school who cannot get jobs, why bother? They say, 'Why bother going to school if we are not going to get a job?' I go over to Northbridge here a fair bit—I eat over there probably far too often—and there is the issue about kids over there. They are asking that, if there is a hopelessness around, why should they bother? They are not getting jobs. I really feel for those kids in some ways—their lives seem so hopeless. Unless we start having the rewards at the end of an education system, like getting a job and getting a car, they will say, 'Why bother? We will just go and steal one. It is easier.'

I was in Canberra—and I always tell this story because it is fairly graphic—when the daughter of a friend of mine came down with her boyfriend from Brisbane. About two weeks into their visit he asked, 'Where does your mum go every day?' She said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'She gets dressed, and we do not see her and then she comes home.' This kid was 19 and had never lived in a house where anyone went to work. He just could not understand the concept of work. He was no dunce, by any means. He said, 'I have no hope of getting a job like that.' He eventually came to the view that he would climb in windows and steal people's money. He said, 'That is what I do. That is my weekends, and when I get caught and go to jail that is my work.' That is fairly tragic if we have people in this society who not only have those attitudes but do not have the opportunities that people have. I think that is what the education system has to do: it has to provide opportunities for people to advance and to be a part of this society. It really worries me.

CHAIR—Are you saying that it is not?

Mr Gooda—In that case it was not. I remember taking the same kid down to a dole office, and he said, 'They are not interested in helping me. I will not even get on the dole. I will just steal a bit more money.' I definitely say it is not inclusive in those cases.

Mr LLOYD—To follow on from that, was that an Aboriginal person you were talking about?

Mr Gooda—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—The reason I ask that is that that is a problem across all societies in Australia. It is not restricted to Aboriginal people. I think the parental incentive is very important. What I am seeing in a lot of areas, and Aboriginal people are telling me, is a missing generation, a lost generation. I think that is where some of the problems with children are coming from at the moment—with education. We had mission education, for all the right or wrong reasons, but many people got a traditional Anglo-Saxon education. They spoke English and they got degrees. There then seemed to be a breakdown of the mission education system, and whether or not they went to school at all—these are now the parents of these children—they have no concept of the purpose at the end of education. Without parental support, the children that we are trying to get educated now do not have that background. That is how I feel about it. I would like to hear whether or not you think I am wrong.

Mr Gooda—There are aberrations around. I worked for the legal service for 12 months, and there is an Aboriginal lawyer there. He comes from a family of three boys, and they are all lawyers. Perhaps we should look at that and say, 'What made that family different?'

CHAIR—Not 'perhaps'—we should. We need role models. We all do.

Mr Gooda—These guys are very proud of their Aboriginality and, from all reports I hear, the oldest boy is a fairly gun criminal lawyer and well respected in the legal fraternity here in WA. What is the difference? These boys come from the Pilbara.

Mr LLOYD—Hopefully, these are the sorts of people that we can use as role models. I think it is very important, because you say that kids say, 'Why go to school? What is the point? There is nothing at that end of it.' If you have people in your community that can be used as role models who say, 'This is what you can do. I come from a disadvantaged community, an isolated community, but I did this'—whether it be a sporting achievement or whether they became lawyers or whatever.

Mr Gooda—As I mentioned before about teachers, it is more the exception than the rule, and a very small exception. But there are people and families around who achieve.

CHAIR—There are many. They do not get enough recognition.

Mr Gooda—I come from a family of 10. I do not know what motivated my mum and dad to make sure we got educated. They are both gone now, so I cannot ask the question, but all 10 of us were educated in the Catholic system. I just wonder, because I have got cousins in Rockhampton, Queensland, who are the same age as me—my mother and their mother were first cousins—and it is different.

Mr LLOYD—This is more a comment in some ways than a question, but I would like to hear what you think, Commissioner. In lots of communities where we go, the comment has been made that they feel disenfranchised from the decision making. I have asked in a number of locations if they have seen their commissioner in the community or if they have contact with their land councils and often the answer is no and that they feel disenfranchised. I know you are new to the job, I am very impressed with what you have said today and I think you are going to get out into the community as much as you can. Again, that feeling of disenfranchisation is not restricted to the Aboriginal community because often, particularly in rural and regional areas, people feel that they are not part of the decision making. I think it is important that you, as a commissioner, hopefully get out there and make people feel as though they do have an input.

Mr Wynne—You are right. Before my time, I noticed that in this region ATSIC had not been transparent in letting the community know what was happening in ATSIC and how community people could access the programs that they managed. We want to change all that. We want to be transparent. We are working out a different process and making sure that just about all the community members know what we are doing and how we can be contacted. There are 27,000 Noongar people and we are not going to contact them all over the next couple of years, but we are going to try and do our best to ensure that our service delivery is getting out to them as well.

Mr LLOYD—I understand the distance problems, as we all do as members of parliament. Barry Haase has got the largest electorate in the world, taking up most of Western Australia, so he has the same difficulties of getting to his communities as commissioners do. I just feel it is very important.

Ms HOARE—When we are talking about education and looking at role models from the more regional communities that we have visited, it has come across fairly clearly that, if the families cannot provide the role models from within the family, they want their children to be able to see what can be achieved through education. In the more urban areas there is a lot more opportunity for that because most of the success stories live in the urban regions and have more opportunity to get out to the schools and talk to the kids. Further to that, there are kids out there that we know have not been able to access that education, for whatever reason. We heard about that young person that came down from Queensland, that their job was to go out and steal money or go to jail.

I was interested to read up on the New Zealand system with the Maori kids and what I think they call the juvenile initiative program that they have put into place to stop young offenders being imprisoned. It is more like a council type of system. I know your area is law and order. Is that an area that has been pursued and has that New Zealand model been investigated? I think it has been in place now for about five years. If that model is investigated or pursued, maybe that role model system could be extended to the juvenile justice system. Do you have any comments to make?

Mr Wynne—I am not quite familiar with the model that you are talking about, especially the New Zealand model. I have heard of it—it is a role model system, isn't it?

Ms HOARE—Yes, and a roundtable discusses the crime and fitting punishment, but within their own community as well.

Mr Gooda—There are models around in Australia like that: I think South Australia has some body like that that works. We are looking at it in the sense that we spoke with the Attorney General over here a while back when I was working for the ALS, and the next reference to the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia is going to be customary law. I think that is probably the mechanism to set those processes in place. We are fairly interested to see where that customary law term of reference will go to with the Law Reform Commission. That is probably the best place we can fit that at the moment.

I would have to refer you to the Aboriginal justice plan, here in the state, that has been developed in the state government about some of those issues. We are having a look at it at the moment. I cannot speak in any great detail about it, but I think WA is the only state to have developed an Aboriginal justice plan. So if you are talking to anyone from the state government you can ask for a copy of that. It is a fairly useful document, I understand.

Ms HOARE—Earlier you were talking about the vocational training that has been integrated into one of the high schools here that has a large Aboriginal population. Is that just happening at one high school, or does it look like being extended so that it is not just for indigenous kids but for all kids that are not academic, so they are able to have that education-to-work system within

the school system, where they get some vocational training within that system and stay on until year 12, to have that structure there as well?

Mr Wynne—Yes, it is actually happening in about six high schools at the moment. It is working with the Red Cross based in Perth. I am not quite sure of the six high schools, but there is Hamilton Senior High School, Girrawheen Senior High School, Balga Senior High School and South Lake Senior High School; I am not quite sure about the other two. They have a VET program, that is the vocational program, in a lot of the high schools now. I do not know if this is a trial program, because they found out that Aboriginal kids work a lot better as a close-knit group than in the mainstream. When they looked at the outcomes of a number of kids going on to year 12, they found that the kids did not quite mix in with the whole school. By putting them together as a group, and then going through to year 12 as a group, they are getting much more of a success rate than previously.

Mr QUICK—Following on from that, I have looked at the New Zealand experience where they have total immersion schools; I have seen it first-hand and it works very effectively. Has anyone within the Aboriginal community or the Western Australian education department thought outside the square and said, 'Our retention rates are absolutely appalling. Let's do something innovative—totally out of left field—and set up our own middle school, high school, primary school, and see, over a five- or 10-year period, what happens to retention rates. Let's do a longitudinal study'? And if it is no worse or no better, at least you have tried it. Is there any of that thinking in the education department?

Mr Wynne—Yes, there is. The education department is currently in the position of building a school at Midvale, starting at pre-primary to year 3 and then going up from year 3 to year 7 at different stages. They have started that process. The school has appointed a principal and is looking at appointing teachers to start next year.

Mr QUICK—I have worked in disadvantaged schools for most of my life. You need a sympathetic principal. You need highly skilled and highly motivated teachers—some of the best teachers around. You have got to be thinking about different angles virtually every day. Every day is totally different.

Mr Wynne—Definitely.

Mr QUICK—If you are going to put something like that in place, you need a sympathetic principal, adequate resources and really fine staff. In lots of cases the education system around Australia is selling indigenous people short by not providing them with, firstly, the resources, secondly, a sympathetic principal and, thirdly, effective teachers who really want to ensure, over a five- or 10-year period, that these kids can achieve just as much as any other kid, irrespective of where they come from. It has been proved overseas. As Mr Gooda said, it is a hell of a lot cheaper to put those resources, time, energy and effort in than it is to jail them, to have additional police out there giving them a hard time, and for them to be involved in the juvenile justice system. Until people realise that, we are still going to be behind the eight ball.

Mr Wynne—The principal of the school is a Noongar male. He has been a teacher for a long time. He was one of the first Aboriginals to go through teachers college. They are going to

target as many Aboriginal teachers as possible. If not, it will be non-indigenous people who have a sympathetic view of Aboriginal education.

Mr QUICK—So that is up and running now?

Mr Wynne—Yes. I do not know whether they have chosen the teachers yet but they have chosen the principal.

Mr Gooda—The school is being built.

Mr Wynne—Yes, the school is being built.

Mr Gooda—Can I raise an issue in relation to the terms of reference. One of the problems we have in Perth—and you will find that it is probably the same issue in all the major cities—is that it is really hard to define the Aboriginal community. We can go out to discrete communities and say, 'This mob here don't have water or power.' I am not saying it is easy but it is easier to say, 'What are the strategies to provide the solutions here?' It is hard to define the Aboriginal community in Perth. Is it Armadale? Is it North Bridge? Is it Balga? It is very hard to get that sense of community in Perth because the level of dispossession in the metropolitan area is far higher than anywhere else in the state. Also, you get people from the outer regions coming in here more often than you get Perth people going out there. I would be interested to hear whether there are any other comments like that around the place—just defining what the Aboriginal community is in a place like this.

CHAIR—The terms of reference hopefully will elicit advice from individuals and communities about the extent of availability of government services. The Commonwealth government spends $2.3 billion on specific indigenous programs and we are looking for feedback on how those services are being accessed—their accessibility and their effectiveness. In that context, we are looking for ideas as to whether some people living in larger metropolitan urban communities are aware of services or need some assistance to organise themselves to access them. We have no prescription because that is not our view. We want to hear from you. The government has asked us to find out how these very substantial funds are being received, the knowledge of people about their availability and whether they are actually getting to the community or being dissipated with layers and layers of unnecessary bureaucracy, for example. So they are the sorts of things; we have got an open mind on that.

Mr Gooda—The one word I would give you about that is 'coordination'. That is what we want to start achieving through the elected arm. ATSIC—and I think it is mainly focused on the elected arm—have a responsibility not only to deliver programs developed in ATSIC but also to comment on the service delivery of programs provided by other agencies. We need to get a little more serious about that.

And if there is one word that I can say would help the distribution of that $2 billion down to the grassroots level, it is 'coordinated approach'. For far too long, not only has there been infighting amongst state and Commonwealth departments, but it has been multiplied by the fighting that goes on between the state and the Commonwealth. The resources that we have wasted over the years is just horrendous. If you go to the remote areas you can hear stories, which you have probably heard, about roads being put down and the week after someone comes

and tears them up to put water pipes through or something like that. Even that basic coordination needs to be done and done better at all levels.

We will be looking at reviewing the ATSIC state plan in the next little while. We will target probably the major areas—employment, education, law and justice, remote area infrastructure. My office will be given the task of pulling all that together.

In the west, particularly in the remote areas, we have done some really good work with the state. We now have bilateral agreements on housing. We have bilateral agreements on infrastructure. That has just been through the state cabinet. We are looking at something going through cabinet very soon about the provision of power to remote communities. That has been done with the best will in the world. There is any amount of literature on that. The new buzzword I hear around the place is 'joined up government'. I compare this, coming from Queensland, with trying to negotiate a bilateral agreement on housing there for three years. They never moved an inch and they are still going—that is seven years ago now. We came here and started and it took us six months in the west. The one lesson I learned from there was that if you go into a meeting with a fair amount of goodwill you can achieve anything. We left all our baggage out the door—about whether we were Commonwealth, state, ATSIC, AAD or whatever—and came in and sat around the table, and within six months we achieved the signing of a bilateral agreement.

CHAIR—You can imagine how disappointing it is for us as representatives of the Commonwealth parliament to be told in one community we were in this week, within the space of an hour's discussion, that there are about 2,000 Aboriginal people with four separate housing cooperative management systems. Four separate ones! The general comments from representatives of some of those—I think I am being accurate—was that nothing is happening with maintenance; there is no strategic plan for maintenance; et cetera. It is very disappointing to hear, from the ground up, people saying these fundamental things about managing a system. Without making a judgment, it appeared to me that the people at the community grassroots level need to have some very strong leadership injected, to say: 'Why have we got four separate administrations with such a tiny but very important infrastructure for our community? Why can't we have one pooled administration that will ensure that everything is done in a coordinated manner? Furthermore, why don't we know what the strategies are for maintenance schedules for these houses and families? What do we have to do to find out what they are so we can have some control and ownership of those decisions?'

That, to me, was a very stark illustration of something odd—that is, there is $2.3 billion worth of Commonwealth funding going to indigenous programs. We hit one community and within an hour we were told this. When will someone in ATSIC and other communities take control of these things and say: 'Well, that is just not good enough. We will do something about it and we will lead our people into agreeing—into some form of coordinated administration'?

Mr Gooda—There are models around for it. What you are saying is exactly right, there has to be fairly strong leadership. In Queensland, up in Cairns, they have said on the housing issue, for instance, that they will not fund organisations unless they are in one big group. They wore a lot of heat from the community for that approach and they saw it through. Believe you me, with blokes like the commissioners living in the community they do cop a fair bit of heat. You people would be aware of that, but multiply it by 10 or 50 for these fellas. It is a fairly hard call.

At the state level our job will be to develop those things. If that is the way they want us to pursue that coordination of housing services at least, that is what will happen. I suggest if you went out to the western part of New South Wales, the Murdipakki region, you would find they have done a fair bit of stuff on forcing the issue. It has been through the regional council and the commissioner out there, a bloke called Steve Gordon, who has done a great amount of work in coordinating that stuff. The same principles and imperatives apply, that you have got to reduce the amount of administration, you have got to have a coordinated service and, last but not least, there is always that thing called economies of scale: it is easier to do things on a fairly big scale than—

CHAIR—Mick, that is very refreshing and good, but surely it is time for ATSIC at every level to say to its client base, 'We can't consider any funding distributions, allocations and support for funding bilateral negotiations, et cetera, unless and until the proper management systems are in place. And it is a prerequisite for our future that that happens, because unless we do that we are not going to help the indigenous people overcome disadvantage as quickly as we could otherwise do it.' But it has to come from your levels. You have got to do it. Otherwise, if you do not, you are going to find this continuing wastage, or apparent wastage—I had better be careful as the committee has not made a finding yet.

The time has gone by. Eric, as my colleagues have said, we welcome your refreshing approach, particularly to the youth and to targeting, trying to get kids to see the future and to get them involved in training leading to further education. We wish you well. And we look forward, Mick, to your continuing support for your commissioner. We look forward to getting that report you spoke about and, in particular, Eric, if you could give us even a one or a two pager as a preliminary with some thoughts about strengthening the parenting and how government might culturally, with your advice, start to develop some programs that could build up that parenting issue. We thank you very much and wish to you well.

Proceedings suspended from 10.08 a.m. to 10.19 a.m.

CHANDLER-JONES, Ms Jennifer, Aboriginal Advancement Council

HANSEN, Mr Morton Henry, Acting Administrator Project Officer, Aboriginal Advancement Council

CHAIR—I have some formal matters to put to you. Although the committee does not require you to speak under oath, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Commonwealth parliament. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Before we ask you questions, do you have an opening statement that you would like to make? Would you bear in mind that, unfortunately, the time that the committee has has now been seriously constrained because your evidence was to commence at 10 a.m. and, unfortunately—I do not know what happened—you were not here. We have other people to give evidence and, because of other arrangements that have to be made, the hearing has to finish at quarter to 12 when we have other witnesses to follow. I wonder if you could assist us by trying to achieve a timely completion of your submission. Do you have any opening statements that you wish to make?

Mr Hansen—Only that I would like to know personally what it is really about.

CHAIR—Do you have any opening statements, Ms Chandler-Jones?

Ms Chandler-Jones—No, I am like Morton. I am quite in the dark as to what it is all about.

CHAIR—All right; you are not ready to make a submission to the committee. The committee has called on people across Australia who wish to make a submission to this inquiry, which you have the pamphlet for, to do so. Submissions close on 13 October so you have time to do that and I would suggest that that is what you might like to give consideration to. We would welcome a submission from you. Perhaps you could briefly outline for the committee, in anticipation of us getting a submission, something about the Aboriginal Advancement Council—what its role is, what sort of work it does, et cetera—so we can look in anticipation of getting your submission.

Mr Hansen—The Aboriginal Advancement Council initially was set up for the benefit of Aboriginal people and the progress of Aboriginal people within our community. The Aboriginal Advancement Council originated many years ago from the need for a place for Aboriginal people to go to for entertainment and those sorts of things without being harassed by the constabulary and the governments of the day. The building where we are at was established in 1953 for the purpose of Aboriginal people being able to hold dances and get together. Up until previously in that year, Aboriginal people were not allowed on the streets after 6 o'clock at night. That is a thing from the governments of the past, the churches of the past, the education system of the past and the laws of the past That is what the Aboriginal Advancement Council was originally set up for.

CHAIR—Do you operate in Perth?

Mr Hansen—We operate at 201 Beaufort Street. How that was obtained was that many years ago a group of Aboriginal people went out and raised money and the government matched them dollar for dollar. The funding that was raised was raised through lotteries, dances and that sort of stuff being held. The building that we are in now, which got burnt down and we refurbished it, was bought for around £30,000 and for the dollars and cents that were raised the government at the time matched those dollars and cents. We have been a benevolent group for a long time. We manage to function off grants. We also have a couple of other buildings in the vicinity of where we are. We have another building in 28 Lindsay Street. We also have a hostel type building next door in which we actually rent out rooms to other organisations.

CHAIR—It is accommodation and you are a landlord to another organisation?

Mr Hansen—Yes.

CHAIR—Can you give me a snapshot of the funding sources you have? Which governments or community groups provide funding to you?

Mr Hansen—Jennifer is the best person to talk to you in regard to the finances of our organisation.

Ms Chandler-Jones—Since the rebuilding of 201 Beaufort, there has not been much funding at all. Most departments think they have put all this money into rebuilding; therefore that is it, you have had enough. We have been scraping through here and there. My function is to keep it going. I work on a voluntary basis for the dole just to keep it going. Morton is also voluntary because we get no money for wages. We get a bit of rent that comes in from next door and it pays the light bills, insurance and things like that. We opened up a little op shop. That brings in a few dollars. We had a beautiful art gallery built into the building. Our main aim was to have Aboriginal art there for known and little known Aboriginal people. But, unfortunately, they like to sell their art first. They are in a hurry for money. We do not have that money to come in to buy the art to do that for them. We can only promise to do it on a commission basis.

CHAIR—So you get income from commission?

Ms Chandler-Jones—Yes, we would get income from the commission. Now and again we do little bits of things for ATSIC. We do their sports grants and they then give us a 10 per cent administration fee.

CHAIR—You apply for the grants? You help them with the application forms for local community sports groups?

Ms Chandler-Jones—Yes, Aboriginal sports groups—people going overseas or interstate for sporting things.

CHAIR—ATSIC pays you a fee for that?

Ms Chandler-Jones—Yes.

CHAIR—Morton, when you send your submission over, could we have a copy of your last annual report? That might give us the formal side of your lifeblood, where you get it from and the innovative ways you raise funds as well. Can you give us a snapshot of the types of services you provide? You have told us about acting as an agent for ATSIC to help people put sport applications in.

Mr Hansen—In our capacity in the past, the Aboriginal Advancement Council is a mother figure for a lot of the Aboriginal organisations that are around now, like the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service. The Aboriginal Advancement Council was like the mother figure of all those.

Ms Chandler-Jones—The first to start.

Mr Hansen—That is right, one of the first establishments. We do a bit of welfare work. We are an information centre as well for people. It is a meeting place that Aboriginal people have a lot to do with. They know exactly where it is. When they want to meet someone, they refer to that as a place to go. For instance, local people know where Parliament House is, so they will go there to meet someone. The Aboriginal Advancement Council has that same set up and people have knowledge of it. We are looking at becoming a resource centre. In our own capacity as it is, we are acting now like a resource centre. We do not have finances to do things, but our resources are verbal in pointing people in directions of where to go and what services they can—

CHAIR—Like a signpost.

Mr Hansen—Yes. A lot of our work is beneficiary work. In the past, that is what it survived on. We have a function centre at the back. I am reading a sheet of paper that is in front of me. We do not have a place like that with urban dwellings, which inquires into the needs of urban dwelling for Aboriginal people. We have a lot of transient Aboriginal people coming into our region. A few times we have actually been used as a hostel, especially when there are funerals. We allow people to camp within our building. They sleep on the floor and that sort of stuff, especially when they come in droves of about 20, 30, 40, 50 or 60 people. We have a hall that is big enough to do that. It is a meeting place where people hold meetings especially at 28 Lindsay Street. We have what we call a function centre. It is a hall that can hold up to 200-odd people within that facility.

Ms Chandler-Jones—We also have a conference centre upstairs which we hire out to all different organisations. A lot of people still want to come there for meetings and that, so we then hire that out to get a bit of income in. We also arrange catering, et cetera.

CHAIR—I have just been advised that the next group, whose appointment was for 10.30 a.m., are waiting and that some of them have appointments to go to. I would like to suggest that you have a look at the information sheet about the terms of reference, and if you would like to make some suggestions to the committee on the various issues raised in the terms of reference, we would welcome them and would look forward to receiving them from you.

Mr Hansen—I would just like to make one little statement in regard to one thing. Aboriginal people do not have down here the capability to go into a hostel, hotel or motel like other people

do and get urban accommodation. I believe there is a need for a motel of some kind that caters for Aboriginal people. On our streets today we have a lot of problems with our transient people. At the Aboriginal Advancement Council, we have a group called the Noongar Patrol who patrol the streets. They are not a security group. They are a welfare group, and their only intention is to try and quell the problems that people have before they even start. They do not get in and break up fights but if they see a situation that is happening they try to quell it before it does happen. We are also the mother figure for that group.

There is a very big need, I believe, for some kind of hotel, motel or whatever—a dwelling place—that our Aboriginal people can have easy access to.

Ms Chandler-Jones—It has to be in that area because that is the area they all head for.

CHAIR—You might develop that in your submission.

Mr Hansen—These are the people who tend to come from country areas into town here, especially for medical services and those sorts of things. There is literally no place for them to go and quite often they do not want to be in the places that they are sent to. That is a cultural type thing, I suppose.

CHAIR—Coming from country Victoria as I do, I know that when families have to take one of their children into a specialist hospital in one of the cities, for example, if the child is in the hospital critically ill for a period of time it is very difficult for them to get some homely place to live. The sort of thing you are suggesting might be good.

Ms Chandler-Jones—Some people have to actually pretend to be drunk to get into these night shelters. They actually have to pour alcohol on themselves and smell of it so they can get into a night shelter.

CHAIR—So they can have a night's sleep.

Ms Chandler-Jones—If they are sober and do not drink then they cannot get in.

CHAIR—When you give your submission and your advice on this, you might give us some anecdotal examples of that to illustrate the difficulty that is occurring. We will look forward to getting that submission from you and we thank you very much for your initial attendance today. We hope that from your knowledge and experience that we will learn from your submission some good thoughts and ideas.

Mr Hansen—On my behalf and that of the Aboriginal Advancement Council, I would like to thank you for inviting us along and allowing us to talk to you. I apologise for us being late.

CHAIR—That is okay. I know what it is like. We look forward to hearing from you. We might one day be able to come out and say, 'Hi,' to you in your own place, if you would let us do that. Thank you very much. We wish you well with your work.

[10.34 a.m.]

MORRISON, Mr James Arthur, Program Manager, Ways of Working, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University

SCOUGALL, Mr John William, Academic Coordinator, Postgraduate Programs, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University

WINCH, Dr Joan, Head, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University. Although the committee does not require you to speak under oath, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Commonwealth parliament. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Before we ask you questions, do you have an opening statement that you would like to make?

Dr Winch—I really want to put forward something about education and what is happening over here, starting with children in classrooms. They are under constant pressure. They feel rejected. They see no way out of their situation. There is a lot of antisocial behaviour and that becomes a way of life with the children because they are rejected. There is a lot of police harassment which leads to court appearances and incarceration and then the children get into the prison system when they are old enough. We believe that through education there may be a way out for these children. They find that when they get into the prison system they feel in a hopeless position. There is one way out that they find and that is through art. By doing art they feel there is some relief from the situation they are in. They would possibly need resources when they come out of the prison system, because when they come out of it they get into the same situation that put them in there in the first place.

Also, I would like to say that there are a lot of problems with young people, with their gender, and they do not really know who to turn to. They turn to the wrong person and they get rejected and then there are further problems. We have a lot of youth suicides. In fact, there was one that we heard of yesterday. It is very distressing for our people. We would like to look for a way that we can back young people up, starting from the very beginning of the education system and trying to get a better understanding between Aboriginal people and the broader society. I will hand over to Jim Morrison, who runs our Ways of Working program, which is linking into the non-Aboriginal system.

Mr Morrison—My program is geared towards non-indigenous people. It is an Aboriginal cultural training program. I should say too that I have only recently been involved with the program. I think Aboriginal people, wherever they might be, are affected by a whole range of issues in the community, so it is not just from an educational point of view that we are here. Some of the words that Joan has mentioned about suicide are appropriate, because of the inadequate housing that is supplied to our people. One of the issues I would like to pick up is the same-sex issue of young people. Suicide amongst young people is really pertinent to young,

indigenous people who are not supported by their own communities and travel to the larger cities, like Perth or Sydney, where there are other issues relating to their identity

Our Ways of Working program—I have pamphlets to give you—is probably one of the oldest in the country. It has been recognised as such by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. It has been purchased by a range of public sector organisations. One of the first was the Homeswest organisation in this state, and then Family and Children's Services and the Department of Ministry and Justice. It has been purchased by a number of Queensland organisations which have won, in turn, public sector awards. We are working with some large mining companies. That in itself has some problems. When mining companies are downsizing, there are lots of homes available. One case in point is Mount Newman, which has 300 empty houses. We have a huge problem in Newman with the local Matu people who do not have houses. When you look at the government, which has been asked to look at these houses as being something appropriate for—

CHAIR—You are talking about the Western Australian government?

Mr Morrison—Yes. When the mining company wants to sell these houses for $50,000 a piece, and the government say they are not culturally appropriate and, in turn, spend $220,000 per house to make something culturally appropriate, I think that needs to be looked at. Holistically, when we are talking about native title and mining companies, there are issues that need to be addressed for housing. If people are not protected and they are living in the elements and dying at a very young age as a result, there are some issues there.

CHAIR—Can I just clarify this for the record: the Mount Newman mining accommodation became vacant, the state government was asked if that accommodation could be made available to Aboriginal families, the state government agreed to it but said they had to be altered and renovated. Is that the position?

Mr Morrison—They felt that the houses were not culturally appropriate and, in turn, built separate houses.

CHAIR—So they did not take up the vacant houses and they built separate houses?

Mr Morrison—Yes.

CHAIR—In what area?

Mr Morrison—In the same area.

CHAIR—How many did they build?

Mr Morrison—Three, at $220,000 each.

CHAIR—How many houses still remain vacant?

Mr Morrison—There are still 300 empty houses in Newman. I am giving Newman as an example of some of the downsizing that occurs in mining towns, particularly where indigenous populations live and seem to be the outcasts and do not get the opportunity to access any house.

CHAIR—How many houses have Mount Newman left?

Mr Morrison—Three hundred.

CHAIR—They are still vacant?

Mr Morrison—They are still vacant.

CHAIR—How far away were these three houses that were built, just approximately?

Mr Morrison—They are all in the same area of East Newman, which appears to be the place where the lower echelon of the community lives—that is, the contractors and/or the indigenous people and not the management of BHP.

CHAIR—So we can help track it down, because we will be talking with people from the Western Australian state government, is there a submission with some minister or department from your people persisting in the effort to get those empty houses made available to your people?

Mr Morrison—Not as such, because we have just been approached by BHP to offer cultural training to their staff and these are just some of the issues that we picked up on.

CHAIR—So there is no submission currently before the state government?

Mr Morrison—No. We have only reached the stage where early next month we will be operating the program for 20 managers, so we have not reached a stage where we can develop a better relationship with the mining company and/or government to see what can be done for homeless people in the area.

CHAIR—But is it the intention, James, to put forward a submission seeking a review of the decision and asking that the 300 houses be again considered for housing?

Mr Morrison—That is something that could be done. We need to work closely with government. I believe that as a university we can do that.

CHAIR—I am just trying to get a strategy in place. You have alerted us to what appears to be an obvious answer to part of the accommodation difficulties, but I do not want to leave it up in the air. Is there a plan of action, a strategy, that your expertise and department will pursue to try to bring it to a conclusion?

Mr Morrison—No, there is not. I think we can formulate one, but there is nothing specific at the moment.

CHAIR—Okay, thank you.

Mr Morrison—We have worked closely with Homeswest in this particular program in educating mainstream white Australians to treat and service the Aboriginal community a bit better. Hence, the program has been purchased by Homeswest, a state authority, for their use and they are practising the same program within Homeswest.

Mr QUICK—What is culturally different between a $200,000 house and a $50,000 house?

Mr Morrison—The mining houses are considered not to be appropriate because of the airconditioning. They do not have the breezeways through, they do not have the verandahs. Some of those sorts of issues they perceive to be not culturally appropriate, even though indigenous people in the town want to live in those mining company houses. They have decided that they are not culturally appropriate.

CHAIR—Do you know whether ATSIC has a view, at state or regional level?

Mr Morrison—No, I do not know. One of the things I think they are concerned about in that area is that, because it is a mining town, Newman used to be a closed town and it is only in recent years that it has been opened up. I believe government do not want to interfere too much because it was a mining town and they believe that BHP Iron Ore can cope with those sorts of services; therefore ATSIC and/or the state Aboriginal Affairs Department are not taking a leading role.

Mr QUICK—How many homeless indigenous people are there in the area that require housing?

Mr Morrison—I could not really say at this point. I am highlighting it as a concern. There are a number of Mount Newman mining companies and government that are not providing services in a coordinated way. Newman is just a blatant example of what I have seen recently—but there are others.

CHAIR—John, did you have an additional opening statement to make?

Mr Scougall—I would just like to talk about a couple of areas of research that might be relevant to the terms of reference of this committee. The first one relates to schooling for Aboriginal children. In the past, issues of retention, achievement levels and truancy have tended to be seen as almost intractable problems—struggling to find out what works. I think there has been some major progress made on those fronts, particularly in recent times. There is a very innovative program operating in the north-west of this state at the moment which has produced quite remarkable results in terms of Aboriginal people entering university, going on to vocational education and also going directly into skilled employment. There are some important lessons that can be learned from that pilot and from other similar things that have been going on elsewhere in the state. I guess what I am saying is that there is the potential to begin to think about models of best practice. You could well argue—I would certainly argue—that schooling is up there amongst the most important issues. It is a gateway to all kinds of things—improved health, economic opportunities, employment, further education and so on. If we are talking about sustainable futures, it seems to me to be an absolutely key issue. I would encourage this

committee to look at those kind of initiatives to draw out what we can use from those that might have applicability and be transferable to other places in Australia.

CHAIR—Can you give us some identifiers of that program. Maybe there is a report already.

Mr Scougall—There is a report. The reason I have not actually named the community involved or the organisation is that we were employed on behalf of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies to do an evaluation of this program. It is still a pilot program and the people who have set it up are very keen for it not to become promoted too highly in the initial stages because of the problem of raised expectations. They think they are on a winner but they would just like a little bit of extra time before they do that. One of the parties involved is the Polly Farmer Foundation here in Perth. I would encourage this committee to contact John Cunningham for details about that specific program. The strength of it comes from the range of strategies that are used. It is a consortium of interests that actually manage the program. You have got Aboriginal community involvement, family support, a compact that parents sign agreeing to do certain things to support their children's education, industry involvement in a big way, and of course the education sector is heavily involved. That is one of the strategies that explains why it is effective; but there is a whole range of things that they are doing that I think amount to best practice or something very close to it.

CHAIR—Do you know whether any of the federal $2.3 billion funding is going into that program?

Mr Scougall—There is funding through the ATAS, Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, that goes into that program. I am not aware of what other funding goes in from the Commonwealth. My understanding is that the bulk of the funding is actually industry funding.

CHAIR—We will pursue that through the Polly Farmer Foundation.

Mr QUICK—What does it say about the Western Australian education department?

Mr Scougall—That is not for me to comment on, but they are actively involved, not necessarily in a financial way. That would be a good question to put to them perhaps. There is certainly scope for greater involvement. Their involvement has tended to be in the non-financial areas; for example, school based mentors, people who work at the interface with the parents, students and the school to improve that three-way communication flow which is absolutely crucial. A lot of their involvement is actually using existing resources rather than using additional financial resources.

Mr QUICK—Is this primary or secondary?

Mr Scougall—Only secondary at the moment. The people involved are very keen for it to be extended to the primary level.

Mr QUICK—What was the retention rate in this area prior to them setting up this—

Mr Scougall—I do not have those statistics with me. We could certainly get those for you. The change has been extremely dramatic.

Mr QUICK—Is that the only pilot that is operating in Western Australia that you know of?

Mr Scougall—It is the only one that I have been personally involved in, but I do know that a lot of innovative things have been done across the state. Perhaps that is the best example—certainly the best one that I am aware of. There is the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness Program (ASSPA), and people have been doing some innovative things through that as well in other places.

Dr Winch—They are setting up an Aboriginal primary school in Midland as well.

Mr Scougall—Just drawing on Joan's point a bit further, perhaps what is required is some kind of synthesis that draws all these best practice initiatives together so that we can all learn from them.

CHAIR—Yes, indeed. In fact, one of the early thoughts I have, as Chairman, for this committee to consider is recommending that there be a special project funded that actually does that and provides the lights on the hill around the whole of our great country of the successful programs and illustrating some of the ingredients of those to enable people to say, 'Wow, that is a good one.' It seems to me that just at an early stage that is not being done. There are some wonderful stories to be told but not enough understanding of them. Would you support that sort of concept?

Mr Scougall—That sounds like an appropriate approach to go down, but I obviously would make the point that it would need to be something that is negotiated with the Aboriginal community to determine what is the most appropriate direction. It is certainly worth negotiating.

CHAIR—Because of the time constraints today, of course, this is a preliminary discussion with your centre—which we have a high regard for. We are hoping that we can get a lot of help from you over the next few months in respect of the terms of reference and inquiry. Will the centre be putting in a submission?

Dr Winch—Yes.

CHAIR—What I am looking for is some guidance, because of your enormous experience and insight, into some of the things that you think the committee could be expanding on, developing and encouraging the government to do in that line, drawing on your expertise and experience.

Dr Winch—We found that a lot of pressure has been put on the students since the full-time tutorial support system that we had has been removed. It is not just tutorial support. In fact, one chap came to me yesterday and he is a tutor in the prison system. He said that you do not really do any teaching like the three Rs or whatever. The people have such a lot to unload before they can ever start to learn. This is what we find with all of our students. There are a lot of personal problems that these tutors actually deal with because you have to really get that out of the way before they can see their way clear to study.

We found that when we lost the funding for the tutors that were in each area, that people start dropping off and we have no way to save them. We found that was the big difference between

last year's students when they cut off that funding to this year's. We find that people are slipping away and we really cannot do anything to keep them up. We believe that that full-time support is really necessary for us to be able to keep the people together. Keep in mind that they do not get any support at home. There is nobody at home that they can ask for assistance in helping with things that they get stuck on. Most of the people are just first time into tertiary education so there is really nobody around that can assist them except the assistance that they can get within the school system that they are at.

Mr QUICK—Is the tutor problem the university's decision? Is it the state education department?

Dr Winch—It is the federal government's and DETYA's decision to say that they are not going to support this any more.

CHAIR—It was a directly funded program to your university?

Dr Winch—Yes. It is called a tutorial system.

CHAIR—Would you put a paragraph in your submission about that so we can get some briefings on it.

Dr Winch—Yes.

Mr QUICK—Could I just follow up what James said about the prison system. You have two problems. One is the recidivists that are in the juvenile justice system and trying to sort out their hassles. In my mind a greater problem is the issue of early intervention to ensure that the kids do not travel up the pipeline—the brothers and sisters of the kids that are currently featuring in the Western Australian juvenile justice system. I applaud what is happening, but in my mind it should not be happening in the high school, it ought to be happening in the primary school.

What innovative things are happening, or should happen, or what impediments are there? There seem to be bag loads of money. You have Homeswest with social workers, the education department with social workers, the juvenile justice system with social workers, ATSIC with social workers—a plethora of people out there being funded—and yet we have these huge gaps in the net and kids are falling through it, and families are dysfunctional. What strategies are there in place that are working, or should work? What do we, a committee, need to recommended to governments to say, 'Let's change the mind-set'?

Dr Winch—This is part of my study. I have done a lot of study with kids at school—particularly I was looking at the Pitjantjatjara area. That is the are of focus for my study. Even the teachers say that there is a lot of racism within the schoolyard, within the teachers and within the system. I know that no matter what the children do they feel that they cannot get away from it. They feel that they are in a bind. They feel that if they try to complain about something it comes back to a racist point of view.

The thing that people have most often said to me is, 'If you want to talk to an Aboriginal kid, don't come on a Friday or a Monday.' They do not take into consideration that we have a lot of deaths in our community. It is part of our life that we are expected to attend the funerals of the people that die—from the children up to the whole family. We are not a rich group of people so most of the people have to wait until the following fortnight until they get their money through if they have to travel to the country, if they have to travel back. So the children do miss out on school in this way, but they gain a lot in meeting their families and having that sort of cultural get-together as well. But there is no sort of compensation for the students that really have to go with their families to the funerals. Then they are stuck there and they cannot get back because there is no money to get back and things like that. There is a lot of lack of understanding about the Aboriginal cultural system within the school system. Some of the teachers have actually told me about that.

Mr QUICK—Should we have the Maori experience and set up your own schools and then the problem is not anybody else's—it is yours—and you adapt your education system, like the Maoris have done, to cater for that.

Dr Winch—This is what they are doing at Midland—they are going to have an Aboriginal school and put that focus on there to see how that runs—it will be a pilot. They have certainly done that as well in Canada and they found that if children are given a strong cultural base until the age of 12 or at the age when they are going into their teenage years, they have found themselves, they feel happy within themselves and then it is much easier for them to learn in the broader society.

Mr QUICK—Why has it taken so long for that realisation, with all respect to people like yourselves? Why has it taken so long when we have examples overseas? We are at desperate stakes. Our retention rate with our indigenous people is absolutely appalling and our youth suicide rate is absolutely appalling. Why hasn't someone gone and done it? Pilots are fine—this wonderful thing in the northern part of Western Australia—

Dr Winch—We are up against a system that says that this is the way that the education system works and that is the way that you have got to do it. That is the bind that the people are in. It sounds like this one that John is talking about is quite enlightening.

Mr QUICK—With all respect, that is being funded by industry, not by the state taxpayers.

Dr Winch—The state does not recognise it. People that are in the education system, because they are in the system, do not really see a system outside as working, even if you do point to other areas where it has happened in other countries. It has worked. You do get a strong feeling of self and culture and then you can go on and be able to achieve at a very high level.

Mr LLOYD—John, how much involvement is there on that pilot program from the parents of the community? It is obviously a high school program, so the kids must have reached a certain level of education in the primary school for it to be successful, wouldn't they—otherwise it would not go anywhere?

Mr Scougall—I will answer the second part of the question first. There is an important part of the program that is concerned with compensating for what people should have learnt in

primary school. There is intensive tutorial support. They go to a thing that is called an 'enrichment centre'—which you could think of as a homework centre although there is a bit more to it than that. It is a place where they go to do their homework. They get intensive support to learn in that place. It would be wrong to assume that the primary schools are working and that people are actually starting from the right base.

Mr LLOYD—I was not assuming that; that is why I asked the question.

Mr Scougall—The notion of, 'Is this applicable to primary school?' is well and truly worthy of exploration. The first part of the question was about the extent of family support. There is an eligibility selection process for students to be accepted into this program. One of the criteria is that the parents sign up a compact agreeing to provide certain kinds of support. It differs from family to family, but it could be as simple as providing transport to the enrichment centre every afternoon. It could involve assisting with things like awareness visits, when people visit a university to try and broaden their range of available opportunities and perhaps be exposed to jobs and further education opportunities that perhaps they would not even have thought of. Parents assist in those ways, and even on things like weekend camps. There is a whole range of opportunities for parental involvement. It is an absolutely crucial element of the program. Without the family involvement, it would not work.

Mr LLOYD—So in some ways you are almost educating the parents as well on the purpose of education? In lots of areas we have found that there is just no interest from the parents in education or the purpose of education, because it failed them. Even if the children are wanting to learn, they fall by the wayside very quickly because there is not that support.

Mr Scougall—That would be true for some Aboriginal people. Obviously Aboriginal society is very diverse. For some of the families, it is not so much that they are not interested in their children's education. Most of the families we spoke to were very interested. What they felt was that the school was a culturally alien place and not a supportive place. Their own memories of bad experiences that they had had at school began to play for them when they entered into that environment. So they found it quite a threatening environment in some cases.

CHAIR—As this is our preliminary discussion, we have other witnesses who are scheduled and we also have commitments with connecting aeroplanes. It is one of those difficult times. I would like to thank you very much for having this initial discussion with us and for agreeing to give us a more detailed submission. You can see from our questions that we are very interested in the parenting and the building up of education as a basic foundation for the successful achievement of the things we would like for our indigenous brothers and sisters, and in addressing the reasons why we are not making it in every case. We would particularly like your advice on how we might improve the targeting of funding to achieve those sorts of things.

If you want to get into it—you do not have to—we are also particularly keen to see that the communities have a greater sense of ownership of the programs. But bear in mind we have enormous worries about communities not addressing the leadership potential issue. They do not seem to be able to grapple with some of the leadership decisions that need to be made. For example, instead of having four different coordinating groups for local housing, why not have one doing the administration and all of that, therefore releasing your mind and your assets and resources into achieving the improvement of housing? There are things like that. We would be

grateful for your advice there. We wish you well with your work and look forward to our next discussion and to the receipt of your submission. Thank you very much.

Dr Winch—Thank you very much. I will give you this document about our centre at the university.

CHAIR—Thank you, Joan. It is exhibit 'C for Curtin'.

[11.06 a.m.]

REYNOLDS, Mr Ron (Doc), Manager, Bay of Isles Aboriginal Community Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Reynolds. Although the committee does not require you to speak under oath, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Commonwealth parliament. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Before we ask you questions, do you have an opening statement that you would like to make?

Mr Reynolds—No. All I want to do is say I am sorry that I did not get any information to you. I am on holidays at the moment, and the information has been following me around by fax. When I saw the application, I said I wanted to go, so I had to get my office to chase it up. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be able to come here and address you this morning. I am ready to answer questions and to also give you a lot of my thoughts on the issues that you set out in your terms of reference.

CHAIR—You can—and we hope that you might be able to—make a written submission to the committee when you return from your holidays. We would be very grateful for your advice on these matters. Before we go any further, you might give us a pen-line sketch of your organisation.

Mr Reynolds—The Bay of Isles Aboriginal community is in Esperance, which is at the south-east coast of Western Australia and about 750 kilometres from Perth. The Bay of Isles is one of the oldest Aboriginal communities in the Goldfields region. We were established in 1975 under the Aboriginal Associations Act, which is a WA act. We were set up by a couple of women worried about the housing problems of older indigenous people. A lot of our people were dying because they did not have good accommodation, so we set up an old persons home. A problem that arose was that, when a couple of the old people died in the home, the other old people moved out of it because of cultural aspects. They did not want to hang around inside the home. They left it. They did not want to be there because of—in your thinking—evil spirits. We use Aboriginal terms, but I will not use them for your sake.

We then went into a bit of a lull but we were still active in Aboriginal affairs in Esperance, which had an Aboriginal population of between about 400 and 600 people when the major population of Esperance was anywhere between 12,000 and 13,000. Early in the 1990s we received some funds from ATSIC and we set up preventative programs under the substance misuse scheme, which was transferred over to the Department of Health and Aged Care in 1995, so we have been receiving funds from them. We have been proactive in trying to address issues for Aboriginal people because in Esperance we are a one-stop blackfella shop in a lot of respects.

We basically deal with all the issues of Aboriginal affairs that go through our community. Even though we are set up for substance misuse there is housing, social, welfare, legal, health, native title and all those issues that come through our office. As a result of that we are basically overworked, understaffed and under resourced to meet the demands of the people that are

placed on us. We currently have five full-time employees which creates a problem because we have them from all different funding agencies. We have 17 people working under the community development employment program. Totally, I am responsible for 22 people working out of a facility that is only designed to accommodate two people. That is the sort of resources that we are up against.

I had a meeting with a couple of your colleagues last Friday—Senator Winston Crane and Senator Andrew Murray—and I told them of my concerns and issues that I wanted to raise here. That is basically us in a nutshell, but there is a lot of other things we cover and want to go through.

CHAIR—When you send in your written submission, if that is your decision, of course, and I would certainly encourage you to do that, we would like to have a look at your annual report too if you could give us a copy of that. It gives us a snapshot. In your community, the one-stop shop idea is very attractive.

Recently we were at another place in Western Australia and we met with the regional committee and we were alarmed, in some ways, at the number of different groups and agencies in that same community, serving a population of about 2,500 Aboriginal people, apparently doing the same thing in administering housing projects. There were four separate housing projects being administered instead of perhaps one coordinated one. In your model of the one-stop shop, if indigenous people like that model and obviously they do because your workload would not be as great if they did not, why not use your experience and replicate that one-stop shop model in appropriate communities. That is why your preliminary comments are very interesting to me and to hear how you got to that stage of being the one-stop shop, or do you find that even, notwithstanding what you are doing, there are still agencies and communities in your community duplicating some of the things you are trying to do or have you ironed that out?

Mr Reynolds—In the mainstream?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Reynolds—In the mainstream there is but they are not culturally appropriate. That is why people come to us. Because I used to work for the welfare and I used to work for the legal service, people still see me in a lot of those roles because they come in and ask for legal advice. The problem is that because we have so many issues which we have to address, there is only one Doc Reynolds and I cannot do everything, if you understand what I mean. We have a works program that is set up and we have our program so that we can set our workers up because we have to try to generate income for our workers so that they can have a bit of pride in themselves. We generate our own woodworking business, which provides some funds to prop up our existing services and give top-up wages to our CDEP participants. With a lot of the stuff that we are finding the people come in and their problems are so diverse that I cannot send them down to mainstream, and there is no other Aboriginal facility that they can basically go to.

There is another Aboriginal organisation in Esperance and that is set up in a small environment in a small way which addresses a small group of people. It still addresses the wider community but it is very hard to send off because of the cultural contracts between Aboriginal

people. Basically you might have a section of groups within a community. Whereas, with us we overview everybody but, in some sectors, they just have that cultural conflict where it creates a bit of a gap. Everybody lands on my lap when they come into my office. A couple of weeks ago the sad thing was that I was away for a meeting, and the problem that you tend to find out was that we had 11 of our people who died in a matter of 10 days and associated with our workers. Seventy-five per cent of them were under the age of 45.

The tragedy case, the one that happened in Port Lincoln, was all linked to our people back home. So all our people needed to go across to where that young mother had an epileptic fit and the two young children starved. That was our people from back home. When you hear of all these people dying, you have to try and send people out there, because the cultural thing is to warm to them. But when you have eight of them, or 11 of them, it just becomes quite astronomical. Every time I woke up in the morning I was told that there was someone who had died.

One of my colleagues over here was at the same meeting, and all he thought I was doing was taking phone calls. When you do that sort of thing, people come to you because they have no-one else to turn to. So I had to make the arrangements for the funeral and get the immediate family to the area where the people were. We were lucky in a sense: we normally do body transports, because it becomes too high a price to pay for individual families to bring the bodies back to the homeland. Nobody else is set up for it, so we have to do it in our vehicles. We just put a tarp over the coffin so it does not look so conspicuous. That is a thing that we have to do. Those are the sorts of issues. We cannot go to the people who say, 'We got no money,' or, 'We can't do this here; it's outside of our charter.' It comes back on to us and the meagre resources that we get. We have to address that issue, because if we do not they will tell us quite explicitly what they think of us. We try, in our best possible ways, to address those issues.

When you are dealing with that, on that scale, it adds a burden to the stuff that you are already doing. They are things that you just wait for. Even though I am away from the office now, I do not like leaving my mobile on, because you will always hear of your people passing away. In our community back home, out of the 400, there are only five people over the age of 60. There are none over the age of 65. The ratio percentage from 45 to 60 is well below mainstream. When people look around for elders within the community, there are none there. There are only two people out of those 65 who are traditionally linked to the Esperance region. The other three either married in or came in from other means—they are in-laws or what have you. Even though I am only 42 years of age, compared with a lot of the younger kids I am seen as an elder. I am only 42, but there is no-one up there. They have all these other problems, like housing. You guys are looking at housing, and we have problems with single dads trying to get houses. If you are a single mum, you can get a house. They seem to discriminate against single dads getting a house.

CHAIR—Is that the state housing department?

Mr Reynolds—The state housing, yes, and that is an issue. They cannot go down to the real estate agent and ask for a house, because as soon as an Aboriginal walks in—regardless of whatever is said and done—the house is not there. They have got to have pretty favourable recommendations from people like me. If you know the person is not a likeable tenant at all—that they are going to smash the house—you cannot give them one, even though you would like to. You go and talk to them. The onus comes back on to us, then—the organisation or myself

personally is where the buck stops—to try and make a decision. Sometimes we have a lot of people put in, but when you get them put in and the houses get trashed, it comes back on to me as the organisation, not so much the person.

CHAIR—I do not want to be impertinent here, but I am trying to capture what you are saying and then focus. In the white man's area, we would be looking at going to see some regional leader who is involved with the provision of services generally, to say, 'I can't do all this myself. You guys have got a lot of expertise and knowledge. Can you guide me, put me on a pathway of helping to address some of these issues, or come in and help me as a partner?' In that context, what dialogue are you having with your regional people, like ATSIC—your representatives? What are you doing?

Mr Reynolds—I have a personal view of ATSIC, and it is not a favourable one: it doesn't do a lot for us as an organisation. The one that we do get a lot of support from is the Aboriginal affairs department of the state government of Western Australia. We have more of a rapport with them than with ATSIC. The ATSIC regional offices are so sparsely staffed and so spread out—the regional office in Kalgoorlie covers from Esperance to the central desert and, I think, the western desert area of Western Australia—a huge area for a very small number of people trying to do everything. Their state legal service, which has a regional office, cannot serve us because they are under resourced. We have a health service we are trying to get funding for. The problems stretch from us in the south right up to Wiluna. In addition, you have the land council, which covers the goldfields region. And you have to sit on regional committees to try and draw resources down to help us, which ties you up because of the time it takes to travel to those regional meetings—

CHAIR—Too many meetings.

Mr Reynolds—to fight for resources. Then you have your problems back home, which you need to spend time on the phone dealing with. The problem in our region is that I have to travel to Kalgoorlie, which is an 800 kilometre round trip. Sometimes they even have the regional meetings in Laverton or Leonora, which is a further 300 kilometres. Very seldom do they have them in Esperance or Norseman, which is halfway between Esperance and Kalgoorlie. The problem now is that we are being restricted because, when we got our funding, the figure was based on 75c to 80c a litre for fuel; it was $1.12 when I left home. When you are spending an extra 30c to 40c a litre on fuel—

CHAIR—To go to a meeting.

Mr Reynolds—Sometimes you have to pay for the regional stuff yourself. I don't like talking over the telephone; if I have something to say to someone, I tell them straight to their face and if they don't like it—

CHAIR—In summary, what you are saying is that your organisation is very much in demand. It is close to the community and seems to be well accepted by the community—culturally as well—but that you are doing too much, that the workload is too great. You also say that you seek help from the state and have a good direct line, and are doing pretty well in some areas, but there is still a lack of a solution to some of the programs. You say that attempts to get regional representatives of indigenous people through ATSIC involve too much meeting, travelling time

et cetera and perhaps there is not a full understanding of some of the issues you want to talk about because the people at the ATSIC offices are stretched over a huge jurisdictional area. In essence, what you are saying is that we should re-examine the way we deliver the services and perhaps direct more funding in the local communities to organisations like yours. Is that the concept you are talking about?

Mr Reynolds—That is an excellent idea. Being a small organisation, I have to go to all the funding agencies. Each agency has a different set of funding guidelines, performance indicator reports and accountability reports instead of doing one report that will cover the whole lot. At the moment we have got six or seven bank accounts because, for auditing purposes, you have to be able show how the money is spent. Then you have your performance indicators. Even though the whole thing is looking at the one issue and you amend your program objective to meet the funding guidelines, it doesn't hinder your performance or your organisation's objectives or your performance indicator report.

CHAIR—Doc, I would be the last one to ask you to spend some of your valuable time writing a long submission. I am conscious of the hands-on practical work that you do and the value of it. I am just wondering whether you could give us 10 points to consider of direct action that you think, based on your experience, the committee could have a look at as possible answers to some of the problems that you face. That sort of direct focused concept coming from you might give us some information on the direction that we need to take to try and help you.

Mr Reynolds—I listened to the meeting last week when I was with the other two senators. They highlighted something that really gave me food for thought, and that was funding coming through the local council—local government. If I have a problem with the agency, I can then just go to a local government office and argue my case there because they are hands on with us down there. Where we are, even though we are not remote, we are seen as remote. Trying to get people to come to Esperance is pretty hard. It might be good that they do not come, because too many people would come, I suppose. I find that, if I go to the local government with my issues, I can speak to them directly, whereas now it is by phones, faxes and emails. I believe that if we tried that out it might be a better option than trying to deal with Canberra, Perth or the regional office, because that would cut a lot of our funding.

Mr WAKELIN—You would be more inclined to use the bottom-up approach.

Mr Reynolds—That is only a personal thing—

CHAIR—We cannot pre-empt that. Can I just share something with you? I know members of my committee privately would applaud what you have just said. We have got to keep an open mind and, indeed, white people should not be telling indigenous people how to access and deliver their services. But coming from a leader like you, if you would like to perhaps develop that a bit and put your thoughts on paper, that would be a valuable contribution. And I think you are on the right track, quite frankly.

Mr Reynolds—The reason why I say that and why I applaud it is that I do not want it to go. The issue is that if we work through the council it creates problems. I believe that, if the funding agent comes through, then the council is accountable straight to Canberra or Perth or to wherever the funding comes from. And then all we are dealing with is the issue. If an indigenous is-

sue goes through council and if you have got people on the council who are not favourable to Aboriginal issues, you could find yourself with a problem. But if you are dealing with the administrative arm and putting your points through them, that deals directly with whichever funding agency and all your accountability, financial reporting, performance indicators can go to address the one issue.

Mr WAKELIN—When you say council, are you talking about local government?

Mr Reynolds—Local government, yes, sorry.

Mr WAKELIN—That is fine. I thought that was what you meant; I just wanted to be clear.

Mr Reynolds—That is what I was saying. But I would have to have a look at it. It has had a favourable report. Anything that we have presently got will basically help us or help me as an organisation.

Mr QUICK—How much do you think you would save, Doc, if you worked it that way? Would 30 per cent extra go into the provision of services rather than being tied up in administration? Would it be that high?

Mr Reynolds—I would say about 20 per cent, if our phone calls, faxes, fuel costs and travelling costs are cut down. For one of our grants, we only received the contract last week. They tell us that we have to spend all our money by 30 June, otherwise they will take it out of next year's money. But when you do not get signed contracts, you have it lying idle for three months. If an Aboriginal organisation did that, it would be taken to the cleaners. But government organisations are a law unto themselves.

We have to put everything in a 'hold' mode because we do not know how much funding we are getting. We ask for more but we generally do not get more. We only get the indexation rate, which I think is just under two per cent. I think we could be cut back, conservatively, by at least 20 per cent of our funding. When you are talking about 20 per cent, you are talking about a lot of money. In the last financial year, for all our programs, our fuel bill was just over $25,000. A lot of that was tied up with travelling to Perth. I had to come here to talk to the funding agencies. That involves a plane trip. Of course, you have to go to Kalgoorlie. Then there are phones, faxes and the time that you actually spend away from the office.

Mr QUICK—What is your total budget?

Mr Reynolds—Our total budget? I would have to add it all up.

CHAIR—We are going to get the annual report.

Mr QUICK—Yes, I know, but off the top of your head?

Mr Reynolds—From the federal Department of Health and Aged Care, we get $150,000-odd; from state Health, we get just over $50,000; and then there is what we bum, beg and borrow in between. Sometimes how much money we get can vary depending on our needs and

our response to government funding agencies. I know we get about $220,000 annually. With respect to CDEP, we do not pay their wages; that gets paid by a regional body in Kalgoorlie and it is paid direct from Kalgoorlie. So I do not have to pay for the wages. When you are looking at 20 participants at about $9,000, that amounts to about another $180,000-odd that I do not handle.

CHAIR—On that note, Doc, we look forward to getting a copy of the annual report.

Mr Reynolds—No worries.

Mr QUICK—We would like to come down and see you one day, too.

Mr Reynolds—It is a nice part of the country.

CHAIR—It is a beautiful place. Good luck with your work.

Mr Reynolds—Thanks very much.

CHAIR—We will look forward to receiving a few points that you think we should look at.

Mr Reynolds—What happens from here?

CHAIR—If you can send us those dot points of some ideas that might help your organisation, we would like to get those.

Mr QUICK—We are taking submissions from all around Australia. We have got a bit of an idea of what is happening in Western Australia; we need to go to all the other states and then, if necessary, come back to some other areas.

Mr Reynolds—Are we talking about six months, 12 months, before we get—

CHAIR—We will report next year. We are hoping to get ideas from people like you, hands-on, from the community. That is particularly what we want. We want to get advice from people like you to help us to formulate our recommendations. Thank you very much. We wish you well.

[11.34 a.m.]

EGGINGTON, Mr Dennis, Chief Executive Officer and Director on Board of Directors, Aboriginal Legal Service of WA (Inc) and Derbarl Yerrigan Medical Service

WILKES, Mr Edward, Executive Director, Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service (Aboriginal Medical Service)

CHAIR—I would like to explain that the witnesses we are about to hear from—and I thank you for coming in—are unscheduled, in the sense that the time set aside for the hearing today has been allocated to groups. A late request to give evidence was received. Because of our commitments, we have only 15 minutes to spare now. I want members of the public who are observing these proceedings to understand that when I close the hearing it is not because we do not want to hear further from the witnesses; it is just that we have commitments that are beyond my control. In that context, we hope that we can get the germane ideas you have got, bearing in mind that your organisation will be free to make a written submission in greater detail.

Although the committee does not require you to speak under oath, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Commonwealth parliament. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Before we ask you questions, do you have an opening statement, bearing in mind that we have to complete this hearing at 11.45 a.m.?

Mr Wilkes—Yes, I would like to make a brief opening statement. There are many issues that we will be putting in a submission, Mr Chairman, and I thank you and your colleagues for allowing us to present them verbally today. Fifteen minutes will be more than adequate time. Whilst I have written down a big list of things, today I want to try to pull out three issues that I think are really crucial to what we need in this city to fix us up.

My background is 15 years of working in community-controlled health. One of the issues that we have tried to impose on government and ourselves is the need for a good reaction to our accommodation needs. To my left you will see a pictorial display of some of the accommodation that we have visited around the south-west of Western Australia. We are talking about urban settings, towns and rural parts of Australia in some sense. But the Noongar population of the south-west are one and all, so we live in this sort of lifestyle even if we are in Perth. You are seeing a typical pictorial display of the sort of housing and accommodation infrastructure of our people. You can see that there are points about things like creeping damp—obviously something that is always in our houses—and all sorts of other issues that I could talk about in relation to Homeswest, which is the authority for this state.

CHAIR—Members of the public are welcome to come and look over our shoulder if they wish to.

Mr QUICK—Are all the houses featured there Homeswest houses?

Mr Wilkes—Yes. A couple have been bought through purchase schemes but 99 per cent of them are Homeswest houses. One of the major issues that I want to present to this committee is to identify the accommodation needs of Aboriginal people living in urban settings. Homeswest and state government infrastructure with regard to our accommodation needs is sadly lacking. One reason is that Aboriginal people have not been able to own this issue.

When we try to improve our quality of life I believe Aboriginal people come to the fore through owning the issues—whether they are good or bad issues. If it is about child abuse, we have to own that issue; if it is about accommodation, we have to own that issue. But let's not own it unless the other partner—the resource provider, which is government—is in partnership with us. I want to say quickly that accommodation is one of our major issues. We need to do it in proper partnership with government, but we have to allow Aboriginal people to own it. By that I mean that we have to learn how to build our own houses, how to maintain these houses and to do all of that stuff ourselves. At the moment, the white system—bless your souls—is trying to do that for us and is not doing a very good job.

CHAIR—May I add that terms of reference No. 2 actually asks this committee to look at the exact issue you have mentioned so that we can make recommendations fostering partnership government arrangements and giving indigenous people more decision making.

Mr Wilkes—Yes.

Mr Eggington—Is it reference No. 2 or 3?

CHAIR—It is No. 2.

Mr Wilkes—The other ones are built around youth. In the cities, within urban settings, the amount of child abuse is unpredictable. We need to develop appropriate partnerships with government to develop pathways for our youth to turn into proper adults. Our youth somewhere miss the opportunity to do that and some of it is quite identified. We can identify regions and families and we need to work with government to get those families proper assistance. Without naming these families, I know there are some which are on the hard end of the justice system. We know that some of those families are really oppressed. We need to work with those families not only to fix up this stuff but also to stop the child abuse that is happening as a result of that. If kids in some of these families are being abused, then surely to God they will not going to turn into adults with any respect for society. We need to work with the government to make sure that this sort of abuse on kids is diminished. It is going on in the cities and it has got to stop. It is built around substance misuse and exploitation by older people. Those older people include not only Aboriginal men and women but also non-Aboriginal people working in partnership, whether we call them paedophilia rings, or whether we call them other forms of organised misuse of kids, I do not care. It has to stop. That is really one of the big issues.

The other issue around dwelling in cities is obviously access to health care. I work in health and we have to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to proper primary health care. In this city we have decentralised the main service. The Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service is centrally located next to Royal Perth Hospital. In the last two years, we have managed to set up a clinic at Midland, a satellite centre. We will be opening a satellite centre in Mirrabooka in a couple of weeks. We will be opening another satellite centre in Maddington. We have identified the

populations and the pockets of Aboriginal populations where we can strategically put these facilities, but obviously government has to resource it and provide the proper infrastructure for us to do that. They are my three main points. The rest of the issues will be brought up in the written submission. We will be putting in a complete submission.

CHAIR—That is great; it is a good focus. Well done.

Mr Eggington—I think term of reference No. 2 is obviously by far the most important. You guys and women are a major part of looking at the whole area of Aboriginal affairs, whether it is housing, health or whatever it is. It is quite understandable in the year 2000 that we cannot improve drastically where we are heading, being thrown scraps. I think some of the stuff that we can offer you is leadership in this state, and particularly in the south-west, that has a whole number of people. We are all closely linked. I am also on the board of Derbarl Yerrigan Health. I have been for about eight or nine years. I also have been the Chair of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies for the last three or four years.

CHAIR—At Curtin?

Mr Eggington—At Curtin. Mort Hansen, who talked to you earlier on, is a part of what we call the coalition. So there is the Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Legal Service and Manguri, which is involved in housing and other issues as well. Mort Hansen is from the Aboriginal Advancement Council, and there is our child-care agency and our Noongar Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service. We have all joined forces in what we call a coalition. The reason we have done that is to try to take away the responsibility from the government and give it back to us.

CHAIR—Bottoms up?

Mr Eggington—Yes, all good policy should be developed for the needs of people from the ground up and I think taking the argument one step further by having partnerships. I do believe that, in the south-west, we have got a unique situation. There is one culture group, the Noongar people. Of course, we have got eight or nine major dialect and clan groups that have all got their own vested interests, but we are one cultural group. We are also one region. So it is quite easy to have a partnership with one unique people, the Noongar people in the south-west. It would also fit into government's proposals on regionalisation.

We are very keen in the south-west to have more than a partnership. We are ready to move into a joint approach to the whole of the south-west, including strategic issues like going beyond partnerships and talking about joint sovereignty for that part of the country. I know that they are terms that will freak people out, but, believe me, they should not. They are all about us working together. There are about us taking on the responsibility and, of course, we do not want money from ATSIC. We do not want money from government. If we are in partnerships, we should be getting the money in the same way as government gets it. We can set our own priorities. If, for instance, we feel that our kids are at such a crisis point with child abuse, we can put all of our efforts into that and clean it up.

The biggest factor with housing here is something I heard before when I was out at Warburton. People were driving around in this huge cattle truck that was the school truck.

People said that was exactly what they needed out at Warburton because of the rough roads and kids getting in. I reckon they would have been pretty good cruising around in an airconditioned double-storey bus as well. Why should our people in Newman take second-hand things off the mining industry when we should be getting all of the stuff up-front for ourselves? We should have proper housing.

There is this burden of racism in WA that you guys have to understand is a major hurdle for us. It comes out quite clearly with all of the papers and Cathy Freeman and stuff. I am glad Cathy stuck it into all of them and got a gold. The committee has to understand that WA has a special place in that. Even our Labor and Liberal politicians have lobbied the Commonwealth to overturn national land rights and, quite recently, other debates of national interest to Aboriginal people in the state. We are up against that. That is why these people in these houses are not given proper maintenance. Aboriginal people are put into houses that are already second-rate houses because we are still regarded as second-class citizens. That is a major change. This partnership will change that mind-set of Australia and also the mind-set of our people who would find that a difficult concept as well to deal with.

What we can offer the committee at the moment is this partnership developing in the south-west where we could find groups of people that could look at the whole region as a partnership. The committee could understand that WA has a special situation. For instance, state housing in WA will not at all accept Aboriginal cultural values within the way it administers Aboriginal housing. That is a major problem.

At the legal service I get a call once a week where vigilante groups have set up to push Aboriginal people out of a street. I am not saying that the Aboriginal family is not suffering the social problems that our people do and, therefore, causing irritation, but that is not really the problem. It has to stop because people are pushing one another away. Ethnic cleansing is happening in WA. In nice suburbs in the northern suburbs there are active people from within Homeswest trying to clean Aboriginal people out of those places. The way that we are perceived and seen and treated in this state is a major problem for us. The fact is that we can move towards a partnership and get away from government funding and assistance and do something positive to change the mind-set of not only white Australia but our mob as well.

CHAIR—Dennis and Edward, thank you very much. We look forward to receiving your submission. I think you would agree with me that the terms of reference that Minister Herron has drafted for us to pursue this inquiry will enable a lot more sensible dialogue to occur and, hopefully, help us strengthen the partnership arrangements and achieve that governance by Aboriginal people themselves. I think a lot of the solutions lie in people being able to be totally responsible for their own decision making. From that you get the best support systems. On that note, I wish you well.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 11.49 a.m.