



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

TUESDAY, 1 MAY 2001

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS
Tuesday, 1 May 2001

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: Mr Lieberman, Mr Haase, Mr Lloyd and Mr Snowdon

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.

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Committee met at 9.06 a.m.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the committee's inquiry into the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As you know, the committee began this inquiry at the request of the then Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Senator John Herron. The new minister, the Hon. Philip Ruddock, has also indicated his enthusiasm for the committee to continue its work. The inquiry will assist the government's continued introduction and development of practical measures to help indigenous people. We are consulting as widely as possible, and today's hearing in Alice Springs is one of a number being conducted across the country. We wish to hear from interested parties—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—in a spirit of friendship, cooperation and building partnerships.

[9.08 a.m.]

BRAND, Mrs Tracey, Senior Executive Officer, Tangentyere Council Inc.

LENEHAN, Ms Kerri Elizabeth, Research and Policy Adviser, Tangentyere Council Inc.

TILMOUTH, Mr William Roy, Executive Director, Tangentyere Council Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome all. 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; it may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. We have received a submission from you—thank you very much for that—which has been published. Would you like to make any opening statements before questions?

Mr Tilmouth—The committee has received our submission. In addition, I would like to make a brief opening statement. The purpose of this statement is so that the committee can gain an understanding of the history of indigenous people in urban areas like Alice Springs—a history that continues to inform decision making at Tangentyere Council.

The town camps began in Alice Springs even before the town was gazetted in the 1880s, as a direct result of Aboriginal people being dispossessed of their traditional lands. Although initially accepted as convenient ration distribution points and labour camps in the 1900s, opposition to the town camps grew with the growth of the non-Aboriginal population. But the camps survived, initially by resisting or avoiding measures set up to remove or assimilate them. Such measures include at least four official round-ups and forced evacuations of town campers to bush communities between the years 1929 and 1960, and the declaration of Alice Springs as an area prohibited to Aboriginal people from 1928 to 1964.

However, the town camps remained, due in part to administrative regulations that reinforced their presence, such as the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and their placement at the Bungalow in town, which in turn attracted their families to come to town to be closer to their interned children. Secondly, there was the lack of recognition of Central Australian Aboriginal land needs. Camps also remained attractive to Aboriginal indigenous people because, although they lacked services, they were not regimented like the missions and settlements and represented an escape from culturally destruction programs carried out in those places. I cannot begin to depict the proscribed life people led on missions and settlements. As one of my executive, Wenten Rubuntja, recalls, ‘We got lost in the welfare days, and then we started Tangentyere Council. We picked up people out of the drains. We asked for traditional land from the Northern Territory government.’

From the 1970s, with increasing involvement of Aboriginal people in the land rights movement, the town camp struggle began to change from one of resistance to actively asserting our rights. Thus, the disparate town campers that were living in humpies made from bags, branches, sheets of iron, tents and iron sheds with no ablution facilities and limited access to water began to demand land tenure, shelter and services. In 1977, they formed their own representative and resource organisation which they called Tangentyere Council.

From 1977, the town camp struggle had been for independence, control and self-determination. Today Tangentyere Council manages 200 houses and 70 tin sheds on 18 special purpose leases for approximately 1,500 to 2,000 residents. It is hard to determine the exact town camp population, as camps also play host to a constant visitor population from Central Australian communities. In essence, Tangentyere provides actual and cultural space for Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. Our role is to address and self-define needs of our clients to shield and protect them from the inconveniences resulting from state neglect, market forces and social bigotry and discrimination—overall, to enable the disempowered to feel stronger in the world. We have a saying at Tangentyere that our clients are our bosses. This reflects the governing structure of the council and ensures that the town campers retain responsibility for designing and delivering the services to meet their needs. We consider that Tangentyere Council is a model organisation of civil society, for we enable people to take responsibility for their lives.

According to Vaclav Havel, responsibility is the key to human identity for it makes possible the separation of self from the world and enables the self to become an independently thinking, judging human being. The converse is what Havel describes as nothingness, which means a human personality that is virtually dissolved into its surroundings. We argue that nothingness is what assimilation, mandatory sentencing, social bigotry and discrimination produce, and evidence of this can be found at the level of substance abuse in Aboriginal communities. Governments and agencies need to recognise their role in producing the conditions of nothingness for, despite operating in policy frameworks called self-management and self-determination, non-indigenous control is the reality for most Aboriginal people. At present, many Aboriginal people have little or no control over crucial areas of their lives, welfare payments being a case in point. I raise welfare payments because I know that the committee heard evidence from Northern Territory government officials about the culture of welfare dependency in the Aboriginal community. I dispute the whole notion of welfare dependency of Aboriginal people in Central Australia, and I believe that my argument is supported by statistics. To this end I table a brief paper prepared at the direction of the Papunya Regional Council for a visit from the ACCC. That paper is included in the annual report.

CHAIR—We will introduce that as an exhibit into the public record. It is ordered that the document tabled by Mr Tilmouth, entitled *Regional issues brief*, by Papunya ATSIC Regional Council be accepted as an exhibit and received as evidence to this inquiry.

Mr Tilmouth—I want to bring to the committee's attention the fact that most Aboriginal people in the Central Australian region fail to access welfare payments, one, because of difficulty in accessing and maintaining work for income, the inadequate Centrelink services on remote communities, low literacy and numeracy levels, and the lack of an interpreter service; two, because of the inability to budget and maintain a level of financial independence because there is no informed access to appropriate banking or financial services—this forces indigenous people to utilise non-regulated services such as stores, taxidriviers and hawkers; and, three, because of the excessively high cost of living and the unethical and opportunistic practices of some businesses towards Aboriginal people.

We lobbied to have a Centrelink office located at Tangentyere Council because, in assisting with tax returns, our financial counsellor picked up that the mean income of town campers was \$3,000 per annum. When we started our CDEP, over 60 per cent of the participants were in

receipt of no income. Is this welfare dependency? Where is the welfare safety net for Aboriginal people?

Consider as well that a large number of Aboriginal people do not actually receive any money. Captured on the book-down merry-go-round, their cheques get directed to a store. The store owner allows the people to take goods in exchange for the cheque, and most people have debts. Artists exchange paintings for boxes of groceries. Desart found that, in one year, work of Utopia artists sold for \$38 million. Needless to say, the profits did not go to the Utopia artists. Is this welfare dependency? No! Aboriginal people live in a created condition. We have spent the last two centuries having our behaviour constrained and prescribed by non-Aboriginal people.

The inefficiency and ineffectiveness I described in relation to Centrelink services is replicated, to a greater or lesser degree, in all services such as local government, education and health. We have become an industry. People earn tidy incomes from the Aboriginal industry and they have vested interests in seeing our disadvantage continue. Some of the ways in which the Northern Territory government spent the Commonwealth funding for Aboriginal programs have been well documented in reports like *Learning lessons* by Senator Bob Collins. Whose welfare is being looked after?

Aboriginal disadvantage will continue while we have no responsibility and no control over our lives. Things have not changed that much from the days of assimilation; while the methods of control may be a little more sophisticated, the outcomes remain the same. At Tangentyere, we recognise that the only alternative to nothingness is the struggle to establish a self capable of acting responsibly in the world. This is what the elders of Tangentyere Council understood when they formed the council in 1977 and this is the way we continue to operate. We also argue that only organisations from civil society are capable of fulfilling this role. However, throughout its history, the Tangentyere Council has had to battle for its very existence and, despite the large number of homeless people in Alice Springs, expanding the number of special purpose leases was never considered as an option.

When Tangentyere Council wardens went out to talk to river campers, we found 400 people in 51 groups who were living in the rivers and creek beds for a variety of reasons, but predominantly because of a lack of any alternative accommodation and transport. Significant numbers of Aboriginal people in Central Australia are still waiting for the return of their country and non-Aboriginal people want more land for development.

It is a contest over the actual ownership of space that underlies the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships in urban areas. In Alice Springs, this contest generally takes the form of questioning the behaviour of Aboriginal people in the town area and challenging the right of Aboriginal people to have space in which to effect control. The implications are that Western values are predominant in urban areas, and Aboriginal cultures are tolerated only if they remain out of sight or conform to the dominant culture. Conforming to the dominant culture means hiding your Aboriginality, keeping a low profile, paying your so-called market rent in advance and, most importantly, keeping your relatives and visitors away. The failure to comply ultimately results in eviction.

Aboriginal people in urban areas are criminalised. Their lives are scrutinised by a host of government agencies, and their existence is publicly debated in the media. Almost inevitably,

there are calls for people to be removed. Tangentyere Council established the return to country program, which is designed to assist visitors who become stuck in town. This program has been questioned by the Northern Territory government at the very time when more people are being caught up in the mandatory sentencing provisions and are going to jail. Jail is a high-cost option that costs approximately \$60,000 per year per person. Tangentyere operates a return to country scheme of \$200,000 per year, which results in significant savings in the law and justice budget. This \$200,000 assists more than 400 people per year to renew their lives by returning them to their country and community.

We consider that it is time for governments and their agencies to be more accountable in their dealings with indigenous people. It is imperative that governments and their agencies recognise the importance of giving the responsibility back to Aboriginal people. It is not good enough to continue to pay lip-service to self-determination; this creates nothingness. Unless the situation is addressed now, it is the future generations that will pay a higher cost. The submission makes a number of recommendations on some urgently needed changes, and we are happy to answer the committee's questions.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Bill. There have been almost 30 years of struggle. Can you tell me whether you have a good relationship with your ATSIC regional representatives in this area and whether they help you?

Mr Tilmouth—We have a fairly comprehensive relationship with ATSIC. ATSIC is basically our main source of funding; we get very little funding from anywhere else.

CHAIR—I do not expect you to have these figures in your mind, Bill, but I noticed that there are no financial statements in the annual report of 1999-2000. Would you be able, within the next week or so, to provide the committee with details of your financial statements, please?

Mr Tilmouth—I am sure that we can do that, yes.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I am not suggesting that anything is wrong with those; I just wanted to see what the financial cash in and cash out was—where you were getting funds from. Having said that, without expecting you to be absolutely accurate, can you give me a ballpark figure: how much do you receive from the collection of agencies per year—Commonwealth, state, local or otherwise—for the work you do?

Mrs Brand—With all programs put together, \$3 million. Would you say \$3 million?

Mr Tilmouth—I would say in excess of \$3 million. I would estimate it to be around \$8 million.

CHAIR—Obviously, you do not have a surplus.

Mr Tilmouth—We never do.

CHAIR—I gathered that—things are stretched.

Mr Tilmouth—We are always in deficit because of the high demand of programs.

CHAIR—So when I see the financial statements, there will be an accommodating bank somewhere—someone understanding your plight. I am particularly keen to understand how you relate with the regional representative of ATSIC in this area in a working week, say. How does it work? You said that most of your funds come through ATSIC. How do you have this relationship? You talked about being in more control yourselves. The reason for my asking the question—it is not a trap question—is that what is going through my mind is: would it be better to fund you direct rather than through agencies? I am not suggesting that that is what I will recommend, but I want to know your thoughts on this.

Mr Tilmouth—I totally agree with the notion of direct funding. It assists the organisation to plan better. It assists the organisation to look at a yearly plan and then next year not have to budget to continue with that program. It also has more flexibility in where funds can be directed to assist the most urgent need. I totally agree with the notion of direct funding.

CHAIR—Has the council ever made a submission to governments and ATSIC along those lines and, if so, has there been any response?

Mr Tilmouth—That agenda of direct funding has been on the backburner for quite some time, along with the agendas for regional authority, regional agreements. These are all issues that have been up there, but we have never really defined them as such in the Central Australia region.

CHAIR—I personally am very sympathetic to direct funding. If direct funding were argued for in our report—I am not saying that that is what my colleagues will agree to; it is open for discussion—there would have to be principles of accountability, performance measures and those sorts of things to get it from governments. First of all, how would I argue the case for you that you are truly representative of the group of people for whom you wish to get direct funding? In other words, are you and your representative body elected regularly by the people?

Mr Tilmouth—Every year we have AGMs. Each town camp is an autonomous and independent body. They holds their own AGMs and elect a member who then becomes a member of Tangentyere Council. The Tangentyere Council runs its own AGM, and members decide the president and office bearers. I believe that we are totally accountable in relation to governments. Historically we have gone through the wears and tears of accountability, but our most recent history indicates that we have learnt the ability to be accountable to government, but our emphasis is also to be accountable to the people we serve.

CHAIR—Absolutely.

Mr Tilmouth—Accountability works both ways with us: our bosses are our clients and our clients are our bosses. It is a governing structure that does not allow for much leeway in any way but for accountability to people and accountability to government.

CHAIR—I am interested in what I can do in that regard. I will leave my colleagues to ask their questions now. I may have some round-up questions at the end.

Mr LLOYD—I am most concerned about your comments on the number of people who are not registered for benefits or who are not accessing government services. Obviously, one of the council's roles would be an advocacy role to make sure that people can access services. Is there any way in which that could be done better? You mentioned Centrelink benefits. But the other concern I have is Medicare and access to health services. Have you any ideas on how that could be improved—that is, how you as a council and governments generally could get in touch with those people and help them to access those services?

Mr Tilmouth—Tangentyere Council currently has a one-stop shop. This is due to Centrelink and the manager who was here previously. The minister, Larry Anthony, was here last week or the week before to open our Centrelink office at Tangentyere Council, which also has a family assistance officer, a job shop and a banking facility with an ATM, getting Aboriginal people used to keycards, et cetera. We are very happy with the progress that we have made in that direction. It is also a one-stop shop for Aboriginal people to access housing needs, pay rent, get repairs and maintenance done, talk to night patrols, to wardens and to legal service people and also to receive assistance in financial counselling.

Mr LLOYD—That must be a huge step forward.

Mr Tilmouth—Yes, it is a huge step forward, but it is only a one-off in relation to the Tangentyere driving towards that. It is paramount that access is open to people where they want it and how they want it or they will not access it. Historically, people had to come in and register at DETYA and then wander off down to the Centrelink office, or social security as it was in those days, and then wander back to DEWRSB. In between times, they got lost. They did not understand the forms or the process. The Tangentyere Council now has a process whereby people can walk from door to door and receive the services they need in their lives. We are quite proud of that. However, there needs to be more involvement by the education department, an area where involvement is totally lacking, and by the health sector. We do not have the access or input into the health arena that we would like. There are a heap of issues that relate to health, such as screening, epidemiological studies of diseases and things like that and we know a lot of our Aboriginal clients do not attend clinics until they are in crisis. The crisis-driven mode is the only way in which Aboriginal people attend hospitals or clinics.

We are probably heading towards prevention. That strategy works upstream. It involves environmental and preventive health. I believe it also involves primary health care because that is the first port of call in relation to health. We do not have women's and men's health programs at Tangentyere. There seems to be a stigma about the fact that those programs remain with the clinics, which close at 8 o'clock at night, and we know from our night patrol records that most of the injuries occur late at night and early in the morning. We do not have access to those services for long periods of time.

Mr LLOYD—Where do you take people if they are injured at night?

Mr Tilmouth—The night patrol has a hospital pick-up and drop-off service. After 8 o'clock, when the clinics are closed, they are taken to the hospital outpatients department, and the stress and strain that adds to the hospital staff is enormous. Having a mobile clinic attached to the night patrol would probably be a better answer than to have them all go to the outpatients department late at night.

Mr LLOYD—When you get people to access Centrelink payments, is there any backup help? You talk about the welfare trap and you are talking about people who have never been used to managing money and all of a sudden you have got them onto a benefit and they have money coming in. They may have no ability to manage that money. Is there any assistance available to help or guide them?

Mr Tilmouth—We have a financial counsellor, funded by the department of consumer affairs, who assists people with regard to finances. We also have a system whereby people can obtain food vouchers in the off weeks. It is feast or famine, and the system provides some food supplies during the off week so that people do not have to starve for a fortnight before they get their money again. We have tried a number of little programs in and around that. The minister, Larry Anthony, announced that they would be looking closely at weekly payments which will also provide assistance for those people.

Mr LLOYD—I know that this is a simplistic statement coming from somebody from an urban area, but I am concerned when you say that you can arrange food vouchers for the second week when their benefit should in theory, if they manage their money well, give them enough money to survive for the fortnight and to feed themselves and their family. I know that is not the case and that the situation is very different in areas like this. Perhaps you could elaborate a little on that.

Mr Tilmouth—One of the reasons why that happens is because people do not have fridges and so people do not have the ability to store and preserve food. If you buy fresh food, it is eaten within the first day because the meat will go off and so on. People do not have the income to purchase food.

One of the things I would like look at there is the supplying of whitegoods as part of housing construction. Whitegoods would enable people to wash their clothes, which would ultimately prevent skin infection and cross-infection of scabies and diseases like that. Whitegoods would also help with the storing of food and that would enhance nutrition. With the sort of lifestyle that Aboriginal people are living at this point in time, they do not have access to these things, and it is a fair bit out of your budget if you want to buy a fridge.

Mr LLOYD—Just one final question. Going back to the council itself and its make-up, you say you have annual general meetings for each camp. How are people eligible to vote at those elections? Obviously, you have a lot of people who come in and move out of the camps. Is it just the people who happen to be at the camp at the time of the election who are eligible to vote? What is the process?

Mr Tilmouth—Each camp has a list of members and those members might say, 'This person now has lived here for three months. He is here accessing a renal dialysis machine and needs to stay in town. He has been evicted from public housing and therefore has applied for membership. We will accept that person as a member.' They have a list of members, and it is only those members that vote for the executive of that town camp. That town camp then votes the members onto Tangentyere Council.

Mr LLOYD—Who decides to accept people as members or reject them?

Mr Tilmouth—The committee—the council—of that individual town camp, bearing in mind that they are autonomous and they are independent from Tangentyere. We are a resource centre and we facilitate access and help organise people in trying to get that access.

Mr HAASE—I do not have a lot of questions. It is a pretty good submission and you seem to be on the right track. I apologise for coming in a couple of moments late and I have not checked the handout that you have just produced. I would like to know approximately what area around Alice Springs we are talking about. Is it all of the camps around Alice Springs? What I am getting at is this: is there another group looks after some other camps around Alice Springs? Is there another group or are you the exclusive group?

Mr Tilmouth—We are the exclusive group in relation to the immediate area of Alice Springs. But there are out-station groups like Ingererer—

Mr HAASE—I understand. But you are the mob that is looking after those that are itinerant and in camps around Alice Springs?

Mr Tilmouth—I would not say they are itinerant. The majority of our people would be permanent residents.

Mr HAASE—Did you play host to the Kiwikurra mob from Western Australia during the floods?

Mr Tilmouth—Yes, we did to some extent, but they mainly stayed with the Norforce unit. But they have relatives in the town camps anyway. We would have seen the rise and decrease of people numbers.

Mr HAASE—Are you doing anything about reduction of drug and alcohol usage, through your organisation?

Mr Tilmouth—We have a youth activity service, which works with the youth of the town camps. It is a very progressive program. Not only does it teach them about horticulture and gardening, but there are youth activities and we also have a few education programs that the community have started themselves, because they needed to do something about the substance-abusing youth on their camps. They started an intergenerational school, which at this moment does not receive any funding whatsoever. It has a nutrition program. It has grandfathers sitting down with grandsons and grandmothers sitting down with grandchildren and learning in an intergenerational environment. With their participation, it works far better than a lot of programs we see.

Mr HAASE—Do the elders have any clout with the young bucks in the camps around here?

Mr Tilmouth—Traditional law is alive and well. But when you grow up and you see your grandfather totally powerless in the world that he should be powerful in, it does not leave you many aspirations for the future. When you see your uncle taken off by the police, there is no hope for the future. I can fully understand that the breakdown of traditional society is not one that Aboriginal people desire. It is a breakdown of the system where Aboriginal people are battling to come to grips with what Western society wants of them.

Mr HAASE—It almost becomes a choice between traditional influence and alcohol, doesn't it?

Mr Tilmouth—No, I think it is a myth about alcohol. We had a report done just recently, where non-indigenous alcohol drinking was found to be parallel to indigenous alcohol drinking. Alcohol is a product of a society that just totally disempowers you from any agency in your life or any responsibility in your life. If you fall back into what I call nothingness, than what have you got?

Mr HAASE—Isn't that just an excuse for just not taking responsibility for yourself, though? Couldn't we all be affected by alcohol if we felt a bit off or it was too easy? Justify to me why your organisation is not putting a lot of resources or fighting harder to get government resource to put in an alcohol abuse education program that involves everyone, not just you.

Mr Tilmouth—Our organisation was the founding organisation for two models. The CAAAPU model is a total abstinence model. That came from the Tangentyere alcohol committee. The other option we have is to learn to live with alcohol so, out of that alcohol committee, came the formation of an Aboriginal social club called the Tyeweretye Club. That club has been struggling for a long time. The original intent was to have four clubs where all the different language groups could go without running into each other, to give avoidance groups. So we were basically at the forefront of a lot of the issues in relation to alcohol.

Mr HAASE—Do you say that is not working? Is something wrong with the funding? What has happened?

Mr Tilmouth—It is just the pressures of society in relation to Aboriginal people and alcohol. We are expected to drink it and we are expected to die from it, but we are not expected to have agency in it. I am not advocating the wholesale selling of alcohol to Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people, but that is what is happening from the broader community and we do not have any agency whatsoever in the liquor side of things. I think what I am saying is that we need agency. Having agency, we can bring about control.

Mr HAASE—Are you suggesting—and I confess to having some personal support for the idea—that total abstinence in camps and communities is not the way to go? Given the significance of alcohol in the broader Australian community, it is always going to be accessible. Is some sort of controlled outlet of alcohol in communities something you and your peers would advocate?

Mr Tilmouth—I would totally agree with that. If Aboriginal people had agency within the alcohol industry, surely we could bring about reforms in the behaviour of our people. Learning to associate alcohol with food is something that has never been tried. Learning to use alcohol in an environment in which you own and control it or it is owned and controlled by other Aboriginal people is something that has never been tried. A lot of these things have been there and have never really been given the open door to be tried properly.

Mr HAASE—But at this stage your council is not putting any great effort into getting funding from ATSI/C, government or whatever to address the learning of the handling of alcohol by your people in the camps. That concerns me, that is all.

Mr Tilmouth—At this point in time, we run a night patrol program, which is an alcohol prevention program. Twenty years ago, you would have seen Aboriginal people drunk, lying around on the streets, open to abuse, open to scrutiny and open to police arrest. The night patrol program picks up people and takes them to the drying-out centres and to the police for protective custody. That is the strategy that we have taken.

Mr HAASE—Are you now getting fewer of those clients or customers each evening, with the ongoing exercise of that patrol?

Mr Tilmouth—We are getting fewer into the jail system, yes, because there are fewer getting into trouble.

Mr HAASE—How many would be delivered to a sober-up shelter each night?

Mr Tilmouth—Approximately 20 to 30 people.

Mr HAASE—Do you see that number declining at all?

Mr Tilmouth—We recently started a database to record all this information. Whether there is a decline or an increase would be hard for me to estimate.

Mr HAASE—I do not want to hog the questioning; I just see it as a major problem in camps in urban areas, and I wanted your point of view.

Mr Tilmouth—It is a major problem within the Territory.

Mr HAASE—Full stop—yes, I agree.

Mr SNOWDON—You might inform the committee of the debate about alcohol restrictions which is going on in the Alice Springs community generally.

Mr Tilmouth—The report called *Dollars from broken spirits* was too emotive for people—bearing in mind that the title came from my executive, and that is the way they feel about alcohol—and, as a result, the recommendations of that report really did not get much credence for advancement. But I totally agree with some of the recommendations on restricting liquor hours and so on—we are full supporters of that. We believe that this town is overpopulated by liquor outlets, to the extent that service stations even sell liquor. Yes, we agree with the current debate. Richard Lim, the member for the CLP government, held a meeting. It was a very good meeting in regard to the support that we added to it, but it has to go further. It has to take on board the Aboriginal voice in the alcohol issue—not so that it is an issue in which Aboriginal people drink and buy alcohol in extreme poverty. I do not agree with that, nor do a lot of Aboriginal people, and nor does my executive.

Mr SNOWDON—You might advise the committee about the existence of Yipirinya and its origins.

Mr Tilmouth—Yipirinya School is a bilingual school. It was started by our president, Mr Eli Rubuntja. It started from a little demountable in the corner of the yard at Tangentyere. Pastor Eli, a very distinguished man, started Yipirinya out of frustration at the lack of education for Aboriginal people. The slide shows Pastor Eli and Wenten Rubuntja, who used to be a member of the reconciliation council. Pastor Eli took it on board to start the school and, as a result, Yipirinya School has flourished. It now exists on a block of its own and it has full staffing and Aboriginal teachers as well.

Mr SNOWDON—And its focus is to provide primary school education for kids in the town camps.

Mr Tilmouth—Very much so.

Mr SNOWDON—I just want to make sure that the committee understands the full scope of what Tangentyere has been involved in since its beginnings. One of the issues confronting this committee is the question of welfare housing. Earlier you said something along the lines that when people are kicked out of government housing, you often get them into town camps, or sometimes you have people on the town camp lists. The reason I ask the question is that you also talk about house design in your submission.

CHAIR—And very helpful it is too.

Mr SNOWDON—One of the questions which is of interest to me, and I raised it yesterday, is whether or not the Northern Territory housing commission has ever discussed with you or any other organisation or individual in Alice Springs the appropriateness of its housing designs for Aboriginal people.

Mr Tilmouth—No, they have not. I am also a member of the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory, which I believed was a whole-of-housing approach to indigenous housing. To my dismay I found that we have an agency in remote housing but we do not have agency in public housing in urban areas. The reason I am dismayed about this is that I see many people from remote areas who want to access renal dialysis machines to sustain their life and they have to wait three months for out-of-turn housing. They get the out-of-turn housing and, after three complaints, they are evicted. I have known of old people who have lived in the river for nine months and who get picked up every second day to be taken to a renal dialysis machine and then dropped off by the river again, where the hygiene is just not conducive to sustaining life.

I am appalled that the housing commission has policies that exclude Aboriginal people from within the urban setting. The houses were designed for the nuclear family of husband and wife and three children. Aboriginal cultural traits determine that you have a responsibility for an extended family as well. I am not saying that you should design the house to accommodate your entire extended family, but the important members should be there with you.

The Aboriginal people who come in from areas such as Kiwikurra, Kintore, Papunya, Urapuntja and so on have a backyard that is as wide as you can imagine and then they have to conform and live within a square block about the size of this room or a bit bigger. That is a very hard adjustment for Aboriginal people to make. Ultimately, those people fail those tenancies

and end up on town camps. Currently we have 22 patients living on town camps. It is out of sympathy that the committees of those town camps have accepted them as members and have accommodated them.

Mr SNOWDON—Do you have any transport that assists town campers to travel into town or to go to the clinic for dialysis?

Mr Tilmouth—No, we do not. That is a commercial contract that is handed out to another organisation because we do not have the inside running on the information of that contract. The organisation provides that service without being identified with those people. Once again it is the consumer—that is, the renal patient—whose needs are bypassed.

Mr SNOWDON—In Darwin yesterday there was a lot of discussion about itinerant movement and about people coming from the bush and camping in town. You have referred to that this morning. We have also heard you refer to the return to country program. Can you expand on the return to country program? Can you tell us how it is funded, how it works and whether or not you think it is successful?

Mr Tilmouth—Let me start with Aboriginal people coming into the town of Alice Springs. Alice Springs is the service centre of Central Australia. People come in to access a whole heap of services. I have mentioned renal dialysis machines, but they also come in to visit family members in jail, to visit children in educational institutions, to buy spare parts for cars, to buy cars and to do shopping. When they have done all of that, they sit down and have a few beers. But sometimes they come in with vehicles that you would consider not roadworthy—

CHAIR—Not all of them sit down and drink.

Mr Tilmouth—Not all of them, no. That is just a—

CHAIR—I think it is terribly important for us as a committee to be constantly reminded that not all of them sit down and drink.

Mr Tilmouth—Not all of them. Some of them go directly back once their business is done.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Tilmouth—Yes. I am sorry about that.

CHAIR—No, it is fine. I think your evidence is excellent.

Mr Tilmouth—I was just saying that with vehicles that are considered roadworthy in remote communities, once they get into the confines of Alice Springs, they are found to be defective and are taken off the road and there goes the transport system of that entire family. As a result of that they have no way of getting back to their communities and they have nowhere to live, so they fall back within the realms of the fringes of the town camps and they live there. After a while you will get a group building up, so what we do with our wardens is that we go out and talk to people and, if they identify that they would rather be back on their community and they

do not have the means to get there, we will then offer a bus service to take the entire group back. In this way they can access their cheques and return to community life.

It is a pressure valve for the entire community of Alice Springs and it is funded by the Territory government for \$200,000 per year. This year we were threatened with a cut in funding as of the next financial year, but political pressure came to bear and all of a sudden we have got a reprieve. We are smiling a bit on that one because it is such a valuable service, not only to the indigenous community but to the non-indigenous community, because people feel intimidated when there are a whole heap of Aboriginal people in town.

Mind you, they get attracted in because there is commercial gain for people. The Lightning football carnival is one example of the town benefiting economically from the money that is spent by Aboriginal people, although once that money has gone, those Aboriginal people become invisible. I think that is the sad part about the commercial activities of this town in relation to Aboriginal people. We assist those people who are economic prisoners to return to their communities.

Mr SNOWDON—I have one final question. One of the issues that has also been discussed is the relationship between organisations like Tangentyere and the mainstream local government. Can you explain your arrangement with local government here, and can you also explain—if you have time—what the disincentives are for Aboriginal people being involved in local government elections?

Mr Tilmouth—The local government elections here?

Mr SNOWDON—Yes.

Mr Tilmouth—We ran a candidate here who ended up with the third-highest number of first preference votes and, after the count, he ended up 11th—and the council only had 10 members. It is not a reality that Aboriginal people can be actively participating in the council or the local government council here. But we have a new council which is far more progressive than what has historically been the case, and we have now reached an agreement—a memorandum of understanding—with them.

One of the parts of that MOU is that they will seek proportional representation, which will allow Tangentyere or the town council to have at least one or two representatives on that council. I think that is progressive, but that was stopped by the Northern Territory government when we first asked for it. Now that it is in the MOU, we are only waiting on the goodwill of the Northern Territory government to allow us to do that, because hopefully then we can have Aboriginal people participating within the community of Alice Springs on the local council.

CHAIR—I have a couple of questions, Bill. You can take them on notice and maybe your council would be kind enough to write to the committee. If you could do it within the next fortnight, that would be helpful to our deliberations. I would like to know something about how your council and its members relate to the land council in this area, the Central Land Council. I was naturally moved and worried by the introductory remarks in your submission about the feeling of sadness and dispossession that your people have. I could feel the anger coming through those words, and I know that anger is one of the contributors to people losing esteem

and not having good health. I understand all that. Then I was thinking to myself that I had better find out a bit more from you, Bill, as to how the asset—the land in this area—now owned by the land council is being planned and managed in order to be made available to the benefit of your people so they can have that link with their land. I wonder whether you would be kind enough to write to us and give us some details of the ways in which you are working with the land council, how you have access to the management of land under the land council stewardship and what plans you have for the future in relation to that. My dream would be that the land council would be allocating particular areas of land, under suitable arrangements, to give security to your members in appropriate areas. That could enable you to build more houses and things like that. It could even promote the idea of home ownership in appropriate cases for some of your families. So could you enlighten us with a submission along those lines?

The other one is a pretty big order. You do not have to write to me on this one if you do not feel comfortable about it, because I understand you do not want to talk about other people's lands too much. But, wherever I have been on this inquiry—and in the last five or six years since I have been chairman, I have been to Adelaide, Darwin and Perth the other day—we are told about the overcrowding of public housing by family coming to stay. We had graphic evidence the other day from some Adelaide grandmothers—a magnificent group of women who are taking positive steps to try to help youth with drug problems in Adelaide CBD. One of the grandmothers said that she had a three-bedroom home—it was public housing and she was the tenant of it—and 40 members of her family arrived. One of her friends—another member of the grandmothers' group—said that this grandmother became a homeless person too. It was impossible for her to stay in her own home. Her grandmother friend said, 'I actually gave her one of the beds in my house.' You have touched on it a bit today, and certainly in Darwin yesterday we heard about it. What I am asking is very sensitive and I say it with great respect to you. Could you guide the committee on how traditional law and custom in those areas can be discussed and examined with a view to trying to get less pressure on Aboriginal families in their homes so they do not have to cope with this huge number of people coming in and causing overcrowding and in some cases, sadly, eviction and all that sort of thing?

Mr Tilmouth—I can write you a response in relation to that. But, in a nutshell, one way we see of preventing that from happening is the decentralisation of services to larger remote communities—

CHAIR—Fix it at the core.

Mr Tilmouth—Yes—so that the essential services are out there with people and there would be less demand to come into town to get those services. I think that probably is very much along the lines of regional authorities, regional agreements.

CHAIR—Thanks, Bill. Give a bit of thought to the other side of it, the cultural side, and how that might be done by the white man, who has not done too well in the past in trying to get understandings with your people. I would like to wish you well, Bill, with your staff and members. I thought your evidence was excellent, and we will do what we can to support you in our report. Thank you very much.

[10.05 a.m.]

AH CHEE, Ms Donna, Acting Deputy Director, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

CARTER, Ms Elizabeth, Cabinet Member, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

McMASTERS, Miss Donna Marie, Secretary, Cabinet, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

ROSEWARNE, Mr Clive George, Research and Policy Officer, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

CHAIR—I welcome witnesses from the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. 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. Hansard reporters will be taking a record of what is said today. From time to time, I may ask you to repeat or spell place names so that we can record the details accurately. We have received a submission from you, and I thank you for that. That is part of the public exhibit now. Before we ask you questions, do you have any additional statements you would like to make?

Miss McMasters—Yes, we have one. Can I go ahead and read that?

CHAIR—Do we have copies of it?

Miss McMasters—No.

CHAIR—That is a bit of a problem. How many pages is it?

Miss McMasters—This is not additional. We were told to provide a 15-minute statement.

CHAIR—Go ahead. I am just conscious of the time. I was trying to streamline it. If you had a long statement, we could get a photocopy.

Miss McMasters—The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to expand upon some of the points of our submission to your current inquiry. Congress has been a strong advocate for the rights and needs of the Aboriginal population of Alice Springs since its establishment in 1973. Congress is an organisation of Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people, controlled by Aboriginal people.

We believe that the particular needs of the urban dwelling Aboriginal population of Alice Springs are often overlooked or ignored. There are many reasons for this—often policy makers exhibit a rather simplistic view of what makes up a community. Aboriginal communities in remote areas and those in larger metropolitan urban centres are relatively easily defined both geographically and by how they look socially. We believe that similar recognition for the

distinct community characteristics of regional urban Aboriginal communities is still to come. The Aboriginal resident population of Alice Springs is a distinct community that has its own dynamic and cohesion based upon traditional and current affiliations. This is also a population that faces particular issues because they live in an urban environment.

There are approximately 4,000 Aboriginal people resident in Alice Springs. The town area is situated on the land of the Mparntwe-arenye. The Mparntwe-arenye are central Arrernte people. Although the Aboriginal population now comprises many different groups, the sense of community is maintained through a complex array of family and organisational relationships. While it is a recognisable community, this does not mean that it is necessarily a unified community on all issues. It is a dispersed community when compared with those in remote areas, in part because at times of the overwhelming presence of the non-Aboriginal population. These factors often mask the existence of the community to non-Aboriginal observers.

When dealing with the Aboriginal organisations in town, it is very important for policy and decision makers to understand how the organisations are defined and their different roles. It is vital that people do not attempt to take shortcuts when trying to find representative bodies and organisations to deal with. Misinformed approaches when seeking community consultation or attempts at establishing bilateral agreements within this environment may be, or be seen to be, meddling in local Aboriginal political and community processes.

Congress established a medical service in 1975 and now runs a comprehensive primary care health service that currently sees over 6,000 individual clients per year, which adds up to approximately 27,000 consultations annually. As we all know, Aboriginal Australians continue to experience worse health than the rest of the Australian population. The statistics vary greatly across Australia, but generally are worse in the Northern Territory than elsewhere. Mick Dodson has stated that the alarming health statistics for Aboriginal people have been 'so frequently quoted that most Australians tend to accept statistics such as these as being almost inevitable'. It is vital that both our community and the broader non-Aboriginal community remain alert to the appalling suffering, social disadvantage and ongoing discrimination that these statistics represent.

For many years, the congress has been arguing that Aboriginal health needs to be considered within a holistic framework. The physical, cultural, economic and emotional environments in which many Aboriginal people live must be considered in health planning if there is to be any prospect of creating long-term improvements in the health status of the Aboriginal population. This position is supported by the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, the World Health Organisation and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The National Aboriginal Health Strategy stated:

"Health" to Aboriginal peoples is a matter of determining all aspects of their life, including control over their physical environment, of dignity, of community self-esteem, and of justice. It is not merely a matter of the provision of doctors, hospitals, medicines or the absence of disease and incapacity.

Health is not just the physical well-being of the individual, but the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole community.

This definition is very similar to that adopted by the World Health Organisation:

Health ... is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity ... [it] is a fundamental human right.

Our position is now also appearing in a growing body of academic literature on the social determinants of health. These studies have identified a number of social determinants as being the underlying causes of health and illness. Thus scientific evidence can be added to the pre-existing knowledge that Aboriginal people have been attempting to share with policy makers for years.

We would like now to briefly address each of the committee's terms of reference. We will combine the first and second. The key question that must be addressed for more effective delivery of services is how to empower Aboriginal people through policy development and program delivery. Programs need to do more than attempt to address disadvantage. They must actively engage people in the development and implementation of the programs. They must strengthen the control people have over their lives.

There are two ways that power can be exercised by Aboriginal people through their organisations: collectively and individually. By exercising collective power, communities exercise their rights and can mobilise themselves to achieve political change. Community controlled organisations also have the decision making power and legitimacy within the community to ensure encouragement of individuals to take a level of responsibility for their lives where they can, and in what ways. It is vital that the dynamic between collective and individual power is maintained.

We must ensure that there is active community involvement in and control of the organisation. Unless this occurs, our organisations run the risk of reproducing the organisational systems they were meant to replace. We do not want an elitist (top down) or welfarist (dependency) approach. While we do not wish to expand further on this issue, as we believe that it is a matter best dealt with between our organisations, we would note that the welfarist approach: calls for agencies to do things for people rather than with them; perpetuates a cycle of disempowerment and despair; tends to keep people in a state of suspended childhood unable to make decisions over their lives; and creates a compliant population, dependent upon the trickle of handouts from those agencies that have their hand upon the welfare tap.

Congress identifies two ways that governments can have an impact upon empowerment of Aboriginal people—directly through policy and programs, and indirectly through the processes involved in community consultation. Direct government policy has ongoing impacts upon the Aboriginal population. Aboriginal people have experienced directly and painfully the imposition of colonisation through the massacres that accompanied colonisation in Central Australia, which are within the living memory of Aboriginal people, and the removal of the stolen generation children which continues to have an impact upon communities today. Aboriginal people also experience the discriminatory hand of colonisation through the current policies of governments. In the NT, the mandatory sentencing policy is a stark example of a current discriminatory government policy, while the Collins review of indigenous education in the NT has highlighted the deficiencies of the government's education policy. Indirect policy implications are more subtle, but still destructive—being sidelined and ignored by the mainstream is a depressingly common experience for the Aboriginal community.

We would like now to highlight an area where we feel there has been a significant improvement in government policy to date. You have already been briefed in Darwin by the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the NT on the framework agreement, so we will not repeat what they said, except we emphasise that since the transfer of health funding from ATSIC to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care in 1995, and the establishment of the framework agreement, we have seen a fourfold increase in the level of funding available for primary health care. The new Primary Health Care Access Program will further increase resources for primary health care in Central Australia, especially for remote communities, up to the level of about \$2,000 per person. This should also mean a significant increase for PHCAP resources within Alice Springs. This will be a vast improvement, as congress is currently under-resourced for the population we endeavour to serve, receiving only about \$700 per person based on last year's client population. Overall, to date this process has been a positive outcome for government collaboration with the Aboriginal community regarding primary health care.

We must impress upon the committee that, in order to see improvements in Aboriginal health, the Commonwealth and NT governments must honour their funding commitments. This will involve an increase in funding in both the primary health care and environmental health areas. The Primary Health Care Access Program in the NT must be fully funded. There is currently a \$64 million submission with the Commonwealth government to implement PHCAP for the whole of the Territory. This program will benefit both remote and urban Aboriginal communities. In environmental health, the implementation of the National Aboriginal Health Strategy was costed at \$2.5 billion. Until this strategy is fully funded, environmental health conditions for Aboriginal people will continue to be poorer than for other Australians.

Your third term of reference asks you to look at the needs of our youth. It is widely recognised that our young people face many problems. At-risk behaviour is common. This behaviour, often ending in tragedy, is the obvious and extreme expression of the daily suffering that our youth experience. This experience includes few employment opportunities, continued negative and high levels of contact with the judicial system, poor access to appropriate education, low self-esteem, a lack of effective links into the world of Aboriginal culture, daily experiences of racism, and lack of opportunities offered by the white world. This leads to a lack of respect for self, family and community, substance misuse and other at-risk behaviours. That came out of the AMSANT 99 report. Governments have a duty to provide adequate resources to programs and to ensure that their programs and legislation assist rather than compound the problems faced by Aboriginal youth.

Learning lessons, the report on indigenous education by Bob Collins, has outlined the appalling failure of the government to provide a fundamental human right to Aboriginal people. It is important to note that the research now shows that the physical and emotional environments that children are reared in, both before and after they are born, have long-term effects upon their physical as well as mental health as adults. Too often, Aboriginal youth in Alice Springs are viewed as a group involved in a set of antisocial behaviours rather than as the future of a community's cultural survival. Government policy regarding youth should embrace a positive image of Aboriginal youth. This approach would express concern for both the social and emotional wellbeing of the individual and for the community in which they live.

Under the committee's fourth term of reference, congress sees that for far too long Aboriginal people have been written out of the history of Australia, and consequently excluded from the

social identity of the country. In Alice Springs, Aboriginal people are also physically excluded from the town area, their own country. The general community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, must take up the role of addressing the racism that still is here today, whether this be at an individual level or at a structural level.

The ongoing denial of the policies and attitudes of the past denies the reality of Aboriginal people's lives. The assimilation policy was an attempt to destroy Aboriginal culture. It has not only resulted in trauma for individuals of the stolen generation but also for their descendants in the communities from which they were taken. There is a clear need for the Commonwealth government to say 'sorry' on behalf of non-Aboriginal Australians to the Aboriginal community for that policy.

It is clearly the role of the Aboriginal community to find the mechanisms to link youth to their culture and to provide a framework for making sense of their intercultural pressures. Governments have a role in supporting Aboriginal communities in cultural maintenance through funding and policy support and by ensuring that the messages sent by government do not contradict this process.

To develop opportunities for economic independence for the Alice Springs Aboriginal community, three strategies should be considered. The first is how to strengthen existing employment sectors and industries. Particular attention should be given to supporting the community control sector, as this sector employs a large proportion of the local community and jobs that are highly valued for their role in serving the community. The second is to support the expansion of options within existing markets; for example, tourism and retailing. Due to the limited scope for developing new markets in this remote area because of economies of scale, policies should be targeted to gaining a share of those existing industries for the local Aboriginal community. Both tourism and retailing would be suitable industries, as they are both heavily reliant upon Aboriginal people: tourism for its product and retailing for some of its product—Aboriginal arts—as well as for a large proportion of its customers. Finally, this should be based upon a community development model to improve the communities' control over their social and economic environment and to develop the community skills in managing their own affairs and controlling the pace and amount of change that confronts them.

The relationship between health and housing has long been accepted. Access to housing as well as the quality and affordability of housing all impact upon people's health. Since the beginning of 1999, the Northern Territory government has embarked upon a policy of privatising much of its public housing stock. The effect of this policy has been a transfer of public housing into private investment. The near doubling of rents in the Alice Springs to market value has resulted in huge numbers of notices to quit. This in turn has led to overcrowding in other housing in town as well as the removal of Aboriginal people from the central locations of the urban area.

There are a number of concerns about how this policy has been implemented as well as its impact upon Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. Apart from those tenants who are forced to move out of their homes or into debt by the near doubling of their rents, tenants were also encouraged to purchase their homes. The market value of the houses is determined on the basis of the rents that are being levied. As these rents have nearly doubled since January 1999, some house sales have occurred at an artificially inflated price. The Northern Territory government is

both the vendor and the creditor of home ownership schemes. They are the agency that sets the value of their own property and then arrange the financing of the purchaser. In order to achieve redress of their individual circumstances, many Aboriginal people in Alice Springs have been forced to take legal action. Others have lost their homes of over 30 years. This policy has an obvious impact upon the levels of stress and social dislocation experienced by Aboriginal tenants and, consequently, upon the health of the individuals concerned and their families. Therefore, the policies should be reviewed by the Northern Territory government. The Commonwealth government should examine the impact of the policy with regard to whether the Northern Territory government is meeting its obligations under the funding structure of the national housing agreement while it sells off public housing stock.

One of the issues that the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress wishes to draw to the attention of the inquiry is the inadequacy of the funding formula under which the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory operates. IHANT was established as an authority under an agreement between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments with ATSIC. Under this agreement, moneys from the Northern Territory, Commonwealth and ATSIC are pooled. IHANT is then responsible for determining policies and strategies and the allocation of the pooled housing funds. The main limitation of this agreement is that the fund pool is inadequate for the level of demand it is attempting to meet. This process causes Aboriginal communities to be bidding against one another for these scarce funds. Clearly, what is required is adequate funding based upon a needs formula. Currently, funds available under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement are distributed on an equal per capita figure which does not account for a variety of regional factors. Under the CSHA, the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program funds that are allocated to each state are based on the 1987-88 survey. The funds from the ATSIC Community Housing and Infrastructure Program is also based on measures from the late 1980s.

The funding formula for Aboriginal housing in the NT is in need of a major overhaul. Work undertaken by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research uses the multimeasure indicator approach of homelessness, overcrowding and affordability to establish an adequate per capita figure. This work should be further examined.

CHAIR—On page 4 of your submission, you talk about the issue of identity being further complicated by the considerable number of Aboriginal organisations and you mention quite a number of them. You also talk about a clientele of about 4,000 Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. I am interested in how you are funded, and you can respond to this in writing rather than take up time now. Can you give me an up-to-date statement in the next two weeks, please, of your financial position, where you get your money from, et cetera? Would that be okay?

Ms McMasters—Yes.

CHAIR—Good, we will not take time on that now. Secondly, I am concerned, and I think you are too, that there is not enough being done to build up the management of services for your people at the coalface by people like yourselves. I support very strongly that principle, as I told the previous witnesses. How on earth can we do that well and efficiently with so many organisations? Then I see also that we have got ATSIC Regional as well involved in the situation, and a central Territory congress as well. You can see that going through my mind as chairman in this inquiry is the question, 'How can I help the Aboriginal people really well by

empowering them with the right to run their own programs right at the coalface when there are so many organisations?’

Can I ask you just in principle if you think that the opportunity now exists for your own people to come back with a model of how you would like to see the organisations rearranged, or do you want to keep them as they are? Do you want to keep ATSI Regional and all those things? Give me some thoughts on that.

Ms Ah Chee—I think that in terms of what the organisations do, although it may seem that there are a lot, the things that they do are mandated for those particular areas.

CHAIR—I do not want you in any way to think that I do not know they do good work or that their work is not needed. Please understand that. I am trying to work out ways of helping you do better in ways that you would like, rather than the way I say it should be done. Do you understand what I mean?

Ms Ah Chee—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you want to make some comments and give advice to the committee on this? Which direction do you want us to go: leave it as it is or what?

Ms Carter—Are you talking about the Aboriginal organisations?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Carter—I think we are doing a fair job. We want more resources, but we would like you to look at the things that we put into our submission and see if that could be improved upon.

CHAIR—I will do that too, but I am asking the broader question that you very correctly invited me to ask in the very well written paragraph on page 4 of your submission, where you drew my attention to the number of organisations. You say:

The issue of identity is further complicated by the considerable number of Aboriginal organisations present in Alice Springs and the lack of any single representative body.

I am picking up on that idea. That is great, but where is the next page that tells me what you would like me to do? It is not there.

Mr Rosewarne—I think the submission is asking you to be aware that there are a large number of organisations. It is not a criticism that there are, but a warning to outside people coming in trying to negotiate with the community to be aware of this wide variety and not to fall into the trap of thinking that if you consult one organisation you have consulted everybody in town. There is a complex array of organisations that do different jobs. It is not a questioning of those jobs; it says they exist and, if you come to negotiate, be aware that there are lot of people to negotiate with and to know what their areas of expertise are, and what the range of their speaking rights is, I suppose. You may have interpreted it maybe slightly differently from what the intent was.

CHAIR—I am allowed to hope. You know what I mean—I am a practical bloke. I come from the country like you do and I like to do things, rather than have to go through all the layers. However, I move on to the next question. Because you are specialist in the health area and you are doing such important work, how do you relate to the mainstream health providers in Alice Springs? Are they looking after you all right? Are they treating you okay? Are there any problems? I need to know what you think about them.

Ms Ah Chee—Through the actual framework agreement that you have been briefed on in Darwin, we do now have a much closer working relationship with Territory Health Services. There are arrangements in place where there are regular meetings about continuity of care with the Alice Springs Hospital. But that by no means says that everything is okay. They are meetings on issues relating to the provision of services to Aboriginal people in the town—that they are being delivered adequately. When we are talking about discharge of patients and the relationship between congress and the hospital—those sorts of discussions occur at that level.

CHAIR—I was pleased to hear you endorse the direction in health planning around Australia and Michael Wooldridge's work to try to get real partnerships going. It was echoed in the evidence yesterday in Darwin that you mentioned. That is great and we will report back on that and encourage him to keep up that work. Are there any bits of advice we can give Dr Wooldridge about more that you would like to do in that particular direction?

Ms Ah Chee—Yes. I think we could give some advice to other portfolios within the Commonwealth and state and territory areas about how this model should be seriously considered, particularly in terms of Aboriginal education, which is a previous background of mine. I think it is something that the Northern Territory government, along with the Commonwealth minister for education, Dr Kemp, could use to explore the framework agreements in Aboriginal education.

CHAIR—We will certainly take note of that.

Ms Ah Chee—Housing is an area that we have also mentioned in our submission. Although we have IHANT in place—no disrespect to IHANT—there is probably room for improvement in the way in which this mob has worked till now.

CHAIR—That is good advice. Thank you for that. We will certainly discuss that. By the way, I think I read about the Collins report on education for the Northern Territory government that there were 102 recommendations and 101 have just been adopted. Did I read that somewhere?

Mr SNOWDON—No funding has been made available, if that is what you mean.

CHAIR—I am not trying to get you to say that you are satisfied with the outcome; I just want to know. Is it right that they have been adopted by the Northern Territory government?

Ms Ah Chee—I cannot comment on that.

CHAIR—Who told me? Can anyone help me?

Mr HAASE—It is in our briefing notes.

CHAIR—Someone told our briefing note maker.

Ms Ah Chee—I am not sure if IAD have put in a submission, but they would surely be up to date with the implementation of that.

CHAIR—It was a pretty good report, wasn't it, the Collins report?

Miss McMasters—Yes.

Ms Ah Chee—And they are things that have been said for a number of years. We need more Aboriginal teachers. There needs to be more negotiation with the Aboriginal community about what types of educational programs they have. There needs to be more say about the type of education that Aboriginal people want delivered to their children. We need more Aboriginal parents on community councils.

These are things that Aboriginal people have been saying for many years. What we currently have in the Northern Territory in terms of the Northern Territory government—in my understanding of the way in which the Bob Collins report has been handled—is that they have said that they will not give any additional money to implement the recommendations of that report and that cabinet has told the education department to go back and find the money within the department. So there will now be competing priorities. The education department will have to make decisions about competing priorities. That is not a useful way of looking at a report. As Bob Collins has said, if we do not do something in the next 20 years, we are going to have a social catastrophe in this community.

CHAIR—With my colleagues' permission, when we get back to Canberra I will ask our secretary, Mr Catchpole, to write to the Chief Minister and to the minister for education in the Northern Territory, enclosing a copy of the transcript of what you have just said, and ask for urgent comments back on that.

Mr SNOWDON—They comment all the time, brother; they do not give us any useful information. I want to raise a couple of quick points. I hope you are joking when, on page 12, you refer to an upper house in the Northern Territory.

Ms Ah Chee—Where is that?

Mr SNOWDON—You talk about governance issues, and I understand the intent of it, and the lack of accountability in the Northern Territory government, and the lack of transparency, freedom of information and judicial and administrative review. I know all about that. You refer to the lack of proper processes for parliamentary decision making and to the lack of a committee system. I know all about that. However, why the hell would you want an upper house? Who wrote this? I just think that it is a joke. I want to ask you a couple of questions, but I want to refer to your comments on welfarism which, frankly, I think are very ill thought out and cannot be justified. You describe welfarism as people on the drip if they have a visiting medical service in town camps—that is what is implied in this document, and I think you are on another planet.

Ms Ah Chee—Can I—

Mr SNOWDON—Hang on, just let me finish. If you think that welfarism means, as we have been told this morning, that when CDEP was started at Tangentyere 60 per cent of participants had no income at all, I think we need to discuss this argument. However, I have very strong views about welfarism personally, and I have very strong views about the way in which town camps should be serviced. Do you have a visiting service to town camps?

Ms Carter—No.

Mr SNOWDON—How do town campers who are crook get to the clinic?

Ms Carter—They ring for the bus to take them there.

Mr SNOWDON—What happens if they are living in the creek?

Ms Carter—They can go to the town camp where there are phones.

Mr SNOWDON—There are camps in my place and there are no phones there.

Ms Carter—What do you want them to do?

Mr SNOWDON—This is an interesting question. Yesterday we were told about a medical service in Darwin which has a mobile clinic. There was no inference from the discussion about the mobile clinic at that health service that there was an act of welfarism.

Ms Ah Chee—Because it services more than the town based areas, we also have a bush mobile which provides services within a 100-kilometre radius. I stand to be corrected, but I understand that the reason to withdraw the service to the town camps was because it was beginning to develop into a Mr Whippy van type of service in that it was going out and handing out medication, but not carrying out genuine consultations about a particular person's illness. As I understand it, that is one of the reasons why congress stopped that service. People have the service in town and we provide transport. People have to be able to make their own decisions and we do have a transport service to allow them to come to the clinic. The bush mobile enables us to maintain a service out in the bush where there is none at all.

Mr SNOWDON—Can you describe which areas you cover? How large is the congress service area?

Ms Ah Chee—It covers a 100-kilometre radius of Alice Springs.

Mr Rosewarne—The resident population is 4,000 people.

Mr SNOWDON—Does it cover the Ingkerreke camps?

Ms Ah Chee—Yes, it goes north and south.

Mr SNOWDON—I found something in here which was quite strange. On page 5, you talk about the fact that you do not really cover the ATSIC regional council. One assumes you do, because you cover most of the camps inside the Alice Springs ATSIC regional boundary.

Ms Carter—Yes.

Mr Rosewarne—Yes, with primary health care.

Mr SNOWDON—Yes. What interaction do you have with the other providers such as Tangentyere for town camps, Arrernte Council and the other service providers in terms of health provision for town campers and itinerants?

Ms Carter—They are all congress clients—they go to the clinic whenever they are ill.

Mr SNOWDON—I appreciate that, but I am talking about other aspects of health care, such as environmental health, nutritional support—whatever.

Ms Ah Chee—We deliver an outreach program for the kids at Yipirinya School. We also provide a service to one of the programs in one of the town camps—their educational program there. We also go out to Amoonguna, which is a community close to Alice Springs, but about 30 kilometres out. So we deliver not only those outreach programs but also our FAD program.

Mr SNOWDON—Just one more question, because I am conscious of the time: one of the issues which we addressed yesterday in Darwin and are addressing today is the question of alcohol and substance abuse. Congress has had a pretty forthright role in trying to advance the discussion about substance abuse and alcohol in the town. Could you give us an indication of what the initiative has been from congress and what the reaction has been from the broader community?

Ms Ah Chee—Congress has had a history in the whole struggle about the oversupply of alcohol in this town. We have, as I understand it, approximately 80 liquor outlets for a population of 25,000. It is just an oversupply.

CHAIR—It is a disgrace.

Ms Ah Chee—It is a disgrace, yes, and congress has been heavily involved in having the licensing commission for the Northern Territory consider a 12-month trial. We now have got close to that: the commissioner has gazetted and advertised a 12-month trial reduction in takeaway hours and also the sale of wine in casks over two litres. For us it has been absolute progress, but he needs to get community responses within 30 days. We know that the licensees and hoteliers association is obviously out there not wanting this trial to go ahead, but there has certainly been support for it by a number of Aboriginal organisations in town, the police, the town council and various other government departments, including Richard Lim, who recently facilitated a meeting on this issue.

Mr Rosewarne—Under the framework agreement there is also a working group on substance misuse, which includes grog issues, that has just developed a substance misuse plan for Central Australia, and that is currently before the four core partners being signed off.

Mr SNOWDON—What about juveniles, youth suicide and juvenile justice? Are they issues in which congress has got involved?

Ms Ah Chee—Yes. We absolutely oppose mandatory sentencing, and we have publicly displayed that. We have also made that clear in other submissions that we have made. We had a youth summit last week, and we would be happy to send recommendations to this committee on what youth were saying were issues that were affecting them as citizens of this town or of this region.

Mr SNOWDON—Were you hosting the summit?

Miss McMasters—Yes, at Ross River.

Ms Ah Chee—Yes. We had about 300 participants, and it was basically run by the youth.

Mr LLOYD—Mr Snowdon has asked a number of questions which I was going to ask. I have two questions basically. One is on your organisation. Can you elaborate a little on how large your congress is and how many people you employ? Do you have an annual budget? I know the chair has asked for some financial reports. Can you give us a one-minute snapshot of your organisation?

Ms Ah Chee—We employ up to 100. It can go up and down, depending on what particular projects are on, but generally it is around 90 to 100. We are quite a large organisation in that we also have a child-care facility. Our major core business is our clinical services. We also oversee a women's health and birthing centre, which is Alukura. Our social and emotional health program is a result of the *Bringing them home* report. Our annual budget—although I cannot tell you the exact figure—is about \$5 million.

Mr LLOYD—Of your employees, how many would be Aboriginal or of Aboriginal background?

Ms Ah Chee—If I had known I was going to be asked these sorts of questions I would have got the information from our department.

Mr LLOYD—It is just for my own interest. It has always been of interest to me to know how many Aboriginal people are involved in associations and in employment.

Ms Ah Chee—Of the staff there would probably be 60 to 40 Aboriginal representation. Our professional area is obviously that of the doctors. We do not have a lot of Aboriginal doctors around the country. We will one day. We are obviously supported well by our Aboriginal health workers. It is something that congress has been involved in for some years—our Aboriginal health worker program. All of our board members are Aboriginal. The senior management of the organisation are predominantly Aboriginal: certainly, the director and the acting deputy director are Aboriginal. In the next layer of management they are in the majority.

Mr LLOYD—That is very impressive, compared with some other organisations which we have taken evidence from over the years—not just in this inquiry. I think the percentage is very strong; it is very good.

Ms Ah Chee—The Aboriginal organisation in town, as we have said in our submission, is a major employment base for Aboriginal people. However, we do need to acknowledge that there is a real skills shortage and this applies right across the Northern Territory. We have to remind ourselves of this and ask why we have it. I think it is seriously an issue about education.

Mr LLOYD—On page 5 of your original submission you said that ATSIC has always suffered from its heritage in trying to gain legitimacy as a body representative of the local community's aspirations. You then go on to deal with the election of the regional council and the percentage of people that voted in that. What is your relationship with ATSIC? Do you have contact with your local ATSIC council and regional commissioner?

Ms Ah Chee—Since the transfer of health money to the Commonwealth, our main involvement has been with the Commonwealth and Territory Health Services, but we have a close relationship with ATSIC regarding the framework agreement. It is at that table at the policy level with congress, being represented by AMSANT—which you were briefed on in Darwin—where that concentrated interaction mainly occurs.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee. We would be grateful if you could let us have the information which we have requested.

[10.50 a.m.]

DIGGENS, Mr Rodney, Special Project Officer, Institute for Aboriginal Development Inc.

HAYES, Mr Richard James, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development Inc.

PEARCE, Mrs Elizabeth, Chairperson, Institute for Aboriginal Development Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome. 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 which may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. We have received your submission. Before we ask you questions, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Hayes—I have a background in indigenous education and employment. I have a public service background of 13 years with DETYA and Social Security, dealing with social issues and education, training and employment, as well as the remote delivery of services. I have headed the sections of both organisations which deliver services to remote communities. When I talk about urban Aboriginal needs I also mean the remote Aboriginals who are in town for visits and for family purposes and who fall into the category of obtaining services from the Institute for Aboriginal Development for indigenous education. The Institute for Aboriginal Development has had a long struggle to try to counter the lack of education within the Northern Territory and Central Australia region. We endeavour to try and meet the needs and give services to every client.

CHAIR—As a strong supporter in Australia—particularly regional Australia—of adult education services, I would like to record my personal appreciation of the pioneering work your people have done in developing adult education services for indigenous people in this nation. I think you were one of the five founding members of the federation. So you have a great history there. I have read your submission and it has been very helpful to me and given me a lot of food for thought. I want to know what your most pressing need is. In all the priorities—and I know there are many—what is the thing you would most like the Commonwealth government to do in respect of your area of specialisation?

Mr Hayes—Firstly, our pressing need is that, because we are an independent provider of indigenous education, we find at times that we do not meet the criteria or eligibility for the policies and procedures that are done through the Commonwealth. That puts us in the position that sometimes we have to justify why we deliver indigenous education in an urban environment and even in a remote environment. It is very hard for us to obtain funding to assist us to address this need because we are an independent provider.

CHAIR—Is that because the policies are not flexible enough?

Mr Hayes—Yes. Just as an example, we are funded under the DETYA IESIP program, which has now changed to Dr Kemp's NIELN strategy—the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy—which is based at primary and secondary level. IAD sits across all sectors.

Our students have to be over 15, so we deliver to adult students who do require primary and secondary, but also tertiary education and at times we have to find funding from different buckets to assist us in addressing these needs. For example, in my opening statement I said that we also give priority to remote communities in the delivery of services and education. That can be basic literacy and numeracy for an adult person, say a 30- to 40-year-old, who has no education at all. So we have to pick up all sorts of students.

CHAIR—It is an enormous task.

Mr Hayes—Exactly. When I worked in the public service dealing with social security issues and DEET issues, we found that with remote education there is a level that has, say, a grade 7 outcome. But when it is challenged and has to be compared with an urban environment, we find that the remote client will have only a grade 3 level. It is put back on us as an organisation to upskill adults, teenagers and young offenders just to be able to have an understanding of basic education needs. We start from basic levels of education but also go through to dealing with primary and secondary education. Also, we have linkages with La Trobe and, up until last year, the University of South Australia.

CHAIR—Did you say La Trobe in Victoria?

Mr Hayes—Yes, so we are very flexible.

CHAIR—I was a member of the University Council of La Trobe until recently, so good on you.

Mr Hayes—Our client groups have needs that have to be met. As I said earlier, we sometimes do not fit into the eligibility criteria of funding bodies. We have joined, as you are aware, the federation independent group in which we have a partnership with Tramby College and Taoundi College and also the Dance Theatre. We have the same problems because we believe there is a unique need and we are delivering a unique service.

CHAIR—You certainly are.

Mr Hayes—We find, at times, that our biggest arguments are over funding. For example, with IESIP—and I will get back to that—we started negotiations with DETYA with regard to this new strategy in which we have to fit with the six elements of the new strategy under NIELNS. We find that, because we did not fit primary and secondary education neatly, we had to justify our existence to get the funding to deliver. Up until now, which is 1 May, we have not signed off on a contract, but nor have many other providers in our situation.

CHAIR—Why not, Richard? They were approved but they have not been signed?

Mr Hayes—They have been approved. Three or four drafts had to be sent to the DETYA funding office and, with regard to that, we had to keep being called to justify why we are doing these services when they could be done by a mainstream school or a mainstream activity in a college. It is just because we deliver a unique service. As I said to you, a lot of our students have cultural backgrounds. It goes back to IAD not only being a place of learning but also

providing learning in a culturally sensitive, appropriate manner. That is the really good thing about IAD.

CHAIR—Is there any way that you would like us to help you with respect to the signing of the contract, or would you rather we not stick our nose into it? We might be able to write to the minister, but I am reluctant to do that if you feel that it is under control. Richard, is there any way we could help to get this contract signed? We do not want to stick our nose into it if it is going to complicate it. We could contact the minister for you if you want us to.

Mr Hayes—Up until late Friday we had open discussions with the secretary, Tony Greer, and Peter Buckskin in the DETYA office in Canberra. We found the cooperation very good and very full on. It is just that we did not actually fit the criteria at the time. We had to mould, mish and mash and shape our application to be accepted to release some funding.

CHAIR—So they have gone out of their way apparently to help you, which is very good; I am pleased to hear that. I would like to convey that to the minister, if you would not mind. It is a good development, isn't it—that it appears that the minister's team is endeavouring to listen to what you are saying and to adapt some of the programs and make them more flexible. Even though it is a bit arduous to get to that level, it appears that he is on the right track. Is that what you would like me to tell the minister?

Mr Hayes—Yes. These negotiations have been done there but in reality it is the uncertainty of our future in regard to the delivery of indigenous education. As we said, when the new policies were given last August to be negotiated with all the providers—and as of Friday we have just gone to the final rights to get them signed off, and that was our fourth draft—

CHAIR—So you are okay.

Mr Hayes—We made it but there has been toing and froing. Our biggest problem is that, because we do not get other funding assistance from the NT government and other agencies in regard to education, we are always putting our hand out to the DETYA office in Canberra to get the money.

CHAIR—Can I tackle that one with a question that will invite your advice on this issue. Do you have a three- or five-year business plan that enables you to forecast your needs and then put them to the federal department for dialogue with a view to hopefully getting some more certainty in your programs? Give me some guidance on how you go about that.

Mr Hayes—Just in regard to the strategy, it is a four-year plan, so we have put our plan for the next four years in regard to all the criteria that have to be met. Also we have focused on looking at our organisation; it has to be reviewed. DETYA is reviewing all independent providers to look at this funding issue, which we raised early last year. DETYA has given us the assurance that it will deal with us to try to find the right funding eligibility for all organisations like ours to be able to dip into a bucket to continue our services, and to deliver this unique service. Also, in regard to IAD, the board and the Special Project Office are all working together in looking at enterprises and at the development of business activities within the organisation as well. As you are aware, IAD is a partner of the Desert People's Centre. We are in partnership with Batchelor College.

CHAIR—Yes, I talked with your people in Canberra about that some months ago.

Mr Hayes—Exactly, I was one of the members that went down there.

CHAIR—That is right; I thought so, Richard.

Mr Hayes—We are looking at that five-year plan as well in regard to coming together following the partnership with the centre to indicate how we address indigenous needs with a wider scope.

CHAIR—I am going to ask my friends to come in on questions and you might like to think about this one and answer it when they have finished asking questions. I want to get your vision as to where you would like to head and where you should be heading in relation to information technology and overcoming the tyranny of distance with modern information technology. I would just like to get a few comments from you at the end of my colleagues' questioning on the other issues that they might raise.

Mr HAASE—Thanks for being here, Richard. How many courses and how many students do you have at this stage? What is currently the degree of your interaction with your community?

Mr Hayes—We have up to 22 courses. The number varies at times. We have national standard courses that are set. They start from certificate 1 and go up to certificate 4 and then into the diplomas and associate diplomas. On the other hand, we also run survival courses like Living Skills.

Mr HAASE—How many people have you got involved in these courses?

Mr Hayes—We have 80 staff. Fifty would be permanent and up to 30 are contracted and are brought in on short-term contracts in regard to the nature of the program. For example, last year we had our best numbers. We had 600 students come through.

Mr HAASE—Six hundred students?

Mr Hayes—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Was that a total of 600 students or was that one student for each of the three semesters? Is that 600 separate individuals?

Mr Hayes—Six hundred separate individuals, but when you look at it in regard to the FTE for, say, a 540-hour course, it worked out to be 200 FTEs. Because of IAD's unique situation, we do have courses that are 12-month, fully accredited courses, but because of the community needs—and at times we have to address these community needs—we are required to deliver flexible courses which could be for one month, six weeks, three months or six months.

I will give an example relating to flexible needs. We have run a workshop with the Tangentyere Council, Aboriginal housing and the NT government on the delivery of living skills. As you know, for an applicant to obtain housing from the NT government, they have to

sign a contract. If indigenous applicants need retraining, they can access the living skills training course that has been set up. We are running it, in partnership with Tangentyere Council and Aboriginal housing. It is meeting community needs. As I say, the organisation has the capacity to meet long-term aspirations of students but we are also required to meet community needs when the demand is there.

Mr HAASE—Tell me about that course. Where is it run? Is it run in communities or in buildings in Alice Springs?

Mr Hayes—It is run on our campus. We have guest lecturers who come in and explain policies and guidelines with respect to housing. We coordinate the respective providers and the people who have skills that they can deliver. We deliver in a culturally appropriate way so as to ensure that it is a two-way learning process.

Mr HAASE—That is the 40-hour course?

Mr Hayes—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Are you paid by the NT government for that course?

Mr Hayes—Yes, it comes under the flexible response funding.

Mr LLOYD—I have only a couple of questions. With respect to participants, how many of the students have no English at all when they come to you, and how difficult is that?

Mr Hayes—It is very hard to say. As is mentioned in my submission, there is a grade 3 capacity or less. We find that up to 70 or 80 per cent will have a grade 3 capacity or less. Up to five years ago, old ladies aged over 60 came in to learn how to write their names. That is why I referred in my submission to basic English—literacy and numeracy. They came in to learn how to write their names so that they were able to sign off on cheques, bank statements or whatever. A great majority of our students have English as a second language. At times barriers have to be broken down. That is why IAD is a place which offers culturally appropriate service delivery which maintains individuals' cultural aspects.

Mr LLOYD—How much of a disadvantage do you believe it is for an Aboriginal person not to have the ability to speak English?

Mr Hayes—I can refer to the example of the two laws. It is a classic example. An indigenous person has respect for and knowledge of their own law. When they come into an urban environment, there is a completely different law. What they do out in a community is not acceptable within town boundaries, and different laws apply there. The learning aspect relates to education itself—we have to break down the barriers to deliver the education at a level of understanding so that individuals understand that they have to abide by the two laws.

Mr SNOWDON—I am sorry I was out—and I have to go in a minute—but, if you have not already expressed it, could you provide an outline of the cooperative relationship you are developing with Batchelor and CAT and how that might impact upon service delivery for people in this community?

Mr Hayes—That is the cooperative arrangement with the Desert People's Centre, as I mentioned earlier, CAT, the Centre for Appropriate Technology, the IAD, the Institute for Aboriginal Development, and Batchelor College. There has been a long discussion over many years and it has come to fruition at this stage. Because there are up to 70 or more providers that are delivering some form of training to remote communities and indigenous people, we find that, if we cooperate, amalgamate some of our services and identify our specific needs and our specific areas of expertise, we are able to offset and support each other in the delivery of those services. For example, Batchelor College has been delivering health worker training for many years and we find there is a great need because it is addressing health needs in communities. It also gives the indigenous people a chance to be able to obtain skills that are relevant to their community needs. The Centre for Appropriate Technology is a technology centre looking at how to better service communities without power and electricity and how to get over that burden of the high cost of running essential services. The IAD, as a whole, has the appropriate learning style and also has cross-cultural courses, the press and interpreter services. We combine all that together so that we do not fight for the same bucket of money. That is how we identify it. There is a five-year plan.

CHAIR—Richard, I would like to ask if you would write to the committee, if possible in the next two or three weeks, giving us your vision on the future of IT with your organisation.

This brings to a close this public hearing in Alice Springs, and I would like to thank everyone—the witnesses and the public—very much for their attendance. I would like to record my thanks to Hansard, to the secretariat and to all those people who have assisted us with this visit today. I wish everybody well in their work.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Lloyd**):

That the committee authorise publication of the evidence given before it at the public hearing today.

Committee adjourned at 11.12 a.m.