COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

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

WEDNESDAY, 27 JUNE 2001

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Wednesday, 27 June 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: Ms Hoare, Mr Lieberman, Mr Quick 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.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 4.35 p.m.

BENNETT, Ms Stephanie Jean, Team Leader, Indigenous Employment Branch, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business

BLACK, Ms Susan, Team Leader, Indigenous Employment Branch, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business

HAWGOOD, Ms Dianne, Group Manager, Regional and Indigenous Employment Support Group, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business

GUMLEY, Ms Kate, Team Leader, Indigenous Employment Branch, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the committee 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 honourable 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. Today's hearing is one of a number that we have conducted around the country. We wish to hear from all interested parties, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in the spirit of cooperation. Although the committee does not require you to speak under oath, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Commonwealth parliament. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament.

We do not have a submission from you as such, although we have had a number of very valuable documents sent to us by your minister and the department. They have been made exhibits to this public hearing and are on the public record. Would you like to make an opening statement before we commence with questions?

Ms Hawgood—I would like to just make some brief comments. We are managers of the Indigenous Employment Policy within the department, which is a specialist indigenous employment program that complements the mainstream employment services system. As you noted, Minister Reith previously sent some documents to the committee. I believe they covered fairly comprehensively the various elements of the indigenous employment policy. We are very happy today to answer any questions that you have on those details.

To summarise, the Indigenous Employment Policy commenced in July 1999. It was the first comprehensive indigenous employment policy in around 15 years. It is designed to complement the mainstream employment services programs in recognition of the particular disadvantage of indigenous people. It reflects that the primary responsibility for indigenous employment in the Commonwealth rests with DEWRSB. It focuses on increasing participation of indigenous people in the private sector to increase their economic capacity and attack a number of barriers that are facing them. The policy comprises a number of elements, with different approaches to employment assistance, and adapted a number of the best elements of previous programs that were around. For example, one of the main elements, the Structured Training and Employment

Program, STEP, replaced the old TAP program, the Training for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander Program.

In 1999, TAP ceased its funding of $25 million. That then became part of the Indigenous Employment Policy, and an additional $25 million was put in to fund the new IEP. There are some major differences from past programs. Essentially, funds are now tied to ongoing job outcomes, and the emphasis is on generating opportunities in the private sector.

CHAIR—Performance based?

Ms Hawgood—Yes, performance based, so we may pay a component of funding up-front as an establishment cost, but then we typically pay on the basis of commencement in a job, and then at 26 weeks or sometimes at 13 weeks. The emphasis is really on getting a job and then retention in that job. It is geared to that.

CHAIR—A fair dinkum job?

Ms Hawgood—Fair dinkum jobs, real jobs, not additional jobs. Our focus really is on getting more indigenous Australians into existing jobs. There is a small job generation element, but it is about real existing jobs that anybody, indigenous or non-indigenous, would be eligible for within a company or a public sector organisation.

Basically, ministers have been keen to test innovative measures and have given the flexibility to adapt programs as necessary so that we can get the best outcomes. The program is around $50 million annually. We do have a number of fundamental elements, but we are also able to do some innovative projects, and our ministers have been open to suggestions about changes to the existing elements. If we learn as we go that something is not working and is not as effective as it might be, then we have been encouraged as a department to come forward with proposals to change that to better hit the mark.

CHAIR—Dianne, would you be able within 10 days to write and give the committee some examples of some of the changes and a brief summary of why they were suggested and the outcome?

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

CHAIR—I am sure that an illustration of how you are doing service delivery with this flexibility and dynamics is something that my colleagues will be interested in as an approach for across Australia. Would you be able to do that for us?

Ms Hawgood—We can certainly do that.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Ms Hawgood—We have learned a number of lessons as we have gone on. The experience that we have had with the IEP and with past programs has highlighted a number of issues—namely, there is a continuing need for programs to complement and support the mainstream

programs. While most indigenous people will still get employment assistance through our mainstream programs, we have recognised that, because of the level of disadvantage, there is a need to complement those programs with the specialist programs of the nature of IEP.

We also need to recognise that employment services, programs and obligations are more difficult to deliver for indigenous job seekers. They are less effective in remote communities where there are fewer jobs and labour markets are not viable, except in particular cases where you might have a large employer based in a remote community, such as a mining company. There is a need for greater coordination and cooperation between government agencies if outcomes are to be achieved, particularly in remote areas. That goes to that issue of job outcomes impacted on by health issues, education issues, environmental issues and so on. DEWRSB saw a particular need to distinguish between government efforts on economic participation and community participation. I am not sure if you are aware of the recent COAG decision and the establishment of the indigenous roundtable. I am happy to talk about those in some detail.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Hawgood—There have been a number of significant developments or reports recently which have been relevant to our work, one of which is a recent decision by COAG about how government agencies—Commonwealth and state—deliver services in indigenous communities. There has been what is called an Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable established that is looking at capacity building activity in indigenous communities, and of course we have had the McClure report, the welfare reform report. Each of these has provided us with a framework and an impetus for an increased focus on collaborative issues across government.

CHAIR—Can I just ask something by way of insertion? In respect of those major, fairly recent round table initiatives and accords, would you be able, in the same time period of 10 days, to give us a letter confirming the adoption of those principles and strategies?

Ms Hawgood—We will give you—

CHAIR—In whatever form you like.

Ms Hawgood—We will give you something describing what they are, and we can certainly describe our input to those activities.

CHAIR—Yes, and confirm that they have been embraced—well, obviously they have been; they are from a COAG situation.

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

CHAIR—The reason for that is that I am trying, in your evidence, to fill in the pieces. Do you understand?

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

Ms HOARE—And something on the impact.

Ms Hawgood—Yes, I am happy to do that and happy to go into more detail on that as well. The differences between the government's approach to rural and remote and urban communities I think is one that you may want to flesh out a bit today. Certainly the recent budget initiatives—welfare reform initiatives—included a specific indigenous package of measures, and also included some initiatives in the mainstream package that are relevant to indigenous job seekers as well as other job seekers. The budget initiatives essentially recognise the differences in approach between rural and remote and urban communities based on our experience to date. For example, in addition to the IEP and mainstream employment services, a focus for DEWRSB effort—and we received additional funding for this—is to be in areas with viable labour markets, where we will be working with ATSIC to establish what we are going to call indigenous employment centres within CDEP organisations in those areas with viable labour markets. That will be a strengthening of our job outcomes focus in those areas. I am happy to come back on that and talk you through in detail what the indigenous employment centres will do.

Ms HOARE—And what a viable labour market—

Ms Hawgood—Yes. We will also continue to participate in remote communities, particularly where there is a large employer present, like a mining company or a large hotel; and we will continue to participate with ATSIC in remote communities to fund jobs where there are real jobs to be had. In the remote communities there are always a small number of jobs that are paid jobs—unsubsidised jobs within communities—and they are the ones that we typically look to fund in those communities.

Mr QUICK—What is your definition of a real job?

Ms Hawgood—An unsubsidised job, one that is not subsidised through—one where people are not on CDEP wage with a top up of a wage from somebody else.

Ms HOARE—What about a job that already exists that you then subsidise? Is that a real job or not a real job?

Ms Hawgood—Yes, it is, because we give some financial support to the employer for a short period of time.

Mr QUICK—What is the definition of work? You can have a job for one hour a week and not be subsidised, but it is not really a job; it is a task. What is the definition between DETYA and you guys? When I was growing up, a job was something where you started at 9 and finished at 5 or started at 8.30 and finished at 4.30.

Ms Hawgood—It does not have to be a full-time job; it can be a part-time job.

Mr QUICK—How low do you go, and what differential is there for urban remote and urban CBD? Are there heaps of guidelines? If you are working for four hours a week in a motel at Kununurra or Broome, what flexibility is there about the perception of a job—non-subsidised—compared with four hours a week working at Redfern?

Ms Hawgood—I do not think four hours a week would fall into our program. Our preference is to pay for full-time jobs, but obviously full-time jobs are not always available. So we will also support people into part-time jobs provided they are ongoing. My colleagues might just help me out here in terms of specifics.

Mr QUICK—What does 'ongoing' mean? We have part-time casual, part-time permanent. Is 'ongoing' for ever and ever, Amen? Is it 26 weeks?

Ms Hawgood—Our support will normally go to 26 weeks. That is on the basis that, if an employer employs somebody for 26 weeks or puts them through a traineeship and apprenticeship, the individual is then quite likely to stay in employment.

CHAIR—So it is a reasonable prospect test.

Ms Hawgood—Yes. It is consistent with the way the mainstream employment services system works and funds its participants.

Mr QUICK—You must have heaps and heaps of figures about the success rate of non-indigenous people after a 26-week program and indigenous people after a 26-week program—say, Kalgoorlie compared with Wagga, where there is an indigenous community.

Ms Hawgood—To call it a 26-week program is a little inaccurate. We do not run 26-week programs. We tend to pay under the Structured Training and Employment Program, for example, STEP, on the basis of a per participant cost to a maximum of $10,000 per participant in a training program, which the employer can use to pay some of the wages costs, to do some cultural awareness training for other employees within their organisation, to buy equipment for the indigenous employee or to pay for some pre-employment training. So it is a reasonably flexible package in that way. Our milestones are somebody commencing in employment, apprenticeship or traineeship; somebody being in employment for 13 weeks; and somebody being in employment for 26 weeks. That is typically how we tend to fund. Although it is early days, we are getting fairly positive outcome information from our post-program monitoring system that is telling us that in the structured training and employment program and under a wage subsidy scheme we are getting over 50 per cent—in fact, it is closer to 60 per cent—retention in jobs at a three-month period.

CHAIR—Indigenous?

Ms Hawgood—Indigenous.

Mr QUICK—What is the breakdown by states? Are any states doing it any better than any others?

Ms Hawgood—I am happy to take that on notice and give you a split by state.

CHAIR—Yes, we would be happy with that.

Mr QUICK—If Western Australia is doing better than somebody else, there must be a reason for it. If South Australia or Victoria is lagging behind, why, and what are the impediments?

Ms Hawgood—That can depend. I cannot give you the detailed breakup by state because we do tend to look at it more at the national level. What I can tell you is that in Queensland—

Mr QUICK—You have state offices though.

Ms Hawgood—Yes, we do.

Mr QUICK—They should have records.

Ms Hawgood—Yes, they do. What I am saying is that I do not have that information with me today.

Mr QUICK—I understand that.

Ms Hawgood—What I can tell you is that Queensland is probably our best performing state, in terms of private sector employment. There can be a number of reasons for that. It can be partly about location of the indigenous population; it can be about job opportunities and viable labour markets throughout the state. For example, the Northern Territory has a significant Aboriginal population in remote areas where jobs are scarce. It is quite different when you look at that from when you look at a state like Queensland. Again, Victoria is different. There is a small indigenous population in Victoria. When you say there are reasons why one state is doing better than another, yes, there are reasons for that, but some of them are not about departmental performance, if you like; some are about other state specific issues.

Mr QUICK—None of them to do with inflexibility?

Ms Hawgood—Some of them may be, but I am not aware of that being an issue. We have, I believe, a very flexible program that we can tailor to the needs of employers.

Mr QUICK—Who holds the whip hand? Is it you guys, DETYA or ATSIC?

Ms Hawgood—We have different roles.

Mr QUICK—I know. That is one of the problems when we come to ‘blame someone’. If we talk to ATSIC, they will blame DETYA or they will blame you guys. If we talk to you, you say there are two other key players, as well as state governments, huge corporations and mining companies. We are worried about indigenous people who do not have a job.

Ms Hawgood—So are we.

Mr QUICK—Someone must assume ultimate responsibility for the poor indigenous employment outcomes. Can we say to DETYA that the guidelines state that you hold sole responsibility?

Ms Hawgood—No.

CHAIR—It is a whole of government thing.

Ms Hawgood—It is a whole of government thing. We are not interested in blaming everyone. I think that each agency—

Mr QUICK—No, I am not blaming anybody, but quite often people say it is not their responsibility and that they are only one of the players in the scheme.

Ms Hawgood—I am not saying that. We have a huge responsibility in this area, in terms of employment assistance to indigenous job seekers.

CHAIR—The first one for 15 years in Australia.

Ms Hawgood—That is right, and we do not back away from that.

Mr SNOWDON—The first what in 15 years?

CHAIR—The first strategic, concentrated, whole of government, dedicated program for 15 years.

Mr SNOWDON—That is nonsense.

CHAIR—That is the evidence we have had so far.

Mr SNOWDON—I was responsible for labour market programs in the Keating government, and I can tell you that it is wrong.

CHAIR—No, this is whole of Australia.

Mr SNOWDON—Yes.

CHAIR—That is the evidence you missed. You can refute it.

Mr SNOWDON—I am happy to refute it.

Ms Hawgood—The point I was making was that, while we have primary responsibility for indigenous employment within the Commonwealth, because other issues like health and education impact on employment, and employment in turn impacts on those issues, we have recognised that we need increased collaboration across agencies. We have also recognised—and this is partly what the COAG decision that I referred to was about—that there is a need for government agencies at both the federal and the state government level to look at how they are providing services in indigenous communities, to make sure that services are being provided in the most coordinated and effective way, and to address that issue that you can get where you have six agencies going into a community one after the other, offering a slightly different, or a very different, service.

Ms HOARE—Can I go back prior to when you were talking about STEP and the 13 weeks or 26 weeks? I want to refer to your comments about innovation and flexibility in your programs at the moment. What is being done to address the increased casualisation of the work force? Non-indigenous people cannot expect to be secure in their employment when you talk about 'ongoing jobs' and 'real jobs'. What I am asking, and I am not being critical, is why indigenous people should miss out on employment prospects in casual work.

Ms Hawgood—They are not. They do not have to under our programs. And in fact we have—

Ms HOARE—But you said that you will only assist in areas on outcomes where they are in work for more than 26 weeks.

Ms Hawgood—Yes, but casual work in hotels is an example. We have recently funded a big hotel chain, where hotel work is now all casualised work, but it is of an ongoing nature. It is not on a full-time basis or a formal part-time basis. It is casual work, but it is ongoing casual work.

Ms HOARE—What about in the instance of labour hire companies or group apprenticeship schemes like labour hire companies. You are not employed by a company for a 26-week period. You might be employed by one company for two weeks and another company for two weeks; you might have two weeks without work; you might be with another company for a month. It would be like the group apprenticeship schemes that I am aware of in my community. Employers cannot afford to employ an apprentice full time for four years—or have not got the work to be able to. A group apprenticeship scheme, if you have not heard of them, is where—

Ms Hawgood—We know what they are, and we use group apprenticeship schemes quite frequently. For example—this is one example; we use them in other ways as well—under our Structured Training and Employment Program at the moment people need to be able to employ five indigenous job seekers to attract funding. But one way we look at that, where we have smaller employers in a town or where we have a group of building industry employers, for example, is to use a group training company as the initial trainer and employer; even though the companies in that industry or the companies in that town cannot employ five people each, between them they could employ five people. So we will often use a group training company to actually be a broker, if you like, or a middle person.

Ms HOARE—I am going to go in another direction here, Mr Chairman. Are you saying that STEP only applies if an employer can employ five indigenous people at one time?

Ms Hawgood—It does at the moment, but this goes to one of the issues of flexibility.

Ms HOARE—That is extraordinary.

Ms Hawgood—STEP was designed in that way. The wage subsidy—wage assistance—is available to employers who employ one or more people. There was always a balance there in terms of smaller employers. But when I mentioned that there was flexibility to change, we are have been looking at the way STEP operates, and one of the things that we have been looking at in particular is making STEP funding available to employers who are prepared to employ fewer than five people—probably down to two people.

Mr QUICK—Where does that flexibility decision making rest—in Canberra or out in the state office?

Ms Hawgood—The decision is made here, but the policy changes are based on what our field staff and our state office staff are experiencing in the field. If they are telling us, for example, in this case, that there are a number of employers around who would be interested in participating in the STEP program, and that they cannot employ five or more people but they could employ two or three people, that feeds into our policy process.

Mr QUICK—Have there been 20 flexible decisions since 1999 about the difference between five and one?

Ms Hawgood—I am sorry, I do not quite follow you.

Mr QUICK—Have there been 20—

CHAIR—Has there been—

Mr QUICK—Have there been 25 people saying, 'I can only employ three'?

Ms Hawgood—No.

Mr QUICK—Has there been one example of flexibility?

Ms Hawgood—I am sorry, in relation to the feedback coming back on STEP—

Mr QUICK—The STEP program says five or more. You are talking about flexibility. Someone in Kalgoorlie or Kununurra might say, 'I can take three.' Kununurra would then have to get in touch with someone in the state—obviously in Perth. Then Perth would have to ring up Canberra and talk to the FAS or whatever it is to say, 'I have got someone in Kununurra that can only take three under STEP. Have I got permission to ring him back and say, "Go for your life. We will send the paperwork up"?' That is example one. How many of those examples have there been since 1999, when the program first started?

Ms Hawgood—That is not actually how it is worked. What we have done, now that we are two years into the program, is that we have been looking at STEP. We know that there has been feedback coming in through our state offices and when we have been out in the field. We have had employers saying to us, 'It would be really good if you could reduce the number.'

Mr QUICK—I know, it would be wonderful, but has it happened?

Ms Hawgood—No, I have just said what we have done. We have just reviewed the STEP program.

Mr QUICK—After two years?

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

Mr QUICK—So in those two years, you have not had any examples of someone saying, 'All we can do as the best is three. Can you change the guidelines?'

Ms Hawgood—Yes, that is what I am saying. We have had those examples and we are looking at them.

CHAIR—Can I just clarify that the policy to drop has not yet been determined?

Mr QUICK—But none of them have been given the tick. You are still saying five?

Ms Gumley—Those employers' needs have been met through Wage Assistance, which is a wage subsidy. So if a butcher in Kununurra rings up and says, 'We would really like to take some indigenous people,' and they have been able to take two, we provide them with job seekers who are eligible for Wage Assistance, and that provides them with a $4,400 subsidy to employ someone over 26 weeks.

Mr QUICK—What program is that under?

Ms Gumley—That is called Wage Assistance.

Ms Hawgood—Under the Indigenous Employment Policy.

Ms Gumley—It is under the Indigenous Employment Policy, and it is called Wage Assistance.

Mr SNOWDON—Under STEP you get $10,000—is that what you said?

Ms Hawgood—You get a maximum of $10,000 per person.

Mr SNOWDON—But for how long?

CHAIR—If I understand what you are saying, the decision to review whether you should stay at the five minimum is currently being examined, supported by your department.

Ms Hawgood—We have made the decision.

CHAIR—You have made the decision to do it, but has it yet been implemented?

Ms Hawgood—No, it is about to be implemented.

CHAIR—That is what I was trying to get at. I think then the discussion gets into proper context.

Mr SNOWDON—Can you just give us the guidelines for the operation of STEP and the $10,000?

Ms Hawgood—Yes, the $10,000 operates for the first year, and that may include people doing an apprenticeship or a traineeship. STEP has been most typically used for people doing apprenticeships or traineeships.

Mr SNOWDON—The reason I ask the question is because clearly, if it operates over 52 weeks, on a pro rata basis it is worth $1,600 more over 26 weeks than the wage assistance is worth.

Ms Hawgood—Yes, that is right.

Mr SNOWDON—Why would that be?

Ms Gumley—STEP includes other components. Rather than just a pure wage subsidy, with STEP we basically tailor make to what the provider needs, so it can include payment for a mentor—somebody who will actually help that employer make sure that those job seekers are in work—and it can pay for pre-vocational training, equipment, et cetera, whereas Wage Assistance is $4,000, as a salary subsidy. We have encouraged people to look at using it more flexibly, but mainly it has been used as a wage assistance subsidy.

Ms HOARE—Let me just give you my background. I used to deliver TAP programs to Aboriginal kids in the outer Brisbane area. I was able to get kids in apprenticeships by using those TAP programs, which were wage subsidies. Those kids stayed there for four years and the wage subsidy was over a four-year period. I could do it for one 16-year-old or I could do it for a 35-year-old. I cannot come to grips with why you are saying that this is better than what was introduced in 1999 or is better than anything that has happened because, from what I am hearing with the STEP program, it is not.

I said that I could do it for one because this was an urban area and a capital city. Employers were not employing dozens or 20 apprentices. I would think that something the size of BHP—from Newcastle and the steelworks where they already employ lots of apprentices—does not need wage subsidies to look at taking on five Aboriginal apprentices, whereas the smaller employers do need some kind of assistance. I do not know whether you have got any figures on what TAP costs compared to indigenous employment strategies over a 12-month period and what the outcomes have been.

Ms Hawgood—We can try to get you some of those figures. We do know anecdotally—and it is hard to get hard evidence on this—that what has often happened when the wage subsidy has finished has been that employers would then let people go.

Ms HOARE—I am talking apprenticeships. An employer does not invest four years of the employer's effort to let a person go. I am not talking about short-term wage subsidies.

Ms Hawgood—The shorter support that is provided under the IEP is partly designed to ensure commitment of an employer. It is not meant to cover a significant proportion of the wages. The theory behind it was that, if an employer is willing to employ an indigenous person with a company for a small subsidy, they are more likely to keep that person in the job when the subsidy finishes.

While you make a good point about large employers' needs versus small employers' needs, the funding that is available under STEP in particular is not typically used as a wage subsidy. What employers, including big employers, are finding is that if they use the money for something like providing mentoring support, they are having a much higher success rate than if they simply plough the money into wages. A very big emphasis under the Indigenous Employment Program is this mentoring support for people once they get a job to get them through the first few months. That can be about fairly fundamental things like just making sure that people get out of bed every day and get to work. It is about developing those soft skills within the first three or six months. They are finding that they are having good success with that.

Ms HOARE—I think we have asked for examples of successful innovative measures to be provided.

Mr QUICK—What is the difference between STEP funding and the corporate leaders for indigenous employment project? You say there is a mix of assistance. What assistance do they get under the corporate leaders for indigenous employment project? Do they get $10,000 per person they employ?

Ms Hawgood—They can get up to $10,000 a person. They are companies who, as corporate leaders, commit to and tend to utilise the STEP program for support.

Mr SNOWDON—How long do they contract for?

Ms Black—It can vary; it is usually 12 months.

Mr SNOWDON—Are there any longer than 12 months?

Ms Black—There are some.

Mr SNOWDON—So why did Anaconda not get a guernsey? You probably heard about our concerns about Anaconda and their innovative program where they were employing in excess of 100 people.

Ms Hawgood—We have been funding Anaconda for some long period of time now.

Mr SNOWDON—How much do they get per person?

Ms Hawgood—Most recently they are getting around $9,000 per person.

Ms Black—Initially, they got $6,500 for the first project we funded them for and then $7,700 on their current project.

Mr QUICK—To my mind, having wandered around most of Australia, $10,000 in, say, Brisbane or Sydney—if Qantas decided to take on 50 indigenous people there—would bear no relationship to the costs of provision of service with something like Anaconda. We flew out there—

Ms Hawgood—Ten thousand dollars is the maximum that is available.

CHAIR—But Anaconda are not getting $10,000. Isn't that the position?

Mr QUICK—No.

Ms Hawgood—If I may I will just put you in the picture about what has happened with the mining industry. I think John Jury referred to some of this in his evidence.

CHAIR—You are familiar with his evidence?

Ms Hawgood—Yes, and we are very familiar with John. We work with him very closely and we have an extremely good relationship with him. We work with most of the major mining companies across the country. There are some very particular problems in the areas where the mining companies work, because of remoteness. We have recently been working with a representative group of those mining companies, including Anaconda, on what we are calling a mining industry framework, which will recognise some of the issues that John and a number of the other mining companies have realised that they need to deal with. They have probably already employed or taken from the community those people who are at the job ready level, and they are now dealing with people who are, in some cases, very well below that. They have asked us for some assistance with that group, which they believe, with some additional effort, can get up to the job ready stage and then into a job. We have now agreed to treat the mining industry as a separate sector for the purposes of the Indigenous Employment Policy because of the sorts of issues that are peculiar to the mining industry in remote locations, and we have agreed to fund them up to $15,000 per person. That will take them from this very underdeveloped stage and will include bringing some people from a substance misuse problem through to some basic job readiness training, leading to some pre-employment training and then into job specific training. So it will attract them through those different levels.

That, for us, is quite a significant change to what we had previously been doing, where we had been funding mining companies and others for training that was very directly associated with the job—for an apprenticeship or traineeship and then into the job, that sort of training. What we have done here is recognise issues that mining companies like Anaconda have brought to us—issues about where they are in these communities and the situation they are now facing of finding a supply of people within the communities whom they can get up to that job ready stage.

Mr QUICK—Who is assessing them—the company or you guys?

Ms Hawgood—The company.

Mr QUICK—You are happy with that?

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

Mr QUICK—The reason I am asking is that departments are on about guidelines, criteria and all that sort of stuff. They are coming to you with what they see as a reasonable package and you are then going to change the legislation?

Ms Hawgood—There is no legislation.

Mr QUICK—For that $10,000 there must have been.

Ms Hawgood—No, it is administrative.

Mr QUICK—So you can just change it, right?

Ms Hawgood—We can.

CHAIR—Mr Quick will continue no doubt, but may I say on the record that the Anaconda issues on which John gave evidence appear now to have been resolved. Across the board, Anaconda and other mining companies can now seek up to $15,000 for giving job readiness preparation training as well as the other components. I am so pleased to hear that—it is great.

Mr SNOWDON—It is very good. It is targeting the package at where it should be. I will just ask a question about that because I am attracted by the proposition. You have indicated from that response that the $15,000 will provide them with opportunities to get people job ready, which presumably also means pre-block training.

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—What finances are available to people who live in communities in the bush, which might be 2,500 to 3,000 people, for that sort of pre-vocational training leading to employment?

Ms Hawgood—They can access STEP as it is.

Mr SNOWDON—They cannot unless there are five or more indigenous job seekers working for an employer.

Ms Hawgood—No, that goes to the changes that we have made in relation to STEP, whereby people will be eligible for STEP for less than that.

Mr SNOWDON—I am interested in why it should be different for mining companies in regional areas from anyone else who is in a regional area.

Ms Hawgood—Frequently mining companies do not operate in areas where there is a town regional base. They are often in extremely remote communities as opposed to regional communities.

Mr SNOWDON—I live in the Northern Territory. I know where mining companies work. I am more interested in knowing why, for example, you would not offer $15,000 per participant to an employer at Port Keats, which is a community of 2,500 people.

CHAIR—In mining or generally?

Mr SNOWDON—Generally. I support the idea of giving $15,000—don't get me wrong—but it seems to me it should be a flexible program that could apply across the board, depending on the circumstances. If there is a regional employer, whether that person can employ two, three, or five people—

CHAIR—And whether or not in mining.

Mr SNOWDON—Well, regardless. It could be fishing.

CHAIR—Let us have a discussion on that point.

Ms Hawgood—At this point we have not had employers in those locations coming to us saying, 'We need more than you are prepared to give us at the moment.' We had worked with the mining companies over time and could see that there was a need. What we are doing with the mining sector is, in some ways, a trial to see whether that works. What we did not want to do was simply to up the ante for everybody. If somebody in Port Keats comes to us with a proposal to employ a significant number of people and they need more money than we would usually offer, we are very happy to talk to them on a case by case basis about how we might do that.

Mr SNOWDON—I should not use Port Keats as an example. Let us use the example of a community which has 2,500 to 3,000 people, which does or does not have a CDEP scheme—it does not matter—but has a discrete labour market with only a small number of jobs in the way you have described them—unsubsidised work. There might be positions for only two people in that community in a particular area. Why would they not be able to attract the $15,000 subsidy, regardless of how big the company is and regardless of how many people there are? If one person could be trained as a mechanic or as an essential services officer in one of these communities, it would make a hell of a difference. And if the $15,000 were available, it might make the difference—although I do not know that it would. I notice that CDEP schemes do not attract it, but what about CDEP schemes as employers?

Ms Hawgood—I was asked about unsubsidised. I referred to real jobs in the context of longer term issues. We do fund CDEPs, so we will fund a period under STEP where somebody is attracting the CDEP wage, as well as a top-up through STEP.

Mr SNOWDON—A subsidy. What do you see as an acceptable outcome for that person?

Ms Hawgood—An acceptable outcome would be that person being able to go off CDEP and into the job in that community that was not attracting CDEP for wages.

Mr SNOWDON—This is an interesting exercise because, as you would be aware, a lot of communities are quite discrete in terms of labour market structure. They have large or small CDEP schemes, depending on their size, but what they can do is provide the capacity for people to move within a CDEP scheme. There are plenty of communities where teachers' aides are paid by CDEP. It might be that someone aspires to be something more than, say, the janitor of the garage, and wants to be doing something else in the garage—maybe a trades assistant or whatever—but they are still under CDEP. To be upskilled, they need resources to get the training so that they can get the job within that discrete labour market, which is not an

unsubsidised job. What is their recourse for training? Where do they get the training dollar from for those people?

Ms Hawgood—But it is an unsubsidised job, isn't it? They have been paid by the CDEP but they are not CDEP participants.

Mr SNOWDON—No, they will be CDEP participants.

Ms Hawgood—You are talking about people remaining on the CDEP?

Mr SNOWDON—Absolutely. They are being paid the equivalent wage—but a part-time wage—for doing that sort of work, and some of them will have structured wages.

Ms Hawgood—Our programs are not targeted at those people who are going to stay CDEP participants.

Mr SNOWDON—Can you see my problem? There is an issue here, isn't there? If you look at the question of CDEP and its relationship with the broader labour market and if you look at CDEP as part of a discrete labour market in most communities, you will see that you have a skill base which is very limited. If you want to upskill people so that they can eventually move into the broader labour market, you have to provide resources for them.

Ms Hawgood—We can do that. If the aim is to move into the broader labour market and the job is identified, we can support them.

Mr SNOWDON—That might not happen today. It may not be identified. This is the point.

Ms Hawgood—You are talking about people being trained but then staying in CDEP until a job comes up at some point somewhere.

Mr SNOWDON—And moving into a different job within the CDEP until—

Ms Hawgood—Our programs are not targeted at those people. In the Australians Working Together package in the budget, ATSIC was given an additional $31 million specifically to develop community capacity building activity in remote communities. Some of that will involve looking at how each individual participates within that community, including through CDEP. Our programs will still be available to provide support in those communities, but our funding support is tied to job outcomes.

Mr SNOWDON—If you are on CDEP, you have passed the work test.

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—CDEP is a job.

Ms Hawgood—But our programs do not target people who are on CDEP, unless—

Mr SNOWDON—Here is my problem. I do not think that shows any real comprehension—this is no reference to you—of unskilled labour markets.

Mr QUICK—That is right. When Minister Reith launched the policy, he said in the first dot point that it was against the background of:

Continued disadvantage in the labour market of indigenous people.

Ms Hawgood—Can I move away from remote communities and talk about CDEP in non-remote communities? I referred to the development of indigenous employment centres within CDEPs as part of our recent budget initiatives. Indigenous employment centres are aimed quite specifically at the target group that you are talking about. They will be set up, though, in areas where there are jobs available. They are being established in recognition of the situation where someone will come into a CDEP and end up staying in the CDEP for anything up to 10 years, even when there are jobs available outside CDEP.

Mr QUICK—How many of those centres are going to be set up?

Ms Hawgood—Over a four-year period, there could be between 40 and 60 centres. We are currently working with ATSIC to identify what areas will be captured and what areas will be included as viable labour markets in that arrangement. To determine that we are going through a consultation process with CDEPs, employers in local communities, Job Network members and so on over the next few months. The indigenous employment centres will commence operation in early 2002, and in the period leading up to that we will be consulting widely.

Mr QUICK—How much is in the budget for that?

Ms Hawgood—It is $31 million.

CHAIR—We are going to get a letter within 10 days outlining details of these programs.

Ms HOARE—Can I go to the indigenous employment centres—and this may be related to a question I asked right at the beginning of our discussion. Who actually delivers the STEP and the wage subsidy programs?

Ms Hawgood—We do.

Ms HOARE—From Canberra?

Ms Hawgood—No, from our state and field officers.

Ms HOARE—Whereas previously the programs were delivered because the people delivering the services knew the unemployed people and were able to tailor make, you would say, a package of what were then the Working Nation programs to fit the particular job seeker's needs. From what I understood when you were talking about the Anaconda project. That does not happen?

Ms Hawgood—Yes, it does.

Ms Gumley—We tailor make our programs. We have a network of indigenous employment officers who deal direct with employers or agents who might provide that sort of training that you were talking about, and the placement of unemployed and indigenous people. Our indigenous employment officers will go to an employer, understand what their business needs are, and tailor make a program that is correct for the employer and the group of job seekers that they are going to place. Then, depending on their costs, what they need and their location, they can get up to $10,000 per person for the employees that they take on.

CHAIR—Or, if it is a mining industry for the purposes of the pilot program, it is up to $15,000. Have I read it right?

Ms Hawgood—That is right.

CHAIR—And that is going to be used as a pilot to maybe develop other broader sectors.

Ms Hawgood—Yes, we may look at other sectors.

Ms HOARE—Are the indigenous employment officers working for the unemployed people or the employers?

Ms Gumley—They can effectively matchmake. The indigenous employment officers work for DEWRSB. They play a facilitation role by working with employers to encourage them to take on indigenous people in their work force. They can also play a role in linking Job Network members and our corporate leaders, for instance, so that we can make sure we have the correct supply of job seekers to meet employers' needs. If there is a community where people for some reason might not be accessing Job Network or perhaps another community where a CDEP has a number of indigenous people who want to move into mainstream work, then our indigenous employment officers can work with either those communities or CDEPs to look at how they can use the indigenous employment program to matchmake employers and job seekers with a package that is tailor made for what they need.

Mr QUICK—How many do you have?

Ms Gumley—We have 80 indigenous employment officers around the country.

Ms HOARE—How many Job Network providers are there?

Ms Gumley—We have 2,000 sites and 200 providers in Job Network

Mr QUICK—And there are 80 officers.

Ms Gumley—There are 80 indigenous employment officers.

Mr QUICK—How many are there in places like Kalgoorlie?

Ms Gumley—There is one.

Mr QUICK—What is the relationship with the DETYA office in Kalgoorlie?

Ms Hawgood—Very close. They are frequently co-located with DETYA offices.

Mr QUICK—They are co-located in most cases?

Ms Hawgood—In most cases they are. We try to avoid having one-person offices where we can.

Mr QUICK—Back to my question: who has control? Is it indigenous employment officers under your department, or is it the DETYA bloke? Are they all ASO6s?

Ms Hawgood—No.

Mr QUICK—Is there some sort of rank? For example, what happens if an indigenous employment officer in Kalgoorlie says, 'I have this wonderful thing. Can I slot these persons through some DETYA thing?' but you have some guideline hassles and that sort of thing? I was on an inquiry when the old CES and Social Security had two different definitions of what homelessness was. We are dealing with legislation at the moment about concession cards and entitlements. One of the problems in this area is whether you fit your guidelines or whether you fit DETYA guidelines. In lots of cases, they do not dovetail in nice and smoothly so that everybody ends up being very happy.

Ms Hawgood—I think our field staff do work very well together. They tend to visit communities together—that is, most frequently they visit communities together. We have already referred to the need for agencies working in this area, at both the Commonwealth and the state level, to work even more collaboratively than they do now. But already we have very close working relationships with DETYA, particularly in remote and regional locations.

Mr QUICK—When we went to Groote Eylandt, we saw some of the innovative things that are happening there and the linkages with the university. The people there said that trying to find their way through the manuals was bloody impossible. They ended up writing their own training manual for indigenous people who wanted to be involved in horticulture, for example. It was the same with trying to find the money per person to fit their particular thing, because they had to reafforest the whole mining area—and whose guideline did that fit into? But they had an obvious problem: they had to resurface and replant the whole area. They had a whole bunch of indigenous people who did not necessarily want to drive a truck up and down the same road all day and who wanted to use some skills and expertise in horticulture. So they designed the program. They had an excellent building in which we saw the training programs, and they were basically doing first-year university courses.

Ms Hawgood—We do not have manuals; we do not operate that way. The way that we typically work—and this is the way we have worked with Groote Eylandt—is that one of our indigenous employment officers will go out to Groote Eylandt. They will sit down and talk to the employer and to the local Aboriginal people about what they want to do. That officer will then work out, under STEP, a package that suits what they need and the way they want to work. So we do not have a rulebook that we take out or give out. We tend to do much more face to face, sitting down and hearing from the employer what it is that they are prepared to do and then

working out how we can help them to do that. That is why, with STEP, we do not just say, 'You get up to $10,000 as a wage subsidy.' We say, 'There's a whole range of activities here that you could select from. In fact, if you've got other ideas about the way you want to use this funding to ensure that you can employ and retain an indigenous person in a job, then we are open to thinking about that.'

Mr QUICK—So should we get rid of CDEP or put it under STEP? Basically, STEP is structured training and employment—and so is CDEP. Why do we continue to have silos and all these different programs when basically we are on about indigenous employment, IEP? Why can't we be imaginative enough to think outside the square to say, 'Let's have STEP—Structured Training and Employment Programs—for indigenous people?' The subsidy for CDEP might be up to $2,500; the next stage might be $4,000 to $6,000; then it might go to $10,000; and then, if you are a mining company and you have something innovative, it might go to $15,000. Why do we still have to have all these acronyms? I admire what you are doing. We have talked to DETYA, and they are a real pain in the bum—they really are. With them it is 'guidelines' and 'this is the program,' and there is no flexibility. I do not know whether it is the minister or what it is, or whether you have more flexibility to do things. But, to my mind, we should have one program: STEP—that is what it is: Structured Training and Employment—for indigenous people. There is one encompassing umbrella.

CHAIR—Do you have a comment on that?

Ms Hawgood—CDEP is valuable.

Mr QUICK—I am not saying that it is not.

Ms Hawgood—STEP is very job outcomes focused. As we have heard, in remote communities often there are not jobs to be had outside of a CDEP. So CDEP funding is very important in those areas to support people into the work experience.

Mr QUICK—But, like the old health care card, it has been around for so long. In many cases, it is an inhibitor to people moving on to the next step, because a whole lot of things are associated with it. I have seen some very innovative CDEP programs, one of which I have already referred to. It was based on the banks of the Murray River and was funded through ATSIC. We were there a couple of years ago. They had planted this enormous lucerne crop and they wanted a new tractor. By the time they went through the ATSIC guidelines and so on, the crop was going to disappear. So they went to the local bank and said, 'Look, our tractor has broken down and we have this guaranteed crop of X hundreds of thousands of dollars. We have already pre-sold it. Can you lend us the money?' They got the tractor and harvested it all and then paid the money back to the bank virtually overnight. In the meantime, ATSIC were mucking around—the chain of command was so hopeless.

Ms Hawgood—I can see your point about having one overarching big program—

Mr QUICK—STEP.

Ms Hawgood—that is able to target every situation—remote, urban and regional.

Mr QUICK—And it would break down a hell of a lot of barriers. I know that lots of people involved in CDEP programs are sitting back and saying, 'We've got CDEP—why worry?' Others are saying, 'We've got CDEP. We're really innovative, and we're frustrated because we need a little bit extra.' But because the whole thing is labelled CDEP they end up saying, 'It's all too hard; let's sit back,' and indigenous people are suffering.

Ms Hawgood—I think that is a very fair point. In response to that, what I can say is that we recognise that those are real issues. We and all the other agencies—DETYA, ATSIC, Health and others that work in this area—do recognise that often it is the participants who are the ones who suffer if we do not get our programs coordinated and if we do not make our programs accessible to and flexible for people. So we do recognise that we need to be ever vigilant in that way and that we need to work together better. While we have not got to the point where we have one overarching, whole of government program—

Mr QUICK—It would make a good recommendation, Lou—seriously. In our indigenous health inquiry, there were obvious needs for people to erect houses and maintain them in the Pitjantjatjara homelands, Docker River and a whole lot of other places. If you build up a skilled work force within the community, you empower the community no end.

Ms Hawgood—We are involved in the community capacity building activity that ATSIC will now be taking on out of the budget initiative Australians Working Together. A community—typically a remote community—will identify that it wants to develop its capacity in particular ways and will work out how it wants to do that, with support and assistance from ATSIC and other agencies. The commitment from government agencies like us is that we will deliver services or programs into that community that are targeted to its community plan, to the areas that it has identified as important to it, and that we will deliver our services in the way that the community wants and needs those services delivered, rather than deliver the services in the way that we think the services should be delivered. So there has been recognition that that is an issue particularly in remote communities, and part of what we will work through under the leadership of ATSIC is how we can deliver our services into those remote communities in a more coordinated way.

Mr QUICK—So how do you tell Dr Wooldridge's office, 'Look, it's really appalling that the nurses in Ernabella live in shipping containers. They have a wonderful, state-of-the-art community health centre, but there aren't enough people in the Ernabella community trained in housing construction'? How do we start breaking the silo mentality and sharing the bags of money, saying to his office, 'We've got this wonderful STEP program. Can we get some money from you, because this concerns the overall holistic health outcomes for those people'? It is a cost to society. We have trouble getting nurses to go there because they are living in shipping containers. How do we upskill the workforce so that in the Pitjantjatjara homelands we have 20 or 30 people with enough trucks and the wherewithal to go and do this and do that?

Ms Hawgood—In addition to the new initiatives that ATSIC is undertaking, I referred to a decision by COAG late last year. That decision was also about how governments deliver services in indigenous communities. Since that decision, at the Commonwealth level we have been doing some very focused work, which has been coordinated by the Prime Minister's department, that has been looking at those sorts of issues. We are to report to the Prime Minister fairly soon with suggestions about how we work better with agencies like Health, and how what

we do can very clearly complement what Health does, what Education does and so on. So there are a couple of streams operating in parallel at the moment that are really focused on addressing just that issue that you have raised.

Mr QUICK—We saw examples in Western Australia of communities saying, 'We're not going to sit around and wait.' They actually trained the young people in basic carpentry and housing construction, and they built their own houses. We went to communities when we did the Reeves report, and some of the schools and the accommodation for teachers were absolutely appalling. The education system said, 'We don't have the money to do anything.' We have not even mentioned the state government and their role in the state education system. How are they working with some of this innovative stuff? It must frighten the hell out of them that you have got the flexibility to actually go and do something, when they are still in their solo mentality of saying, 'No, we're on about different things from Dr Kemp's portfolio.' How does that bear any relationship to what is happening with indigenous people who do not end up going to school in places like Kalgoorlie and the like?

Ms Hawgood—Yes. Again, all the state governments have committed to this COAG process, so while we focused on what will happen at the Commonwealth level initially that then needs to be linked up with what is happening at the state level. So they are part of that process. It is not something that is going to happen overnight, but it is a recognition on the part of all governments around the country. Every government signed up to a commitment to that COAG decision.

Mr QUICK—This is my last question. Hopefully, when we get back into power, whenever that is, we will not reinvent the wheel and think of a new name. We seem to have something in place. It seems to be a bit innovative, finally. It has only taken us 100 years or 200 years.

Ms HOARE—Can I go back to the actual program delivery? We have got 80 indigenous employment officers.

Ms Hawgood—That is right.

Ms HOARE—We have 2,000 Job Network sites. Do the Job Network site people deliver the programs?

Ms Hawgood—They do not deliver the specialist programs, the Indigenous Employment Policy.

Ms HOARE—Do they know about them?

Ms Hawgood—Yes, they do. While they do not deliver it, they can actually use it. So they can use STEP or wage subsidy, for example.

Ms HOARE—Do your indigenous employment officers ensure that those officers in the Job Network sites know about IEP?

Ms Hawgood—Yes, they do. Just so you are aware, Job Network members recently set up a committee that is chaired by Robert Tickner. That is an indigenous special interest group

committee which has a particular focus. It involves Job Network members from all across the country. That has looked, in particular, at the relationship between Job Network and the Indigenous Employment Policy. It has looked at things like how Job Network members might get a closer relationship with CDEP organisations, working to get CDEP participants and other indigenous job seekers into available jobs. It has particularly been looking at how Job Network members and some of our corporate leaders for indigenous employment companies might work together. That has had three meetings so far. It is a very active committee under the chair of Robert Tickner.

Ms HOARE—I am not saying that TAP was the be-all and end-all. What I am trying to determine is whether or not we have lost the good parts of TAP. It seems to me from your discussion that the good parts of TAP are still there; they have just been remodelled. It has not all been thrown out purely for ideological reasons.

Ms Hawgood—No, it has not. In fact, when the Indigenous Employment Policy was being established, it was a key issue that it should draw on the successes of the past. There was recognition that some of TAP, in particular, had been successful. So those things were picked up in the design of the Indigenous Employment Policy.

Ms HOARE—It concerns me that some of the discussions we were having seemed to be focusing more heavily on the employer than on the person looking for work.

Ms Hawgood—No, they do not.

Ms HOARE—That is why I wanted to get to the issue of service delivery or program delivery.

Ms Hawgood—It is recognised that, for there to be a job at the end for the indigenous job seeker, we have to have a focus and a good relationship with local employers. So we do put quite a lot of effort into working with employers and making those linkages between the employers and the indigenous community. We do a lot of facilitating of that kind of contact.

Ms HOARE—What about community awareness? Before, we could go out into a community and talk TAP, and the majority of the indigenous community knew exactly what we were talking about. If I went to my local community now and asked them, 'What do you know about STEP,' would they be able to tell me?

Ms Hawgood—I would hope they would be able to tell you. That would depend on where you were.

Ms HOARE—I did not know about it, despite having an interest in the area, having previously been an employee in that field. I thought that TAP had just disappeared, that it had gone.

CHAIR—It is just that this government is doing so many good things that it is hard to keep up with all of them.

Mr QUICK—Delete that from *Hansard*!

Ms Hawgood—Our indigenous employment officers regularly get to each Aboriginal community or Aboriginal organisation within their area and talk to them about the programs. You might be aware of the fact that we also have a network of area consultative committees across the country—56 of them. They have had a particular focus over the last two years on indigenous employment activity. They work closely with our indigenous employment officers and they have been doing some very good facilitation work with communities, putting out information and promoting what is available to communities and individuals through the Indigenous Employment Policy.

Ms HOARE—Can I provide a little bit of feedback on that? Recent discussions in my area discovered that nobody knew about employment programs, full stop.

Ms Hawgood—Can I ask where you are located?

Ms HOARE—Newcastle, so it is a Newcastle ACCC. They have been holding public seminars in clubs and so on but people are not going to them.

Ms Hawgood—Have you had contact with Yarnteen CDEP? They are very active. We do a lot of work with them and with Job Network members in the Newcastle area. We have quite a lot of support from Job Network members in the Newcastle area in working with Yarnteen and other indigenous organisations. When you say Newcastle, I am a bit surprised by that, but thank you for the feedback.

Ms HOARE—I am talking generally about the ACCC—we used to call it the ACCC; we do not anymore, because there is another ACCC. The consultative council found that the community was not aware of DEWRSB programs.

Ms Hawgood—Not just indigenous programs?

Ms HOARE—Not just indigenous programs. That is what I meant by feedback. Yes, Yarnteen is very good; however, we do run into the local problem which faces many other larger communities—and that is what we are talking about here—with different organisations vying for a very limited number of CDEP places. So one organisation may get them year after year; other organisations miss out. If you are a member of the other organisation, you miss out. I do not know how that issue can be addressed. I think we probably all have seen it in our local communities. If you are still going to look at the allocation of CDEP places, maybe it should not be based on traditional allocations. As I said, Yarnteen is very good; however, there are not any more to spread around.

Ms Hawgood—CDEP places are ATSIC funded. I am happy to pass that feedback on to them.

Ms HOARE—Thank you.

Mr QUICK—What goals do you set yourself in two areas: one, the number of people that are in real jobs; and, two, the decrease in the unemployment levels of indigenous people? Have you set any goals? Has anyone put up a figure and said, ‘When this funding finishes in four years time, we’d like to have achieved this’? I notice you mention about 7,400 in about 330

STEP programs—hopefully those 7,400 are in full-time work, hopefully that figure increases to 15,000 and hopefully the unemployment rate decreases. When we set our indigenous health outcomes, the aim was to decrease the life expectancy gap to the equivalent range of the indigenous people in America and the Maoris so that, rather than a 20-year gap, it goes down to five or six.

Ms Hawgood—We have not set specific targets. Our target is really that indigenous job seekers get their fair share and have the same opportunities in relation to jobs that are available to non-indigenous job seekers.

CHAIR—Our secretary has suggested a number of very valuable questions and, because of time constraints, we will write to you with them, asking you to respond. Again, it is a fairly tight schedule. We are trying to get a report in before the end of August.

Ms Hawgood—I am happy to do that.

CHAIR—Secondly, I think the questioning has been very useful and productive, but I am conscious of the fact that you had other matters that you might have wanted to mention.

Mr QUICK—What didn't we ask you that you might like to tell us?

Ms Hawgood—It was really about the welfare reform initiatives, and I think we have covered those in the questioning.

CHAIR—So you are comfortable with that? If, when you get back to your office, you feel that there were some important matters, put that in as well.

Mr QUICK—We interrupted you too much!

Ms Hawgood—No, that is okay. We had a question about the focus of the committee, which we read as being on people in urban or large regional centres. We were interested in the Anaconda issue, which to us is a remote issue. We do recognise that there are differences between remote communities—and I am talking about the very remote communities, where there are really very few jobs to be had—and other communities, urban and regional, and so we work in different ways.

Mr QUICK—The reason I have been pushing Anaconda in the House is basically to do with inflexibility and the need for departments to think outside the square. If someone, irrespective of whether they are in Mildura or Shepparton, suddenly comes up with a whiz-bang idea, they do all the hard word, they work out the training program and then say, 'Could someone help us?' the best they get is $10,000. Anaconda are now getting $15,000, which has probably opened Pandora's box for a lot of other people. We can then say to people in Alice Springs, for example, 'There is flexibility here. There is no excuse for you not doing anything, because there is an additional $5,000 for you to go that extra step and to find $5,000 out of your own kitty to do it.'

CHAIR—It is a good thing. Dianne, what was the issue that you wanted to clarify with us?

Ms Hawgood—Whether you were also focusing on remote communities and whether there was recognition that there are those differences. Even in our programs, there are differences in the way we use our programs in one area as opposed to another.

CHAIR—The chairman's approach—subject to the views of my colleagues—is that whilst we were asked to look at urbans, and we are doing that, we are conscious of the fact that communities live outside of urbans and need to relate to them. So it would be wrong, in my view, for us to say, 'We're not going to listen to the voice and the pleas of people outside of urbans if there is an interrelationship.' I would also like to think the committee would take the view that, as we do our inquiry, we want to be flexible, too. If we hear of good ideas or solutions to problems that will lead to employment outcomes and good outcomes, we will listen. We will take note and we will promote and encourage those things. That will help everybody. So do not be constrained in your responses to us, because we are not going to be, either.

Mr QUICK—For example, Alice Springs would be an urban area—

Ms Hawgood—An urban and a remote.

Mr QUICK—Yes. To a lot of the people who are now working at Uluru in the hospitality area, Alice Springs is a big town. But to those of us who come from Sydney—

CHAIR—I have thought of another example. When we were in Darwin we heard almost heartbreaking stories of people coming in from the outback and living in the bushes in Darwin. So you can see the relationship. As chairman, I could have said, 'I don't want to hear about what they need because they don't actually belong to Darwin and we don't know how long they'll be there.' But, instead, I think, 'Why are they going there? What is going wrong in their communities?'

Ms Hawgood—I would like to make one point in relation to the Anaconda issue. We think Anaconda do excellent work, and we want to continue working with them and supporting them.

CHAIR—John Jury is a great advocate for Aboriginal people.

Ms Hawgood—He is. In relation to the increase to $15,000, we would like to see what outcomes we get from increasing the amount with the mining industry before we look at opening that Pandora's box and offering it more widely. We do not want to now say, 'Everyone can have $15,000.' Our view is: let us see where we get to with the mining industry.

Ms HOARE—I would like to see one of your indigenous employment officers actually go out and make sure that at Anaconda—I am not against Anaconda, of course—the people who are being selected to benefit from the $15,000 are the people who are most needy.

Ms Hawgood—Yes.

CHAIR—Before I close the public meeting, I would like to pay tribute to you and your team for a refreshing discussion.

Mr QUICK—I would like to thank you, too.

CHAIR—A great and exciting outcome is being developed by you all. We wish you well. We would like to credit your minister and your previous minister with doing the hard yards politically in getting it up. So, good luck and good work.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Hoare**):

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

Committee adjourned at 6.03 p.m.