COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Capacity building in Indigenous communities

TUESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2003

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Tuesday, 18 February 2003

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

Members in attendance: Ms Hoare and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

(a) community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities;

(b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and

(c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous people.

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WHITING, Ms Lyneve, Program Leader (South-West Region), Sustainable Futures, Department of Primary Industries; and President/Board Member, Community Connections (Victoria) Ltd 391

Committee met at 10.08 a.m.

AMOS, Mrs Sharyn, Drug and Alcohol Clinical Specialist/Drug and Alcohol Acquired Brain Injury Clinician, Western Regional Drug and Alcohol Service

CHATFIELD, Mr Tim, Chairperson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Tumbukka

COLLYER, Mr John Ronald, Chairman, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

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CHAIR—Welcome. I ask Mr Collyer to make some opening comments.

Mr Collyer—I would like to welcome everybody and thank those who travelled long distances. People have gone into their diaries and put a couple of days aside for this in a lot of instances, particularly those who travelled from Melbourne and the far reaches. That is pretty important to us and I think committee members acknowledge it. Although this is listed as a

formal hearing, it is a reasonably informal discussion. Thanks again to everybody for participating. I will hand you over to the chairman, Mr Barry Wakelin, who will do the introductions and get this show on the road. I would like to give a special welcome to Tim Chatfield from the Tumbukka region, who was appointed last week, and the regional councillor, Jodie Ryan.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, John. Could I also acknowledge Mayor James Nicol. Echoing John's comments, thank you all for coming from wherever you have come from. I was actually travelling through Warrnambool about a fortnight ago on my way from a wedding in Melbourne, so I feel as if I am back in almost familiar country. We will try to make the hearing informal but gain as much useful information as we can for the purposes of our inquiry. I will read out the terms of reference for our inquiry so that they give us a focus about the purpose of our inquiry. The terms of reference state:

The Committee will inquire into and report on strategies to assist Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders better manage the delivery of services within their communities. In particular, the Committee will consider building the capacities of:

(a) community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities;

(b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and

(c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous people.

That is the brief that we set ourselves some 12 months ago. We are about a third of the way through our hearings. We have been to Queensland and the Northern Territory, and now to Victoria. We will be in Melbourne tomorrow. Next we will go to New South Wales. We have about 12 months work ahead of us. In the role of a standing committee we are out talking to people to find out where they think things are at and how we might do things better, basically. There are clearly Commonwealth, state and local government issues involved. But, more importantly, there are issues that involve the community and the Aboriginal people themselves, and how they see those services being delivered and improved.

A meeting like this could become pretty cumbersome as we have only about an hour and a half. John, perhaps we could start off with a perspective from you, and then from your newly elected chairperson, Tim. Perhaps you would speak for two or three minutes about who you are and your background. We know that in Victoria a small percentage of the population is Indigenous. We were at Shepparton yesterday and there are all sorts of exciting things happening there, and there are really interesting things happening in Warrnambool and in the region in terms of positive outcomes. John, where do you see things are at? We will move to Tim, and then, Mayor, I will ask you to make a comment.

Mr Collyer—I am the chairman of the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative. I think that where we are at is fairly well represented here today. In putting a list together we tried to get a broad cross-section of people who have contributed to the growth of this organisation. If you look at the list you can see that it covers Job Network providers, Centrelink, environmental type groups—things like that. It also covers—for want of a better word—the welfare providers, because we have recognised that we cannot be all things to all people. Certainly, as a referral point to those, it has been very beneficial to us. There is a confidence amongst our workers and

our members here to deal with those services, and that has been a big push from us as well. Without bringing those services on board, I do not think we would survive.

On another matter—and I have made the point at a national level and as part of the review of CDEP, as well as in other places—as you guys travel Australia you are going to see distinct differences in remote areas and in discrete communities and homeland communities. Whether the numbers are small or large and whether we look at here, Bendigo, Mildura or Shepparton, I think the benefits of CDEP lie in its value to the rural and regional economy. As you know, this organisation also deals with non-Indigenous work for the dole. Whilst that might be a semblance of reconciliation, the important thing to us is that we see ourselves in the broader context of being a valuable participant in the local economy. We have gone beyond just being a black co-op on the corner that is isolated. We have gone to great lengths to share our resources and also chase other resources, apart from the traditional funding bucket of ATSIC and Aboriginal Affairs. That makes it all inclusive from us. We are happy, pretty much; we are going along. We are self-paced but, at the end of the day, we certainly have some outputs. That is pretty much it from me, and I encourage people to actively participate.

CHAIR—Thank you, John.

Mr Chatfield—Firstly, I would just like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the country and thank John for the invitation. It is probably my second day in the job.

Mr Collyer—Sorry about that.

Mr Chatfield—That is okay. I would like to support John's comment in terms of where we are at and the issues, especially in the Tumbukka region. For the people who do not know me, I am from Giraiwurung country and a little Aboriginal mission, Framlingham, where I was born and raised. I did all the things like learning the culture, getting involved and participating with elders and so forth. I was fortunate enough to head off to Halls Gap, where I managed a tourism venture, which was a learning experience in getting Aboriginal people involved in tourism. I managed the Brambuk culture centre for the last eight years and I am very proud to say that it has been a model in the state for cultural tourism.

I had the opportunity to be elected as the Tumbukka chair, thanks to all the people from the communities who supported me. The last couple of days have been an eye-opener because the Tumbukka region goes from metro Melbourne to Echuca, along the Murray River, and right down to the south-west and back to Geelong. We have a budget of $8.4 million which ATSIC deals with in trying to support local communities. That is going to be a challenge in itself.

Prior to being the Tumbukka chair, I heard things at a grassroots level on the other side. A lot of communities are struggling, and they have been for a number of years. The economic and social aspects cannot work together; they have to be separated. There have been a lot of organisations trying to do both. Unfortunately, we found out at Brambuk that, if economic development is your core business, you definitely have to separate the social stuff, because it does not work.

Certainly, from the council's point of view, in the next three years we will be looking at how we can resource local communities. At the front, that is where it is at—there is no CEO and there are no dollars or actual leaders in the community, so in trying to keep the doors open to

deliver social welfare programs we are robbing Peter to pay Paul. That is something we will be endeavouring to look at. We have to get real jobs. More importantly, we have to get real partnerships with local government and, by sitting around the table as we are here today, together we need to look at how we can get on with business and provide services. Then we will have the outcomes we want in terms of reconciliation and providing better services for the broader community.

I am proud to say that Halls Gap—which is where I was before I became Tumbukka chair—will probably also be a model through the actions of the local community. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria funded a facility for the local community, a remote organisation in Halls Gap. We went out to the broader community and the local governments to encourage them to use the facility and to provide services for Halls Gap, because it is a tourist destination. Now we have a real partnership, with a doctor's service, a maternal child health worker and a physiotherapist in Halls Gap. So this is focusing not just on the Koori component but on the whole spectrum of community issues. We are very proud to be involved in that.

As I said before, there is only a certain amount of money that you can give out to the organisations, because there are so many needs. But I think the starting point for us, and one that the communities have been screaming about, is resources. That is one thing that we will definitely be looking at. From there, we will basically be looking at training and real jobs. I am on my second day in the job and I think I have done all right so far today. It is a big job and I am looking forward to the challenge. Councillor Jodie Ryan and I will be endeavouring to look at the best way forward in terms of the local communities and partnership with government. But there is only a certain amount of dollars out there.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. You have done fine—we appreciate that. Mayor, would you like to speak about how you see things and where we are at in the region of Warrnambool, which is your area of responsibility?

Councillor Nicol—First of all, I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of these lands and pay my respects to their past and present elders. On behalf of the Warrnambool City Council, I would certainly like to welcome the committee members who have travelled here today for this very important hearing. We hope you have an enjoyable stay in Warrnambool. I will perhaps begin by quoting briefly from my Australia Day address. I talked about the need for advancing the idea of reconciliation. There has been a lot of work done at a practical level to bring that about and I think more needs to be done. In the same speech, I talked about the fact that the Howard government has talked about practical reconciliation, and that is to be commended. But I also said that, as part of the process of reconciliation, I think that a clear, unambiguous national apology to Australia's Indigenous people for all of the injustices of the past would be a significant step along the road to true national reconciliation. I think there are a lot of people in the community who have that view. Obviously that is the larger political backdrop issue for this whole discussion.

I would also like to speak briefly about the role of Warrnambool City Council and local government generally in the process of assisting on Indigenous issues. I am actually a member of an organisation called the Barwon South West Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, representing another group called the South West Municipalities Group, which is essentially the municipalities of Glenelg, southern Grampians, Moyne, Warrnambool, Corangamite, Colac, Ararat and Pyrenees. They have appointed me to be their representative on

that. I am also a member of a body called the Municipal Association of Victoria's Indigenous Issues Network, which is basically the Victorian local government peak bodies network dealing with Indigenous issues. There is a meeting of that association in Melbourne on 12 March.

My involvement in those organisations demonstrates that local government is keen to assist. Tim has just talked about issues to do with funding, and obviously the key challenge in relation to Indigenous issues is to have the appropriate level of funding and to see that it is actually directed to the services where it is most needed. From a local government perspective, we are very much involved in facilitating things, and those two organisations that I have just mentioned would certainly be keen to assist with the delivery of services or facilitating the delivery of services. As Tim has indicated, the question of funding is obviously paramount, and, from a local government point of view, we tend to be at the lower end of the food chain when it comes to funding and the availability of funding for the delivery of particular services. But there is certainly a willingness to assist in facilitating things. The regional Aboriginal justice plan really is part of an overall state plan.

CHAIR—We heard about the Koori Court yesterday, and we were very impressed.

Councillor Nicol—We discussed the Koori Court, and in fact there was discussion about whether there should be one in Warrnambool. There was a number of possible candidate locations for the first Koori Court—Shepparton was one and I think Broadmeadows was the other one.

CHAIR—As we have time lines to keep in mind, I have a couple of questions which you could help us address. Are many Aboriginal people employed within your local council?

Councillor Nicol—There would not be high numbers.

CHAIR—According to the numbers I have in front of me, approximately 300 Aboriginal people live in Warrnambool and 1,000 in the region, so you would not expect it to be high. In terms of the blockages, if you like, or the impediments to further progress—and you touched on some broad national issues—what practical things can communities do and address? Does anything strike you? Around Australia—I do not know what it is like in Warrnambool—we have issues of education and literacy and numeracy which really block further progress. Basically, if your literacy and numeracy is not there—and former Senator Bob Collins did a wonderful report on education in the Northern Territory—that is a blockage to people and their progress. I am not saying that is what is happening here; it is dangerous to translate it as such. So there is an issue of literacy and numeracy.

Also, there is an issue in relation to the cultural approach—what is appropriate and how that encourages people to come forward. What I find exciting about Warrnambool today is the CDEP and the Work for the Dole. There are some very good reasons why that has happened—and I do not understand why that has happened. So two or three things come to mind. The medical service, Tim, that you mentioned, is state funded, I presume; yet, you do not have a Commonwealth funded AMS, for whatever reason. I will not dwell on that, but if you want to add anything more to the issue of whether the Commonwealth should be supporting more on the health side and the blockages, please do. Also, you might like to comment on how the education process is going and the employment opportunities that might be available within your own council.

Councillor Nicol—The council is certainly mindful of the need to advance those issues wherever possible. Things are happening like community job programs which are very well received around here, and the council has been involved in a lot of them. There has been a bit of Koori involvement in those. When I was talking before about the regional Aboriginal justice advisory plan I was talking not only about the interface between Indigenous people and the justice system but also about a lot of the broader social issues and the underlying issues of why people have got into the justice system to start with. I am sure all of those sorts of issues will be discussed and addressed in that process. I commend that. I would make the point that, in relation to that, I believe there needs to be some overall coordination of services, as there are different little levels of activities happening. I sometimes wonder whether there needs to be a larger picture of the overall delivery of services, but I suspect that that is a common problem.

CHAIR—I think that is right. You may be aware of some COAG initiatives which the states and the Commonwealth are working together on at the moment to develop this whole concept of working together within Commonwealth offices, let alone between Commonwealth and state offices. A major initiative is being developed there.

Ms HOARE—I have got a couple of questions to direct to Tim and John. First of all, in relation to funding, there has been a lot of Commonwealth money put through ATSIC and other initiatives for various programs within Aboriginal communities. Has the disbursement of that funding been appropriate and how could it be done better? For example, could it be done on a needs-by-needs or community-by-community basis? As part of your review of CDEP, John, what kind of good news and sound practices are you taking to the national review from your community and from your involvement here? I would like to pursue those areas.

Mr Collyer—Obviously, as I said before, there needs to be a clear distinction of the needs of remote areas in, for instance, environmental health and those sorts of things. I have been a bit worried, and I have said it for some time, that CDEP is following what used to be the DEWRSB agenda. We were basically getting hijacked with mutual obligation. There is a whole set of circumstances with people that work with us and people that want to enter mainstream employment. I think we have about a 25 per cent rollover, if you like, of people that do choose to take the path of going into mainstream employment.

But I came on board originally with CDEP through the DSS, as it was known in those days, and the two key words were ‘community development’. Part of our charter here is to develop small businesses, which you will have a look at later today. It is just ludicrous for us to work to a DEWRSB agenda of using CDEP as a transitional point when we are trying to develop our own businesses. I look around the room and see people—and you will see people later—that have been with us for the long term. Developing those skills up internally and retaining those skills makes us somewhat sustainable, if you like—although it is subsistence, I suppose.

I was a bit fearful about mutual obligation and trying to match that with CDEP, particularly in rural and regional areas, although not so much in remote areas, obviously. I was concerned that that was going to be the push and that we were getting too closely aligned to mainstream activities. I do not have a problem with that because, as I said, with a lot of job-matching programs you can talk to people and they will say that that has been quite good, and it suits individuals and certain employers. But the reality is that there are people that have social issues and family issues that would not survive in mainstream or normal employment. It is like casting them out to the lions—because of their social circumstances or family circumstances they are

just not going to survive. We have actually had a number of people that have left and this has always been their fall-back position. We have not made it easy for them to come back. We have got employment contracts with people where we outsource and so we do encourage that, but it is certainly only a very small part of our business.

The other thing you mentioned was Work for the Dole. James talked about practical reconciliation; we have sort of reframed that word here and we call it natural reconciliation. I might end up in a blue with some of my colleagues, but I think that when you push the agenda of reconciliation for a community that is not ready—and I am talking about the non-Indigenous and Aboriginal communities alike—it becomes a bit of an imposition on people. The priority becomes asking, 'What is reconciliation and what do we want to achieve with reconciliation?' But the way we operate here is by just engaging people, whether they are black, white, Muslim or Hindu—who cares? It just seems to flow over that that relationship with people develops over a time. So it is not about saying, 'We are reconciled' or 'We are heading towards reconciliation,' it is just a natural thing.

Mr Chatfield—Just to answer one of your questions regarding the dollars, by the time it comes down through the process I think that Aboriginal communities are only getting a small percentage. I think there is a lot of duplication in terms of positions and on-the-ground delivery. That is something that really needs to be addressed. At the end of the day, we need to control our own destiny as Aboriginal people because it is culturally important to the local Aboriginal people. So we need to get the jobs, especially within the mainstream services. They need to be based in some capacity where we have a full-time health worker or a family violence worker et cetera. Because the country is so big, the needs are not being met in terms of services. This is a major concern for a lot of Aboriginal communities, and I have experienced this.

I would just say to you, Mr Chair, on the issue at Halls Gap that the local community have Commonwealth and state funding, so it is three-year funding for the service delivery stuff. The state allocated the facility to provide those services. In terms of self-determination, the community really have to self-determine the way in which we are going to go. The only way we are going to deal with our problems on the ground is by having Aboriginal people employed to deal with those issues. We also need to have a training capacity so that we can be accountable and make sure that that service delivery is done professionally and properly.

Ms HOARE—I would like to pursue that a bit further. You would be aware that there is currently a review of ATSIC happening. I would like to put a scenario which we have experienced the evolution of in the Torres Strait. In the Torres Strait there is the Torres Strait Regional Authority and it seems to cut back on bureaucratic levels. The people who are working in the authority are then closer to the needs and the wants of the local community. Could you maybe see something like that happening for the Tumbukka region and, say, my area, the Many River region, or maybe the northern and central land council regions in the Northern Territory? So it would become more region based than national based and come down to the most minute level. Do you have any views on that?

Mr Chatfield—I welcome the review and I certainly look forward to that process. I have a meeting on Friday, actually, about the review process. I think ATSIC can be structured in the way that it has been zoned with the two sides: the Binjirru and the Tumbukka. If we are calling upon Aboriginal leaders within the organisations, I think they need to be full-time councillors

with portfolios—believe me, it is a nightmare sitting around the table trying to do your business because you are relying on the Tumbukka chair, the deputy and the alternative.

You also have subcommittees. Councillor Ryan is the chairperson for economic development, for example. I am certainly interested in looking at the Tumbukka area in terms of scaling down councillors. Instead of having 12 we may have six with six main portfolios—one could be social welfare, one could be housing, one could be economic development et cetera. It gives you security, too, in terms of the people in those positions. You could base them out in the regions so that they are out on the ground. The criticism you get in any position is that you do not see anybody. I only spend two days a week in the job, and community people want me to go out and visit. I think it is really important to be out there on the ground and see what the issues are so that we can address them and take them back to council.

I definitely think the restructure is the way to go. You are talking about only a small bucket of money in terms of dealing with 28 organisations in Tumbukka. They all want something from the same piece of pie, and hard decisions have to be made around the table. I also think each organisation needs to be looked at in terms of which way they want to go with respect to their vision: either social welfare or business. There have been a lot of consultancies going around getting views and all the rest of it, but at the end of the day it is going to be around the table, speaking to heads of families and so forth, that people decide what they want to do. I welcome the review and we are looking forward to the process—aren't we, Jodie?

CHAIR—Thank you. Can we go back and talk about duplication. It is a vexed issue in government that has been there forever. Resources wherever you are at are limited all the time, and we need to get the best value from them and certainly add to them if we can. To me, when it comes down to it, you have tabled the same thing: we are all about getting the best value out of these precious dollars, but this duplication drives us all silly. Does anyone want to talk about that?

Mr Chatfield—Certainly. I would like to call a summit of all government agencies. In the Tumbukka region I do not think one has been called, and I also think one is overdue for the state. We need to get around the table with the heads of departments and look at what we are all doing on Aboriginal issues. I will use the example of native title and cultural heritage in the state: there is a lot of duplication in parts of Victoria in the amount of dollars spent on heritage officers, rangers and so forth. We are talking about a budget of $500,000 to employ eight heritage officers for the South West Cultural Heritage Program, which is in the south and the Wimmera. Then you might have the native title unit which has a certain amount of dollars to deal with land matters, and you have parts of Victoria that have all these senior rangers, if you like.

I think that needs to come together as one. We are all dealing with the same native title, land and cultural heritage issues. We all have an obligation and responsibility. Basically we need to get people around the table to make sense of it all, because there is just money all over the place and the services are not being met on the ground.

Mr Collyer—I think a good example is NAP, the national action plan. We are obviously involved in environmental services, and we have some good people with DSC and things like that, but it is bureaucratic red tape. To answer one question, CDEP is basically a drip-feed. There are no resources for administration. I think it is disorganised. We have one full-time

position, which is filled by Jennifer, and a part-time position to look after regional CDEP activities. The rest of it we have to go out and earn. That is the only funding we get, other than the wages and the oncost component, and we have to milk that dry.

As we know, CDEP is a national program. I know you are meeting with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. I was with the director last week. People are unclear about particular roles and particular levels of government. The advocacy role that AAV has taken on with state government is probably right. But there are the wider overlaps—and we can go back to that word 'mainstream'—for example, in salinity control and NAP. There is an amount of duplication in those and I think it is a waste of resources.

If you are talking about devolution and putting people out into the regions, there are so many agencies in the country regions. Whether it is education or community development, aside from CDEP, there is a flow of Commonwealth funds into state agencies, but we never see them in the country region. Our education needs are met by TAFE and local people. I hear of programs out there—for instance, there are community development officers. Do we ever see them? We just do not see them. As far as I am concerned, straight up, and it is in *Hansard*, they are milking the system and not providing the services out here. So I think there needs to be a total review of that. Whether it is CDEP or something else, there have to be listed outputs. If they are not delivering them, they need to be chopped.

Tim and I do that with the communities that we deal with, and we make friends and we make enemies. But we do not ever see the resources go out of the bucket; they are redirected. I think the Tumbukka council is being a bit courageous. Tim has actually chopped organisations based on my recommendations, but those resources have been redirected to proactive groups that are delivering the outputs. So I think CDEP is a drip fund. I believe the same thing from a national point of view: if they are not delivering the formula of funding per participant—as you know, there are huge accounts sitting out there where they are not developing—that needs to be addressed by taking the same view that Tumbukka council has taken over the years of redirecting those funds into areas of deliverables.

CHAIR—It is a question I have always had in my mind too, John, in the sense of how thoroughly the Commonwealth tracked that money through to where it was supposed to be. This is a question as old as time. Cost shifting is one term that is used. There is a whole lot of debate that goes on about it, but there needs to be scrutiny of whether the original intent is delivered at the end point. I have always been wary that there is sometimes not enough regular scrutiny of that when it gets down to the grassroots. Can we open the discussion up to other people? Do any departmental people have a view? There are some very practical accountability issues and bureaucratic issues. Mr Mayor, do you want to add anything at all?

Councillor Nicol—No, I am just going to move back a bit.

CHAIR—All right. Thank you. Does anyone want to add anything or volunteer any general comments? We need to ascertain (a) where it is going pretty well and (b) where we need to do it better. What are the main areas? You all come here with different perspectives. We would have loved to have had a couple of days and sat down with each of you and gone through your perspectives, but we want to make it as open to you as possible. Does anyone have anything they wish to say? I could have gone around and introduced every single one of you, but that would have taken 30 or 40 minutes, and half our time would have been gone. So please forgive

me for perhaps being slightly discourteous in that. Is there anything that anyone would particularly like to say in general terms, in relation to our terms of reference or about anything that is staring you in the face?

Mr Chatfield—I will just finish off with one question, then I will go out and have a cuppa. Cross-cultural training is very critical for government. For far too long I have seen that there are issues that need to be addressed, especially at a local level and especially with government. So I think that is very important. If you want to get on with business and go into partnerships, it is one of the first things that needs to be addressed—how to approach Aboriginal people, how to deal and what the current issues are. I think if we strengthen that up we will get on with better services.

CHAIR—I think you have raised an essential point. I have just done—very, very badly—a week of trying to learn Pitjantjatjara. That is part of my electorate. I have learnt some words, we have had a lot of fun, laughed at each other and all the rest of it. It is not an issue here, I would presume, but what I learnt was that where you do not have language—and my people, Pitjantjatjara people, have two languages—it is a bit embarrassing. What I am interested in is trying to understand how we define culture and the important things to retain and yet live in this European dominated society. Can you give us a couple of pointers about cross-cultural education? Pick out two or three points that you think are really important.

Mr Chatfield—I would like to hand you over to Esmai. Sorry, Esmai. I put you on the spot there, but we raised this issue this morning.

Ms Manahan—I am the Manager of the Koori Business Network. I am a Yorta Yorta woman. This is not my country, but I acknowledge country and elders. Cross-cultural training is very important. I work in government and I know that if you address some of those difficulties in the delivery of government services, they certainly are delivered in a far better way. If there is an understanding of protocols and local issues—the politics of communities—there is a far easier transition of and delivery of services.

I have been in government for quite a long time and I have observed that, where there is not that understanding and where you do not have officers who understand those issues, there can be a lot of difficulties. That even happens in my own department—I work with the Koori Business Network in the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development. Where cross-cultural services are provided—and I think Parks Victoria have run quite a lot of cross-cultural programs across the state—I think that they could be done better and they could be more effective. But at least they are addressing and trying to understand some of the issues that are there. I think that is essential and critical.

CHAIR—Are you able to give an example or a couple of examples? I think we really struggle with understanding what we mean by culture, where we advance the issue and how we manage it appropriately from government delivery of service, community and Aboriginal perspectives. It is a huge challenge. Without trying to put you on the spot, there may be a couple of examples you can give me of a positive and a negative.

Ms Manahan—I think one of the issues is that, obviously, the core business of the Koori Business Network is business development in Indigenous communities and with individual Indigenous entrepreneurs. I think it is very easy for people working within a large government

department not to understand the barriers that Aboriginal people or communities starting up businesses face when going into business and the reasons why they want to go into business. It may not necessarily be about wealth. There could be cultural or ecological reasons—they may want to replenish the waterways, for example. It is not only about creating wealth for individuals; it may be about creating wealth for communities. I think there is a basic misunderstanding in government institutions of the reasons why Aboriginal people or communities want to go into business or start an enterprise. It can be about employment issues—about employing Aboriginal people in the community. Maybe, if they want to go into aquaculture, it can be about making sure that Aboriginal communities have access to local species and bush foods. It is for those types of reasons. It is not only about creating wealth for individuals. I think that is crucial.

It is also about understanding some of the impediments. Aboriginal people, when going into business, do not have a history of business. They do not have generations in business, like the Greek community or the Vietnamese community—when those cultures migrate here, they have that history and they also have families to support them. Our communities do not have that. They are starting up on their own. A lot of them do not have the assets to be able to go to a bank and say, 'We want to borrow money.' There are difficulties in going to ATSIC and we address those issues sometimes—there are certain criteria. It is a basic lack of business understanding. I know from a personal perspective—and I think that Jodie would know this, too—that, when working within a government body that deals in big business, we are very low profile. We do not have that status. We do not have Aboriginal people in business or with a history of being in business. We have a few successful models that we can look at, like Balarinji, but not much apart from that. It is difficult to say to government, 'We need your support—please support us in what we're doing and in trying to get assistance, but acknowledge that the reasons why Aboriginal people might want to go into business may not be the same as white people's reasons.' There are other reasons. It is all about that wellbeing of Aboriginal society and looking at the whole, not just at making millionaires—it is not about that.

Ms HOARE—We have been speaking a lot about partnerships—partnerships between community, community and governments, community and the three levels of government, communities and business and between employment providers. When you are talking about the development of business, can you talk a bit about the partnerships? We can see here today that Worn Gundidj have invited people in from all parts of the community. I know we have education providers and employment service providers here. They are the kinds of partnerships that I would see the community using to build up the business development, where the cultural training is provided by the local TAFE. Are needs analyses done to see what kinds of partnerships can be of benefit in the issues that you are raising with us?

Ms Manahan—Absolutely, and it is crucial if you do not have these partnerships and the support of partners. It is right across the board—the needs analysis, the research into what is needed and what partnerships mean is important. We need to have that research. There is a whole lot of research that is not done that would show us, or expose, a lot of the myths and stereotypes. It would also expose the gaps, the low socioeconomic state that Aboriginal people are in in this state and what they do not have. We rely on those partnerships to provide the resources that we do not have. When we look at existing partnerships across the state, it is important that you bring in all the partners, not just for mickey mouse stuff or for showcasing themselves but to have real input into providing. The main thing is consultation with communities about what they actually want. It is not about providing big stuff and big dollars

and saying, 'This is what's going to happen,' but about consulting about what the real needs are. Some of those needs are about addressing those barriers. Why can't Aboriginal people go to a bank and get a loan? Why can't they go and start things up? Why is it so difficult? Why can't we in this state get our artists' work into galleries in Melbourne? Why can't we do that, when we have top quality artists in this state? They are not recognised. There are issues like that.

It is about recognition of people in this state for what we are. We have a traditional artform. We have our own culture. Each tribal area has their own distinct and beautiful culture, which a lot of the time is not recognised by people out of this state. That is what we want as well—recognition of things that are happening in this state. A lot of our businesses are in the area of arts and crafts and culture. It is important that they are recognised and supported by institutions and galleries in Melbourne. The National Gallery of Victoria shows and buys Aboriginal artwork from all over the country but I bet if you go into the new Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square you will see about two or three Victorian artworks there; everything else is from everywhere else interstate. That is also an issue for us that I wanted to raise. It is a big issue.

Mr Collyer—On the issue of the cultural barrier, as you said, in the AP lands it is totally different. I have had the privilege to work there a few times, so I understand. There is a misconception that Victorian culture—although people are trying to practice their culture and reinvigorate it—is someone in a lap-lap playing a didgeridoo. There are organisational cultures and community cultures. There is a different culture and mind-set in Halls Gap, for instance, from what we have down here. I have heard the comment sometimes: 'the real blacks' and 'the make-believe blacks'. If government or non-Aboriginal people start defining what culture is, you will establish a cultural divide. Culture is not just about dancing and painting but about environmental culture, family culture, third generation unemployment and those sorts of issues. Those are the cultural barriers.

CHAIR—Do you feel, John, in terms of understanding and appreciation within the broader community, that it is well understood? It seems to me that we have a long way to go towards understanding it. We started to develop this because many of us who come from different traditions struggle to understand it.

My greatest embarrassment—and I was saying this only last night at dinner—is that if I had my time again I would insist on having an interpreter when I went to the Pitjantjatjara lands, as I did 10 years ago, so that I could get on the right wavelength as quickly as possible. I think that is a fundamental thing, just one example. I reiterate and perhaps leave as an open question the comment that if we work out a more appropriate or stronger way then it is a win-win situation both ways. That is the point I am trying to make. In trying to define it, I agree with your point that it is not about laying it down in terms of 'the real black' and 'the not real black'—trying to apply that to white would be pretty interesting, wouldn't it? That is something I wanted to touch on, and I think we have got something out of that. It is quite valuable. Does anyone particularly want to add anything? We need you to volunteer and come forward.

Ms Haynes—I am Linda Haynes. I am employed by the South West Institute of TAFE.

CHAIR—The staff have done great work making all of these wonderful tags, so they want people to use them. Please relax and enjoy the ride.

Ms Haynes—That is easier said than done; my heart is thumping.

CHAIR—Please relax. We bite only each other, not others!

Ms Haynes—First of all, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this country. I feel very privileged to be here. I would like to pick up on something that came up about culture. One of my roles is as co-chairperson of the local Aboriginal education consultative group. Just yesterday we had to deal with a very unpleasant issue regarding one of our young Koori educators. We have three Koori educators in the Warrnambool area. This young educator unfortunately had not returned to work after the holidays, due to quite strong family issues. The last thing on her mind, of course, was contacting the school to let them know that she could not return at that point in time. When she finally did have time to do that the principal of the school said, 'I don't want you to come in on Monday at nine o'clock; I want you to come at 10 o'clock and you will come before a panel.' There was no consultation or discussion with this young girl—and I do not want to go to into why or anything like that. She was absolutely distraught. She is a very young mother and she was absolutely distraught, so she contacted, through Gunditjmara, the two chairs of the education group. We also contacted the regional Koori education development officer, and the four of us went to this interview to support her.

This sort of thing happens all the time, and I just want to highlight one particular incident. This principal sat there and made us all wait while he wrote our names down—this was his authority over all of us. Then he turned around and said, 'I want three of you to leave.' We sat there and said: 'No, absolutely not. We're not leaving this young girl to you.' He said, 'One of you can stay as a mentor for her, but the other three will leave.' I said: 'No. We are allowed to be here as observers. We will stay here and we will give her all the support that she needs.' It was absolutely disgusting. There was no flexibility and no consultation with her, even about how she was feeling on that particular day. She was sitting there almost hysterical and in tears. He did not give a damn. He did not ask her, 'Do you need help? Can we as a school community help you?' or anything like that.

I believe it was a cultural issue for him. He turned around to the two co-chairs and said, 'This highlights the need for your education group to have training in how a school runs.' I have been the principal of a school. I know how a school runs. I do not need him to tell me how to do that. We said: 'No, this isn't the point. You and your teachers need some kind of cultural training.' He flatly denied the fact that he needed cultural training. He turned around and said: 'There is no difference. We are all human. We all have the same basic needs.'

To me, dealing with young kids at school is where they need help. Just the other week a teacher who lives opposite me at home came to me and said: 'I've just delivered the component about Aboriginal history. Where do I go to from here?' I said: 'What are you doing delivering Aboriginal history? You know nothing about Aboriginal history. I don't really know anything about Aboriginal history, yet you sit in front of a classroom of 30-odd children and tell them the white interpretation of Aboriginal history. Why didn't you get an Aboriginal person to come in and talk about Aboriginal history?' Most teachers do not even have an Aboriginal friend or colleague.

CHAIR—I wonder—

Ms Haynes—I am getting sidetracked, I am sorry. I am getting passionate.

CHAIR—No, that is all right. We value that. Could you describe for us and suggest to us the alternative? Let us go to the other side and put the negatives back there where we have to put them and then we can go to what the ideal is. How do we now create something which, in your view, would be ideal? I think you know it; you, really, just described it to us. But could you, in a minute or two, just take us through the way to do it?

Ms Haynes—Every teacher that comes through training must undergo some kind of training in Aboriginal culture and traditions and that way of dealing with things. That can be delivered only by an Aboriginal person and not a professor of whatever. That is where the basic thing lies. No teacher should be asked to have Aboriginal children in the classroom unless that teacher has had Aboriginal cultural training.

CHAIR—You might also describe what the appropriate model would be for handling something like that unfortunate incident yesterday, where there is a difficulty with a staff member or something.

Ms Haynes—The first point of call should have been the local education group. We keep talking about partnerships. There does not seem to be that partnership. We have regional Koori education development officers, we have the local Indigenous education groups, but schools ignore their existence. They think that they know how to deal with these issues, and they do not.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Ms HOARE—Linda, I understand that you are the Koori liaison officer with the South West Institute of TAFE?

Ms Haynes—That is right.

Ms HOARE—Could you let us know about any organisations other than schools that you might deal with and maybe talk a bit about your work and about how having a Koori liaison officer has benefited both the Indigenous community and the broader community in which you work?

Ms Haynes—Part of that might have to be answered by John. South West Institute of TAFE has three campuses—Warrnambool, Portland and Hamilton—so we are working with a number of Indigenous communities, such as Framlingham, Winda Mara and Portland, and we do some work out at Lake Condah Mission. We do a little bit of work out at Framlingham, but the bulk of the work is here in Warrnambool.

Worn Gundidj is what I consider our most successful story in terms of the relationship that we have developed with them. They have asked us to come in to train their workers in textile production and painting. We ran the horticulture department's apprenticeship training for them. Most of the work that you see in here is the result of the South West Institute of TAFE training that we have delivered on site. And that is one of the big things I have learned—you cannot ask Indigenous people to come into the institutes to do their training. The most successful training occurs away from campuses, on site, so people do not need to come in for their training.

CHAIR—My assistant just reminded me that a lot of people might want to say things. I had better open the discussion.

Ms Haynes—Sorry.

CHAIR—No, never apologise. You bravely stepped up when I needed someone to step up—so thank you very much, Linda. Come forward, please, anyone who wants to. You assured me that people are raring to go, Jodie.

Mrs Ryan—Yes. Also, it would be quite good if we could get an interchange going. People should feel free to—

CHAIR—That is right—deformalise it a bit and have people responding to each other and coming in with comments. Now is the time.

Mr Collyer—I would like to comment on the liaison. Yes, Linda has been very effective in her role. South West Institute of TAFE was not used by us for some time, not because there were any quality issues but because they did not deliver a horticulture course at that particular time. All over the place, I find there are training providers who simply want black bums on seats. I was dealing with a group last week, for instance, who were under a training provider that we threw out of here five years ago. These people are getting all these certificates, but still none of them have qualified to go and get a real job—talk about the duplication and the waste of money that goes into that system. I said: 'Have a look at the minutes when I come up here. I suggest you get rid of them.'

We had a situation here at another college, 120 to 130 kilometres away, that suited us with a regional apprenticeship program. A couple of our people were lagging behind. We did not even know. We were not getting the attendance lists, for instance. They were getting signed on but in fact they were not there. There was an issue with one particular person who would sit up the back of the class; they did not recognise this person had a hearing and eye problem. So we basically pulled the people out and went to the TAFE with a pretty clear message: 'If you aren't prepared to deliver and properly manage these people, we'll go elsewhere.' Too often, particularly in regional and country areas, Aboriginal groups and other groups are stuck with what are in a lot of instances lazy training providers, who purely want to get bums on seats. There needs to be a severe look at that system within the education system.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mrs Ryan—Thank you. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. My heart is beating quite quickly but I will give it a go. I want to speak from a variety of roles. As an ATSIC regional counsellor, I work with Esmai and the Koori Business Network in business development. I have had previous roles working in Aboriginal education and working in the mainstream as an accountant. Something that I have found consistently an issue in the government approach to working with Aboriginal communities is that they are always talking about equal opportunities. I think that we need to understand that we are not looking for equal opportunities but looking for equal outcomes. We need to understand what the gap is between an equal opportunity and an equal outcome, and how we get that.

We do not have a level playing field. We are three to four times more likely to be unemployed, 17 times more likely to be in prison, seven times less likely to access higher ed. We need to look the reason why that is so—it is because of over 200 years of social injustice—and look at how we bridge that gap by identifying how to channel something from being an

nd look at how we bridge that gap by identifying how to channel something from being an equal opportunity to being an equal outcome for our communities.

From my working experience I can give two examples of ways to address that. We need to be adequately resourced and not just have mickey mouse programs that are not going to be effective at the end. That is just setting up people to fail. A good example of that are our community organisations that are not resourced with financial management and do not have CEOs and are managing up to 25 staff. We cannot even attract the right people to do it. We are struggling to get a CEO for our legal service in town, because we just do not have the dollars to attract the right people with the right skills.

As a result of the CYS funding cuts six or seven years ago, probably half a dozen of our organisations are struggling just to keep their heads above water. I sit on the board for local community organisations, and I think they are the backbone of communities. They are assisting these organisations in their development through social issues and also their economic development, but if they do not have the resources to lead the way then I do not know what hope we have got.

There is a program-specific federal government program that works specifically in business development, where I am working at the moment. I think there are two issues that need to be addressed: identifying what the barriers are and how we can address them, and that is through adequate consultation. So it is listening to what people have got to say and actually taking that on board when they make their recommendations. But that is only the first step. Often a problem is that we do have the right programs but the access to, and the delivery of, the program is not efficient. A good example of that is the Indigenous Small Business Program within the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. They have identified issues within business development, such as those Esmai was talking about—that is, we do not have access to our mentors and our families, we do not have the skills, we do not have the equity.

Within our communities too there is a want and a need to further develop our communities through economic development, but we do not have the skills and resources to do that. The Indigenous Small Business Program assists people to access training and programs such as funding to help develop business plans and marketing plans. But the problem with that program is that access to it is limited, and the delivery of the program is not very efficient, in my opinion. Working with communities trying to access this program, I have found that it takes up to six months for a $10,000 business plan to be approved, when our need has been identified six months before. The application process is unbelievable.

CHAIR—What do you think should be the time maximum? Should it be 30 days or 60 days?

Mrs Ryan—Thirty days. Why does it take that long to approve $10,000? The application is 15 pages long. Four months down the track it comes back asking for more information, half of which we have provided in the initial application. So five years down the track when we look at this program to see how efficient it was, people will say: ‘There’s not many people accessing it. We’re not expending the budget.’ But it is not because the need was not there but because the delivery of the service was not effective. So I think that is something we need to look at across all programs.

That also comes back to the cross-cultural awareness training within our government departments. I think that working in a state government we can see it at that level, but I think it reflects at the local government level. There are a lot of local councils in Victoria, such as the City of Port Phillip and the Ballarat City Council, which are developing MOUs with their communities. A crucial part of that is an Indigenous employment strategy. So I think that is on the way; with the support of a lot of best practice models it is getting off the ground. I think the Victorian state government has an excellent initiative with the Wur-cum barra Indigenous employment strategy, where they are looking within their public service to ensure our employment is representative—we make up two per cent of the population so why can't we make up two per cent of the public service work force? I would like to see the federal government take on an initiative like that, so they are being proactive.

Ms HOARE—Yes.

Mrs Ryan—You have heard that one?

Ms HOARE—I think we actually recommended it in our last inquiry.

Mrs Ryan—I guess I would come back to that initial point: keeping in mind that we do want equal outcomes, not just equal opportunities, and identifying what that gap is and making sure the gap is addressed and effectively delivered in the resources and the services.

CHAIR—Did I hear you say that you are a trained accountant?

Mrs Ryan—Yes.

CHAIR—Congratulations, and thank you for your forthright presentation. Has your heart slowed down?

Mrs Ryan—Yes.

CHAIR—As long as it has not stopped totally; that is the main thing. It was great to have you present so well. Kelly, do you have any questions?

Ms HOARE—No. That was very well presented, thank you.

CHAIR—Would the next witness please come forward.

Mr Fox—I am the Convenor of the State Friends Network Committee, which is the umbrella group for all the friends of national parks, creeks and Auntie Mabel's backyard. I feel very privileged to be welcomed to these lands today. I would like to comment from that parks and volunteers and friends network angle. I have known John for quite a long time. I first met him in Social Security, when he had that role to work within Social Security on community development. That is the bit that seems to have dropped off the agenda. There are some good examples that both John and Tim have spoken about today—Brambuk, Tower Hill and other places around here—where the opportunity is there if someone recognises that there are a hell of a lot of barriers, mostly unconscious barriers, placed in the road. I see from just listening this morning that there is a great opportunity, under the label of research, if you like, to publish the

successful case studies—not just to publish the fact that they exist and how good they are now, but to go back and research how they were allowed to come about.

You have met John; I seem to meet Tim every time he starts a new job and that is about all. But you have some creative people who focus on an outcome, see that there is a chance or an opportunity here and then start talking with the people who have custodianship of or responsibility for those issues. Through that dialogue there is normally some sort of innovative way to get that outcome. Part of that outcome is to involve the local people. Of course, the overall objective is to make sure that custody of the particular estate or whatever is fine. There is a lot of scope for that to continue, not just with the national estate but with local government. You have some really good case studies here, as you have around the rest of the country, but unless you happen to trip over them you do not know they exist. So I would just like to put in a plea, maybe as part of your paper, that it be organised in that way.

Mr Coverdale—Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I recognise also the traditional owners of this area. I am the Manager of Westvic Work Force, which is a group training company. We are hoping to develop a bit of a renaissance with Worn Gundidj. We have been actively building some communication links with Worn Gundidj and looking at trying to improve opportunities for young people in apprenticeships and traineeships in particular in the area. We have had involvement with young people from various communities in this area and from the Heywood Winda Mara area as well, largely through labour market programs.

We are anxious and keen to try and build relationships and see if we can increase the number of young people in our community who are involved in apprenticeships and traineeships in the mainstream areas. Worn Gundidj has been active in doing its own thing there and it has created something of a group training organisation within itself. We commend the organisation for doing that and working on building up opportunities for young people in trades, for instance. We are here to support the organisation in any way we can. We recently sought or invited representation on our board of directors and it has been terrific to have a positive response there. We have a representative from this organisation on our board.

I just have a few comments. I see our role as one where we really have to be there listening to people like John. John is really taking the lead and we have to listen for opportunities and to inspirational comments that John has to make about where he sees the local community going. We really have to listen and follow through. I suppose John could say something like, 'I have a project that would be excellent,' and we could bring forward some of our knowledge of what is available funding-wise and what services we can provide to actually meet John's aspirations. We are hoping to do that right now with a project that is in the wings. So I guess it is about the listening process and the preparedness to go into a partnership.

For the last 12 months, we employed a young fellow on the reception desk at our organisation. He was outstanding in terms of his presentation and his customer service was fantastic. Young Robbie had challenges with his family background. He would be in attendance most of the time but had difficulties on some occasions and could not front up. I guess we always felt that Rob had a lot going for him and so we had to be prepared to support him. We would be in touch with his aunt to try and sort through these things. It would work for a while and then Robbie would have difficulties again. We recognised this as part, in a way, of the history. I guess we have to reflect on the 200 years of persecution and just continue to persevere. I think we would really value mentoring support in these sorts of circumstances—coming back to the community and saying, 'How can you help to further this employment

ming back to the community and saying, 'How can you help to further this employment outcome?'

CHAIR—How do you mentor?

Mr Coverdale—Perhaps with the elders. Robbie's aunt was terrific in helping us work through this sort of stuff. She was a communication link. I am not familiar with what other options would be available.

CHAIR—You remind me, and the secretary has just reminded me as well, that there are elders and also other Aboriginal leaders who may not be elders. To try to understand that and how it works is pretty important as well, isn't it?

Mr Coverdale—Yes, I think so.

CHAIR—It is important to understand how that all fits together and what is the best way to do it.

Mr Coverdale—I do think that creating a support mechanism, even prior to supporting somebody into employment, could be a great way of getting a foundation to achieve a successful outcome. Robbie also talked to us about the idea of job search training, which is in the Job Network area. This is a bit of a hothouse arrangement which brings together teams of people who are job seekers so that they can support each other in getting into employment. He thought it would be fantastic to run something like that within the community. It would bring people together—people who have similar backgrounds, similar challenges and similar difficulties—to support each other into employment. He actually suggested that it should be not only Koori community members but that it should be like the Work for the Dole program which runs here, where we have non-Indigenous people involved to share in that process.

CHAIR—I thought we had a wonderful example yesterday at Shepparton where the emphasis was on reaching out to the wider community. There is as much difficulty in reaching out as there is in making contact—that openness and linkage—and also in the learning of the skills and the understanding of the job market or employment situation.

Mr Coverdale—That was our chief aim with young Robbie: to equip him with some skills and understanding of the Job Network system so that he could act within the community itself.

Ms HOARE—I congratulate you on the initiatives you have taken with the local community. We have found with a lot of Job Network providers that, since it has been taken away from the hands of the government—and I came from a background of delivering employment programs to Aboriginal people in my previous life—people who are too hard for Job Network providers to place do not get a look in. That is particularly the case in more regional urban areas. Can you see a way for the Commonwealth to write into the tender process, the accountability process or the transparency process a way for service providers—they may not even be Job Network providers—to ensure that the same service is delivered to all people?

Mr Coverdale—I am not really qualified to answer that question. I think that is a real difficulty, but I think it is quite easy to stipulate that Job Network providers be required to really work towards assisting people in the Indigenous community. You could actually talk about

percentage involvement. The whole job market area is a challenging one in which to generate outcomes and so forth, and it is an area where people probably look towards easier options to achieve outcomes.

I find that question a difficult one to answer. The way in which we are trying to operate here is with a much more fluid, personalised approach. We are listening to John, to Jennifer and to other members of the community about their particular needs and using what staff training and employment delivery resources we have to meet those particular needs. So it is a case of grabbing a bit from here and a bit from there. It is really operating on personal relationships, and a common understanding and sensitivity is the way to go. I am not sure that any government regulation is really going to answer questions on these particular issues.

CHAIR—Where you may be able to help is where there is a clear impediment.

Mr Coverdale—I think the Job Search training is an answer in one way. Another is probably the challenge of encouraging young people in the community to look at apprenticeships and traineeships, because they expose them to the non-Indigenous community. Somehow we have to provide some earlier support for those young people and encourage them to consider the broader horizon and the new options available to them. It is all about giving them a sense of confidence and pride in the culture to which they belong, and it is about supporting them through the process into employment and further skills development.

CHAIR—It is not compulsory, but would any of the job provider people like to come forward?

Ms HOARE—We are running short on time now and we would like to speak to as many people as possible.

Mrs Ryan—I am back again. I did a research project on implementing Indigenous employment policy which looked at why Indigenous unemployment within our region is three times higher than it is in others. It looked at what the barriers were and which services were working effectively and which were not. I am happy to provide comment on the findings of that report.

CHAIR—Thank you. We will give these witnesses the opportunity to talk and then we will come to that.

Mr Eccles—I am from Centrelink and, firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners. I do not want to speak on behalf of Centrelink, but I was interested to hear Miles speak before about outcomes, which was great. This is no slur on Miles's organisation, but when some of the employment agencies talk about outcomes they are actually talking about dollars. It is not so much about getting a proper outcome for the client and getting them into employment and creating a greater good, as Miles was talking about; it is about making money for the organisation. I am afraid that is a result of government policy in that area and the privatisation of the whole employment industry.

CHAIR—What would we do to alter it?

Mr Eccles—Down here we do not have a government-run employment agency like the old CES or Employment National to compete. Although there were a lot of flaws in that particular system, a lot of the people in those areas were doing the job because they wanted to do that job. There was no financial gain for them other than their wage for getting someone into employment. There was no ulterior motive; they were doing that to help the client get into a job. In the current climate, as I say, we do not have that.

CHAIR—Are you saying that the privatisation of Job Network is an impediment to outcomes?

Mr Eccles—I do not know that it is an impediment. I do not know, either, that it is a particular improvement for those hard cases that we spoke about before. They just get recycled again and again through the system.

Ms Umbers—I work for Community Connections, which is a community based organisation that delivers welfare type services, if you like, to the community. My role currently is that of consumer worker and financial counsellor. I have been involved here since John invited me to come and speak to some of his workers. Some of the people who were working out here had difficulties with those areas and did not know how to actually access our services. So I come out here. Something that our agency is looking at is how best we can actually engage Koori people who may need our services but who are unable to access them for a variety of reasons.

Ms HOARE—Would your organisation have done that had you not been invited by John?

Ms Umbers—Yes, it was already part of the process. There are a number of other workers in our organisation who have personal or other links with the Koori community. I am not the only one. Other workers before me or who have been around a lot longer have been doing that on an individual basis. Currently we are having a broader look at that—we are bringing those people who might have those personal links together to talk with the community about how best we may be able to assist people in the community to access our services. One of those things is tax help, for example, which is a small program. We take that out to the Framlingham mission and deliver it there rather than have people coming in.

Mrs Amos—I am from the Western Regional Drug and Alcohol Service. My role with Worn Gundidj is to come here on a formal and an informal basis as a drug and alcohol counsellor and also an access point to refer them to other welfare services within our community. One of my main roles within my organisation, as a clinical drug and alcohol specialist—part of which deals with acquired brain injury—is to actually work with women and men within Worn Gundidj in the areas of alcohol and drug use, the impacts on employment, sexual abuse and domestic violence—the things that are not really talked about within any community. So it is really to help them and also me—we are both learning from each other. How we deal with domestic violence can be totally different within a Koori community, so it is a learning curve. Worn Gundidj is my conduit to the Koori community and we are Worn Gundidj's conduit to the mainstream community.

Through the RIPE program—Rural Interprofessional Education—with Melbourne University, four young students in the fields of pharmacotherapy, medical, nursing and physiotherapy came here. They had no cross-cultural training within tertiary education. They say they do, but the breadth and depth of it is quite small. So these students, who we really want to work in the rural

community, came to Worn Gundidj. We shared a meal and the women actually taught them how to make scarves and things. It was the most incredible experience for those four students. All they wanted to do was to give back to the community. They would never have actually had that experience if we had transported Worn Gundidj to us. It just would not have worked. From that two days they then developed a community program—all they wanted to do was to help Worn Gundidj. But it showed that what they learned in those two weeks with us far outweighed the four years that they had spent within university. It had much more of an impact and they had much more respect for the culture and the issues and things like that. So, even though I work within a drug and alcohol service, I actually go far wider than that. I think that basically we all do.

CHAIR—You mentioned that in the Koori circumstance there is a different way of dealing with domestic violence or other issues. You may choose not to talk about it, but you may be able to give us a couple of clues about that difference.

Mrs Amos—I am a part of the south-west domestic violence network. It is very difficult for Koori women to enter into your mainstream domestic violence refuge system, because by doing so they move away from the connection with their family, the land and spiritual things. All of that is not taken into account within the mainstream.

CHAIR—I am just trying to understand the difference. Domestic violence is seen as an issue. What positive contribution have you found from learning to manage it in a different way?

Mrs Amos—I have worked with women within the mainstream. This could be a feminist thing, but men move away from that and they are an integral part. The difference is to move into that family and that community and actually deal with the violence within it, instead of removing the woman from it.

CHAIR—Okay; I get it.

Ms HOARE—We had reference yesterday to the bullshit laws—that is, the assumption in Aboriginal communities that it is all right to bash your wife. The women call them the bullshit laws.

CHAIR—Jodie, can you tell us about the work and research you did with the Job Network and the impediments you found?

Mrs Ryan—Within our region, the research was done in the Ballarat community. We found that the Indigenous unemployment rate was about 33 per cent, which was three times higher than it was in the mainstream community. We looked at what the issues were and how we could address them. One of the major findings within that was the ineffectiveness of Job Network providers to deliver their service to Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people need to build up a trust relationship with people they are going to share personal reasons with as to why they are unable to work within the mainstream work force. I do not think that Job Network providers readily welcome cross-culture awareness training in enough circumstances. They do not have an understanding of the transgenerational issues that affect our people of today. The social injustices of the past are affecting our people today, and that is why we have such high unemployment rates.

One way we looked at addressing that was through the federal Indigenous Employment Program. We employed an Indigenous person to work with our community to assist them by placing them into employment. Because there was that trust relationship there of having an Indigenous person who has an understanding of the issues within the community, within a six-month period he had placed 10 people into full-time paid positions. He was also able to build up relationships with private organisations and deliver cross-culture awareness training to them so that they can then employ Indigenous people. In the next couple of months one of the hospitals is taking on an additional eight people to the initial four that it employed, so it is working at becoming a Koori-friendly environment. Having that person there has been really effective, because they have been able to provide a service that the Job Network providers have not been able to provide.

Ms HOARE—Jodie, can we get a copy of that research you have done?

Mrs Ryan—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing here today. I now welcome to the table Ms Hancock from the Green Triangle Area Consultative Committee.

Ms Hancock—I offer more of a personal perspective. My work with the Aboriginal community has probably been what I would call shallow. I have not done a lot of delivery of service, although I was the business facilitation officer for the ATSIC community a couple of years ago. We have just worked with John with the Indigenous employment facilitator—I was on the steering committee. It was an interesting process. Through that process and my previous work with the Indigenous community, my personal thoughts are that there are a lot of people running around telling us what the problems are, and it put my mind to a solution which I might offer you today.

To summarise what I am hearing here, there is a deficit in access to knowledge on both sides. It is a two-way street. The white community does not have access to knowledge of the black community, and vice versa. My solution might be to offer something like a mentoring program, where quality access is available. I am not saying that that is an economic solution, because I imagine it would be very expensive, but it certainly would provide proper cross-cultural experiences. For instance, in the Job Network, I understand the point of view that the cross-cultural training is inadequate—certainly, what the CES provided before was adequate. However, the cost of a placement, for instance, cannot absorb the cost of the quality of the cross-cultural training that is required. It becomes an economic argument. So I do not know how much access to knowledge would cost, but it certainly is ignorance that we are working with.

CHAIR—But if you make the argument—if I can hypothesise—that that investment has a range of other spin-offs, such as a sense of wellbeing, a sense of understanding and a focus on more positive outcomes, then perhaps we have not looked broadly enough at the overall picture. There is a very significant economic pay-off anyway because, just through understanding, you can get better outcomes—instead of looking at the short-term with a narrow, silo mentality, as we quite often define it. We might be able to make that argument, though. That is what you were suggesting to me, anyway. In a narrow definition, you may not be right, but in a broader sense it may well pay off in financial terms as well as social wellbeing.

Ms Hancock—Yes. As an extension to that, thinking about the example that Linda Haynes gave, an area of development that you could work on is documentation of processes. When we started the Indigenous employment process, it was not until we were a long way down the road that we realised that there were a number of things that needed to be put into place. We need to have a clear understanding of what expectations are—normal processes. These do not exist, in a cross-cultural sense, on either side. For instance, I am positive that the young fellow Miles was talking about who came in to Westvic Group Training had no idea what the processes were, nor did Miles's organisation.

We all have this sort of base knowledge that, if you employ an Indigenous person, there will be problems. There will be days off, or the young girl will not turn up to the school. We kind of know that. But beyond that—as part of the argument for cross-cultural training—there is no way for us to know how to respond. I think there is some work to be done there, even if it is as formal as an employment contract. These expectations need to be brought out and documented but may also form part of a mentoring process. For instance, who is to say that John Collyer could not have a week's work experience with the Mayor of Warrnambool, and vice versa? Sorry, John!

Mr Collyer—That's enough from you, Toni!

Ms Hancock—There are lot of people who show leadership promise, and in the white community we give those people a chance—we put them through schools and we put them on student councils or whatever; they are signalled as leaders. We see those leaders in the Aboriginal community but we do not give them same sorts of opportunities, simply because they do not fit into the same systems. Someone who fails in the school system is not necessarily a failure. In fact, there are a number of business leaders who did not have any schooling. So, again, we are basing it on the silo mentality—that is, if you have not done this, this and this, you will not achieve that. Unfortunately, that happens for the Aboriginal people because they are so far out of the parameters.

Mr Collyer—I would like to comment on that. I think Toni has undersold the ACC a bit. I think it has been very proactive, with us in particular, and it is certainly open to a lot of new ideas. It has funded a couple of projects with us. The concepts have come to fruition and the outcomes have turned up a couple of years down the track, particularly with the environmental services and the lead-in to bush tucker and things like that. Jodie talked before about the process of getting grants, but this was relatively easy and there was a smooth transition, partly because there were good project staff and a willingness by the committee to invest in that risk; it has delivered a heap of outcomes. So the ACC has been very good, and I think it really complements us, along with a lot of other community projects.

CHAIR—Yes. Toni's contribution this morning has emphasised the need to be proactive. Toni, do you want to add anything further?

Ms Hancock—No.

CHAIR—Earlier I raised the issue of education. Mr Lowe, could we get your comments about how you as a school educator see education issues?

Mr Lowe—I am just new at it.

CHAIR—That is fine, and that is why it is optional. But we would like someone to talk about education and how it is going.

Mr Lowe—I am a Koori educator at East Warrnambool Primary School.

CHAIR—I believe you have just started.

Mr Lowe—Yes. I am new at it. I took over from a lady who is now on maternity leave. I was just working part time at the school, looking after Koori kids who were playing up a bit. I went there to sit in class with them and try to settle them down. As I was there, I have taken over her role until she comes back.

CHAIR—What do these kids who are playing up a bit get up to, and how do you settle them down?

Mr Lowe—They feel as though the teachers do not understand them, or they do not understand the teacher. The teacher could understand them but the kids take things a different way. They hear what they want to hear. I explain what the teacher wants them to do. Most of them are like me: they sit in the corner, do not say much and just do their work.

CHAIR—So if you have a yarn to them and say, 'This is what's trying to happen here,' do you find that they respond? Do you find that that works?

Mr Lowe—Yes, pretty much. I think it helps to see a Koori face in there. If a lot of teachers have troubles with them and they come and talk to me, then I will talk to the kid—mainly out in the playground, instead of in the class—or go outside and have games with them and get other kids to mix with them. Some of the kids just hang with Koori kids and that's all. They do not know how to act with other kids. It is hard to say—

CHAIR—I understand. They are not comfortable with it and they seek the familiar. That would be my guess.

Ms HOARE—Do you think that your being there makes it easier for the kids to keep coming to school?

Mr Lowe—That is what we are looking at now—going to see the mothers and fathers to try and get the kids to school. There was a girl in prep last year—and she is in grade 1 this year—who was not at school for 62 days, and she was up at the top; she was not left behind. We were trying to get her parents to send her to school because she might be gifted. She is bright, she keeps her friends and so on. That is what most of them have problems with—because they are away from school so much that they do not know how to make friends and they mainly hang with their Koori cousins.

Ms HOARE—How did you do it? What did you do when you went and talked to her parents?

Mr Lowe—We are getting it done now, mainly. Linda talked about it, mainly, in the meeting. They live a fair way away and they walk to school. Linda and the others tried to get them in to

about 100 or 200 metres away. If they catch a bus there, that goes straight to school, instead of walking; it would be a few kays.

Ms HOARE—That would put anybody off, wouldn't it?

Mr Lowe—They have to leave home about eight or quarter to eight to get to school on time.

Ms HOARE—Good luck with it. Well done.

CHAIR—How long have you been doing this?

Mr Lowe—I have been behind the scenes a bit, but it has been two years, nearly three.

CHAIR—You are pretty familiar with how it is going and what some of the issues are. That came out in your answers in terms of how you are handling it and those very practical things about getting kids to mix a bit, catching the bus or whatever it might be. Do you reckon the kids value school? I know there were days I did not want to go to school. Would their valuing school be another way of getting them into school? A lot of us did not like school much. That is a pretty common thing.

Mr Lowe—I liked school, because I was there with all my friends. I did not go to class, though! I suppose it gets them to meet a lot of people, instead of being in a family situation.

CHAIR—So there is no problem there. The kids do not mind going to school and being there.

Mr Lowe—It is just a case of getting them to do the work. Mainly it is that they do not understand; the way it comes across from the teacher and that.

Mr Collyer—The other valuable thing that Robbie has done is work with community justice. You dealt with a lot of those issues, Kelly. Robbie did community justice for years so he dealt with a lot of those issues, and with repeat offenders. That is valuable, I think.

CHAIR—Robbie, thanks for that. That was great, mate.

Mr Coverdale—Robbie, you were talking to us about the webcam stuff that you are doing with kids. That was very interesting.

Mr Lowe—We have a computer that we interlink with Heywood and Horsham, and we have just signed up to go global. The kids annoy me about when they are going to go onto the computer, so I will have to get that all organised.

CHAIR—So they like it, do they?

Mr Lowe—Yes, they love it. There are programs on it as well, like a whiteboard program that both of you can use. You can do a word find or just talk to each other by typing words out and all of that. So it is a bit different—we talk to each other on the computer and we can see each other.

CHAIR—That is terrific. We will begin to wrap up this session, unless someone else wants to come forward.

Ms Whiting—Yes, I would like to say something. I am wearing two hats here today. One hat is my community role—I am president and board member of Community Connections, an agency you heard a bit about earlier. The other hat is my employed role with the newly created Department of Primary Industries, which is part of what was the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. In that role, I would like to acknowledge the custodians of this land as well and introduce Jeremy Moloney, a colleague I have worked with over the last 18 months.

CHAIR—Thank you. You are going to have to be fairly brief, unfortunately.

Ms Whiting—What I might do, because of the need for brevity, is leave you with a document. I will use the term 'Department of Natural Resources and Environment', even though we represent different departments—that has occurred only recently. In the Department of Natural Resources and Environment there was an acknowledgment of Indigenous issues and the creation of an Indigenous partnership strategy. There were eight key initiatives arising from strategy. I will go very quickly through them. The Indigenous Cultural Awareness Program is targeting staff, and I am picking up some of the points today. I have a couple of examples of Indigenous community partnerships and of capacity building of Victoria's Indigenous communities. I will leave cultural heritage, land and natural resource management to the parks area, I think—you will be speaking with them later. There is also Indigenous employment, economic development, communication and the development of Indigenous community profiles, giving us greater understanding of our communities. In some of those examples, and within what was the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, I liken the implementation of the strategy to a journey. It is not perfect. The action plan is stumbling along in some areas and in other areas there is burgeoning development.

I would like to talk about some positive areas in the relationships between us and, particularly, the Worn Gundidj cooperative. The employment of Indigenous staff within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment has been acknowledged as a very high priority area. Just recently, in recognition of the commitment to both cultural heritage and the management of the land and sea, our fisheries, flora and fauna areas have specifically employed cultural officers. They will perform the same roles as the other officers but will overlay their knowledge and their priorities on cultural issues.

Another aspect that is increasing—and while it is positive, I think it still needs a lot more work within our respective government departments—is support for Indigenous communities. An example here is the horticulture program—the growing of native plants for revegetation projects. I think we could go a lot further towards supporting businesses like that as preferred suppliers, for example, for works in particular areas. That is certainly happening, but it could happen to a greater degree.

CHAIR—We are running out of time. Is there anything in particular you want to pluck out of that last bit there?

Ms Whiting—In relation to capacity building, something that is probably unique—and some of my colleagues within the department may question our role in this particular community

capacity building event—was titled 'The Torch'. It was an initiative out of Arts Victoria that looked at taking issues relevant to the local community—in this case, it was Indigenous issues—to the stage through five professional actors, supported by a cast of around 50 to 80 local people, who performed for the local community. That was a huge event which was well received, and it has left a continuing legacy of an increased desire for greater knowledge.

CHAIR—Jeremy, in the couple of minutes remaining, can you give us an overview? I apologise for the short time available.

Mr Moloney—That is okay. Thank you for the opportunity. I would like to acknowledge, since coming to this field of work that I have been involved in for the last couple of years, the strong relationships that our staff here in the Warrnambool office have developed with the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative. We feel it is important to develop those relationships, and John and his staff have been very supportive of that approach. A number of our staff are going out and doing fieldwork on private land, and we need to be particularly aware of the cultural heritage issues associated with doing work on private land. Through that process we have gained a better understanding of Indigenous issues, particularly through running cultural heritage type workshops for our staff. These were run by Framlingham officers, and so forth, around the area.

The other thing that John really emphasises—and so do we in the Warrnambool office of NRE—is the relationships that can be developed and the advantages that come out of that process. We have been involved in a couple of local revegetation projects and there is a bush tucker project, which you will see out at Tower Hill later on today. The department has supported that program on a state-wide basis as well, through our marketing offices. We will continue to nurture these relationships, in particular through providing opportunities for tendering processes, such as for the horticultural project here, so that the co-op can compete with other organisations.

CHAIR—That is wonderful. Thank you for giving us a picture of what is happening. Maybe you could write a brief submission to cover some of that information. It does not have to be elaborate—just a summary or a copy of your notes.

Ms HOARE—I see that you both have comprehensive notes there.

Ms Whiting—I will also leave you a copy of the brochure *Indigenous Partnership Strategy*.

CHAIR—Thank you all for coming this morning and for adding to our body of knowledge.

Proceedings suspended from 12.09 p.m. to 1.35 p.m.

BATES, Mr Ronald George, Community Development Employment Program Employee, Textiles Design Artist/Director, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

BURTON, Mr Alan Gordon, General Manager, Essendon Football and Community Sporting Club

COLLYER, Mr John Ronald, Chairman, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

ESPOSITO, Ms Sara Kirstin, Economic Development Officer, Warrnambool City Council

HALL, Mr Maxwell Robin, Community Development Employment Program Employee, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

HARRISON, Mr Bradley Joseph, Community Development Employment Program Employee, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

HORVATH, Mr Kane, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

LOWE, Mrs Jennifer, Community Development Employment Program Employee/Finance Officer, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

McINERNEY, Mr John Gerard, Ranger in Charge, Shipwreck Coast, Parks Victoria

MACKLEY, Mr Daniel Charles, Community Development Employment Program Employee, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative

SCERRI, Mr Frank, Community Development Employment Program Employee, Essendon Football and Community Sporting Club

SUTHERLAND, Mr John Robert, Convenor, Friends of Tower Hill

CHAIR—Welcome to the second part of this public hearing in Warrnambool today. You can have a crack at anything you want to in relation to what the issues are and in relation to what was said this morning. I think most of you were here this morning. For those of you who were not, we basically talked about things that are impeding Aboriginal progress and any solutions or suggestions about how we can do things better.

Mr Burton—Our club is the social arm of the Essendon Football Club. I have a bit of a success story to talk about. About eight months ago I first met John Collyer, and we were not aware of programs such as the CDEP. John explained what the program was all about and how it could help place someone to learn more skills and to be given employment opportunities. Since that time, we have had Frank Scerri with us, and he has been working in our back of house operation in the hospitality area of our club. It has been really beneficial both for Frank and for the club.

We believe that we have been able to assist Frank to learn skills to run the hospitality side of things, the back of house running of special events and functions with our club. We are at the point where Frank has been able to gain additional employment at the club. We now rely on him quite heavily to cover annual leave, sick leave and special events. It has been very enjoyable on everyone's part. Frank has made a lot of new friends and relationships at the club.

Adding to that, we all went out to dinner last night and we have found that we are now able to take another step for Frank on the bar side of things in the hospitality area. A couple of months ago I asked Frank whether he was interested in working the bar, and he was a little reluctant to do that. But after last night's chat and dinner with John and a few others, I think we have convinced Frank to take on training in the bar and things like that during his CDEP program working times. That will give him additional training and, down the track, once he is comfortable and we are comfortable in his knowledge and ability, we will be able to give him more employment through working the bar hours as well as the maintenance hours. He has been a real success story.

The Essendon club would encourage, and welcome, a lot more employers into the CDEP program. It is a great program that has really benefited our club. We can see first-hand what it has done for Frank. Probably the only thing we would like to suggest as an improvement—I think it was probably by accident that we worked towards the bar thing last night—would be to have some sort of liaison officer who moves around, meeting people such as Frank. So, if Frank is not comfortable coming to me to talk about more opportunities, he can talk to his liaison officer, who could come to me and say, 'Frank's keen to do some bar work. Are there any opportunities out there?' I think we could have progressed a lot further than we have to date. We stumbled across it last night by accident, and we are all very much looking forward to it over the next couple of months.

CHAIR—Thank you. It is great that you have shared that with us and described that accident. Government may be able to make some more accidents, that are not exactly accidents, happen. Frank, would you like to say something?

Mr Scerri—I had been out of work for a while and had applied for many jobs and could not get any work anywhere. I spoke to John about this CDEP program, and that has enabled me to prove—to myself as well—that I can do the job. Hopefully, there will be more work for me down the track.

CHAIR—What sort of time scale would that be? Was it over the last few months?

Mr Burton—We have had the program in place for about eight months and now we heavily rely on Frank in a number of areas. He did his training and got an understanding of our business. He is very heavily relied on and is a key component of our daily operation. We rely on him to cover annual leave and sick leave and work on big projects for us. It has been going great. We are looking for a long-term project with Frank. Hopefully we can develop it—we have got to stage 1 and we can see stage 2—and increase that to part-time or full-time employment over the next twelve months or so.

CHAIR—Good luck.

Ms HOARE—Alan, you are a great advocate for the CDEP and for other businesses taking it on. How can you help spread the word?

Mr Burton—That is what it is—spreading the word. When John first came to me, being a bit naive we were looking for the catch—what it was going to cost, and that sort of thing—but, once it was explained to us more clearly, we saw that it is quite a successful and viable program. It is something that we can be proud of. There are obviously many opportunities to promote the program through the AFL clubs. At Essendon we have some high-profile people that I am sure would be more than willing to spread the word. There are a lot of struggling AFL clubs out there. If they can use the CDEP to their benefit—to help them man their clubs and things like that—it also gives people on the program the ability to learn and build their skills and to build relationships with other clubs and other people.

Ms HOARE—Similar to having Ray Martin promote a particular government program, we could use sport stars—

Mr Burton—There are people like Kevin Sheedy and Michael Long. You only have to mention their names and the media are attracted there straightaway. I am sure the AFL would be interested in such programs and what work has been happening around—

CHAIR—Sheedy would be better than Ray Martin, wouldn't he?

Ms HOARE—I am a New South Wales league supporter.

CHAIR—Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mr Burton—We welcome the program and we are going to make it a long-term commitment from our side. When we have Frank established we will be looking at other placements over the near future.

CHAIR—I think you can look forward to a recommendation in our report on that. We have already got a recommendation, I think.

Mr Collyer—I would just like to interrupt. Frank, I am going to put you on the spot. You talked about being depressed and all these sorts of things, and feeling that you were not going to go anywhere. It gave you an opportunity. Tell us about it.

Mr Scerri—It has just opened doors. You get to a stage where your life is not going anywhere. This program came up and opened doors for me. I have Alan to thank for giving me the chance. That is the bottom line.

Mr Burton—It is a two-way street: you have us as an employer who wants to make the program work and Frank as an employee who wants to work and develop himself. It has to be a two-way street, not just one way or the other. Two-way makes it click very easily, and any hurdles that you come across you manage to get over quite easily if you are both working together.

CHAIR—Thanks for that. You have added a dimension. Is there anyone else who would like to step forward? Welcome, Daniel and Bradley.

Mr Mackley—I am a working member of the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative and am involved with the arts and crafts side of things. I have only been working here for the past couple of weeks. I have been on the CDEP program before and I have found it to be pretty successful for what I do, so I am back for some more involvement. In the past, I have been awarded a trade certificate. I am a qualified horticulturalist by trade. It was Worn Gundidj and another organisation—I cannot remember the name—that helped me to get through my trade certificate. That has helped me. I have since been an Aboriginal liaison officer for Centrelink also. Having that start—having something under my belt, so to speak; some sort of qualification—helped me to go further.

Mr Harrison—I work at the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative. I work in the nursery department, and I am a qualified horticulturalist. I have been there ever since I left school. When I first started, we were mainly just doing lawns. Then John Collyer came up to me and asked whether I wanted to do an apprenticeship in the nursery. I took that up, and I have been there ever since. I thoroughly enjoy it, too.

CHAIR—How long have you been there now? I think you said a decade.

Mr Harrison—Yes, I have been there for a while. I am a permanent fixture.

Ms HOARE—We saw some of the fruits of your labour today. It was great.

CHAIR—We did. It is great work.

Ms HOARE—Are you also based here, Mr Mackley?

Mr Mackley—I am based in the arts and crafts section, which is the second section in Worn Gundidj itself, but I have been coming out here to Tower Hill. I like it out here. I think they are going to run traineeships or something. It is a bit up in the air, so I am hoping to jump on that and have some involvement.

Ms HOARE—Have you been working since you left school, like Bradley has?

Mr Mackley—Yes. I was in Horsham working on the CDEP, and then I had an opportunity to come to Warrnambool. I basically got a transfer on the CDEP from there, which worked really well. That is when I managed to get my apprenticeship and fulfil that.

Ms HOARE—Bradley or Daniel, can you tell us what the CDEP offers you other than just a job? How else does it help?

Mr Mackley—For a start, being on the dole is pretty hard. You have to hand in forms and things like that, and you have to be aware in what you do in your everyday life and go out and look for jobs. The CDEP is a little bit more stable, and the main thing is that it is culturally friendly for us as Indigenous people. It lets us do something that relates to us, in our way, and it

helps me to be an Aboriginal person and to work with my people. It is a lot more beneficial, I think.

Ms HOARE—Bradley, do you have anything to add?

Mr Harrison—It kept me off the streets, I reckon. Apart from that, I suppose I would not be doing that much if not for the CDEP.

CHAIR—How long was the horticulture course you did? Was it 12 months? Three months?

Mr Mackley—It stretched over a four-year period. It was four years on the job and three years of schooling. I actually did mine in Melbourne, at Parkville. It was a bit hard—it was isolated and I was the only Indigenous person doing that trade at that time. Going to a place like that was like studying medicine or something—

CHAIR—It was a big move, going to Melbourne for that period.

Mr Mackley—For sure, but I was fortunate enough to have the people of Worn Gundidj by my side, actually. They helped me out with books and things—they helped out in those ways. They helped me stride through it. I have been fortunate to get a trade certificate out of it. It is fantastic, I feel.

CHAIR—So when did the certificate come out—about three or four years ago?

Mr Mackley—Yes, I have had mine for some time.

CHAIR—Brad, were your experiences similar?

Mr Harrison—Yes, my experience was similar. I did a 12-month traineeship in grounds maintenance before I went on to be an apprentice nurseryman. I went up to the Ballarat School of Mines for about two years. We found it a bit difficult travelling up there and getting our homework and all that done.

CHAIR—Just remind me how far it is—I am from South Australia and I do not know the geography too well. Would it be a couple of hours?

Mr Harrison—Yes, it would be a couple of hours. So John got me into TAFE down here and I flew right through it then.

CHAIR—Can you do the backup work and the homework at Warrnambool now and transfer it, or do you still have to do it at Ballarat?

Mr Harrison—We had to do our homework at home, but John let us do it at work—that was all right. I reckon at any other sort of job they would not do that sort of thing.

CHAIR—So that got you through to the point of a certificate?

Mr Harrison—Yes, but I struggled a little up in Ballarat.

CHAIR—Yes, it is pretty tough. Did you have to live there or did you travel up?

Mr Harrison—No, we had to go up there in a week-long block—one week a month. And it was pretty hard leaving home and coming up here. It is cold up here.

Mr Mackley—I can understand where Brad is coming from with that perspective. I was staying in Aboriginal hostels. They are okay, but they are not the best environments, I suppose, when it comes to studying and things like that—you have to make do. It would have been better if we had identified something close to home. It would have been a lot easier, rather than carrying luggage and all the rest of it and travelling backwards and forwards. Brad was actually my apprentice at one stage.

CHAIR—Would it be a development if Warrnambool TAFE or someone else grabbed hold of it? You mentioned earlier that you had a few experiences here. I do not know whether you want to talk about those?

Mr Collyer—I was not actually going to name anyone, but Bradley did. It is particularly about bums on seats, as I mentioned before. The reason that we had Ballarat and Melbourne was that the South West Institute of TAFE did not have an environmental or a horticulture apprenticeship at that time. They were running 12-month mickey mouse traineeships, but we could only get long-term apprenticeships in Melbourne or Ballarat. As I said, we came across a few difficulties. Once the course got up and running in Warrnambool, we just pulled them out and we did see a huge difference.

CHAIR—So that has already happened, in a sense?

Mr Collyer—Absolutely. Bradley finished 18 months ago and he is looking at doing further studies as well. It has been just a good story for Brad. He was seen to be failing up there, but he came back here and really got stuck into it. He got the highest grade in Latin botanical names—I always say Greek, but Latin is very close. When Daniel was doing his apprenticeship he used to come up with all of these words as well. Anyway, he actually got a 90 per cent pass, which was the highest in the class. Yet, up there, it did nothing for his self-esteem or anything. So it is about managing that as well.

Mr Mackley—That was similar in our group. There were about 30 participants when I was doing my apprenticeship back then at the school, and it dropped down to four. Three of us passed, but I was not one of them. It just goes to show how much work is involved.

Ms HOARE—It also shows the difference between growing up in a region and growing up in a city. For you young fellows, when you wanted to study and get your apprenticeship, you had to go away to the city or to a different region. You did not have your family, support, friends and network, and you spent a lot of time on the road, so when those services can be provided in your own home region it makes it easier.

CHAIR—We have probably grilled you enough! Is there anything else you would like to say?

Mr Mackley—No, thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you both. Does anyone else want to say something?

Mr Bates—I have been with Worn Gundidj now for approximately six years. For the last four years I have been in textiles. For the first two years I was doing CDEP activities, including mowing lawns for mainstream people. Before that I was employed at the smelter for 7½ years. Because I had a few social and family problems, plus the shift work, things did not work out and I became unemployed. At that time I got in touch with a few people at Heywood, where Westvic Group Training—which you were talking about earlier—run a program. We built a scenic walk with viewing platforms and all that at Yellow Rock in Portland. I got involved in that, which was a six-month program. That was totally enjoyable. I finished the program. There were 14 of us and, once again, the drop-out rate was such that we ended up with about four.

Once again I became unemployed and, because I am from Warrnambool, I thought I had better move back home, to where family and friends were. During that time when I was seeking employment, there was nothing about. Everyone said that I was too old or there was nothing going, or sometimes they said that I was overqualified. Then I ran into my cousin up the street and he said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I'm looking for work.' He said, 'We've got a new program going—Worn Gundidj CDEP. Go down and talk to them.' So I went straight down and talked to them and got put on.

That was one of the best things that happened to me, because I was starting to get to the stage where I was thinking: 'Here I go. I'm going to end up on the dole, unemployed, nowhere to go.' It was virtually getting to the stage where you think: 'What do you do? Do you become depressed? Do you want to go to the pub or sit around in the park with your mates and do nothing?' Once I got that job, it was an incentive to keep working, plus there was a steady income and I got to meet new people of all different races. That was the other good part about it. With the lawnmowing, feasibility-wise it did not work out. Then we had the opportunity of going into either horticulture or textiles. I thought to myself, 'I can draw and paint a bit so I might try and do the art side of it.' That is what I did and I have stuck to it for the last four years. I have done TAFE courses with that as well. I have a diploma in screen-printing, textiles and Koori culture.

The other side we were looking at was business management. The next new project is a traineeship in ecotourism and so forth. That is similar to what we are doing here at Tower Hill, which is looking at making products for tourists, doing tours with tourists to discuss what is in the area, and explaining some of our designs. I have thoroughly enjoyed it. I have also found that Worn Gundidj and a few of the other people involved in the business and taking on apprentices have an understanding of the people's social problems, which a lot of mainstream businesses do not have. Some of them have the knowledge but no tolerance, I suppose you could say, which is another major issue with a lot of people. I have found too that a lot of Koori people do not have much confidence, because they always get knock-backs. After a few knock-backs your self-esteem and confidence drop. I have thoroughly enjoyed what I have been doing.

CHAIR—It has really made a difference to your life?

Mr Bates—It has. It has opened me up to not just sitting around dwelling on there being nowhere to go but realising that there is an outlet.

CHAIR—Thank you for your generosity in sharing that. Sugar, do you want to say something?

Mr Horvath—My name was Kane Horvath originally. I am originally from Queensland, so when I first moved down here, one of the elders, Uncle Henry, decided to give me the name 'Sugar'. Coming to Warrnambool has been a big striving point for me in my life. When I was young and not doing much, I was nobody really. Since I have been in Warrnambool, I have actually come to somewhere in my life through this great community—my adopted community. It has been a pleasure to be able to be involved in the radio at 3WAY, doing the Indigenous shows. It has given me a striving point to go higher with my training—now in Batchelor—which I am doing in TAFE and so on. I want to go higher and be a role model for the young generation of Aboriginal kids coming through. If I could be that, or try to get them involved in radio, if I could at least get one person to have a voice for our people, I would have done my job. That is what I want to be—a role model for the community here. If I could do that, it would be a pleasure. I can offer some great assistance once I am qualified and have all my training behind me. That is what I really want to do.

Ms HOARE—Can you tell us a bit more about the show you do?

Mr Horvath—The show I do at 3WAY, for Worn Gundidj, is basically an environmental show. It is under the CDEP policy. John and I had a mutual agreement after I decided to move out of horticulture, out of the nursery, and go and do a radio show for them. I offered to do that out of my own time, and now they have decided to pay me under the CDEP rule. I really appreciate Worn Gundidj for doing something that has benefited me later in my life. I am getting more air time on radio and getting where I want to go. I just want to thank everyone—Worn Gundidj and all the staff especially.

Ms HOARE—We will be keeping our eye out for the rising media star.

Mr Horvath—No, really I do not want to be a top shot. I am mainly doing it for my own community here. I want to eventually get more money than I am getting now, but I do not want to be a John Laws or anyone like that.

Ms HOARE—None of us do!

Mr Horvath—I just want to do it basically for the community here. If I could do that and get qualified and show everyone and get a lot more kids here in this community involved in radio, it would be great for us as Indigenous people. It would be great to get more people to actually have a voice for our Aboriginal people right around Australia. If I could do that, it would be an honour.

CHAIR—Can you tell me about the radio station? I am new in town. How would you describe it?

Mr Horvath—I quite enjoy the working environment there, between the other presenters and me. It is very good how other presenters who listen in to your show even ring you up during your show and say: 'You're doing a great show. Keep the work up.' It really makes you look to go forward to where you want to go. It gives you a boost and makes you feel good within yourself that you are doing something for the community out there. 3WAY is a very good

station, and it has been a pleasure to be involved with it. It has given me an insight to where I want to go and where I want to strive. Without that and without the boys of Maar Laka—which is the Tuesday show, which I did from 10 to 12 this morning—basically I would not have had the insight to decide to do it.

CHAIR—Who are the boys?

Mr Horvath—Robbie Bundle and Nick Haynes. Without them to get me into the radio at the start—

CHAIR—To get you into the swing of it.

Mr Horvath—Yes, they actually got me into the swing of it. When I first went in there I was just like a guest, you know, just talking as a co-presenter. Now Nick Haynes has basically decided to concentrate on Koori health more. Due to Robbie—I do not know what is happening with Robbie Bundle's situation—I have been given the chance to be the sole presenter of Maar Laka. Over the short time of the year which I have been involved with Maar Laka and with 3WAY, it has been really great—

CHAIR—Is it just 12 months?

Mr Horvath—It is just 12 months—especially going to Darwin and getting my training. It was a bit hot; I was sweating—I knew that!

CHAIR—It was not Warrnambool temperature?

Mr Horvath—No, it was not Warrnambool's temperature. It was really great to go up there and have the privilege to meet people from that area and to get a cultural lesson of what they were taught as kids from their people. It was really great and I am taking it as a study as well as a cultural lesson that I have gained—for nothing, basically—from the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, especially the islander people, especially the blokes from around Maningrida and Croker Island. They are lovely people to meet, once you get to know them. They come up to you and shake your hand and introduce themselves. You do not have to go up and introduce yourself. They come to you. It was really great to meet those sorts of people that I have never met. And I had never had the opportunity to go on an aeroplane—to Darwin—which was a bonus for me as well. It was great. It has all happened in a short period of time, because of this community that has really accepted me well. I got my community and, by me going to Darwin, I really want to make this work for my community here. I do not want to flop it, because it is the chance of a lifetime that I have got.

CHAIR—Good luck to you.

Mr Horvath—Thanks for that, Barry.

CHAIR—Ronald, when you said 'the smelter', did you mean the Portland Smelter?

Mr Bates—Yes.

CHAIR—How long have you lived in this area?

Mr Bates—All my life. I was born and raised in Warrnambool, but I spent seven or eight years over in Portland.

CHAIR—In the structure of the CDEP, are you employed full time with a top-up, or with CDEP? How does it work?

Mr Bates—Because our textiles involvement in art, we had the chance to study under TAFE and also to use that at work. Because there were a few cultural issues with us doing artwork with TAFE, it was decided that it would be easier if we did TAFE at work as well. So TAFE set up programs for us to run at work. That was mainly to do with a few of the old laws about some artwork that you cannot do. Some you can and some you cannot, so to make things easier they decided to run the program at work, which was a lot easier.

CHAIR—In a week, approximately how many hours would you work?

Mr Bates—Three days a week I would do TAFE and the other two days would be CDEP hours.

Ms HOARE—When you were doing the dogwatch in the smelter, did you ever think that you would have these beautiful artworks for sale at Tower Hill?

Mr Bates—No, I did not think I would be making the stuff that I am making now. The thing with doing those sorts of hours at the smelter was that you never had much time with your family. The 12-hour shift is a killer. We are finding that there is not much artwork around here in Victoria. It is funny, because for us to do our artwork in other areas we have to get permission and so on but we have found that we are being flooded by artworks from other states. We have found too that a lot of people say, 'There's not much dot work done down here.' Everybody thinks that Koori art is dot work. That is the central desert—

CHAIR—That is a very good point.

Mr Bates—Northern Territory area—sure, that is dot artwork. To me, dots mean stars, down this way. Basically, our work was line work, carving work and that sort of thing.

CHAIR—There a breadth of variation.

Mr Bates—Yes, there is.

CHAIR—We have probably kept you out here for long enough. Thank you very much.

Ms HOARE—I am hoping the chair will give me some time to shop for some of your artwork before we leave.

CHAIR—Does anyone else wish to talk?

Mr Collyer—I have been reminded that we have not talked much about Tower Hill. We opened here on 20 December. It is a partnership between Parks Victoria and two local governments. Over eight months, with assistance from city council, we developed a plan, and we have moved in here. Immediately, as the boys just said, there are going to be some ecotourism jobs and also retail jobs. We have talked about job exchanges with other tourism groups, who unfortunately are not here today. Rather than being in ecotourism ourselves, we plan to work in partnership with people and add the cultural integrity. There are five significant sites in here that currently are not on the tour list. We would like to enter into that, but we are not going to do it unless it is appropriate.

As of the first week in March, we will have 10 trainees with Miles's group over a two-year period. The training will be in ecotourism, retail, product design and product appropriateness. We just had Ron, and the other group who work in the textiles area, doing a specific product. Since coming out here, we have realised that tourism demands are different, and people are now venturing off and making smaller items for backpackers, such as little didgeridoos. People are being creative, using their own minds. That is what this has done here as well. We have asked Daniel to be involved, because he loves playing the didg and things like that. There will be a rotation of different people to have an Aboriginal presence here all the time. We are even thinking about setting up a table where people can do some work, so the artists get that total experience. It has created a whole lot of new avenues and got the brain ticking over about how we are going to do things as a group. So that is good.

CHAIR—Thanks, John. Do some of you want to tell us a little bit about what is happening?

Mr McInerney—I am the ranger in charge of what we call the Shipwreck Coast, and I work with Parks Victoria. I have only recently returned from the north-east, so if I look a little weary that is why. Going back about a year or two, it was recognised by a lot of the community that, for a variety of reasons, the management of Tower Hill was not up to scratch, to be completely honest. That led to community consultation and the development of a future directions strategy. One of the recommendations that came through from that future directions strategy was that we should form a partnership with certain groups, one of which was the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative. We saw the idea of a partnership with Worn Gundidj as a win-win situation. Out here at Tower Hill, we have always had problems servicing customers, guiding tours and having a presence. Worn Gundidj have now stepped into those roles. They have developed the retail outlet. It is early days yet, but we are hoping—and I think it is a tremendous opportunity for them and for us as well—to get into the tour guiding side of things.

One of the problems that we have out here is that, even though we do have a large number of visitors coming through the place, it has not really been the case that they know a little bit more about Tower Hill when they leave compared to what they know when they arrive. Hopefully, in the future people from Worn Gundidj will guide tours and value-add to the visitors' experience out here. We have a lot of international people coming through. A large percentage of our visitors here are from interstate and overseas, and I know from my personal experience—three years overseas—that the majority of Europeans are interested in Australian fauna and Aboriginal culture. This was reinforced last week when there was a session out here with the tourism minister. I think that is the direction we are going in with Worn Gundidj. There will be skills developed in that area, and, from a Parks Victoria perspective, we can add some of our own experiences and develop those skills amongst Worn Gundidj staff.

CHAIR—Thanks, John. Does anyone want to add to that?

Ms Esposito—I am from the Warrnambool City Council. I am an economic development officer. We are one of the partners that formed the future directions strategy for Parks Victoria, and we have probably been the strongest advocate of getting Worn Gundidj and Parks Victoria working together. We can obviously see the benefits of empowering our local Indigenous community to set up an area like this, where they can employ large amounts of staff and get training.

In Warrnambool city itself, the largest employment sectors are retail and tourism. If the staff from Worn Gundidj can be in here and have a traineeship in retail or ecotourism, the opportunities for them outside of this realm are huge as well, because we have such a good tourism facility. Tower Hill is not even in the shire of Warrnambool—it is in Moyne shire—but Warrnambool City Council can see the obvious economic benefits not only to Parks Victoria and Worn Gundidj but to Warrnambool City Council itself. People have to come through our shire to get to Tower Hill and, ultimately, if they are going to stay overnight they will be staying in Warrnambool. So we see it as a huge project and something we are very proud to be involved in.

We are currently sourcing funding to do the first stage of the redevelopment, which will be looking at a footprint for this area and perhaps building a new interpretive centre where we can have all sorts of Indigenous things happening. Rather than just being in this building, which in its layout can be quite constrictive, we are looking at a second building where we could have artisans working and people explaining the bush foods—the bush food trail—and so on. We are currently looking at stage 1 but also thinking of stages 2, 3 and 4.

CHAIR—Wonderful.

Ms HOARE—It is a great example of partnerships.

CHAIR—That heap of gear there, with the camera and everything, looks pretty formidable. It belongs to the local media representatives. We welcome the Warrnambool *Standard*. Let us move on to Mr Sutherland. Do you want to say something?

Mr Sutherland—I am from the Friends of Tower Hill. We are a group that volunteer our time for the betterment of the park. We have a passion for the place and want to see it improve. We spend one day a month out here planting trees or removing species that should not be here, or creating habitats for different critters that live in this area. We have welcomed this move. We see it as a positive move forward. We only have one problem: most of the volunteers work in their other jobs during the week and we are fairly restricted in giving a hand during the week—but where we can we will.

CHAIR—We reckoned, coming out, that when this went up originally it would have been better if it could have been in Warrnambool or Portland, and someone suggested South Australia. It was a fairly significant explosion that occurred, wasn't it? It is amazing when you come in and you can see the various layers of ash or whatever it was. It is quite a unique thing—to me, anyway. I drove past only a fortnight ago, not realising what was here. You get a lot of enjoyment out of it. What are you travel numbers? How many people are coming through?

Mr McInerney—I think we are getting around 300,000 or 400,000 going through a year. A large percentage of those are international people. The great thing about here is that it is close to Warrnambool city and it has kangaroos, koalas and emus, and it has that Indigenous culture as well, which we hope to build on in the future. In terms of tourism it has great potential.

Ms Esposito—It would be fantastic if we could get even half of the visitors that go to the Twelve Apostles, just down the road, coming here to experience Indigenous culture and native flora and fauna. There is nothing else like this in this part of Victoria. It would be great if we could harness that. Certainly we would need to look at marketing and all that sort of stuff.

CHAIR—What is the distance from Melbourne—three hours, four hours?

Ms Esposito—Three hours.

CHAIR—You have three or four million people sitting over there and I guess they get out here from time to time. Essendon come out, don't they!

Ms Esposito—I might slightly change the subject away from Tower Hill and talk about Warrnambool City Council. One of my other roles with Warrnambool is labour market programs. I currently run the Community Jobs Program and Work for the Dole. We would more than welcome taking on CDEP participants in any capacity that we can. We could offer apprenticeships in tourism, business administration, horticulture. Our council is such a big employment arm in the city that we would more than welcome that.

CHAIR—How many people are employed by Warrnambool City Council?

Ms Esposito—About 800.

CHAIR—That is quite large.

Ms Esposito—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that an ongoing thing, as you see it?

Ms Esposito—Yes. It is something that we would definitely look forward to developing with Worn Gundidj.

CHAIR—Ms Esposito, thank you for coming and for advising us; we really appreciate your time. There has to be potential there but, as I understand it—and as you were saying, John—it is not what it could be.

Mr McInerney—That is right. It is early days, but I think in about two or three years down the track we will have something that will be the envy of a lot of other places around the state and around Australia.

CHAIR—Yes. You have location, and a lot of other things.

Mr McInerney—Yes, we just have to capitalise on it; be movers and shakers.

CHAIR—Thank you, and good luck. Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

Mr Hall—I come at CDEP from a slightly different direction. I have been with Worn Gundidj for about four years. I started as a project coordinator, and I joined when things were probably at a slightly lower ebb than now. Over the years I have seen tremendous development, not only in people but also in the jobs being done and in the acceptance of CDEP within the community. You heard Brad and Daniel speak earlier about the horticultural side, and they now supply to Landcare, Parks, Warrnambool City Council—it is an ongoing thing. My point of view about CDEPs is that there are probably two or three holes in the system.

CHAIR—It is good to hear about them.

Mr Hall—One of those is that when, on certain occasions, we have wanted funding for something—and a lot of people say, 'Oh, yeah, there's funding all over the place,' but occasionally you want something specific that is really important to the progress of what you are doing—it has not been there, and because it is not there it makes life difficult.

CHAIR—Would you have an example of that?

Mr Hall—Yes. Some time back we did a deal with the Warrnambool City Council to do some work on the local tip, and we desperately needed a tractor. At that time we had our native nursery, which was well out and off the road. To be honest, it was an absolute pain in the butt because it was too far away, and we had to transport people back and forth. We did not have funding, and there was no specific little hole. We had a tractor, but it was one of those tiny ones and was getting tired and worn out, and it was only a matter of time until it blew up. Without a tractor the project was in trouble, but through ways and means they found one. To me it seemed a ridiculous waste of time and energy to have to get funding for something that was needed but not be able to get it. That is a drawback.

One of the other drawbacks that I have seen in the CDEP—and I look at if from the other side of the fence a bit—is that there needs to be help but that is not funded. I would be the first one to want to see all the major positions in a CDEP run, covered and administered by Kooris. But, to achieve that, along the way there has to be help, assistance, and sometimes that has to come from outside. There are positions that probably need assistance, but that is not funded. If they were funded for a period of time, somebody could come in, assist and then get out, leaving someone trained behind them. But the funding is just not there to get them in there; there is no funding for that specific position.

The other thing I have noticed, in the period of time I have been involved, is that sometimes CDEPs get harshly judged. In the four years I have been at Worn Gundidj, I have seen it happen a number of times. The people who are working in the CDEP obviously gain skills and get better at what they are doing, and you say, 'Boy, are we rolling along well here! Things are great.' Then, all of a sudden, there is an opportunity. This is where CDEPs are their own worst enemy, because they shoot themselves in the foot. You promote from the top. Your best people go out. You say, 'Boy, are we really going along well!', you promote from the top and, all of a sudden, you have lost some of the key people you had trained up. So you start again. You are going in everlasting—

CHAIR—There is an ebb and flow.

Mr Hall—There is an ebb and flow. It happens. Let us face it, that is what should happen. But, unfortunately, sometimes those on the outside looking in do not appreciate that that is how it happens and that, for as long as it is run, that is how it is going to continue to happen if it functions correctly. Those are some of the observations I have made in the time I have been here. Our horticulture is going well and so are our textiles, as you can see, and so is the new venture here. You have no doubt heard of all the other ventures that have been going on. Obviously, this is one of the active CDEPs, but I think some of the things that I just pointed out probably happen in the whole lot of them and need to be taken into account.

CHAIR—We appreciate your input, Max.

Mrs Lowe—I want to talk about our host employment program at Worn Gundidj. We invited about six of our host employers today, but they all run their own businesses, with Indigenous employees, and unfortunately they all pulled out at the last minute. We have about 20 host employment positions, where we host out an Indigenous person, similar to what happens with Frank. We have 18 local ones, and two are in Melbourne; Frank is one of those. Among the local ones, we have a cabinet-making apprentice, a builder, a solid plasterer, fibrous plasterers and several bricklayers—there has been huge interest from young kids to do bricklaying apprenticeships—and they are all hosted with mainstream businesses who support them in their job and provide them with all the workplace experience and training that they need to fulfil their apprenticeships. It is a really fantastic program. We are currently developing 10 traineeships, which you have heard about, through Westvic Work Force, as they are now called. Basically, we are going to have about 30 accredited training opportunities. It is good for those people who do not want to work in textiles, horticulture or ecotourism. They get to choose a trade of their own. If they want to be a plumber, we find a plumber who wants to take on an apprentice. It is customised to the individual.

Ms HOARE—How long has that been going, Jennifer?

Mrs Lowe—Our first apprentice is finishing his last year this year, so it has been going for just over three years.

Ms HOARE—And that is supported by the CDEP?

Mrs Lowe—Yes, it is supported by the CDEP. We pass on a wage subsidy to the host employer, and they pay the difference between the gross wage and super and what we fund from the CDEP.

Ms HOARE—Are most of the apprentices or trainees with the one employer for most of that time?

Mrs Lowe—Usually they are with the one. Sometimes we come across employers who do not have any cultural sensitivity and we have to move them on, but generally we have been really fortunate to have a wonderful pool of host employers. We now actually have employers coming to us saying, 'We've heard about your program. Have you got anybody available?'

Ms HOARE—Are the indications that the apprentice that is finishing up shortly will be put on unsubsidised, full-time employment at the end?

Mrs Lowe—Absolutely. Their contract ends when their apprenticeship ends, so the expectation is that they cease employment with us on CDEP and gain full-time employment with that host employer, or move interstate with their trade certificate and get a job somewhere else.

Ms HOARE—With the abolition of what used to be the Training for Aboriginals Program, which was federally funded, has CDEP had to pick up the slack?

Mrs Lowe—Yes, we have.

Ms HOARE—That used to be funded through CES type programs.

Mrs Lowe—Yes. Our original five apprentices all went through under TAP, and that was starting probably nine years ago.

CHAIR—It just occurred to me that if we had been available in the evening for a couple of hours the host employers might have been more likely to come.

Mrs Lowe—Probably. They all have walls to plaster and pipes to fix and buildings to build.

CHAIR—Exactly. It is something we might have to think about—and I am not sure that my members would thank me—because there is a real issue about people who are working during the day.

Ms HOARE—Twenty-four hours a day.

CHAIR—Jennifer, thank you. That was fantastic. Max, thank you for that perspective. If that is it, we will wrap it up. Thank you, everybody, for the wonderful hospitality at lunch. Good luck with it all. We are very appreciative of all this. We know we already have one recommendation. Kelly and I agree; we have only eight more to convince. We wish you every future success.

Committee adjourned at 2.37 p.m.