COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Capacity building in Indigenous communities

THURSDAY, 7 AUGUST 2003

LOMBADINA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Thursday, 7 August 2003

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

Members in attendance: Mr Cobb, Mr Haase, Mr Lloyd 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.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 9.40 a.m.

OCKERBY, Mr John, Committee Member, Lombadina Aboriginal Corporation

SIBOSADO, Mr Basil, Chairperson, Lombadina Aboriginal Corporation

SIBOSADO, Mrs Caroline Frances, Administration Officer, Lombadina Aboriginal Corporation

SIBOSADO, Mr Robert, Tourism Manager, Lombadina Aboriginal Corporation

SIBOSADO, Mr Trevor William, Vice-Chairperson, Lombadina Aboriginal Corporation

CHAIR—I declare open the public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into capacity building in Indigenous communities. We have been going for just over 12 months now. It is great to be at Lombadina and to share some time with you today. As we go through we will introduce ourselves and get a bit of a hang of where we are. As a little bit of useless information, the four of us represent almost—bar a little gap of 200 kilometres—from Sydney to Western Australia. We stretch across the continent: New South Wales, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, so but for a little gap in New South Wales, we cover the country. We have that diversity of experience and just about all of us have pretty direct involvement with, and have some understanding of, Aboriginal issues.

I am the Chairman of this committee and I am from South Australia. My electorate is a bit over 90 per cent of South Australia, unlike Mr Haase who has over 90 per cent of Western Australia, which makes his electorate significantly twice as large as mine. So we are used to the remoteness and those issues that go with it. I need to remind us all that these are proceedings of the parliament and need to be accorded that regard. I think that is all I need to do in a formal sense but this will be a fairly informal chat. Thank you for your welcome and for looking after us so well. We have enjoyed the friendly atmosphere that we have come to. I will invite you each to make a short opening statement and then we will have a pretty informal discussion about where you see things are. Does anyone want to lead off at all?

Mr B. Sibosado—First of all, I am the Chairperson of Lombadina Aboriginal Corporation and I would like to thank you for coming over. I think we got a few problems that we would like to discuss with you. Really, just looking at what you have got here, I think maybe it would be better if you asked us some questions and we could sort of answer.

CHAIR—Yes. If you have got a bit of an understanding we are grateful and the community seemed pretty aware of our visit and what we were endeavouring to try to talk about today. It would be nice if you just give a bit of a picture of where you think it is. It is not too tight, it is just to try to give a bit of an understanding of where the community is at and what we can do better and how the government agencies are handling it.

Mr B. Sibosado—First of all, with our CDEP, it has been working pretty well when the community organised it themselves or when the CDEP sort of wage and on-costs were coming straight to the community. We could have handled it better but, as it is now, they changed it and

we go back to KRCI and there is one CDEP in Broome. With their project officers and managers, we have to go through them again. That is like going from ATSIC to them and then to us.

As I said, if you have a small business and you are trying to build it up, if we have to wait three weeks for money to come through to pay the wages and whatever, you cannot go ahead. If you have got it on hand, you can do what you want to do with it. Same difference if we say there is no work, no pay and we dock somebody if they do not turn up; we have got that money and we can use it to top up somebody else who does a few hours extra. But at the moment we cannot do that because it is going up there, so we are going backwards.

CHAIR—It is the flexibility which offers a bit of incentive for those who are prepared to get going, have a go at it?

Mr B. Sibosado—We have got our tourist business here, bit of roadwork and stuff like that, and we do other small jobs like concreting and work for the other community. We have to wait for money.

CHAIR—We are interested in that boat down there. Why is that out of the water at the moment?

Mr T. Sibosado—Survey.

Mr B. Sibosado—We had to bring it up, the surveyor came down.

CHAIR—Yes, we heard that. That is why we were a bit interested to understand.

Mr B. Sibosado—They come up in the middle of the season, you know. Good timing!

CHAIR—Is that a normal thing?

Mr B. Sibosado—With them, yes, but not with us because it is the middle of the season when we have tourists up. Why didn't they come over when we knock off around Christmas just before the cyclone to check it or before we use it?

CHAIR—No doubt you pointed out to them that it is pretty inconvenient. We would like to hear a bit more about that. In fact, I know it is probably a state department that is involved, but they are the sorts of things we are interested in: how people get in the road of progress. So we have CDEP, which you would like to see a bit more flexibility in to get a bit more incentive.

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, when it first began, that was pretty good, communities were handling it themselves.

Mr JOHN COBB—Basil, if I could just ask you, I think you started off saying when you organised it yourselves it was okay but now they have changed it to where it is organised by who?

Mr B. Sibosado—KRCI—crikey, all right, it is the right name!

Mrs Sibosado—Kullarri Regional CDEP, it takes in the Kullarri region.

Mr B. Sibosado—That is in Broome.

Mr JOHN COBB—Now it has become regional instead of local?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

CHAIR—Is there anything else before I allow Mr Haase to head off and then Mr Cobb and Mr Lloyd to go?

Mr B. Sibosado—Not really. It was a good thing that ever happened in the community, but now it is taken away from us again. That is a bad side of it.

CHAIR—Can we go to you, Mr Haase, and just have a bit of a yarn about a few things?

Mr HAASE—Thank you, Mr Chairman, it is great to be here. You have a fantastic opportunity today to put on the record a number of the issues that you have. I cannot underline sufficiently this break that you are getting through this service. Already we have heard a major problem of communication or organisation with your vessel being out of the water for survey. That is ridiculous. It would not be tolerated anywhere else by anyone else. I would like to hear if you put up a very strong case as to why it should not happen now, or whether they simply railroaded you and said, 'We are going to do it anyhow.' I would like to know the exact circumstances because it is totally unacceptable. I would suggest the main reason for it happening at this time of the year and not in the off season is because no one wants to come up from down south in the off season because it is too bloody hot and too humid. It is for you to wag the tail, not the tail to wag the dog. I will be having something to say about that to the marine survey people.

I do know about your situation in regard to the CDEP and I know why it is the way it is. I would like you to elaborate a little more, Basil, or even Caroline perhaps, because I think my understanding was that, Caroline, you had a lot to do with the organisation of the administration of the CDEP here originally, yes?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

Mr HAASE—I would like you to elaborate on it. But my understanding at this stage is that the running of CDEP for the peninsula was brought under one organisation in view of the costs of administration and the auditing of the whole system being made cheaper in the hands of one major organisation. Now, that is all very well and good and it was further justified on the basis that, under the control of one authoritative body that knew what it was doing, there would be no rorting. We all know that there were some situations where not everyone was doing the right thing. I happen to believe that Lombadina's CDEP administration was some of the finest around and you were caught up in the web that was created because others were not doing the right thing. I think it is extremely unjust. What I do not know is what effective savings have been made overall as a result of bringing it back to one location. If you can tell me that I would be most interested. We will then discuss a few more things as well, but could you tell me whether any costs savings have been effected by taking it under one umbrella?

Mrs Sibosado—Before I start, they have already taken some of our on-cost money from the communities to run the administration. We are no better off now, we are worse off.

Mr B. Sibosado—Something like $200 a week.

Mrs Sibosado—Each participant got $1,301, I think it was, for on-costs.

Mr HAASE—For what period of time?

Mrs Sibosado—For one year.

Mr HAASE—Over $1,000 per participant.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, $1,300. They have taken so much off the money off that and now—no, I am wrong there; I have got the figure wrong, sorry. Yes, $3,201, sorry. Now we are down to $2,500 per participant. That is not supporting the people. It was supposed to be better for participants, but that is not better for participants; we have lost money. Lombadina used to get $108,000 a year and now we are down to $87,000 on our on-costs, so that means we have to put in more money from the little enterprises we have to run our place. That is not helping anybody.

CHAIR—The same number of participants?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, the same number of participants.

Mr JOHN COBB—They are claiming they have less costs to run them, are they? They have taken certain of them.

Mrs Sibosado—They are not claiming anything, they are just taking that money for the administration of one CDEP.

Mr HAASE—Whilst we are talking about CDEP and its effectiveness, it is criticised all over the place as being no better than the dole. It has been described as a plan simply to get people off the unemployment numbers; many people are very critical of it.

Mr B. Sibosado—I would not say that, I think it has done a lot of good for the community.

Mr HAASE—You argue that because you are giving the leadership and making sure that good things are done by the people who are receiving it. You and I both know that there are many communities where there is no leadership. People receive CDEP for work in the community as directed by the community leaders and no work is done and nothing is achieved. I would suggest that there are far more places like that than there are places like Lombadina. In a theoretical or hypothetical way, how close is Lombadina and its population getting to a point of self-sufficiency? What about roadworks?

Mr R. Sibosado—I think we are still a bit off.

Mr HAASE—Could you endeavour to describe how far off or how close? Could you describe to me what enterprises you do have and how many they might gainfully employ providing

services for funds? I am speaking purely hypothetically and I do not want you to get this impression that I am starting a push to remove it, but I would just like to know because you are a special place here.

Mr R. Sibosado—Yes, with our businesses, because one of the problems is the remoteness, we do not actually have the numbers. Our businesses will support the people that actually work those businesses but they will not support the whole community at the moment. Just say for the gardeners, they are not bringing in any money so the other businesses have to support our gardeners and everyone else around the community.

Mr HAASE—Robert, could you put some numbers to that? Could you explain what are the numbers that are doing the actual work and the numbers in the community?

Mr R Sibosado—We have about eight people working in tourism, and that is our biggest business at the moment. Then we have two in the bakery, one in the store. How many people are doing roadworks? about three.

Mrs Sibosado—Another thing is we have these people but they do not only do that. He is saying eight on tourism, but they do not only do tourism, we have to rotate our workers on different jobs.

Mr HAASE—To keep them gainfully employed or to keep them happy or—

Mrs Sibosado—No, to get the work done.

Mr Ockerby—It is a matter of the workers population. For instance, one of us works in the workshop; when it is time for that person to go out on the road, if they are needed out there, they will go out there. That person may also have an F class licence or a ticket, or whatever, so he swaps around because the other guy has another tour on somewhere else. We have all got to cover each other in a great big circle. That is how it has to work.

Mr HAASE—I understand that, I think it is a very fine system. You have heard me say before, Basil, I wish I could take your solutions and plant them elsewhere, I would create good across this country. You say you are a long way off because you can only find jobs for a certain number of people. You mentioned the gardeners and the fact that they do not really earn anything. I would put to you that the gardeners do because one of the reasons that people like coming to Lombadina is because the place looks so good and that perception seems to be lacking elsewhere.

Mr R. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr HAASE—So they are an integral part of why your other businesses would survive. Your observations of other communities, that is, more mainstream communities, and your positive observations there are setting the example for what you are doing here and that gardening and beautification is very much a part of it. There are many things we could talk about and there are other topics that you might want to broach but one of the things that I know we are going to discuss this morning is how should funding generally from ATSIC work? Should a place as well

run and progressive as Lombadina get as much money per head as somewhere else that is still trying to get that organisation and leadership going? Would you like to talk to that?

Mr Ockerby—We talk about that a lot. We have said to a few people at meetings and things like that, even to ATSIC themselves, why are we being brought back all the time when the funding should be put forward on a performance base? We were just talking about the funding being taken off us. Instead of going forward it looks like we are going backwards and then we have to go out and find money from somewhere else to keep ourselves going. That is for somebody else who is not doing anything to better themselves, whereas you can see for yourselves around here we all try very hard. I just do not feel that we should be punished for it.

Mr HAASE—You would understand funding from ATSIC to be a reward and an opportunity to go on further rather than survival money? Many would say that grants from any arm of government were designed to sustain you where you had no sustenance yourself and that that limited amount of money ought to be allocated on the basis of where there is greatest need. You are saying that it should be used as an opportunity to further improve your situation. Do you see the two different philosophical points of view there? Amongst elected representatives you will find the whole range of views on that; some that say that it is survival, and some that say it is absolute reward for opportunity.

Mrs Sibosado—You are saying about survival. It is only a survival thing if people make it a survival. If they want to use that as a stepping stone to make themselves better, they could do that, and it comes back again to the people themselves.

Mr HAASE—What is the difference? Why does that funding that some would see as charity slip through the fingers and achieve nothing in some situations and in others the fingers are tight and it sticks and people go forward?

Mr T. Sibosado—Self-determination; the individuals themselves.

Mr B. Sibosado—Also way back when they first started with the CDEP, the communities argued, not just us but Lombadina and others. The participants or the other stations that were going up had to go under these communities and they were better at watching them than Mamabowagin from Broome. All they did, the town based CDEP, was get the money for them. They did not care what they were doing outside there. There was nobody to see them or help them go up.

Mr HAASE—They were just concerned about the seed money?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, participant money, on-costs and that. They were getting big dollars in Broome. I do not know if they were giving it to the other stations but then you cannot see anything going ahead there, can you?

Mr HAASE—No.

Mr B. Sibosado—That was ATSIC's fault too because project officers from ATSIC did spot checks and all that every six months and nothing happened.

Mr HAASE—I have one last question, if I may. You are able to get seed funding from ATSIC for particular projects, aren't you? You can make application and you can get loans, seed money—call it what you like. You know all about it. We have been talking about per head CDEP money. What do you call it?

Mrs Sibosado—On-costs.

Mr HAASE—On-costs; sorry, that was the term. Which do you think has been most effective: the opportunity to apply to ATSIC for particular grants, or that continuous on-costs money? Which funding source has been most effective in your progress at Lombadina?

Mr T. Sibosado—Continuous; it has to be.

Mrs Sibosado—Continuous, yes, we have to have continuous but we also have to have the other money as well to supplement the CDEP because otherwise you will not be able to run. We get community infrastructure money but now we do not get any more CHIP capital—it has gone to the state—for housing and everything. ATSIC used to get that before and the regional councils used to allocate for housing and different other things—infrastructure. If you wanted certain machinery for infrastructure just to look after the community, like lawnmowers or something like that, it was classed as infrastructure. You could get it from there and you could get capital from CDEP as well. It still goes on the number of participants you have. This year we could not get any capital. So much of our money was cut off because of the administration of Kullarri Regional CDEP. We cannot get any capital this year; we can only get our money for running costs.

Mr HAASE—Yes, it is a problem, isn't it?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Thank you very much. I will pass back to the chair.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Haase. I have a couple of points on CDEP. The issue has evolved over the years that larger and larger CDEPs are emerging because of the costs of administering a large group of small CDEPs. Is that part of the reason for the reduction? They are endeavouring to enlarge them to have lower administration costs?

Mrs Sibosado—Lombadina was one of the first CDEPs in Western Australia. It was only for remote communities. Then it changed and they came in with town based CDEPs, which was a mistake. You had people going out—we had the out-station policies and all that come in then. People were asked, 'Do you want to go to the homelands?' They did not have to prove they wanted to stay there. They just got money straight from ATSIC and that is how the money went down, like that, because there was more people. A lot of the people were not doing the right thing. In Aboriginal politics when one person does not do the right thing, we all suffer.

CHAIR—That goes for society generally, to a degree, doesn't it?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes. People should be taken on their own merits. If you are doing the right thing, you should be credited for that, not put back.

CHAIR—Can I ask about the CHIP capital? What has happened a lot around Australia over recent years, particularly in housing, is that there has been the strong move to bring the ATSIC, state and other money together to be administered at a state level. Before, it might have been financed more directly to communities and up to regional councils.

Mrs Sibosado—From federal, yes.

CHAIR—Yes. Now that has been amalgamated to try to bring a bit more sense, some would say, to the state doing something, the Commonwealth, ATSIC and somebody else doing something else. You feel that the capital that you are getting has been reduced based on that policy now coming out of Perth, rather than coming out of Canberra? Did I get that right?

Mrs Sibosado—We have certain things that we were supposed to get from the state before but we never got them. What is going to be the difference now? We do not trust it.

CHAIR—It is a totally legitimate point. I would like to hear more about how much the state government supports you.

Mr JOHN COBB—My electorate is in western New South Wales—the more remote part of it mostly. On the whole, it is not as remote as Western Australia but it can get that way. Basil, Mr Haase pointed out quite correctly that in the vast majority of cases CDEP does not work. Could you explain what you did here, because I want to hear about one that does work, and quite obviously yours does. Could you tell us how you set it up and run it?

Mr B. Sibosado—That is when the community had the management of it. It was a no work, no pay sort of thing and we kept the money. They did not take it back. We hold that money in office and if there is some other bloke that performs and that, we will give him a top up with that.

Mr JOHN COBB—You revolve it through the whole community, do you?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—The same group of people do not do it all the time?

Mr B. Sibosado—No, if there is no one there, if somebody messes up or goes walkabout or something, then we just drop them.

Mr JOHN COBB—They get moved off and then moved back?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, and that way we could control them. It is our money, so we just top up the other ones that perform better.

Mr JOHN COBB—How many of people administer it?

Mrs Sibosado—I am one and I have one bookkeeper. When I first started—when Lombadina first got CDEP—I worked for two years with no money. I did not get paid at all. We sacrificed things because we wanted to build up our community. We were just lucky we had some

buildings and things from the mission. But we worked really hard; we worked 35 hours a week. We never got paid for 35 hours.

Mr B. Sibosado—This is another thing with CDEP. Now they are saying you will have to pay the full wages just for four hours a day. What can you do with four hours a day? That is why we need money to top up the other guys, because we are working seven hours—we are still doing it. It does not matter whether or not they turn up; we still have to work seven because we cannot run a place with four hours a day. It is impossible.

Mr JOHN COBB—Did you have any shortage of people lining up to do it?

Mr Ockerby—No. We had a meeting a few years ago and made an agreement with everybody that worked their 27 hours a week or whatever it was at that time. Then on the Friday people could have the Friday to themselves because they had already worked their hours. We asked the people: how about we work the full week, seven hours a day every day, and then the Friday you are working for the community, because you do benefit from the community? The whole community agreed to it and we still do it now. On the Friday we work for nothing; we work for the community. It is not for nothing because the community—

Mr JOHN COBB—I understand that. But the guiding principle has always been no work, no pay?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

Mrs Sibosado—When CDEP first started and people wanted to be on the dole, they were not allowed to live in the community; they had to go somewhere else. They had a rule. But now, because you have got all sorts of different things changing in the world—

Mr JOHN COBB—Did the whole community set that rule?

Mr B. Sibosado—Council and the committee, yes.

Mrs Sibosado—It was not only our committee, it was other committees as well. If people wanted to sit down and get the unemployment, they can go somewhere else and sit down.

Mr B. Sibosado—You get into trouble for doing it.

Mr HAASE—I think it is a magnificent principle.

Mrs Sibosado—You have got equal opportunity, human rights and all this type of thing coming at you from every side. It makes us feel like sitting on the dole, too—not doing anything.

Mr B. Sibosado—It went down, I reckon, with having the town based CDEP and the people living out here on the peninsula and getting CDEP money off them. They did not have to do anything. Even our guys can see it. People who are working, these guys run around with spares in the back and maps when they bugger their Toyota, and they are getting full pay because they were being paid by Mamabowagin in town. So what can you do out here?

Mr JOHN COBB—I am not trying to put words into your mouth but would it be fair to say that with it becoming regional instead of local it is going to be a lot harder to keep running it the way you have been?

Mrs Sibosado—It will be if we keep getting our on-costs cut off.

Mr HAASE—I accept that point about the on-costs; I meant the principles upon which you started to do CDEP.

Mr B. Sibosado—If you take the management side off us, it will go down.

Mr HAASE—Yes.

Mr B. Sibosado—I have not had a project officer yet from Broome, the Kullarri Regional CDEP. There are supposed to be four getting paid and living in town. When they first came out with that thing they wanted all our assets back and to give them to this regional Kullarri—what do they call it?

Mrs Sibosado—The Kullarri Regional CDEP.

Mr B. Sibosado—We said, 'No, you are not taking any asset off us; if you buy it then maybe you can have that'—and that was another thing: if we put in a submission for a tractor, they buy it but they own it. So how can you get control in your own community if this type of thing can happen?

Mr HAASE—Who is going to maintain it?

Mr B. Sibosado—Who is going to look after it? If they own it, nobody is going to care about it.

CHAIR—As Mr Haase says, who is going to maintain it?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—So that has changed too.

Mrs Sibosado—It has not changed. I am on the committee and we had our meeting. They asked us about the assets—this is the regional manager, Chris Cottier—'How are you going with the assets?' We just told him, 'No way you are getting our assets, and that is it, we will go to court with you. This is our asset, we bought it, we got it through our grants and that belongs to Lombadina.' So they wiped that off. Now they are telling us they do not want to own any assets but it was because people stood up to them.

Mr LLOYD—Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to visit Lombadina. It is my first opportunity to come to your township and I have been very impressed, just in the short time I have been here, with the whole atmosphere. For me it is quite a change to come into an Aboriginal community where you feel welcomed and you have an interaction with tourism and

visitors from outside. Unfortunately, in many other communities, you feel as though they do not want you to come and visit.

My electorate is in New South Wales—mainly urban. I do have fairly strong family ties with this region, particularly in Fitzroy Crossing. My wife's brother, Bill Aiken, and Mary Aiken run the Indigenous Geikie Gorge Tours and so I have fairly strong family links in that area. That is why I have an intense interest in what you are doing here, particularly in tourism. I think it is a great step forward. With the CDEP plans and the projects, if you had more positions—you have 105 at the moment, is it?

Mrs Sibosado—Thirty five.

Mr LLOYD—Thirty five, sorry. If you had more positions, could you use them?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, we could. When it is tourist season we are pretty short all around when the boys have to go out on the boat or take them out, then there are only a few left to do the maintenance around the place.

Mrs Sibosado—We have a problem. If we want other people, we haven't got any accommodation. We have had that problem for a while. Because we are a small community, they only give you one house or something like that in the year, if you get it. That is what draws you back too because you are small, even though you are running really good. Because of the numbers, you cannot get these things.

Mr B. Sibosado—I would like to tell you something but it has gone off the track from that. The first lot of housing we got, they gave us money for four houses. We talked amongst ourselves, talked it over and we decided to work those houses for no top-up, no nothing, just on CDEP, and we built seven. Seven houses out of four.

Mr LLOYD—For the money that they allocated, four houses—

Mr B. Sibosado—The wages and all, we put it back into the house.

Mr LLOYD—And you built seven?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—That is very important information.

Mr B. Sibosado—The guys worked the hours, they did not mind, because we wanted to see more people in the houses and we have got more workers around here. So out of four we built seven. That was another three houses just with the money that was—

Mrs Sibosado—We did it a second time when we got money for one house—when we get an in-house bid, as you call it, the money goes to the community—and we built two houses.

Mr B. Sibosado—Just when we got an in-house bid so we could do what we like with the money but if we can send it to someone else and then they just delegate the money, you cannot do a thing like that. They get their contractors; they get their whatever.

Mrs Sibosado—We have just completed an in-house bid for all of our renovations on our houses, and we are just at the end of it now, through the Army. We had PBK or Parsons Brinckerhoff, as they are called now—they are the program managers for it. A lot of money is spent when you have to go to program managers or project managers. We never had that years ago. ATSIC staff used to do all that. If you have a department like ATSIC doing it, they can buy in the experts; they do not have to get a program manager to do it. There are a lot of people who know about that type of thing. We have certain people whom we deal with all the time and we know we can trust them but, when you have program managers, you have to put in all these tenders and things and you get people you do not want anyway. That is where money is getting robbed, in that system now.

Mr LLOYD—It is much more cost-effective to do it yourself, obviously.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

CHAIR—Seven for four—that is pretty impressive.

Mrs Sibosado—That was in the days of the ADC; it was before ATSIC started.

Mr LLOYD—You mentioned the CDEP regional supervisors, that they have four of them in Broome—

Mr B. Sibosado—In Broome, yes.

Mr T. Sibosado—Field officers.

Mr LLOYD—This is part of their field, isn't it? I think that is an important point; they are getting paid to be field officers—

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—and you have not seen them?

Mr B. Sibosado—No.

Mr LLOYD—How long have they been in the field?

Mrs Sibosado—They started on 1 July but they should have at least come out to see the people.

Mr LLOYD—Have they made contact with you at all?

Mr T. Sibosado—No.

Mrs Sibosado—No. They may contact someone on the committee. He should be making contact with Basil, the chair and the committee here of Lombadina.

Mr LLOYD—On electricity and water services, do you run your own electricity plant?

Mr B. Sibosado—No. Gary does next door but Chris does the maintenance.

Mr LLOYD—Who funds the cost of that? Is it the state government?

Mr B. Sibosado—ATSIC.

Mr LLOYD—ATSIC actually provides the money to—

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, for fuel and what have you.

Mr JOHN COBB—So all utilities are funded by the Commonwealth one way or another?

Mr T. Sibosado—Yes.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

Mr B. Sibosado—But we pay for electricity as well.

Mrs Sibosado—They are in the process now of doing all the pilot projects, like for Western Power to take over the powerhouses, building up a powerhouse here and I think one at One Arm Point or at Bidyadanga. That is just in the process now.

CHAIR—To deliver power back?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, to build a new powerhouse and deliver power back to us.

CHAIR—How far away?

Mrs Sibosado—Probably out near the airstrip somewhere, I think.

Mr LLOYD—When you pay for electricity, where does that money go?

Mr B. Sibosado—Djarindjin, because they are in charge of the power out there.

Mr LLOYD—So it is a shared service. Could you outline how you govern your community? What is the set-up of your board? It seems very effective. Is it like a council?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, a council.

Mr LLOYD—Do you meet once a week or once a month? Does the community have interaction with the board? Could you just explain what you do?

Mr B. Sibosado—We try to have one every two or three weeks. It is such a small group so we mix all the times up. Everybody knows what's what.

Mr LLOYD—But you keep your community, your family, all involved so they know what is happening?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—Yes, I think that is the key to it. Do you have elections for your community?

Mr T. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, every 12 months.

Mr LLOYD—Is everyone informed about that and do they get a vote?

Mrs Sibosado—We just have normal voting. We do not have any ballot or secret ballot or anything; we just have our hands up.

Mr LLOYD—Yes. And that works well?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—Can anyone in the community put their hand up for a position?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, people can nominate right there and then if they are accepted. If the people accept him, that is it.

Mr Ockerby—There is a whole community meeting. Everybody gets told the election is coming. If you are not there, you have known about it and you do not vote, do not whinge later.

Mr LLOYD—You might think that these are silly questions or simple questions but, from someone from outside the community, you take it for granted that this is what you do. It is important to get this on the record because this inquiry is looking at good governance and capacity building. Where we have got a system that is working, it is important to get that on the record because it may be a model that can be used in larger areas as well. What influence does the church and mission have on the community? Are they still strong within the community? Do they have any say in running the community?

Mr B. Sibosado—No, none at all. They just do their church thing and that is it.

Mr LLOYD—And the school as well, is it?

Mrs Sibosado—The Catholic education runs the school.

Mr LLOYD—The Catholic Church runs the school?

Mr R. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr B. Sibosado—Not from here, I do not think, but from Broome. They have a—

CHAIR—A Catholic education?

Mr R. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr B. Sibosado—In Broome.

Mr LLOYD—Do you have a teacher that lives in your community?

Mr R. Sibosado—How many teachers? Six teachers, or something.

CHAIR—The school is shared with—

Mr Ockerby—A lot of people go to school.

Mr LLOYD—How many students? I know it is a little bit off the track but I am interested.

Mr T. Sibosado—About 65, I think.

Mr LLOYD—So it is quite a sizeable school. Is it primary school and does it go right through to high school?

Mrs Sibosado—Year 10.

Mr LLOYD—If the young people get through to year 10, what opportunities are there for them to go on and get a trade or maybe go to university? Is there any opportunity or does anyone do that? Do you try to help them with trades?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, a lot of people go away to school in Perth. If they want to do it, they can do that, yes.

Mr LLOYD—What about apprenticeships?

Mr Ockerby—Those who are interested in doing it go to Broome or somewhere to do it.

Mr LLOYD—Do any of them come back? It is no good them going away and getting a trade and not coming back.

Mr Ockerby—There are a few who come back, yes.

Mrs Sibosado—They all went away to school in Perth; they are all back here now.

Mr LLOYD—That is a serious point because what happens a lot of times is communities lose their young people. They go away, get a trade, get a skill, but very few of them come back to put that into the community, so it is good to see that some of you come back.

Mr B. Sibosado—Well, some of them do come back, yes.

Mr T. Sibosado—On the same point, most of them do not come back because there is nothing here for them.

Mr LLOYD—No, I understand.

Mr T. Sibosado—That is what I am saying. If there were some sort of enterprise, just say a good workshop for a mechanic, then he would come back, I am pretty sure of it, because that is his home. But it is no good coming back and working for CDEP when you can actually get a job in Broome and get paid a decent rate.

Mr LLOYD—If somebody came back who was a qualified mechanic and they wanted to set up a business here, how would you go about applying for money? Would you apply to ATSIC or do you have a say in that? Have you had any success in getting that seed capital funding?

Mr B. Sibosado—That is mainly CDEP and then a top-up to make it to a basic wage.

Mr LLOYD—Yes, but if you needed $50,000 to set up a business, would you—

Mr B. Sibosado—To set up a business?

Mr LLOYD—go to ATSIC or—

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, you can go to ATSIC. You go to the business part.

Mr LLOYD—You do not sound really enthused about that.

Mrs Sibosado—We have not had very much success with them so we do not go to them.

Mr LLOYD—That is what I am trying to get at.

CHAIR—You tried?

Mrs Sibosado—We tried, yes.

Mr LLOYD—What do they say?

Mr B. Sibosado—I think there was probably an option to do it.

Mrs Sibosado—The things you have to go through to get it done, it puts people off. You don't want to go back any more.

Mr LLOYD—Too much bureaucracy and paperwork and—

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, all that kind of stuff.

Mr R. Sibosado—They want to know what colour your jocks are.

Mr LLOYD—Again, this is what we are looking at, the problems you have got. The funding is available. It should be available for communities like this that have got the expertise, but you cannot get it. It is up here in the sky and you are down there and—

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, there are always obstacles there.

Mr T. Sibosado—You hear about it; that is about all.

Mrs Sibosado—I think another point too is when there is funding around, they should not be sending things through ATSIC. They should send it straight to the communities to tell them the funding is there, because you are always getting the information late and by the time you have to get your business plan and all this together, the application date has gone.

Mr LLOYD—You do not get enough time to put—

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, you do not get enough time to do your thing.

CHAIR—Okay, that is very good.

Mr JOHN COBB—Robert or Trevor, how were you able to support yourselves in Perth? Did you have relatives down there? How were you able to go to Perth and do schooling?

Mr R. Sibosado—We went to boarding school.

Mr JOHN COBB—Who runs the school?

Mr R. Sibosado—The church did.

Mr LLOYD—My niece is actually in school in Perth at the moment—

Mrs Sibosado—In those days it was easy to get Abstudy, now you have got to go through a lot of rigmarole to get it.

Mr Ockerby—Abstudy in those days was that easy. I have a daughter at Darwin now and she has been there eight months and they just decided to pay her Abstudy. Lucky she had her elder sister up there that looked after her.

Mr JOHN COBB—If somebody does want to go, basically they can?

Mr Ockerby—Yes, as we were saying, the kids go away but it is getting harder and harder for them to go away now. They would sooner stay on the community because it is just as hard to go away as what it is to stay on the community.

CHAIR—You make a very good point.

Mr T. Sibosado—When you were on that point about going away, I think the real issue is better education at the place where you are from. You do not have to go away to get that education. You should be getting it right there at home.

Mr JOHN COBB—It would be impossible to do an apprenticeship here.

Mr T. Sibosado—No, I not talking about apprenticeships, I am talking about actual education.

CHAIR—The point you make about Darwin, what we cannot overlook is where you are on the map of Australia. Darwin would be a bit closer to Perth, one presumes? Not much in it? It would be a bit closer, wouldn't it?

Mr T. Sibosado—A couple of hundred kilometres.

Mrs Sibosado—Another thing, in the system like with Centrelink—you go through Centrelink for Abstudy—if you are in Darwin you have to apply to certain people; if you go to Perth, you have to apply somewhere else. There is all this type of thing going on. If we rang Centrelink from this office—we are a Centrelink agent anyway for this area here—they have the cheek to tell us, the people on the phone, 'You cannot ring us, you have to go through the call centre.' This type of thing goes on because of all these new ideas in Centrelink.

Mr LLOYD—But you are an agency.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

CHAIR—You would hope you would get attention from them directly, rather than going through the call centre.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes. This is why do not get good service, because they get sick and tired of waiting on the phone for half an hour, you know, this business of 'Wait here, I will get the person,' and you are sitting there, sitting there, sitting there. You just get sick of it and put the phone down and go away.

Mr LLOYD—There should be a separate system in Centrelink—and I am sure there is—where, if you are an agency, there should be a number that you can ring directly through to Perth to talk to. You are not just a customer so you should not have to go through the call centre. We might be able to follow that through, Barry.

CHAIR—Yes. Thank you, Mr Lloyd, that is exactly right. Do you have a Centrelink manager as an agent that you connect to? Do you have somebody that you are responsible to or who is responsible to you? Do you have any one name?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, we do have, but they change around, these people. You know how they are changing staff. As a prime example, in October last year we had these people in CDEP and they were changing that much we could not even get our forms back on time. They are not trained properly or something. I do not know what it is.

Mr LLOYD—Does Centrelink pay you an amount to be an agent?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—There has to be direct communication to your boss in Centrelink.

Mrs Sibosado—I had a situation where I sent an eligibility form in for a CDEP participant, to put them on the CDEP, and because this girl had only been there about three or four days, she writes back on the form, 'This program is only for Aboriginal people,' and it was none of her business to tell me that. That is the type of thing we have to put up with all the time.

Mr LLOYD—Sorry, can I just follow that through? The form that you put in was for—

Mrs Sibosado—A person and they were non-Aboriginal. That is our business if they are non-Aboriginal; it is up to us. If we reckon they are a good worker, we can put them on our CDEP. She sends the form back and says, 'This program is only for Aboriginal people' which was not her business. So I rang the manager and they had to apologise for that.

Mr LLOYD—You do have the ability to make a judgment that somebody who is non-Aboriginal can come into the system.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—Yes.

Mrs Sibosado—As long as you are not putting 50 non-Aboriginal people on at once or something.

Mr LLOYD—Yes.

CHAIR—I would like Mr Haase to complete it because he has a couple of things that he would like to raise. There are two or three things I would just like to run through. Your alcohol policy; what is the story there?

Mr B. Sibosado—It is all right here.

CHAIR—I will look for a beer. So you have a canteen?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes. We started with four cans a day with light beer if the members want it here, and now we have gone up to six; they can handle it, they are working well. We are on six cans a night. In here, we open by four o'clock and six at night.

CHAIR—That is working pretty well by all reports. What about policing? What is the story with law and order issues?

Mr B. Sibosado—We got our by-laws and if there is any problem, then the police come up every fortnight.

CHAIR—Come from where?

Mr B. Sibosado—From Broome, they do a patrol up the north.

CHAIR—What happens when there is a real blue on somewhere? You do not have too many problems?

Mr B. Sibosado—We do not have it here.

CHAIR—So it is all fairly peaceful?

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes.

CHAIR—Basil, I think you mentioned the lack of incentive in CDEP and I want to keep revisiting this because this is one of the great vexations to all of us about not offering the right incentive for people to make progress. I think Caroline and Robert or Trevor said that it is up to the individual. But you also have another saying or expression that CDEP can be a stepping stone.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

CHAIR—That is what it was always meant to be but of course it is entrenched now over 25 years. Very few people go on.

Mrs Sibosado—What happens now is, CDEP has changed. When CDEP was first established it was all about community development. Employment came in later, all right?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mrs Sibosado—You developed your community first. But now, they seem to have all the emphasis on employment and it has changed this CDEP thing around.

CHAIR—I understand that but what I wanted to try to draw out was the proper balance of the fair go that people have food on the table but you are not rewarding sit-down. What you people have done here is actually challenged sit-down. You will not cop sit-down.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

CHAIR—And yet, you are not rewarded, or not offered a strong enough incentive and so there is the point that Basil made about that little bit of extra money when somebody chooses not to participate can go in top-up to offer an incentive.

Mrs Sibosado—For somebody else.

CHAIR—That is the real challenge for us because there is no doubt, I do not think, in committee members' minds here today that you are on the right track. Everything points that way. But the system is not succeeding. It is tending to reward those, in my opinion—there would be a difference around the table about this—who sit down. Rather it is not rewarding, it is not offering enough to move on.

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

CHAIR—That is the real challenge, and we are not winning that. That is why it is so important we get your views.

Mrs Sibosado—I think another thing, too, with Lombadina, we have always administered ourselves. We have never had non-Aboriginal people administering. We are all Aboriginal people. We do it ourselves, yes.

CHAIR—Thanks for reminding me of that because that is a bit of an exception, isn't it?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes. We are all Aborigines and our bookkeeper is Aboriginal. Most of the people for all the key things are Aboriginals and we have other people working for us who are non-Aboriginal. But we are in charge.

CHAIR—Yes, you run it; you are it. How stable is your population in terms of your community coming and going? Obviously Robert and Trevor have been to Perth to be educated, so what is the number of people?

Mrs Sibosado—Our community is very stable, yes. We do not have really that much going away and coming back. People who work here, they have been here for so many years; they do not shift anywhere else.

CHAIR—My last question is to do with this issue we discovered this morning with the boat, and Mr Haase might like to—

Mrs Sibosado—I have some other things to ask about.

CHAIR—Okay. I just cannot believe that that boat—

Mr R. Sibosado—Can I just say something about that boat? The only reason we do it in August is because we cannot afford to actually get the bloke up when we want him.

CHAIR—You take it when you can?

Mr R. Sibosado—Yes, if we want him, say, in February and no other boats want him in February up here, we got to pay his flight up, all his accommodation, his hire car, and we just cannot do it.

CHAIR—Bring him up for a holiday?

Mr R. Sibosado—Yes, well that is right, yes.

Mr LLOYD—Can't he give you a quicker time frame? You say he might be coming next week, the week after or the week after that. Can't he say, 'I will be here within two or three days'?

Mr R. Sibosado—Yes, they do that.

Mr LLOYD—Okay.

Mr R. Sibosado—I was meant to be working on it now, they put it back in.

CHAIR—Where do they come from?

Mr R. Sibosado—He comes from Perth.

CHAIR—Does it work in with other boats? Obviously you are not the only boat.

Mrs Sibosado—He works in with all the pearling companies and all that type of stuff. Other people get their boats done.

Mr R. Sibosado—It is the Department of Planning and Infrastructure

CHAIR—Okay, I think we might leave that as a local issue then, if there are other issues.

Mr HAASE—Thanks, Chair. Somebody was asking about a mechanic coming back here as a tradesman and wanting to start a business. ATSIC is the only source of funding because you have no land tenure that allows you as an individual to go to a lender with a business plan and say, 'Will you lend me money to build a shed to create a workshop on this block of land?' If you lived in Broome and you had a block in the light industrial area that was your block, you could go to the bank and you could discuss the whole situation and get finance. You cannot do it here because you have no land tenure in the name of the individual. That is what I believe and I wonder if you agree with me and if we might get that on the record because it is a very confusing situation. The whole argument of native title is seen by many to be the solution to the problem, but of course native title is communally held land, even in the face of a positive decision. It does not give anyone the right to take a title to a bank and ask for a loan. Would you like to comment on that just before we close?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes, I think you are right there about that. We have a 99-year lease on this land. I do not think we would be able to go to the bank with that. You have to have freehold land and that is it. So you are in the middle of this sort of stuff again.

CHAIR—Do you think the Indigenous business structure would insist on freehold to lend money, or bankers generally?

Mrs Sibosado—The bank; I do not know about Indigenous business. I think they might be just going that way too.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Is there anything you would like to sum up with? Basil, Caroline, would anyone particularly want to say anything?

Mrs Sibosado—I would like to talk to Mr Haase about our charter boat and a charter licence. Because there are so many charter boats, people are coming in all the time; they are non-Aboriginal people. They are coming in to land where Aboriginal people are all the time, going around everywhere. This will be through the state. We think that there should be so many licences put out especially for Aboriginal people each year and other people cannot take those licences. That is where Aboriginal people are being left behind. They cannot get a licence if they have not got the money there to get it. They might have a charter boat but they cannot get a licence because everybody else has already taken those licences.

Mr HAASE—I hear what you are saying, Caroline. Truthfully, I do not know what the regulation is. I do not know if those licences are numbered. I am very happy to look into it and I will do that outside this hearing.

Mrs Sibosado—Now they have got a draft Aboriginal policy for the fisheries and we have to put our submissions in by the end of this month.

Mr HAASE—You and I will talk about this separately.

Mrs Sibosado—All right.

CHAIR—Our secretary reminds me that we have run into the same kind of issue before in other communities, so thank you for reminding us. Anybody else to sum up? I will try to sum up. Basically, you are going pretty well but there are some things we could do better to reward the effort you are making. Is that fair?

Mrs Sibosado—Yes.

Mr B. Sibosado—Yes, and this regional—

CHAIR—This regional versus the local, to give yourself stronger individual control, and the challenges that regional poses for you to then lose some of that control and run it as well as you would like. Thanks everybody, that was much appreciated.

[10.46 a.m.]

LEE, Mr Brian, Committee Member, Youth Officer, Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation

PHILLIPS, Mr Ross, Vice Chairperson, Environmental Health Officer, Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation

PLEY, Mr Cornelis Jan, Chief Executive Officer, Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation

SAMPI, Mr Andrew W., CDEP Coordinator, Committee Member-Secretary, Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation

SIBOSADO, Mr Peter, Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation

CHAIR—I welcome to our committee hearing this morning the members of the Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation. I remind you that these are official proceedings of the parliament and that we need to treat them accordingly. The idea is that we will have a fairly informal discussion about our terms of reference and any other ancillary issues. Perhaps somebody will make a two- or three-minute opening statement on where you see it is at and on what you saw in our terms of reference.

I made the comment earlier that the electorates of the four members that you see before you stretch from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean, bar a couple of hundred kilometres, so we have a reasonable diversity. You would know Mr Haase, who has a pretty good understanding of rural issues and remoteness. With those few words I welcome you, thank you and invite someone to lead off.

Mr Pley—I apologise for Mrs McKenzie; she had to meet the minister for police. Being a warden, the minister her wages—

CHAIR—Where are they meeting today?

Mr Pley—They are at the airport at the moment.

CHAIR—We have a state minister in the community as well.

Mr Pley—Yes, which we did not know about.

CHAIR—Is anyone happy to make an opening statement?

Mr Pley—We had a bit of a meeting about this session and there were quite a few issues that people at the table here raised. If I briefly go through them it might lead to some good discussions. Your terms of reference refer to how to improve the community members to better support families and so on. First of all, we thought that education plays an enormous role in that area, not just in making people aware of the issues but also in grooming the kids at school for maybe a job or leadership role in the corporation. At the moment there is hardly any material in

schools that deals with community management and community governance. It would be very useful—there is a fair bit of experience at this table—if these people went and addressed the kids sometimes and became a bit of a role model.

We also thought that in terms of committee or council members it should be just like local government where new members have induction training. That should be an ongoing thing. That process has kind of started. Some of the members here did some formal training in committee procedures and management but it should be a continuous thing.

In terms of assisting families to better cope, obviously we need to find ways to improve their standard of living. A lot of the issues that appear in communities are to do with people not having a very high income, therefore we need to start working on non-reliance on government funding. We need to start making enterprises in communities and creating real jobs for people because ultimately that will increase people's pride and confidence. No matter which way you look at CDEP, it is still like a handout.

Also—this is more an internal thing for us—we should improve internal communication. Quite often agencies solely depend on councils like this to advise and brief them on issues in the community but I think it needs to be wider. An Aboriginal community is like any community; if communication does break down, things do not always get passed on.

The other thing that may improve services to families and people in the community is much more concentration by government and service agencies to sit down together with one community and develop a holistic plan rather than have what happens now. They walk into the community and expect answers on all kinds of issues in five minutes. It should be a much more planned thing. Once there is a plan in place, it should almost be like a memorandum of understanding between the agencies and the community that this is what is going to happen. I am talking of responsibilities on both sides. I guess John Howard calls that mutual obligation.

CHAIR—He does. I do not think the Australian community really likes it.

Mr Pley—Yes. Again and again people walk into my office and expect me to give answers on all kinds of stuff on the spot. I cannot prepare and I cannot go out into the communities to consult with them. I just do not think that is right for good planning and good service delivery. That was another area where people thought things could be improved. At the moment there seems to be a trend towards regionalisation and the committee here definitely feels that that is not going in the right direction. It is taking control from people and we need to give people control of their issues and their problems, not take it away.

CHAIR—You may or may not know that we will meet with ATSIC in Broome tomorrow, so we will ask them about that.

Mr Pley—Just to give you a little example, with the CDEP program in Djarindjin we started talking about making it real work, so if you do not turn up you do not get paid, but with conditions like long service leave. That has all been taken away now and it is almost like the community has been left in a hole because the decisions are being made in Broome and definitely the communication is breaking down. Who better to see if communities are sticking to the rules than the communities themselves? If you have a field officer in Broome who comes

once a month, we can all line up and take a shovel and be working for that one hour there in the community. If it is controlled and assessed by the community, that becomes much harder.

Mr LLOYD—Do you know why it was taken away?

Mr Pley—I am not sure. I believe that it is a policy; it is happening in other areas as well. They are creating corporate CDEPs all over the place. I believe there is one in Perth, one in Kalgoorlie and one in Hedland.

CHAIR—I offer a reason to follow Mr Lloyd's and maybe we can explore it a little later. In the Pitjantjatjara lands—I cannot remember exactly—there are, say, 10 or a dozen CDEPs. Each one has an officer and each one has certain on-costs or whatever they are called. We did a rough calculation of the various salaries involved and it was hundreds of thousands of dollars. To a centralised bureaucrat or to a planner, there are great opportunities to see significant differences in how money can be spent. I offer that as one of the reasons: the temptation is there and that is why it has been implemented. In fact, it is more than 10 CDEPs; I think it is nearer 20. It was literally hundreds of thousands of dollars potentially, some might say, to be spent elsewhere, but in fact to be taken out of the region. That may have been the reality, so I just offer that.

Mr Pley—I would like to respond to that later. There was a feeling among the committee that things should be much more performance based. There does seem to be a heavy concentration on financial accountability. Just because your books are in order and the money is in the bank it does not mean that things are happening on the ground. I apologise to ATSIC, but I have to say this: some of the performance indicators they put out are, in my book, ridiculous. They should be really practical so that people can see how they are going.

CHAIR—We look forward to hearing that expanded upon.

Mr Pley—The other issue that was raised by the committee is that the aim should be to deliver services to communities that are of the same standard as services for the rest of the Australian population. People felt that should be happening. We have one clinic sister here who is on call seven days, 24 hours a day, and that is just untenable; the same with police stations and counselling services. As you all would be aware, there are a lot of issues in communities to do with domestic violence, drinking and drugs. The only place that people here can get it is in Broome, and that is often not possible because of transport and the cost of going to town.

The committee felt that there should be much more training going on for real jobs. I am fortunate; I am going to be put in a position where I can implement one job. I can train Peter and, hopefully, hand over to him. That should be happening much more. We tend to concentrate on creating new jobs but there are a number of jobs in the community already that are being done by outsiders. Why aren't we training those people to do those jobs?

Another issue that definitely this community feels is housing and overcrowding. It does lead to a lot of problems and issues and some of them would definitely diminish the social issues in the community.

This is probably related to government agencies all planning together for communities. Once this plan is developed and existing, agencies should look at how we can support that. It should

not just be based on bandaid funding; it should be an overall plan for communities. You may not be able to do everything at the same time but it should be a planned approach to implementing that plan once everybody agrees on it.

The committee feels that there should be service agreements with agencies. If I ring the Department for Community Development in Broome with an issue, I should have some kind of expectation of what they are going to do about it, how quickly they can respond and that kind of thing.

CHAIR—You have raised an interesting issue. You may have heard the comment about Centrelink earlier. One presumes that you are an agent for Centrelink.

Mr Pley—No, that is in Lombadina only.

CHAIR—I see. But it raises that same principle about what is the service agreement and what is the expectation, so it is an excellent point.

Mr Pley—Yes. That is it in a nutshell.

CHAIR—Thank you; that is terrific.

Mr HAASE—May I welcome you and say how much I appreciate the opportunity to sit down in a formal arrangement like this and put on record your contributions and our questions. I think the very first point you made on behalf of the committee is very important. It was about the preparation of students in primary schools to eventually fill a role in their community, one of leadership or participation in the leadership process. I suspect that it is something that, if you drove it from a committee perspective, it would occur in primary school. I know that the school here goes to year 10, and certainly in years 8, 9 and 10 there would be great opportunity. The state and Catholic education systems today provide for the study of civics. That role you speak of is very much tied up in civics and, may I say, would be a great practical opportunity for students to know more of the role and their potential role by learning about your actual roles.

That is something that I do a great deal. I go to primary and secondary schools and frequently speak to whole classes of children about my role as an elected member. I would urge you not to wait for school to come to you but to go to the school and formalise the arrangement whereby on a regular basis certainly each one of the executive committee might attend and speak to children about your practical role in the community.

You mentioned community training. I am not sure where the motivation has come from, Kees, but Peter's involvement in understudying you is a hugely positive step. Can you tell me, please, where that came from?

Mr Pley—It is basically part of how I work; it is part of my philosophy. I am always on the look-out for people to be trained to take over from me. I was just lucky; Peter walked in one day and started talking about the business I am involved in and expressed an interest. I do not force it on people. That was the good thing, he came to me, so that created a situation where I felt he was motivated.

Mr HAASE—The key is the motivation.

Mr P. Sibosado—That was in line with my study. I am studying at Curtin Uni. I am in my second year. I want to do something for the people around here, for this region, and that is why I went back to school again—to try to do something.

Mr HAASE—Peter, are you saying that the realisation of the importance of education in providing a future for yourself came after you had left school and not before?

Mr P. Sibosado—No, I have studied before. I have some other associate diplomas and stuff like that but they are in the wrong direction. Since I moved back here, I wanted to have more of an input into this region's politics for the betterment of the people around here.

Mr HAASE—We are hearing constantly from communities all over about the necessity for education as a means of finding good administration and good leadership in communities and providing a future. Probably the foundation for all capacity building is personal education. We are, I would suggest, still at a loss to know where the solution lies to have young children regularly attend school. It is no surprise to any of us—I think it was reported to us at Strelley yesterday—the direct correlation between hours of attendance at school and success in examinations. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to believe that, but they have actually gone to the trouble of formalising the study. How on earth do we get parents of small children to appreciate that education is so necessary and insist that those children attend school? Peter, is it something that you or anyone else would like to make a comment on?

Mr Lee—In the community schools, it does not matter where you are. The standard of education that is delivered in community schools is not the standard of education you get in the towns and cities in Australia.

Mr HAASE—Could you attempt to elaborate on why that might be?

Mr Lee—Maybe the teachers are not delivering that service because they think that the learning ability of Aboriginal children is not the same as the learning ability of non-Indigenous students.

Mr HAASE—Do you think they might make excuses for their own inability to seize the opportunity?

Mr Lee—At this school alone I think, from what I can gather from the kids, they are given sheets of paper to work on that are already filled out and all they have to do is fill in the answers. That does nothing for their ability to think and work out things for themselves. I think that is why a lot of kids here say, 'We don't learn anything interesting at school, it is not worth going to school.'

Mr HAASE—You think that would account for the lack of attendance on occasions?

Mr Lee—I think so.

CHAIR—It is also important to acknowledge briefly the equity of service between urban and rural, the service that all other Australians get, and that principle is in there very much so, as a basic, which you led off with.

Mr HAASE—It is vitally important. If any of you have points of view about attendance and education and the appeal of education, the style of delivery or the style of the system, I would be very keen to hear from you.

Mr Sampi—It depends on the types of teachers too. We have had teachers before who are very good and they really care for the kids. You see it in the way they encourage the kids to learn and also help them to help themselves do all sorts of things. We had a teacher here from Melbourne and he was great. He made the kids have an idea. He said: 'We are going to Melbourne. Do you want to go to Melbourne?' This year we have made money by selling cakes or whatever, all sorts of things. Those kids just grew. But then you have other teachers who may not be the same. In the years when that teacher was there, there was a lot of attendance, there were a lot more people going to the school from the community, but as soon as you get different types of teachers, if you like, then perhaps the interest drops off as well.

Mr HAASE—I am well aware that the availability of good teaching staff is in short supply around the world. It is not something that is unique to Australia. The quality of teaching staff and the availability are deteriorating. I was speaking to somebody yesterday about the American experience; people are leaving education in droves. I do not know how we correct that. I appreciate there is a great imbalance between the capabilities of teaching staff in the leafy, cosy suburbs of metropolitan areas and those who are taking up positions in more remote locations. Much has been done in the state education system to change the remuneration rates to attract teachers. It is not enough, and I do not know what the solution is. However, I do know that in other cultures and in other nations that have a colonial background similar to ours, the parents of young children have an appreciation of education that packs those kids off sometimes miles to the shade of a tree to get an education with a slate and a stylus. We have every modern facility here in our education system and parents are not anywhere near as dedicated to sending students to school and that has confounded me always.

Mr P. Sibosado—That is like me. I was sent to school every day whether I wanted to go or not. Nowadays, the kids here, if they do not want to go school, they do not. There is no parent discipline I suppose, in that sense, to make their kids go to school.

Mr JOHN COBB—Why don't the parents make them go?

Mr P. Sibosado—You cannot just look at what is here now, you have to look behind the history and at why people are like that. There are big issues from way back why parents are like that. This generation of parents are my age.

Mr HAASE—Could you elaborate on that?

Mr P. Sibosado—There is a breakdown in the families in my generation where they have lost their parenting skills.

Mr Sampi—A lot of kids were in the mission and the mission would look after them; they keep all the responsibility away from the parents, and that is not passed down to the next generation. That is you we are saying, I think.

Mr JOHN COBB—How far back do you have to go before you reckon the parents were making the kids go to school?

Mr Sampi—It varies I suppose. I was brought up in Broome and my parents are from this area. They had to virtually look after themselves, but my granny made us go to school, but it came from the parents, she was driven. But if you are in a mission situation, the mission had a dormitory—this is the dormitory actually, where we are now.

Mr HAASE—Yes, I know.

Mr Sampi—The mission would then look after them. That responsibility has been taken from those people. When they grew up as parents, of course, they did not have that and they did not pass it on to the next. How far I do not know. It is getting better all the time in other areas, but that is certainly one of the reasons, I would say.

CHAIR—The problem now is how to find a solution.

Mr Lee—At the moment, we have, I do not know, 10 or more kids away at school. They are either at high school in Broome or attending schools in Perth. We had four in Melbourne, as Andrew was saying. Why can't they get that education here in this community? Why do we have to send them away to be educated?

Mr HAASE—I do not profess to know the exact answer. I think we have alluded to it in the quality of teaching staff that we get, the dedication of the staff, the frustration they suffer because many students do not attend regularly, and I guess the whole thing spirals downwards. Children do not attend because the quality of the teaching is down, therefore the teacher gets despondent because the students will not attend regularly so they try even less and the whole thing falls in a hole. The solution to that is a very problematic question. As my colleague says, it is also costs.

Mr Lee—When the teachers come into Aboriginal communities, they know nothing about how to teach Aboriginal children. You are teaching English as a second language to kids here. They have to be taught differently but the teachers that come in do not know that, they are not trained to teach Aboriginal children, they are trained in teaching the wider community.

CHAIR—We talked about induction earlier, Brian. Is there any induction at all, any preparation, do you think?

Mr Lee—I have heard a couple of teachers say they have done three days of Aboriginal—

CHAIR—Pretty limited when you have got a second language.

Mr Lee—If you are going to stay here for a year or two, three days is not enough to learn about Aboriginal culture.

Mr HAASE—So we should be putting more effort into perhaps specialisation of teacher training if they are going to take up appointments in predominantly Aboriginal classrooms. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Lee—Yes.

Mr HAASE—I think it is a valid point. What we must not confuse, and I am sure it is confused in the minds of some teachers that come to Aboriginal communities, is that they think that to adapt to teaching Aboriginal students, they simply have to lower their expectations. I think that is where a lot of the damage is caused, because they say, 'They are just Aboriginal kids, we won't have to teach them as much.' I think it is a crying shame. But that is a gross generalisation; I accept that and put it on the record.

Mr P. Sibosado—You get some teachers who are willing to stay here for four or five years, but most of them are just here for the year and there is no loyalty to the place. I asked a teacher last year, who was straight out of teachers college from Melbourne, how long she was going to stay here and she said, 'No, I am just here to get some experience and I'm off again.'

Mr HAASE—Their own romantic cultural experience to dine out on for the next 20 years.

Mr P. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr HAASE—I think I have had a fair crack of the whip.

Mr Pley—Can I expand a little bit on education. It is good to look at the history and good to look at what is now, but there is another issue there. They did research in Fitzroy Crossing on why kids left school early and the standard answer almost was: 'Well, what is there? There's only CDEP.' You have got to work in all three areas. You cannot just take one issue and say the teachers are bad. There is a whole range of issues that need to be addressed.

Mr HAASE—Of course.

Mr Sampi—Yes, when we had a good school board there was a lot more communication between the community and the schools

Mr P. Sibosado—It is not now.

Mr Sampi—You have got so many people in the community and all of them are utilised for other things. They are so busy that some of them cannot be on school boards and they cannot be chairpeople or on committees and they are doing everything, if you like. So yes, it is not only just the teachers; it is a whole range of things.

Mr Pley—Andrew is actually an ex-teacher and he is going to hate me for saying this. He has been there, done it.

CHAIR—So the challenge is there.

Mr JOHN COBB—Ross, I will try and get it right; has Djarindjin always had a chief executive?

Mr Phillips—Not that I am aware of. I have only been here six years myself, but my mother is from this area and I am only just learning—

Mr JOHN COBB—I mean the Aboriginal corporation, your body, has it always had a chief executive as now?

Mr Phillips—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—Has it always been somebody from outside?

Mr Sampi—Yes, someone from the outside.

Mr JOHN COBB—I ask because it is not something we see a lot of and you obviously made a very distinct decision to do that, did you?

Mr Phillips—Since I have been here I have noticed we might have been through about five CEOs in the last six years. I think Kees would make number six.

Mr JOHN COBB—You are on the sixth one?

Mr Phillips—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—Have they all been white people?

Mr Phillips—No, we had one Aboriginal guy.

Mr Sampi—There was one Aboriginal from South Australia.

Mr Phillips—I cannot remember anyone else.

Mr JOHN COBB—How long have you been the chief executive, Kees?

Mr Pley—Since November 2001.

Mr JOHN COBB—Can I go back to one of the first things you mentioned, which was the regionalisation as against the local control of CDEP. Could you elaborate on that one because it is fairly important I think? Can you tell us how your corporation runs CDEP and what difference it has made since it has been regionalised instead of as it has been?

Mr Pley—I can only talk from the time that I started but in that time—

Mr JOHN COBB—Any of the others.

Mr Pley—In that time the committee developed a CDEP policy and was starting to implement that policy. It covered all the usual things that you see in employment and training stuff, from what kind of holidays people are entitled to, to policies on when people do not turn up.

Mr Sampi—No work, no pay.

Mr Pley—That kind of stuff. We were starting to implement that, and it was slowly having some effect. It was starting to work. For instance, a couple of months ago a guy who had never done an hour's work—I was going home for lunch and he was still working, collecting rubbish. I thought it is little changes but it is partly because people are starting to take ownership of these things.

Mr JOHN COBB—If I could just ask you a question. If I am understanding you correctly you are saying you were starting to get to the point where, instead of a substitute dole, it was becoming something you actually worked for.

Mr Pley—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—Is that what you mean?

Mr Pley—That is right. It was a set number of hours. Some people got top-up wages through grants from other departments and I guess the more motivated people slowly got the opportunity of getting into better paid jobs. That reward thing was starting to work a little bit.

Mr Sampi—But we also found cases of people who worked well and when they were rewarded by better wages, they worked even better.

Mr Pley—Yes. I suppose you would have seen that contract we did for the Army where we replaced 22 roofs on the houses here and installed 35 hot water systems. People got proper pay. The Army had given us a certain amount of time to finish that contract and we finished a month and a half early because people worked on the weekends. It does work. It works for me too; if I get better pay I—

Mr JOHN COBB—Just following on there, when it became regionalised what was the effect on it?

Mr Pley—Immediately people felt they could not walk into somewhere to find out what wages they were entitled to because it is all at the end of a phone now. You pick up a phone in our office—

Mr Sampi—We had everything in the office if they wanted something, their payroll slips or whatever, we would have it immediately. Then with the change, although it is sort of still—

Mr Pley—It goes from monetary things to non-monetary things; there was support for them in the office. You now have three field officers based in Broome who are supposed to deal with everybody.

Mr Sampi—We have not seen them here since the—

Mr Pley—We have not seen them at all.

Mr Sampi—That is five weeks.

CHAIR—How long has the policy been in?

Mr Pley—The new CDEP?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Sampi—Since 1 July.

CHAIR—Perhaps go back one. You were aware of the decision making leading to it as of six months ago.

Mr Pley—Yes.

CHAIR—That was raised by the central agency, not any local decision making contributing to it.

Mr Lee—It started off with the Spicer report.

Mr Sampi—It had suggestions of how to streamline a lot of the CDEP and other services that are involved with it, and slowly the Kullarri region said, 'We will first try an accounting service.' They set up the KAA and that was to take over and do the accounting of all the eight organisations in the Kullarri region. From there the talk came about to maybe cut down on the amount of guarantee organisations that were in the region. I think it was suggested to cut it down to four. We had a change of regional managers and they came in and said, 'All right, this is how it is going to be, this is what is happening, this is what the'—

CHAIR—When did the last regional manager change?

Mr Lee—About two years ago I think, three years ago.

CHAIR—Thank you. I have interrupted.

Mr JOHN COBB—Kees, just as a structure thing, you obviously report to the board, do you, to the chairlady and the board?

Mr Pley—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—You said you were getting to the stage, as I guess to the end of June, where it was starting to become no work, no pay, people were becoming fixed on it.

Mr Pley—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—Did you change things a couple of years ago when you became the chief executive as to how it worked or has there been a change? Forget what has happened since 1 July.

Mr Pley—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—But in the last couple of years, have you changed the way CDEP worked here?

Mr Pley—Yes, definitely we—

Mr JOHN COBB—You have. Can you tell us the changes?

Mr Pley—We went through a process with the council of developing that CDEP policy and we—

Mr JOHN COBB—Your board—your council?

Mr Pley—Yes. That document was written and it was slowly getting implemented. It was a whole document with—

Mr JOHN COBB—Can you give us a rough idea as to what you changed, what you did?

Mr P. Sibosado—How come you got put here in the first place? Why?

Mr Pley—Well, the job was advertised because the corporation was under grant control. In other words, an administrator was put in.

CHAIR—Do you know what grant control is?

Mr JOHN COBB—No, I don't.

CHAIR—Grant control is something when it is going rough and ATSIC comes in. It is almost receivership.

Mr JOHN COBB—It is like a local government body.

Mr Pley—They were insolvent. So that grant controller fixed things to a certain point and then the position was advertised and I applied for it, and got the position.

CHAIR—It came out of adversity.

Mr Pley—Yes. My interview panel was made up of the committee and the three agencies that are involved with the community—ATSIC, DIA and the housing department—and they now sit on the assessment panel for assessing my work.

Mr Sampi—They never used to do that before Kees.

Mr Pley—That is pretty unique, that never used to happen before.

CHAIR—I am going to need to start winding this up because I have got Mr Lloyd to go but keep going now. Finish off, John.

Mr JOHN COBB—So you made changes to the way CDEP was administered and obviously some other administrative arrangements.

Mr Sampi—He was just a better administrator.

Mr JOHN COBB—I am just fixated on the CDEP issue because most of them do not work and the fact that you are getting yours to work in the way it should interests me greatly.

Mr Pley—Yes, it is all to do with giving people ownership. I did not make any of the rules. I have made suggestions, of course—that is my role—but ultimately, when that document was passed, it belonged to the committee and they gave me the job of implementing it.

CHAIR—You would not agree with Mr Cobb that most CDEPs do not work, would you?

Mr Pley—It is not a pretty picture.

CHAIR—You agree with Mr Cobb?

Mr Pley—It is not a pretty picture.

Mr P. Sibosado—It all depends on how you are running your organisation and how strong you are, because that is what you have to do, otherwise people take advantage of that. If you let them get away with it, it will happen.

Mr JOHN COBB—But you obviously backed what Kees was trying to do?

Mr P. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—Kees, how long is your contract? Are you under contract?

Mr Pley—Yes. It has been extended for another two years but it may finish early because in a year's time, I hope, Peter will be ready to give me the boot.

Mr LLOYD—What is your relationship with Lombadina community as a council? Do the two councils meet at different times to compare ideas?

Mr Pley—Not a whole lot.

Mr LLOYD—Not a lot?

Mr P. Sibosado—Not often.

Mr Pley—We have a practical arrangement in place where they have some equipment that we do not have and we hire it off them. The town planning issue was done together, obviously, because it is very cumbersome to do two separate town plans, so it was done in one.

Mr LLOYD—You share some services, don't you?

Mr Pley—Yes. There is only going to be one road into the community, so the two communities have to agree on where that is going to go.

Mr LLOYD—The school is in your community or is it separate?

Mr Sampi—No, it is on church land.

Mr Pley—There are three major stakeholders: Lombadina, Djarindjin and the Catholic Church.

Mr LLOYD—With the CDEP plan and the changes, why can't you continue to implement stopping the sit-down money? Why have you lost control because of the changes? Couldn't you still be talking to your people and saying, 'Look, no work no pay,' or have you lost control of that?

Mr Pley—No, they still have the same policy. In fairness, we need to give it a bit of time.

Mr Sampi—But also there are outstations that ATSIC needs to monitor. If all those people are not working on their outstations, for whatever reason, when our community members are working, the rest of the members in the community say, 'They are not working; why should I work? They are getting CDEP as well.' That was one reason why it was not working. ATSIC should have had a stronger hand in that.

Mr LLOYD—That is the same in all communities. Even in my electorate, which is basically an urban electorate, if people see others getting something for nothing and not working, they say, 'Well, why should I be doing that?'

Mr Sampi—We made suggestions to the regional council that if they are not out in the community, perhaps they can do a couple of days work while they are in the community and then people will see them working, at least, because they are using all the services. They said they could do it but that is a couple of years ago now. They still do not do it, I think.

Mr Pley—The outstations have always been like that and this was supposed to bring about change. In our view, because you have all the field officers in Broome, it is going to be even worse.

Mr LLOYD—You have not seen any of them yet? They have not been in touch with you?

Mr Pley—No.

Mr LLOYD—How many people in your community are within the township?

Mr Pley—About 230 or 250.

Mr Sampi—It varies. People are in Broome sometimes—back and forth.

Mr LLOYD—Have you tried to apply to ATSIC for business funding to get projects off the ground at all? What is your relationship with ATSIC? Is it good or do you have difficulties getting funding? Are there any success stories?

Mr Pley—I presume everybody has difficulties getting funding but our relationship—

Mr LLOYD—Not just from ATSIC, government money generally. There is a bureaucracy.

Mr Pley—Yes. My experience with ATSIC has been very good. The field officers that work with us give us a lot of support and I have no problems with them.

Mr LLOYD—What about applying for funding for specific projects? Do you apply for funding? Are you successful?

Mr Pley—Sometimes. I am really only just getting around to starting to develop things. The first year or so of my employment I spent purely fixing a lot of things; that is what happens. There are a lot of issues to deal with to make things run properly. We have a number of things in the pipeline. For instance, in the next two weeks there will be an Internet cafe here which we hope to be selling to tourists and local people alike. We hope to convert one of the houses into a backpackers hostel. There are a number of issues where we are trying to address employment opportunities for people.

Mr LLOYD—Do you have any accommodation or businesses that interact with tourists at the moment?

Mr Pley—We have a mechanical workshop which sells quite a bit of fuel to tourists and gets the occasional—

Mr Sampi—And there's the shop.

Mr Pley—And our shop, of course.

Mr LLOYD—Just on education, in some ways I was a little concerned in that you were saying, 'We should have all our education in this community; we should not be disadvantaged,' which I understand. But the reality not just in isolated areas such as this but in western New South Wales and everywhere else in Australia is that people have to travel for higher education. I am just wondering whether you are reaching too high. I have nephews and nieces who went to Fitzroy Crossing school and part of my family have been through the school there. I have one niece in Perth at the moment doing higher school certificate from Fitzroy Crossing.

I just think it is a fact of life in Australia that to get a good school education, hopefully through to year 10, people have to travel. Isn't it better to let them travel and get their university degree, but make sure that a lot of them come back to the community? I am not being critical, Brian, of what you said. I just think that the reality is that we are all going to have to go to the big city to

get university degrees or even apprenticeships. Then we can look at them coming back, because I think that is the trouble. It is great, Peter, that you are back in this community. How do you get young ones to come back? I have been wound up here, so that will be my last question, thank you. It was more a comment but if you would like to respond—

Mr Sampi—Maybe you have misunderstood. We do want our kids to go away and learn. I think they were saying that some of them do stay but, the ones that do, we certainly want them to go and learn away from here.

Mr Lee—I think what I was saying is that the standard of education should be available here.

Mr LLOYD—Yes, a good standard.

Mr Lee—As it is in Perth or any other major town in Australia.

Mr LLOYD—That is a pretty fair point. Thanks, Brian.

CHAIR—On that issue, I would be very careful not to confuse aspirations to university education, to good quality primary and to secondary school education. That is what I hear you say. Too often I think the debate gets confused. The other issue that we should not run away from, wherever we are in Australia, is that we should make sure that those resources are available for people to access urban education, and that is an issue in itself. The cost of going into urban universities is astronomical, particularly for reasons such as this. It is something that I am passionate about and have been totally unsuccessful in, mainly, but certainly I will not relent on the fact that any Commonwealth or state government worth its salt should be respecting that issue.

With that, I will get off my hobbyhorse and go straight to a couple of key questions: first, resolving community differences. How does your community function? You have obviously developed some good governance models; you had some issues. What is it like? How do you resolve community differences? What I am getting at is the broad perception in the Australian community. Aboriginal communities as much as any other, and perhaps a bit more so, have family differences and they are difficult to resolve. The conflict within communities creates additional problems that we do not need. There are enough problems to be solved without getting into rows and blues all the time. I just wanted to touch on it. It is a bit of a no-go area, perhaps, for some people but I just want to talk about it. Is it a reality for you people and how do you deal with it? Are there any issues that you want to talk about?

Mr Lee—Health and wellbeing is a big issue here. We have a lot of young people into the drugs and alcohol culture. There is nothing here for them. We do not have any facilities here that will get young people stimulated into becoming good citizens, if you like. One of the things that we have asked for and talked to different people about is a sport and rec centre here. That would spike young kids' interest—'don't worry about the alcohol; let's go and play sport,' or do something like that, because at the moment there is nothing. They just fall back on the drugs.

CHAIR—Does it run a bit deeper than that, Brian?

Mr Lee—It does. It would go a long way towards healing family problems.

CHAIR—This is a volunteer outfit here but I think we agree it is a pretty key issue. The Prime Minister has been in Cape York talking about alcohol, fractured communities and violence—those issues which you do not need in developing stronger communities. If we do not talk about it, we are never going to deal with it. You people have been dealing with it and you are making progress, it seems to me. It might be something out of left field—anything you have got on it we are going to be looking for. We are looking for how we do it. How do we resolve it?

Mr Sampi—There are a lot of underlying issues on which a lot of people in our community and in a lot of other communities around here need counselling—perhaps the mission days and all that sort of thing that could have passed along, if you like. A lot of people need services like counselling and stuff like that.

CHAIR—Mentoring, counselling, whatever?

Mr Sampi—Yes, all sorts of things. We do not have those services in the town. That could be part of the alcohol and all sorts of different things.

CHAIR—Can I talk about your alcohol policy; what do you have?

Mr Sampi—We have a policy.

CHAIR—None or plenty?

Mr Sampi—We have a policy but—

CHAIR—Does anyone comply with it, basically, and how do you actually deal with it?

Mr P. Sibosado—Everybody has a permit to bring so much in.

Mr Sampi—A reasonable amount, yes—if you can measure a reasonable amount.

CHAIR—It is the definition.

Mr P. Sibosado—It all depends, yes, on what you mean by reasonable amount.

Mr JOHN COBB—Do you police it at all?

Mr P. Sibosado—No, we do not.

Mr LLOYD—How can you police something that says 'a reasonable amount'? What is a reasonable amount?

Mr P. Sibosado—Overall, we really do not need wardens here because it is pretty good. It is only once in a blue moon—once every three or four months—that something happens. There is a big run to town and there is a big party—a couple of days and it is gone again.

Mr LLOYD—Do you sell alcohol in your community?

Mr P. Sibosado—No.

Mr JOHN COBB—Do you mean that it is not a continuous problem?

Mr P. Sibosado—No. It is not coming in every week. It is once every three or four months—a really major binge for a couple of days. People are still going in on the weekends but you do not see it.

CHAIR—Kees, did you want to make a comment?

Mr Pley—Alcohol is less of a problem here than I have seen in a lot of other communities. I am not saying it is clean.

Mr Sampi—It is a problem to a degree. I think what Peter is saying is that every now and again people go on a binge, then we have to tighten the screws a bit and then it levels out again.

CHAIR—It is not an easy issue to talk about or deal with, but I just wanted to make sure. I am asking everybody the same questions because it has a focus at the moment; there are issues of violence around it and it is not the issue you need in your community to give yourselves the best shot at it. We all understand that. From a Commonwealth perspective, how do we best deal with it? Our job is to make some recommendations around it and we need your feedback, support and advice on how you see it. I do not intend to go any further.

Mr HAASE—I have one burning question: I would like to hear your comments about the Lombadina arrangement with their wet mess. Are Djarindjin community members able to access this facility between four and six?

Mr P. Sibosado—Some people do.

Mr Lee—Some do. I think it is at Lombadina's discretion.

Mr P. Sibosado—Whom they let in, yes.

Mr HAASE—So they are here if they are invited, is that what you are saying?

Mr P. Sibosado—I think so, yes.

Mr HAASE—Are they discouraged by your committee?

Mr P. Sibosado—No, not from coming in.

Mr HAASE—Have you ever been moved to recreate this facility in your own community?

Mr Lee—I think it would bring more problems.

Mr HAASE—That is your opinion?

Mr P. Sibosado—Yes.

Mr Lee—It is my personal opinion that it would bring more problems than it would solve.

Mr HAASE—Many people say to me that people should be taught how to consume alcohol in reasonable quantities and socialise their drink rather than have binge drinking. Do you ever have a discussion about that?

Mr Sampi—I tend to agree with that.

Mr P. Sibosado—If I had my way, I would put a policy in place to ban alcohol from there.

CHAIR—That is a legitimate debate to have. That is exactly what the Prime Minister was dealing with here yesterday or whenever it was.

Mr Lee—There are communities that do it.

CHAIR—Yes, that is right. They are both legitimate positions. We would be interested, if it is okay with you people, to get access to your policy on CDEP. Would that be all right?

Mr Pley—Sure.

CHAIR—Gentlemen, thank you very much; it is very much appreciated. We wish you all the best with your endeavours. As I explain about committee processes, it is like watching paint dry—it is pretty long and laborious—but you have contributed to our body of knowledge and we hope we can serve you usefully in the future. Thank you.

[11.49 a.m.]

COOK, Ms Gayle, Chief Executive Officer, Ardyaloon Inc.

DAVEY, Mr Dennis, Elder, Ardyaloon Inc.

DAVEY, Mrs Irean, Councillor, Ardyaloon Inc.

CARTER, Mr Andrew, Chairperson, Ardyaloon Inc.

HUNTER, Mr Peter, Councillor, Ardyaloon Inc.

CHAIR—I welcome representatives here today from Ardyaloon. Somebody might like to make a brief opening statement.

Ms Cook—Yes. I have only been in place for a short while. We would like to open by stating that there are many issues apparent in Aboriginal communities today and that many of these can be attributed to the governments of the past and present. Pre government assistance, Indigenous people were fully capable of caring and fending for themselves in their own traditional ways. Governments then stepped in and provided white man's way with no consideration of the real needs of Aboriginals. They raped and pillaged the Aboriginals and forced them to be fully dependent on them, which today can be seen through their dependence on government funding. Their future was taken out of their control and it was determined by white people.

ATSIC, no matter how well intentioned, became a bureaucratic stumbling block for Aboriginals. Today, the community is inundated with paperwork in one form after another and has to be completed to enable a community to do the most minor of tasks. ATSIC has created internal tension and friction between Aboriginals. Self-determination has been made so difficult that I believe many Aboriginals have given up. I see the pain in the elders' eyes as I know they witness the demise of their culture and face despair for their future.

It is time the Aboriginals in these communities were given recognition and the responsibility for their own future, and governments may well be surprised by the ability that these people have if given the opportunity. Unfortunately, at this time the Aboriginals are not necessarily at a stage where they can take complete control of their own destiny, so I believe governments have an obligation to provide training and whatever assistance is necessary to rebuild the self-esteem and confidence of these people. Who knows what is best for Aboriginals if it is not Aboriginals themselves? This is not to say that Aboriginals want to go it alone but that maybe it is time for a full and complete partnership with minimal bureaucracy. The young people are the future and we need to treat them with respect and instil in them the urgent need to create a future that will outlast their lifetime.

I cannot totally speak for the Aboriginals but will leave it up to them to answer your questions and convince you that they are capable and committed to their future. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Does anyone else want to add anything? You have approximately 450 people in your community and about 110 people participating in the CDEP. We have already heard that there is regionalisation occurring with CDEP so we would be interested in how you are seeing that.

I was interested in your comment about minimal bureaucracy—that would be almost every Australian's dream and perhaps even the bureaucracy's dream. I am not sure who is creating these problems. Mr Cobb thinks I am far too optimistic. Nevertheless, it is every Australian's dream that we minimise red tape and all the rest of it, I am sure.

What are the issues in terms of education and employment that would most immediately give you a stronger community? In your discussions have you isolated that one thing or three things that you think are important to the aspirational comments that you made? Anyone could answer that. I heard some aspirational comments but I did not hear any specific solutions.

Ms Cook—I think a major issue is that we, as whites, have imposed our ways and beliefs onto the Aborigines. It is a bit like education: we believe that the children have to go through that system that we all see as the right system; it is a system that leads onto university. We see that but, really, is that the future of the communities? Is that where the needs are, to be educated under that system when in fact the communities do not operate under that system? There is a complete conflict –

CHAIR—We have established that. The question was: what are the solutions? If you offered three things, what would you do to bring that more in line with that which is going to work for Aboriginal people? That is the question. It is a much harder thing to come to terms with. But give us just a clue—give us two or three things that Aboriginal people think or you think that in your deliberations you have brought out. Can you give us one or two things?

Mr Carter—The standard of education is not the same as in mainstream Australia or virtually the state. For example, if you put a year 10 student from the community out here against a year 10 student from a major town and the metropolitan area, the standard of education of the two lesser ones, the community based and the rural towns, is nowhere near up to mainstream with the metropolitan education.

CHAIR—But what is the appropriate approach for Aboriginal people to get to that standard? We have heard that we have at least two languages: English and the Aboriginal language of the region. Education is one of them but what is appropriate? In a policy sense, what can government do? What would you like to see happen? I accept the standard issue, but how? It is the 'how' that we have to –

Mr Carter—Yes. Probably as with the funding processes in the past and even today, a lot of agencies give you the funding to start up a project but there is nothing at the end of the tunnel. Once that funding for that project is finished, there is no vision at the end of the tunnel—

CHAIR—Doesn't it run a bit deeper than funding, Andrew?

Mr Carter—You need the training back-up on it because a lot of times you are given something for set-up and the set-up can fail—it is like a white elephant—but there is no training component set into those areas.

CHAIR—But the question still remains: what do you, Dennis, Irean, Peter, Andrew and Gayle think would work with Aboriginal people? We know money can help but that is not always the issue. Is it offering stronger induction for teachers which relates better? Is it ensuring that Aboriginal parents insist on their children going to school because we know that attendance rates are way down? Unless you get attendance you are not going to get results.

Mr Carter—That is right.

CHAIR—It does not matter what the race of people is, unless you get attendance it is not going to happen. They are the issues.

Mrs Davey—Just going back, like you were saying, educating the children—like Andrew was saying, the standard of education in the community, there is not any. Then if a certain child gets to that level and they want to pursue it further, they have to still go away for years 10 and 11. At the end of the time, do we educate our kids to go and live in towns? There is nothing in the communities to come back to; everybody knows that. There is no incentive. What happens now, it is money.

CHAIR—What outcomes are you getting at the moment in your primary school, Irean? How are they are going? Is there good attendance?

Mrs Davey—Yes, good attendance at the primary school.

CHAIR—Good results?

Mrs Davey—Yes, good results.

CHAIR—Literacy and numeracy?

Mrs Davey—Yes. I have my grandson going to school in Perth, in Clontarf.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mrs Davey—If he wanted to play football after he finished school, there is no support in that area as well. So where do we put our kids? They come back to the community and they have to go back on CDEP again. There is no incentive for anybody these days, for our young people.

CHAIR—All right. I will go to Mr Haase for a little while. He might be able to help us untangle this.

Mr HAASE—Thank you, Chair. I confess first up to not having visited your community and I am rather ashamed of that. I have been to Lombadina, Djarindjin and up to Cape Leveque, but I have not been to your community. There are many communities across my very large electorate

that I have not yet visited and I will make amends as soon as I can. So I do not know you personally, but I appreciate the opportunity for us to be here together to have this exchange.

We really are looking for solutions. We have had numerous opportunities to hear what the problems are. We need your help in formulating the solutions. Often money is quoted as being the root problem across all communities and communities always tell us, 'If only we had control of the money and an endless supply of money, we would create paradise.' I question that. We do have a one size fits all policy, generally speaking. There is one ATSIC created to represent Indigenous people in Australia, so sure, it is always going to come under criticism because it is not going to be perfect for every situation. But there are many different situations and the worst of the administrations that we endure is diabolical and as good as a few men short. So we are trying to come up with better solutions. The reason for this inquiry is to create a better ability within communities to control their destinies, if you like. The facts is that we do have an education system that is available to communities and we have funding arrangements for communities to get involved in projects, and I know of your hatchery project and other projects that have been started. However, certainly my experience elsewhere has been that so many of these well-developed, well-intentioned and often well-funded projects have failed. That is one of the problems that we need to investigate and better understand. Generally, I find that there is a problem with individual motivation. Whether it is because not everyone can be in control of a particular project or of the funding for a particular project is the problem, I do not know, but I certainly would like to hear from you whether or not you think that is a problem. Some of my colleagues believe that we will not solve the problem until every Indigenous family across Australia has their own funding program.

I would like to hear whether you think that is nonsense or whether you think it has some validity in it. Others believe that, until such time as we have communities that are occupied only by one family group, we will not have harmony in those communities. I would like to hear your comments on that as well. I know that there have been a vast number of resources put into communities that communities have not taken full advantage of, and that disturbs me. So I would appreciate your comments on any of those three points.

Ms Cook—I think you have educated everyone to believe money will solve everything and I think it does not go anywhere near it. I think it is the people and you have to get the commitment from within the communities. Too many of the programs are based on people outside the community, it is someone coming in and putting in place the program, whatever it might be. The whole program is based on that person, that person leaves and they have not taken the time to train the people within the community or get the commitment from the people within the community, because they are the ones who have to sustain it.

I think too often the funding the programs are on is get in, get it done, get out. To me, the most important part is getting it to remain, getting that program to continue with the commitment of the community. I do not think we take the time and effort to train these people to ensure they have the skill level that they can continue with that. It is giving them the accountability and the responsibility, which I do not think people have done.

The standard for the communities often has been set fairly low and that would be the attitude of a lot of people, and so they perform to that standard, that expectation. I think sometimes the pole is not set high enough for these people to say you have to attain that level. Given the

opportunity, even though it is daunting, I think a lot of them will, and then it is there after that program has gone because the community will continue it themselves.

Mr HAASE—You think our expectations are too low?

Ms Cook—I think so, yes.

Mr HAASE—Any other comments from anyone else?

Mr Davey—I come from the other angle because I am a true Aboriginal. I did not go to any schools, no government schools or anything. I was brought up in traditional teaching. I would like that to happen more than taking our kids away and training them for nothing; I see it for nothing. They go down to colleges and then they come right back to the community and end up doing the same old thing that I was doing—fishing or doing traditional things. I have never seen any of them who went to college and get a big job or anything; they have got nothing to work here. So I have never seen any government or anybody say, 'This is your money to teach culture'. A lot of money goes out to teach the white ways of doing things.

Where do the Aboriginal people like me get the satisfaction of teaching my people culturally? Even the teachers who come, they only teach what they come with, they enforce that. I see it my way. They do not give a chance of teaching our kids. If we do ask, they may, 'I got to teach my kids this and that, our rules say this'. Their rules, they do not even ask us what our rules were, what was there before. We are the last Aborigine people that tried to hang on to our culture, I think, and there is no help on that. I see Aborigines should be given a fifty-fifty chance. Education is, yes, well and good, but there is the traditional way of living, which they are satisfied with, comfortable with. If you force things on someone and he does not want it, it will never work. We should be looking at the kids, 'What would you like to be doing?' or something, 'What sort of education?'

Mr HAASE—How would you convince them not to go to the big smoke? How would you convince them that the flashy cars, videos, the entertainment and the lifestyle is not for them and they must stay in the community and do things in a cultural way? How would you tackle that problem?

Mr Davey—I would not know, because it was damaged before. We were under welfare, when they say, 'go', go to school. If our people used to say, 'No, I do not want my kids to go to it', they used to get punished or something. So that was ruined before my time.

Mr HAASE—You wouldn't return to that time?

Mr Davey—Our old people wanted to stop all that, they did not want their kids to go away from country, to live in their country where they had no chance, because that was their ruling. We had no right to stop anything like that, they were on top of us; we had to live by the welfare rules.

Mr HAASE—Yes, but today you cannot stop the children from going either.

Mr Davey—No, I cannot now, because your videos and things came in.

Mr HAASE—That is right.

Mr Davey—So how can I control it? There would be a chance for me to teach my kids in some ways, you know, put up a school, I am saying, or have money to get some equipment—not really money, I do not really need it, but maybe for a building or something so the kids can say, 'That is our Aboriginal teaching centre,' and they can go to it. There is nothing there.

CHAIR—Dennis, I will offer you this thought, although it does not help in any way, but I would have loved to have kept my children at home, too, but one is in London, another in Sydney and they have all left and I cannot keep them home; they will not stay. But I understand. I would love to have them in my community and living on country or on land, but that is not the way of today and certainly not the way for my kids who I would have loved to have kept at home.

Mrs Davey—Just going back to what Dennis was saying, we do not keep all our kids, but to look after our country, to be there to keep the things going—

CHAIR—Yes.

Mrs Davey—Our eldest son is a teacher in Broome. You see? So we did not stop him from that.

CHAIR—No.

Mrs Davey—It is just how we make our country survive on what we have. There is no way you have to put Aboriginal and white people together to understand the differences; there are too many red tapes. Look at us here. There are no young people here sitting down because what are we going to talk about? We do not understand them. They do not understand the red tape. They do not understand ATSIS or ATSIC. There are too many name changes; it was 'native welfare', then 'Aboriginal', now we are 'Indigenous'. Why keep changing our name? We never change the colour.

CHAIR—We can all relate to that, yes.

Mr HAASE—It really is a very valid point—there is no doubt about that—but we have difficulty, don't we, turning back the clock?

Mrs Davey—That is right.

Mr HAASE—In every culture and every generation of every culture there is always a lack of understanding by the elders of the youth. That is a given; that is life. What we are talking about here is something more specific. We are talking about how we can address the question of developing a better outcome for Indigenous people or Aboriginal people—call them what you like and use any term you like. How can we change the outcomes to a better one?

Mr Davey—With all this education that Aborigines go into, when will I see an Aborigine president of Australia?

Mr HAASE—That is up to Aboriginal people.

Mr Davey—Yes, when will they get to that level?

Mr HAASE—You have that opportunity right now.

Mr Davey—I do not think so because I see a lot of educated Aborigines that can fit into parliament and things but when they do really want to go there they get knocked back in some way.

Mr HAASE—No, a number of Aboriginal people have gone through parliament, as I think you know.

CHAIR—A lot of white fellas get knocked back too.

Mr Davey—Education is well and good, but I am just looking at the Aboriginal way of living too.

CHAIR—Yes, I hear that.

Mr Davey—Now, when I tell my kids, 'Don't do that; we should not be doing that,' they say, 'You're still living in the Stone Age.' That is what they answer. I am still living in the past they tell me.

CHAIR—Yes, they tell me that too.

Mr Davey—So where do we get away from that?

CHAIR—I hear the dilemma; it is huge.

Mr HAASE—Peter, do you have any contributions to add?

Mr P. Hunter—To have a young school leaver trained to be a plumber, electrician or whatever, for how long do you have funding? You train them to that level but it takes a while, probably five or six years, to be qualified. The next thing that happens is that halfway through the year, or one year, the funding runs out. Where is the money coming from? Why? They want to train in their home—

Mr HAASE—Are you talking specifically about Aboriginal people or are you talking about people in general?

Mr P. Hunter—No, Aboriginal kids—our kids.

Mr HAASE—Are you talking about a program that is in a community or are you talking about a program in, say, Broome?

Mr P. Hunter—To keep them in the community and to keep the community running.

Mr HAASE—You are talking about a purely funded situation. Are they performing as an apprentice or as an employee providing a service, or is it purely training?

Mr P. Hunter—Training.

Mr HAASE—That is a unique situation. That does not happen in mainstream communities. The individual goes to college and a break for training whilst they are full-time employed. They might be employed in Kalgoorlie and they might go to Perth for three weeks once every year and do their trade training. It has been a problem, I believe, in getting sufficient numbers of Aboriginal youth to be interested in moving from the community to take up the training where the training is available. Are you suggesting training trade skills in communities?

I believe that sort of thing happened here in Djarindjin where, under the Army program, there was some skilling done. I do not know whether those individuals are still working in the community at those trades they learned but I know of other communities where that has not been the case. But a lot of money has been put into training and up-skilling individuals and they have then moved out of the community regardless. This comes back to Dennis's problem about how we make youth captive in the community. We are not allowed to make them captive, of course, but you cannot take away the appeal of the big smoke. As much as we would like them, as my chairman says, to stay home and do the things we did and love the things we love, we cannot necessarily do that.

CHAIR—What about the success of the hatchery?

Mr HAASE—Your hatchery has been funded substantially. Maybe you could give us a report on that and tell us about the progress, employment opportunities and the level of sales and income that has been derived.

CHAIR—In other words, has it helped to retain some employment?

Mrs Davey—The hatchery is going really well at the moment. They are not making any money; they have only got some aquarium interest there. I have been working there for the last two weeks on a scenic place because of Cape Leveque being out, and that is why all the planes are over there. Now there is a scope there for tourism for those young people. They have to pay $5 at the office, go down there and have a free tour, but I charge the airlines for morning and afternoon teas. But those young people, in between that time—the other people who are driving up—are getting it free.

We keep talking to Barry, saying, 'Why don't you charge the people who are coming here more than what should be charged?' As for insurance, they cannot afford all that. Where are they going to get the money to insure anybody that comes in there? So if anybody has an accident, who is going to pay? The community does not have that kind of money. So that is the problem with that. All the guys are keen but, as you will see on your visit this afternoon—

CHAIR—How many people are employed there, Irean?

Mrs Davey—There are seven training.

CHAIR—I will need to give Mr Cobb and Mr Lloyd an opportunity but you raise dilemmas which we would not delude you or tell you we have the answers to, because they confound all of us at times, but we would like to genuinely listen and hear the concern and then look for the solution. As Irean says, she has one son in Broome, but how do you keep some people there to continue the way? I understand that.

Mr JOHN COBB—I agree. I have a lot of children and they all flew the coop. Even when I tried to keep back a couple to do some work at home, they went. But thank you all for giving us a chance to talk to you. I am particularly interested in how successful or otherwise you find the CDEP program. I notice you have over a hundred people on it. Could you tell us whether you think it works or does not work and how it is going within your community? Gayle, have you been there long enough to give us a run-down or would somebody else like to?

Ms Cook—I have an overview of it. One of the problems is that we call them CDEP programs. From my perspective this is taking away the ownership of the community in these activities and it is saying that ATSIC has ownership of it, it is a CDEP program, when in fact they should be viewing these programs as community programs simply with CDEP support. But the program should not be CDEP at all and ATSIC should be taking the view that it is a community program, not theirs. But they have been educated into thinking they are holding the purse strings, they have all the money, you are accountable, you fill out the forms, you write the statements and it is all for them. It is time that they stopped and said, 'This is for you as a community.'

They trained these people to make these programs income generating. A lot of them are just 'fill the hours in; you get paid for it'. The basis should be to start up the program but have it so that ultimately, if we are lucky, it will produce income. By producing income it will give greater ownership to the community. It means they can start doing more things with that; they can use those funds perhaps later on to create employment opportunities. CDEP in its own right does not create employment opportunities at all, but the community will be able to do that if they are given the right training to start thinking, 'Let's make money out of this; let's get it for our own benefit,' and that is a great motivator too.

Mr JOHN COBB—Andrew or Dennis, do either of you want to comment on where it is going wrong at the moment? Is it working with your community or not?

Mr Davey—No, I do not think so. I am giving the Aboriginal understanding because I do not understand your ways. CDEP, I understand, is like unemployment. Some Aborigines think, 'Why should I work with CDEP if I can sleep and get the same sort of money every fortnight?'

Mr JOHN COBB—That is the point, isn't it? You are not supposed to be able to get CDEP if you do sleep.

Mr Davey—But you can go on the dole so you do not have to work. I can sleep all day, read books or watch TV as long as I get up once every fortnight, go to the office and get my dole. It is the same sort of money. You get $150—I do not know what it is now—on CDEP and maybe unemployment of $300 a fortnight. It is just like the same money. So I do not understand the difference, CDEP or the dole, or whatever you call it. I would not understand what it is.

Mr JOHN COBB—It is called Newstart now. Yes, you are right; the name has changed.

CHAIR—It is a new name—another name—yes.

Ms Cook—CDEP has limited places; that is a big problem too. I think CDEP, if it is going to work, should be aimed at a lot of the school leavers. What happens to the children? They leave school, there are no CDEP placements for them and they have no alternative but to go onto Centrelink. They do not want to leave the community; they want to stay there. So their only alternative to survive is Centrelink, so they get that. There is no requirement to look for work or do anything else in the remote communities. They sit at home, there is nothing for them to do, and all of a sudden they have started that cycle of being used to getting money and staying at home. We cannot give them employment through the CDEP programs because there are no opportunities for them. Once they are in that way, leave them there two or three years, what is going to happen when they go on to CDEP? They see that the same as Centrelink and you have lost them; it is too late.

Mr JOHN COBB—Andrew, have you as an incorporated body sat down and set rules under which CDEP should work?

Mr Carter—Not as yet. It is all done under the one Kullarri region now.

Mr JOHN COBB—I know it is now but until a month ago it was not. Did you have your own set of rules as to how it should work within your community?

Mr Carter—We were just given a directive from the regional manager: we were going to go down this track, and that was it. There was no consultation with any of the communities or with any of the members, it was just thrown onto us.

Mr JOHN COBB—No, I meant prior to the end of June. Did you have a set of rules as to how you applied CDEP?

Mr Carter—Our rule back then, from memory, was no work, no pay—working along those lines. If you have CDEP and Centrelink in a community, you are giving people an option. I know communities cannot operate without the CDEP component for their on-costs to operate, but at the same time, if you have CES there going against CDEP—

Mr JOHN COBB—That is a valid point.

Mr Carter—there is that option because, with Centrelink, in a remote area you are not required to look for jobs.

Mr JOHN COBB—So, Andrew, you are making the point that whereas you as a body had the ability to control CDEP, you had no control over Newstart.

Mr Carter—Even today we do not have that control.

Mr JOHN COBB—So you do not have the ability to say to them, 'You cannot ignore CDEP and simply stay on the dole,' because they can.

Mr Carter—They can, that is right.

Mr JOHN COBB—That is a very valid point.

Mr Carter—Because at the moment there is that option.

Mr LLOYD—Can you tell me a little bit more about the hatchery? What do you hatch? Is it just trochus shells, or is it—

Mr Carter—Trochus shells, tropical abalone and tropical fish. We do a bit of giant clams and the other one was live rock and dead rock which, in other terms, is just your aquarium corals and things like that.

Mr LLOYD—Irean, you said that it is going pretty well but it is not making any money.

Mrs Davey—Not yet.

Mr Carter—It is in a position to make the money at the moment but, because we do not have fresh water down there, we have a water problem within our community. We do not have the pressure there. Later on this afternoon I will point it out to you and you will see just how much pressure we really get down there. It is not enough to flush a toilet or anything like that, so we cannot really set up an infrastructure there to facilitate the visitors that do come in. Until we can get fresh water down there, it will continue to cause a lot of problems. But we are in a position, though, to make a large amount of money on a weekly basis with agencies in Melbourne. We have a market over there for small trochus shells. If we send 300 baby shells across there, we will get a dollar for each one.

Mr LLOYD—So you have a business with huge potential, it is ready to make money, but you have one major problem: water. Has your incorporation or the structure that manages the hatchery sat down and examined what that problem is and how to fix it?

Mr Carter—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—And the funding?

Mr Carter—We looked at the options of trying to fix it. I was down there last week speaking to the supervisor. The biggest issue is the water. He has cut a line, because there used to be water up to the end of the airstrip and there was good pressure in the past. We have had major reticulation problems within the community. We fix one burst but the next weakest point breaks, and so on; it is like a chain link. Until that can be rectified, we cannot get the pressure down there. We have looked at the option of tapping into another area, but it was the same again: it reduces the community's water. So do we truck it down, or—

Mr LLOYD—How can that be fixed?

Mr Carter—This is what we are in the process of trying to sort out now.

Ms Cook—With the hatchery, a lot of has been R&D to date and so it has dabbled in a whole range of those activities. It is now at the stage where it has to start to focus so it can become a business as such. So we have put in an expression of interest at this stage for some funding for a business plan, because it badly needs a business plan, to trace its history, to see where it is going and to see what the markets want. Until we get the funds to do that, we are a bit hamstrung regarding where we should be putting our energies anyway. Once we have that business plan, we can then start to make application for funding to get us to the next step. Manmarnah in Broome have used a lot of the intellectual property from our hatchery, which probably disappoints our hatchery somewhat, and they are the ones who have all the funding to date. So it is a matter of our knowing how to play the game of putting in submissions and getting the funding so that we can start to take off as well.

Mr HAASE—There are a thousand questions. I am going to have to come and see you. Remember, I tend to visit where I am invited; that is part of the deal.

Mr Carter—There is always an open invitation to any politician to visit our community.

Mr HAASE—It needs to be more specific, thanks, Andrew.

CHAIR—Peter, I would like to bring you in a little more. Dennis and Irean's contribution has been first class in cutting to the chase, as we say, and getting right to the point. It has been outstanding. You have come to it and there it is: the Aboriginal view and the difference between Newstart and CDEP in a nutshell. Peter, did you have anything in particular you want to add? I have put you on the spot but I just wanted to make sure you have the opportunity, that is all. Is there anything you want to add in terms of the CDEP area, employment, and the future for education? I have a couple of questions I want to ask Dennis after that.

Mr P. Hunter—I would not like to see a young boy or girl leave school and get straight onto CDEP. It is peanuts.

CHAIR—Not the way to go.

Mr P. Hunter—Where I work, I am a full-time education school gardener.

CHAIR—Are you?

Mr P. Hunter—Yes. I've been there for 17 years. I have seen a lot of kids come and go through that school, they are still in the community; there is nothing different.

CHAIR—Some of them sitting on CDEP.

Mr P. Hunter—Yes, some of them are sitting on CDEP.

CHAIR—Going straight from school to CDEP. Not the way to go.

Mr P. Hunter—I would like to see more improvement than going on to CDEP for their future.

CHAIR—Thank you. Dennis, can I just impose on you for a couple of minutes? Talking about education the Aboriginal way, I am sitting here just amazed at your English; it is clear, not a problem, better English than mine. I could understand you that well. Can I understand how you learned English from your native language? I do not want to unduly probe, but I am just fascinated by your ability with English, and that issue for Aboriginal people generally about language.

Mr Davey—When I was going, not at school, but two hours at first, the missionaries were teaching us for two hours or something, how to spell cat or apple or whatever, but we were not allowed to talk English in the camp. Our elders did not allow it and the missionaries did not allow us to talk our language in school. That is the only time we could say yes or no in school. But when we get home, there was no such thing as English. We used to get strapped for it or something. So that is how I was brought up. What I am talking now, I learned that myself, I picked it up on jobs like at Derby or Broome—wherever I went looking for jobs. I would pick it up from the work mates. I did not have any education.

CHAIR—Nothing, no.

Mr LLOYD—Can I just ask a question?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr LLOYD—Do you think it is important that young people from your community learn English? Do you think that they need English?

Mr Davey—Yes, I am not worried about that. I am not against learning English, because it does help in some way.

Mr LLOYD—As well as traditional language.

Mr Davey—In my age, I was brought up in different ways. You grow up now, you see a lot of difference, and I am against a lot of things, but I can do nothing about it, about people doing things that should not be done in communities. When you get your funding, they say, 'This money is only for that purpose.' They do not go back to the everyday people and say, 'How do you want this money to be used?' They do not do it. They just say, 'Righto, this is for a truck.'

CHAIR—This way or nothing.

Mr Davey—'Spend it on a truck, buy a truck.' If Aborigines want to borrow, they cannot, because it has already been decided down there somewhere. So they say, 'This money is for that, mate, you had better pay people so much, $150, and that is it.' You can't say, 'He worked a couple of hours extra; can I pay him extra?' 'No, you can't. You have got to stay with the $150.' So I just cannot understand all that.

CHAIR—Thank you, it is on the public record. It is very important to me that I hear it from you; very important. Mr Lloyd asked about the importance of English for children, what about for the teachers in terms of them having some of your language and in the school? Do you have any advice there about how teachers could help in the school with language?

Mr Davey—We have that now. We all decide, what, how many years ago? We got that happening now.

CHAIR—Yes. Is it working all right?

Mr Davey—Yes. So the kids are talking language now.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr P. Hunter—Even the teachers are picking it up.

Mr Davey—But I am talking about the people that missed out on that. They were taken away and the mission was closed, and they grew up in Derby or Broome, not in their language, it was a different language. It is very hard for us to talk to them now. They try and pick it up, but these kids that go to school now, they have got the opportunity at least. We have put something in there for them.

CHAIR—I hope I get the next question right. In terms of changes to language—and there is sometimes a debate about this and I hear Mr Haase and others talk about Creole—and in respect of the purity of the language, the clarity of the old language, is it changing much? You mentioned people going away and coming back. Is the language holding? Is it similar to what it was?

Mr Davey—It is.

Mrs Davey—It is still the same. Our language is still the same, it does not change. A lot of our young people understand it. Sometimes they talk it, but English is the only way that people communicate now, because that is what they learn in the schools. You have to learn to read and write, if you do not, then you will not—

CHAIR—I accept that, but I am trying to understand the two.

Mrs Davey—A lot of language.

Mr Carter—Maybe if I can refer back to the 1905 act that was brought out back in the old welfare days.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Carter—When that came into effect, it extinguished all rights for Aboriginal people, all their traditions and customs, and they were taught that was taboo. You have to go down this way here. That may still happen today and it may be happening in certain areas, whereas we are in a position now, like we have done a dictionary of the Bardi language through our school and our language teachers, and we are trying to bring that back into the system. In the past, because of that 1905 act, it caused that many problems. It took away a lot of traditions and culture from the people and they were led to believe that they were not allowed to practise it unless you practised it away from the eyes of the European workers that were in place.

CHAIR—Thank you. You can see what I am trying to say and that I am trying to understand. I do not understand it. The committee is sick of me saying that, but my electorate has got the Pitjantjatjara country in it. I am trying to learn a bit of Pitjantjatjara and I am battling, not going that well. I have a few words, but I am not going that well. So I understand a little bit about the difficulties. But that is enough from me. Mr Haase will conclude and than we will offer an opportunity for any last comments.

Mr HAASE—Thank you, Chair. I picked up on something that Dennis said about where he learned his good English and that was by going away looking for work. You did that and you obviously did that successfully and you have obviously made something of yourself. What is the difference in our expectations of young men and women going away and looking for work today? What has changed?

Mr Davey—It is the qualifications, I think. You have to have tickets for this, you have to have a driver's licence, or you have to be qualified in certain areas. In my time it was different. I was a crane driver. I drove big cranes in Ord River when we built that dam; I did not have a ticket. I did not have to go to school for that; I picked it up on the work. I used to drive a grader; that was picked up on the road again on work. I used to weld. I did croc shooting, diving, nursing—I was a male nurse for a few years. So where is the education part coming in? These people have got more opportunity of getting education than pay on CDEP; they are not even operating anything. If they do, they go down and they are training in some school to drive a grader. I picked it up on the road on the track. No school, no pencils there. So what is the difference? Work. Can you tell me how it happened? Where is it coming from? It was not from education for sure. I did not go to any school.

Mr HAASE—You are supposed to be telling me that I could give you a clue perhaps that you are very proud and very well motivated and will always do well because you have got the attitude that will make you do well. How much influence, do you think, having welfare has changed our children these days?

Mr Davey—How much?

Mr HAASE—What has been the effect on our young people today of being able to get the dole, in relation to them going out and looking for work as you did?

Mr Davey—CDEP or dole?

Mr P. Hunter—I think the dole has changed that.

Mr HAASE—It is the same, perhaps.

Mr Davey—Yes, better to get dole than go looking for work.

Mr HAASE—Too easy?

Mr Davey—Too easy, yes.

Mr HAASE—Looking for it.

Mr Davey—Looking for work is too hard, but in those days, you did have no such thing as dole or anything, you had to look for work.

Mr Carter—You had no choice.

Mrs Davey—When did CDEP start? In 1983 in our community, when it first started in Wunnem Point, we were both on it from the beginning. He had to retire because of his sickness. I am still on it. It depends on the individual and how they want to achieve things for themselves. It is the same thing; I only went to a state school, too, see. You are trying to solve things and make things work. A lot of things, we do not credit our young people sometimes. When they do a good thing, we do not go up and say, 'Good on you', and that is everywhere, right across the board, but when they do a bad thing, everything is highlighted, no matter what it is.

Mr Davey—Like Peter was saying, these kids that leave school, they go straight onto CDEP. It did not happen in my time, so when the CDEP came on, I was older and I was stuck with it. Because I like doing things, because I trained different, I was doing things. So I had to accept that CDEP because I wanted to stay home and do something for the community, so I had to just accept that CDEP. But if I had the chance nowadays, I would have slept and waited for the dole every fortnight. Why sweat out there?

Mr HAASE—There are many Aboriginal leaders around Australia today who are criticising welfare—the dole, CDEP, call it what you like, sit-down money—but there remains in my mind a huge problem. You cannot just take away the dole. People have relied on it for too long.

Mr Davey—Yes, I know that.

Mr HAASE—So I am forever looking for people who have—

Mr Davey—Good luck.

Mr HAASE—smart ideas about a transition period, perhaps, or greater choices. It would seem to me that something for nothing does not encourage people to put the effort in to get something for themselves. I do not know if you have any more truths about where we might go to a transition period.

Mr Davey—I do not know, because they can go further, government came up with child abuse and all this. How can we correct our kids now, show them discipline, if we are not allowed to hit them if they do a little thing? Just to slap them or something like. I went through a hiding from my father; he did not go to jail.

Mr JOHN COBB—You and me too.

Mr Davey—Now, you just raise your hand and they will report you, so what can I do to discipline my grandson? I cannot hit him. That is all, that thing came in and then where do black fellas' rights go? Our law, our culture, has gone down because of that. We cannot punish them—punishment law. I think you heard about it, you have been around Australia. Punishment law, if you do anything wrong you get a spear through your leg or something, that was all. After that punishment, that woman or man would not do the same thing again because he had to look at

this mark here, 'I do not want to get that one again'. That was more discipline than putting a bloke in jail for three months; he would get a feed and be well looked after there.

CHAIR—It is a nonsense law.

Mr Davey—So a lot of things like that changed, a lot of things, so it is hard for me to understand, so do not ask me any more because I cannot understand that.

Mr HAASE—There is a move across Australia in some centres for the consideration of traditional law and traditional punishments, and many people are thinking about it and whether it is appropriate to return to some consideration at least of tribal law or traditional law. Do you think that we would do well today to return to a consideration of some tribal law?

Mr Davey—I do not know, I am doubting too—

Mr P. Hunter—It is very hard.

Mr Davey—because of a lot of the things that have been put to our young people nowadays. It would be hard to start that again. If we had been allowed to do that all the time maybe they would know about it. But now they haven't seen it, they grow up and got a different education.

CHAIR—Thank you, Dennis. Peter, do you want to grab a comment there?

Mr P. Hunter—Sorry?

CHAIR—Do you have a comment? You had a comment on that, just supporting Dennis?

Mr P. Hunter—Yes.

CHAIR—That traditional punishment could be—

Mr P. Hunter—Yes, it is very hard to get back on it now, because things have changed a lot and I would not like, with the traditional punishment, to take a boy from the community that has been in trouble and take him out in the bush and do what I have seen. No, it is not on. It is very hard.

Mr HAASE—See how important it is to get these things on the record?

Mr P Hunter—Yes, we would need to get back and do it your ways and our ways, yes, and share it.

CHAIR—I found that just really valuable. I do not know where it takes us, although I have got a few ideas, or what it means in 12 months time, two years time, but it was really useful to get some understanding. Did you want to say anything, Peter?

Mr P. Hunter—The traditional ways, if you are talking, showing our kids, it is not the punishment ways, it is the old fishing ways and hunting ways. I would love them to have that for the kids to carry on today.

CHAIR—Thank you, Peter. I just want to offer an opportunity for anyone to make a short statement or a final little comment. Yes, Irean?

Mrs Davey—We would like to see you guys come back more often and talk to us, that way, to the community.

CHAIR—We would love to. It sounds like an excuse, but we have got to cover all of Australia, so all I can offer is Mr Haase in the short term. Mr Haase is a formidable character and I think he would be glad to be with you, but we have all of Australia to cover so our time is quite limited and I would not want to mislead you. I would love to come back, but I cannot, but certainly Mr Haase, I am sure, will speak with you about when he can come back. So is there any other comment?

Ms Cook—I think education is at the basis of a lot of the issues, too, and I do not mean education as in necessarily just our children; I am talking about the community as a whole. I know the council is looking at doing some governance training at the moment and I think they have to get an understanding of how to run these communities so that it is acceptable to the different government departments. If we are going to apply for funding or whatever, we have to be accountable for that. So I think it is a matter of training your communities to understand all those requirements and also I think really training them to look at their community more as a business. I think the only way the communities will survive in real terms is to view themselves as a business. That will then create a future for the youth of the community because there will be employment opportunities and all of a sudden the youth will be proud of their communities because they will be able to say, 'This is what we do here'. But at the moment I think a lot of that control and ownership of the communities is being taken away, especially from the new KRCI set up with CDEP, and therefore the motivation is going. Until they start saying, run it like a business and get income into the community, I do not know where you are going to go in the future.

CHAIR—Good comment, thank you.

Mr Davey—One thing I would like to happen in our community is to get some sort of money to build an Aboriginal cultural centre. If you can get the education department to pay for building so many buildings around the place, why can't we just have one to teach our kids the cultural things, language and everything?

CHAIR—I would need to leave that with Mr Haase and others to work through. We have to operate in the broad; we cannot operate community by community, but I note what you say. Andrew, did you want to just conclude?

Mr Sampi—I was just going to elaborate more on what Dennis was talking about in regards to what you mentioned earlier about the trades. For young people to learn a trade and to come back into their community, there is never an infrastructure set up in place for them to come back into. Their expectations of them are way too high and there is only the CDEP component there to

offer them, so there is no motivation or self-esteem to go out there and do things like that if you know you have got nothing to come back to.

CHAIR—Thank you all for a wonderful contribution, it was much appreciated. You people had to come a fair way, so we really appreciate that. The committee needs to break for lunch and we will reconvene afterwards. I understand we will be meeting with small business operators after lunch. On behalf of all of us, I thank you very much for attending.

Proceedings suspended from 12.49 p.m. to 1.28 p.m.

ANGUS, Mr Vincent, Chairman, Mudnunn Mud Crabbing and Camping

CLEMENTS. Mr Warren, ATSIS and Ultimate Boat Charters

HUNTER, Mr Eric, Sole Owner, Leveque Dingy Hire and Firewood

McCARTHY, Mr Phillip Terence, Director, Ultimate Experience Charter Boat Company

CHAIR—I recommence this hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and I welcome our next group of witnesses. I invite you to elaborate on the capacities in which you appear before us.

Mr McCarthy—I am the Secretary-Director, one third owner of my company, made up of four people—me, my dad and my two other brothers. We all have equal shares in the business.

CHAIR—Could you just take us through the business, what it is? I read a bit of detail on it earlier somewhere and I am just going through my notes but could you just take us through it?

Mr McCarthy—Yes, it is a charter boat company. We are currently based at Cape Leveque and we have a deal with Cape Leveque Resort. They take 10 per cent commission for doing all the booking and we operate out of there. We do full-day trips around Sunday Island, the eastern side of the Buccaneer Archipelago. Our trip is more of a scenic, cultural experience on the boat. We take them snorkelling, for a reef walk, take them for a walk on Sunday Island, a little bit of fishing and a fair bit of history about our people.

CHAIR—How long have you been going?

Mr McCarthy—This is our fourth year of operation; we started off four years ago.

CHAIR—Without intruding into private matters unduly, is the finance from Indigenous business or from private finance?

Mr McCarthy—Initially when we started off—I think Uncle Warren can help us out—I think there was a $30,000 grant set up for the Bardi organisation. We used that and we went to the Commonwealth Bank and borrowed another $80,000. It was through the bank.

CHAIR—Is it going along pretty well?

Mr McCarthy—Bit of hiccups here and there, but yes, it is doing really well.

CHAIR—I will leave Mr Haase to ask a few questions too, as many as he likes, and go through what are some of the impediments and the future, what sort of things we should be doing. I should introduce myself too: I am Barry Wakelin from South Australia—basically 90 per cent of that state—and I am used to things that are a bit remote, and I am familiar with the issues of small business. As I said, the four of us have got some linkage with small business, if not in operating our own small businesses, but I think we all have. I want to thank you very

much because it was my brainwave to get you fellas on the public record just to see what it was like to be in small business in this part of the world. Mr Hunter, you are Leveque Dinghy Hire and Firewood; is that right?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes.

CHAIR—I thank you very much for coming across and God knows what I have interrupted—I hope I have not wrecked your day unduly. Thanks for taking the trouble. Mr Haase, would you like to start the questions?

Mr HAASE—Yes, I would love the opportunity, Chair. Thank you very much and hello to Eric and Phillip. I need to clarify one point before we go: what is your company's name, Phillip?

Mr McCarthy—Ultimate Experience Charter Boat Company Pty Ltd.

Mr HAASE—Your company, Eric, is Leveque Dinghy Hire and Firewood?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Because the way it is written in my notes, it is one company called 'The Ultimate Experience, Leveque Dinghy Hire and Firewood'.

Mr E. Hunter—No.

Mr HAASE—I am sure somebody is dreadfully embarrassed by that. Now I understand. You have already said you got $30,000 in funding, but then you went to the Commonwealth Bank and that is what really interests me. What did you put up as collateral to the Commonwealth Bank or was there a particular program that they funded you under?

Mr McCarthy—There was an existing charter boat company. Cape Leveque was running itself so it was already a viable business. Unfortunately, the boat they had was not a very good boat; it just kept having problems. We also got $10,000 from the chamber of commerce to do a feasibility plan and a business plan. With assisting records from Cape Leveque and the $30,000 we had, it showed it as a viable business. Just with that and the existing records from the charter boat that Cape Leveque was running, when we went to the Commonwealth Bank it was viable to go into it.

Mr HAASE—Did the existing capital equipment have a value that was large enough for the Commonwealth Bank to consider funding you? Banks do not give money away.

Mr McCarthy—I am going to let Uncle Warren speak on behalf of us.

Mr HAASE—I am not sure if we are able to ask Warren to come to the table, are we?

CHAIR—Yes, we are.

Mr HAASE—That is good. Come in and just state your name and existing situation, Warren, and what you can tell us will be most helpful.

Mr Clements—I am Warren Clements and I am with ATSIS in Broome. At the time of the purchase of the charter boat that Phillip had, I was the administrator at One Arm Point community. How it all eventuated is that Phillip came in one time and said that they would like to set up a business in getting a charter boat. We spoke to different organisations, like Kooljaman Resort and Lombadina, about whether they would support us in getting a charter boat. The McCarthy family put together all the assets that they had and history of previous bank loans for boats and put that before the Commonwealth Bank. They put the grant they got from ATSIC, $30,000 from the regional council, in as a bit of collateral. They had a person named Barry Sharp who supported it and knew a bit about boating and the business side of things. Phillip and his brother, Alec, with their history in the region with the tides and what goes on there, the cycle, the Commonwealth Bank had a look at it. We got Barry Leval from commerce and trade to come in and do a feasibility study with us and we also lobbied to get promotional companies in Broome to look at giving us a bit of promotional stuff. From there everything just sort of fell into place. The boys have managed it ever since.

Mr HAASE—That is most helpful, thank you, Warren. Just quickly, Phillip, it has been going how many years? Four?

Mr McCarthy—This is our fourth year.

Mr HAASE—And it is returning a profit?

Mr McCarthy—Yes, it is.

Mr HAASE—You are paying a profit to shareholders?

Mr McCarthy—I think this year we are breaking even. Any shares will be an equal share.

Mr HAASE—But it is looking as though it is going to be a profitable business for you?

Mr McCarthy—It is a profitable business. We have just had a few major problems throughout that knocked us back a bit.

Mr JOHN COBB—Every business has.

Mr McCarthy—But yes, we have never had any problem with payments—bank payments—never had a problem with anything so far.

Mr HAASE—You went and bought a new vessel, or another vessel?

Mr McCarthy—We bought a second-hand vessel.

Mr HAASE—Who has got the coxswain's ticket, or have you all got tickets?

Mr McCarthy—There are two skippers, me and my older brother, and we have two deckies that we rotate.

Mr HAASE—How do you advertise? How do you get your customers?

Mr McCarthy—We are currently being advertised through Cape Leveque at the moment but ourselves, we need to get some further funds to go on the Net, I suppose, and get some business cards. We do not even have business cards at the moment.

Mr HAASE—Those things would normally come out of your ongoing incomes. I do not know if there ought to be an exception but I am sure you will take advice in that matter. All right, thank you for that, Phillip. Eric, your business, I imagine, is around the resort, is it?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Providing for the resort?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes, it is.

Mr HAASE—How long have you been in business?

Mr E. Hunter—Three years today.

Mr HAASE—Is yours a similar story of origins as far as getting your business up and running? What motivated you to decide to become self-employed rather than dependent upon handouts?

Mr E. Hunter—I wanted to do something for myself rather than depending on the community all the time and expecting not to have a business. I wanted something I could leave for my kids.

Mr HAASE—Good on you, well done. Where did you find the most financial assistance? Where did that come from?

Mr E. Hunter—The Commonwealth Bank.

Mr HAASE—Can you very quickly detail that process that you went through? Where did you get the most assistance from to guide you through that process?

Mr E. Hunter—I had a bit of help from the mob in Broome, the economic development group, and with doing the business plan. Yes, small business group in Broome. They gave me a hand to do the business plan, then I just took it from there.

Mr HAASE—Okay, so you personally arranged your finance?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Was it capital-intensive? I am trying to get an impression. I guess you would obviously need a dinghy to be involved in dinghy hire.

Mr E. Hunter—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Do you have a number of them or one or—

Mr E. Hunter—I took out a loan for $25,000 to set up the business and I bought two dinghies out of that as well.

Mr HAASE—What collateral did the Commonwealth Bank have?

Mr E. Hunter—The dinghies, the motors and the trailers. I used the business as the collateral.

Mr HAASE—Did they demand a business plan?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes, they did.

Mr HAASE—Was it onerous preparing that plan, difficult for you?

Mr E. Hunter—It had to be.

Mr HAASE—Was it difficult for you?

Mr E. Hunter—It was, yes.

Mr HAASE—Did you take advice from anywhere?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Where from?

Mr E. Hunter—Barry Leval gave me some advice.

CHAIR—All right. So as I do not hog the questions, thank you very much for that. I will pass to may to my colleagues.

Mr JOHN COBB—Barry has been asking all the questions I would have asked. The NEIS program never ever came into it—you know that one, Warren?

Mr E. Hunter—No.

Mr JOHN COBB—No, okay. The people who helped you do your business plan et cetera, can you just say who that was? Who helped you through with the—

Mr E. Hunter—Barry Leval, chamber of commerce.

Mr JOHN COBB—Okay. I think Barry asked the things I wanted to ask about how you got going and so on. Warren, does anybody use the NEIS program? You do not know it either?

Mr Clements—No.

Mr JOHN COBB—That is to help people to get going in their own business if they have been on Newstart for I think it is about three months, isn't it? But certainly, if you had not have been employed prior to doing it, it would have been applicable to you. Do you want to introduce—

CHAIR—No, you keep going because I am happy to—

Mr JOHN COBB—Okay. Can I—

CHAIR—You probably want to go and ask Vincent.

Mr JOHN COBB—Yes, I do.

CHAIR—Vincent, can I thank you very much and apologise for dragging you away from wherever you were. It was much appreciated, your taking the trouble to come across. I took a bit of a decision and a punt, because we all come from small business, we are bit biased that way I suppose, and we have a bit of an understanding of it. So we were pretty interested to see Aboriginal people, and anyone else, who are having a crack at small business, to understand the Aboriginal situation because that is of great interest to us and why we are here.

Mr JOHN COBB—Eric and Phillip have just been good enough to tell us how they got going in their businesses. Vincent, would you be good enough to tell us how you got up and going?

Mr Angus—I was at Kooljaman for a while and I was working doing tours from there. So I started up, I said I might as well do my own thing. Instead of working for someone else, I thought I might as well do my own work, just get my family involved with something so I just decided to build it. I wanted to get my whole family involved in my own tourist thing.

Mr JOHN COBB—Did you have to borrow money to get your business going or did you—

Mr Angus—I put in a five-year plan to ATSIC for money to come through, and with the help of TAFE, me doing tourism training with TAFE, I drew that five-year plan up with TAFE. I did the five-year plan with TAFE, they helped me do that, and I put in the submission to ATSIC.

Mr JOHN COBB—So the money you got from ATSIC was sufficient to get the business going, was it?

Mr Angus—Yes.

Mr JOHN COBB—So TAFE provided, what, the business plan, helped you do a business plan, which you had to provide to ATSIC to get the funding, I would presume.

Mr Angus—Yes, when I was doing that tourism training with TAFE. Even though I finished up with Kooljaman I still wanted to do tourism training after that. Only got level 3 certificate in tourism.

Mr JOHN COBB—How long has it been going?

Mr Angus—I started building slowly and finished it last year and just keep going now. Sort of do small things now—that is what I am busy doing—still doing tourism now, we just finished one. We tried it last year, we got everything under way. We have the power set in there now and we are really starting to get camping going.

Mr LLOYD—All the questions that I wanted to ask have been put on the public record, except to say that I am very impressed with all four of you here today, the fact that you have got successful businesses up and running. As the chairman said, we have all been involved in small business. Some of us have been pretty good at taking big businesses and turning them into small businesses. It is not a hard thing to do, so congratulations to all of you, and keep up the good work.

CHAIR—In the Aboriginal situation, quite often family obligation versus either private enterprise ethic or individuals getting ahead as individuals or as individual families can be an issue; there can be a bit of a battle there sometimes. Can we talk a bit about that and what your view is on some of those things? Did you have those sorts of battles and are you still having those battles? Have you got any advice for us? Can you talk about that with us?

Mr Angus—We are still battling now, you know what I mean, trying to get things up and going. Tourism is slow for me because you have Lombadina and Kooljaman there, but they will be slow coming in until they find out more of what is behind there, and me taking them crabbing as tourists. Once they see the camp ground there, more will come in. But we are still quite slow; it is going to be a slow process for us.

CHAIR—Phillip, did you want to offer anything on the family and how it all fits together, the private enterprise ethic and—

Mr McCarthy—The business really started off just for my older brother and me more than anybody else. We grew up at One Arm Point, all our lives, and we have worked for the community all our lives. We saw that we were not getting any reward for the hard work we were doing. We were in a cycle, I suppose. We sat down together and said: 'Look, we are going to start something. We will approach Kooljaman and see if we can get a charter boat.' We were initially going to start up with a small fishing boat and work ourselves up. Being Aboriginal people, I think the scary part is just thinking about going into a business.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr McCarthy—The paperwork becomes a major issue because unfortunately a lot of our people are not highly literate, I suppose. So the scariest part of going into business is doing the paperwork with all the BAS and stuff. We are using an accountant and stuff like that, and we will work our way around it and we are getting small computer training at the moment.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr McCarthy—Unfortunately I am also operating the boat and it takes a lot out of me. I currently doing all the paperwork and bookwork. We still find it difficult getting our young generation to assist with us in joining up as well. Sometimes we have difficulty getting a deckie on board. We have got two sisters who do not seem to want to help us at the moment. Hopefully

we are going to get the young one to do the bookwork and maybe just pay a wage for her time. Having the opportunity, to start businesses you have to do something within your community or something that is going to be viable within your community so the obvious option for us was the boat. We knew there was an existing business there are Cape Leveque. It was a failure because the boat they had was having a problem.

CHAIR—Can I ask what sorts of things you were doing in the community before?

Mr McCarthy—I do not know. Most people in the communities are just working for CDEP. Everybody knows about it—the Community Development Employment Program.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr McCarthy—Just doing these cottage industries around the community I suppose. I was operating as a manger for the—not managing, but just doing a lot of jewellery for the Bardi workshop where the jewellery shops are. I was basically running that for a while, making jewellery and stuff like that.

CHAIR—That would have developed a little bit of the small business principle, I guess.

Mr McCarthy—Principle, yes.

CHAIR—What about mentoring and support? It is tough. There is that scary part. When I started, it was a bit scary with debt and all those things. How do you do it every day, every week and every year? When things go against you a bit you say, 'Now, how do I overcome that one?' The mentoring, the support and clearly—

Mr McCarthy—I am really proud to have a brother like Alex. We just work anyway. He just loves operating the vessel so we have no problem with operating the vessel.

CHAIR—Are you enjoying what you are doing?

Mr McCarthy—Yes, we love what we are doing. It is just, as I said, the bills side and doing all this other stuff that gets you down a bit, when you get behind with tax and BAS statements at certain times of the year.

CHAIR—You are probably on to the next question—what was the toughest thing, and I think you have told me that. I think it is the bookwork which drives us all a bit mad. Could I dare to ask about the GST and the BAS statements or anything like that?

Mr McCarthy—We just send most of the paperwork down to our accountant.

CHAIR—Like a lot of us.

Mr McCarthy—Yes. So we prepare everything and I do all the books—income, outgoings, receipts and all the bills and put them in the computer and, along with the BAS statement, just fax it to the accountant and he does that.

CHAIR—Yes, thanks for that.

Mr McCarthy—I would like to maybe get the young sister to do a TAFE computer course and hopefully get her to do all the BAS statements—keep the money in the family.

CHAIR—Yes. For 10 years I confessed to an ambition for Aboriginal people—that is, the government putting enough emphasis on opportunity and persuading people that there were benefits and, as you say, hopefully getting a bit of a reward for doing something you like doing and managing it in a way which contributes to your community. A viable business in the community strengthens your community and all that stuff. How many opportunities do you reckon are out there? There are a few opportunities out there for others in other businesses and that sort of thing. Do many people want to take it on?

Mr McCarthy—There is a certain limit on what you can do, I suppose. You do not want to run the risk of having too many boat operators doing a similar thing up here, for a start. You do not want to cut each other's throat. I think there are other opportunities, and probably in the major communities, for an aquaculture industry, like what is happening at One Arm Point. I was a councillor and chair when that started up. That is a great opportunity there for the community to do something. We have a successful aquaculture centre. I do not know if you have seen it; I think you are going over to have a look at it.

CHAIR—We are, yes.

Mr McCarthy—It was a pilot program to initially start up the multispecies hatchery in town and it is quite successful.

Mr E. Hunter—There is probably a protocol where individual Aboriginals like Vincent, Phil and me do not want to cross each other's path—we do not want to compete against each other. We make a decision that, okay, we are going to do this thing. Vincent runs his camping and crabbing tours. We are not going to compete with that.

CHAIR—No.

Mr E. Hunter—Phillip runs his boat charter. If someone comes in and we say, 'No, hang on, this young chap is doing it—him and his family—leave it, let it stay.' I run my business, I am hoping that the rest of us will all communicate together to make it a better understanding and business-wise that we are not stepping on each other's toes. I have had a lot of people approach me about various things, such as running other charter boats, and I said, 'No, the boys are doing it; you take your money and your partnership away.'

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr E. Hunter—The dinghies are the scope for me to expand—put more dinghies in Kooljaman—but there is also the problem of tourists who are bringing in their own dinghies. It is going to create a problem for us in the future—not specifically me financially but it will probably create a problem with Kooljaman. We have had five or four accidents where people are bringing in undersized dinghies and they do not know the waters or the weather—they know nothing about this country. We have had to bail out a few people up there and it is very

dangerous. If they do not have the size boat that I have, they are in trouble. Kooljaman is going to find it a little harder in the future.

If you are going to bitumise this road, we are going to be in a very big situation where you are going to have to put some rescue party out there. We had one bloke floating down there for about seven hours last year in a shark-infested area. If Kooljaman is allowing undersized dinghies to be brought in and if that guy had been eaten by a shark or something happened to him and he drowned, Kooljaman has a problem.

CHAIR—You have to know what you are doing.

Mr E. Hunter—His wife is probably going to sue Kooljaman—it is going to come.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr E. Hunter—We have two operations out of Kooljaman; we have a charter boat and a dinghy operation. You as a government have to stress really and truly that we can go out and help them but at the end of the day Kooljaman finds the problem. If one of the parties is going to start suing, Kooljaman may not have the money to pay them.

CHAIR—That is a good comment.

Mr JOHN COBB—Aboriginal people certainly seem to be much more family reliant and family orientated than most Australians are. Does that create problems in a business where you have to have a profit, you have to repay a loan and you might have family members expecting that they can share in it when they are not necessarily part of that business? Does that create any problems?

Mr E. Hunter—Not with me.

Mr McCarthy—You look after your family indirectly but not directly out of the business by making it more comfortable for them to live, I suppose. The condition we live in is not very good and the amount of finance we have goes to wages. You look after them indirectly because you look after them with a shelter, I suppose—a roof. Business-wise, from my point of view, the guys are working and they are going to get rewarded. I do not think I want to pay somebody else who is sitting back doing nothing. It will be the guys who are working; they are going to be rewarded. If a family member wants to be part of it or wants to get something, they have to come and help and be part of it.

CHAIR—Eric, did you want to add anything to that one?

Mr E. Hunter—I am a lot different to Phil Vincent—sole trading.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr E. Hunter—So I am saying I am just the one boss.

CHAIR—So you are pretty independent, yes. You mentioned, Phillip, that you are struggling to get people to work—deckies and things like that. You are battling to find people, is that right?

Mr McCarthy—We are okay this year but it was just battling to get on. The nephews and cousins that come to work—I suppose we spend a fair few hours out there—they just do not want to do it.

CHAIR—Are they on CDEP or something else?

Mr McCarthy—Everybody is on CDEP at the moment.

CHAIR—So do they see that as preferable to making more money? It would be more money, wouldn't it, working with you?

Mr McCarthy—Yes.

CHAIR—Yet you just cannot get them out there.

Mr McCarthy—I do not know, it is the system we are in currently. People in the Aboriginal society, unfortunately it is just—

CHAIR—The welfare dependency type of—

Mr McCarthy—Accepting CDEP as a wage. A lot of our mob unfortunately is not looking too far down the track. One day there probably will be no CDEP here.

Mr E. Hunter—One thing I might add is that earlier on Phil said that he is just breaking even.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr E. Hunter—When they have paid all their debts, I am pretty sure that when they start making a profit that is the way they will go by giving them more incentives to come and work there. I envisage that I would be doing the same things. Now that I have paid the business off, I would be looking to employ someone from my own family to come and help me and give me time off. Then I would say, 'Okay, you go down there; I will pay you so much per hour,' the same with any other business.

CHAIR—You reckon they would be in it?

Mr E. Hunter—Yes.

CHAIR—You reckon they would have a crack at it. In your memory, how many Aboriginal small businesses have there been, say, over the last 20 years in your area? Have there been many? Are you blokes the first? Are you amongst the first people to have a crack at it?

Mr McCarthy—Personal business, yes. Most of them were just community run businesses prior to this. We, along with Lombadina—it has been going for a long time—are probably the

first people who actually got up and did business for a family or an individual. So most of it was community run business.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. In other words, you are breaking new ground here.

Mr McCarthy—Basically, yes. We want to reward ourselves, I suppose.

CHAIR—Yes. There is a question that we keep coming back to. We are a little hesitant because we do not want to be critical of Aboriginal people but we also have to face it that we are a bit concerned about, as many Aboriginal people are, this entrenched welfare approach. Do you have anything to offer in terms of CDEP? Couldn't we give a stronger incentive to get people away from what we call sit-down money? Couldn't we do a bit more there?

Mr McCarthy—The CDEP is not big enough for a start. The wage you are getting on CDEP is only $213 a week.

CHAIR—You have to get that incentive.

Mr McCarthy—Yes, so you have to give them an incentive. The incentive, I believe, is to invest in industries within the communities. You have to look at industries that are going to be viable for that area. I go back to One Arm Point again—that hatchery there. That hatchery has the potential to employ probably 100 people on award wages. We had people from ATSIC come up. The state government have spent four point something on a multispecies hatchery in town but they have never thrown any money back into this community where these multispecies should be helping.

We are in the process of doing a feasibility study and will probably go into a business venture there. We are successfully spawning trochus shells and tropical abalone and we have barramundi in there. I think that the government have to look for industries that are viable within that area, so aquaculture is ideal for here, for a start. Maybe we could have a tree planting organisation with a big timber company down south. We have the land up here as well to do all that and we probably have the water. We also probably need a European manager for a certain time to look after this business for a start because, as I said, a lot of the guys are not educated enough to do the business side of it. We have a great bloke now at the hatchery—Barry. He will manage the hatchery properly. But, yes, we can only do so much in this peninsula because all you can do out here is tourism, and mainly that is it. Tourism is the main income outside your local handout, I suppose—your handout mentality.

CHAIR—I agree with you about the competition and not cutting each other's throats; we all in small business understand that. But there is no reason why there could not be much stronger business development and with reasonable employment prospects with a decent wage?

Mr McCarthy—If people come out and assist us with funding, I believe that it will work.

CHAIR—It has to be better than CDEP?

Mr McCarthy—It would have to be better than CDEP. CDEP is just sit-down money. You can survive on it but you cannot own anything on CDEP. You live day-to-day on CDEP, and that is just food, nothing else.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr McCarthy—Yes, we definitely need more business up here. I think there are a lot of opportunities up here for business to start if we look at the right business.

CHAIR—And that is it. Gentlemen, thank you very much. Vincent, did you want to add anything at all?

Mr Angus—I don't think so.

CHAIR—Eric, is there anything that you would like to add?

Mr E. Hunter—Only one thing: the enterprise body in Broome that handle the Aboriginal side of it, loans and grants and that, should simplify their application because their application duplicates what they are asking. They ask too many of the same questions. Whether it is a corporation or an individual applying for a loan or a grant, those questions are way overboard. If they can simplify that, maybe that will encourage people like me to apply. There are too many questions in there—for example, 'are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?' We all know that we are but we know that has to be filled in. There are a lot of other issues that we have to answer. If they simplify those questions, a person like me, Phillip or Vincent who already have a business running will be able to go and see them. I am not going to go and see them for a loan or a grant; I would rather go to the bank.

CHAIR—Yes, I understand; I have done the same thing myself.

Mr E. Hunter—It takes me three months to get a loan from that particular party and it takes me about three weeks or two weeks to get a loan from the bank. It is as simple as that.

CHAIR—Eric, thank you. As I have said, it is my fault for disturbing you and getting you to come over—I apologise for that—but I appreciate listening to you and acknowledging what I see as very much part of the future of Australia and of your own region. You blokes probably do not see it like that—you are just having a go and getting on with it—but I want to thank you for that and for taking the trouble to come here this afternoon.

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

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 2.04 p.m.