

Oral submission

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10 February 2009

Bureaucracy

The Western Australian and Commonwealth governments are making an effort to shift to greater community engagement and the policies that are being developed are great in theory. However, my experience on the ground and in practice is that the bureaucrats delivering the programs at the local level aren't changing and are going about business as usual. It seems that they are autonomous from Perth.

There was a program called Strong Families which was supposed to reduce the silo effect between government programs however in practice families and parents are still slipping through the cracks and there is little effort to work with the parents to improve their situation.

The people living in Kununurra have all of the necessary services supposedly available to them yet there is still little real assistance for people because of the attitude and practices of the government workers there.

There have been some reports of government workers in positions dealing with alcohol and drug abuse themselves users and/or heavy drinkers which does not give a very good impression. In the mining sector there are random drug tests and it should also be so for government workers. It would also help if there was better screening of employees before they are employed as many are not suitable for their positions.

There also needs to be more evaluations of government programs to make sure that the correct policies are being implemented. There also needs to be some repercussions when performance standards are not met.

Cultural Awareness

Although there are many common issues between Indigenous people it needs to be better acknowledged that it is a diverse race and there are many different ways of doing things.

The cultural awareness training in Kununurra is provided by people flown in from Perth and who are not local people. This means that the training

provided is not well tailored to each different community. For example people who have undergone this training were not advised of the importance of silence when speaking to the elders in the region, and sometimes it can be up to 5 minutes before the elder answers the question. This is very important to know in this region.

There are also people in Kununurra with the skills to deliver the training but they have never been asked to provide such training.

Education

There are programs running to reduce truancy and get kids back to school but there needs to be more support in schools to support the kids returning to school after a long period of absence. They need this support to get up to speed so they can follow what is going on in class and reduce their disruptive behaviour which is a result of them not understanding.

It is a good idea to use computer programs such as those delivered by Kinetic Education when kids first return to school to assist them to get up to speed and re-engage with education as the program remembers their level and where they were up to and is able to assist them to learn what they have missed out on. Once these kids are up to mainstream level they can return to class and are then able to follow the classes better and learn.

The use of such a computer program also means that different age groups can be in the class together as the teacher is there to facilitate and assist with the programs and not teach specific lessons.

This is a good tool to help kids get back into a proper classroom as education is like a brick in the wall and if you miss some of the bricks then your foundation is unstable.