COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Reference: Administration of Indigenous Affairs

TUESDAY, 20 JULY 2004

ALICE SPRINGS

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard**

To search the parliamentary database, go to:
http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au

SENATE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Tuesday, 20 July 2004

Members: Senator Crossin *(Chair)*, Senator Johnston *(Deputy Chair)*, Senators Heffernan, McLucas, Nettle, O'Brien, Ridgeway and Scullion

Senators in attendance: Senators Crossin, Johnston, McLucas, Nettle, O'Brien and Scullion

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

(a) the provisions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004;

(b) the proposed administration of Indigenous programs and services by mainstream departments and agencies; and

(c) related matters

WITNESSES

ANDERSON, Ms Alison, Regional Councillor and Central Zone Commissioner, Central Remote Regional Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 47

BELL, Ms Stephanie, Director, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress 21

DICKSON, Mrs Belle Nakamarra, Strong Women Strong Babies Strong Culture, Yuendumu Women's Centre 1

DODDS, Ms Patricia, Lhere Artepe 67

FLEMING, Ms Rosie Nungala, Senior Elder, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre 1

GRIFFIN, Mr Michael Paul, Representative, Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs 67

GROTH, Ms Maureen, Coordinator, Yuendumu Women's Centre 1

GUY, Ms Delia Elizabeth, Head of Division, Independent Living, Anglicare Northern Territory 38

HOOSAN, Ms Eileen, Key Spokesperson, Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs 67

JOHNSON, Miss Gracie Napangardi, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre 1

KNOWLES, Ms Vicki-Lee, Policy Officer, Central Remote Regional Council, Indigenous Coordination Centre Alice Springs 47

LOADES, Ms Rhonda, Deputy Regional Manager, Indigenous Coordination Centre Alice Springs 47

McNAMARA, Mr Ronnie, Council Member and Night Patrol Member, Laramba Community Inc. 1

MONAGHAN, Mr Michael, Community Manager and Community Development Employment Projects Coordinator, Laramba Community Inc. 1

ROGERS, Mr Desmond William (Private capacity) 16

ROSEWARNE, Mr Clive, Research and Policy Officer, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress 21

SKINNER, Ms Patricia Mary, House Manager, Disability Services, Anglicare Northern Territory 38

STAFFORD, Mr Peter, Council Member and Night Patrol Member, Laramba Community Inc. 1

TURNER, Mr (Private capacity) 84

WALKER, Ms Jennifer, Remote Area Night Patrol Coordinator, Tangentyere Remote Area Night Patrol 1

WILSON, Miss Barbara Nakamarra, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre 1

WILSON, Ms Georgina Nakamarra, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre 1

Committee met at 9.32 a.m.

McNAMARA, Mr Ronnie, Council Member and Night Patrol Member, Laramba Community Inc.

MONAGHAN, Mr Michael, Community Manager and Community Development Employment Projects Coordinator, Laramba Community Inc.

STAFFORD, Mr Peter, Council Member and Night Patrol Member, Laramba Community Inc.

WALKER, Ms Jennifer, Remote Area Night Patrol Coordinator, Tangentyere Remote Area Night Patrol

DICKSON, Mrs Belle Nakamarra, Strong Women Strong Babies Strong Culture, Yuendumu Women's Centre

FLEMING, Ms Rosie Nungala, Senior Elder, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre

GROTH, Ms Maureen, Coordinator, Yuendumu Women's Centre

JOHNSON, Miss Gracie Napangardi, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre

WILSON, Miss Barbara Nakamarra, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre

WILSON, Ms Georgina Nakamarra, Women's Night Patrol, Yuendumu Women's Centre

CHAIR—I call the committee to order and declare open this public meeting of the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs in Alice Springs today. This is the second hearing in the committee's inquiry, and there are plans to hold further hearings and discussions around Australia over the next few months. This inquiry focuses on the government's proposal to make major changes to institutional structures in respect of the administration of Indigenous affairs in Australia, with particular reference to the abolition of ATSIC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

I welcome the witnesses. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but if at any time you have some evidence that you would like to give us in private—that is, with no other people around—you can ask the committee to do that. That is called going in camera. It is a private session of the committee. If the committee agrees to that, your evidence would be given without anybody else in the room listening to it. However, I want to point out that, if you do that, sometimes that evidence might be made public if the Senate decides that that must be the case. If you would like to tell us a little bit about why you are here and what you have to say to us, please do so. After that, we will have the opportunity to ask you questions.

Mr McNamara—I will start off with the native title job interviewers. When we started, we had been working in the Laramba community for many years and battling pretty hard. We kept

the community quiet and safe: no problems, no drinking, no ganga, no anything. We tried to look after the old people and lead the young people towards being good and sound.

A worry from our point of view is the Anmatjere government council. A few times we asked for many things, but nothing happened. We have been asking the Anmatjere government council to help the Laramba community council and the community itself, but nothing much has happened. With the night patrol money, the Anmatjere government council set up the Ti Tree development but it did not give us anything. We are still waiting for that, but I do not know how long it will take for them to give us that money back. That is as much as I will say for now.

CHAIR—Does anyone else want to say something?

Mr Monaghan—As Ronnie McNamara said, there are many problems that are peculiar to remote communities. One of them is the isolation and the issue of communication with mainstream government departments. As Ronnie said on page 7 of his document, which I believe you have, there have been problems over the years with the Anmatjere local government community council, which is supposed to be providing all manner of services to Laramba, from aged care to community management.

I believe in the last four years there have been nine CEOs up there. So the system does not work, in the sense that the community then have to struggle to negotiate with external departments to get appropriate funding which is due to them. These communities are not asking for anything over and above what they are entitled to.

I believe in the last four years there have been nine CEOs up there. So the system does not work, in the sense that the communities then have to struggle to negotiate with external departments to get appropriate funding which is due to them. These communities are not asking for anything over and above what they are entitled to.

So there are certainly many problems that need to be resolved there, and I think the way the government has gone about dismantling ATSIS to begin with has left communities not knowing where they are. It has left the management of the communities not knowing where they are. We have had some correspondence from DEWR regarding CDEP and how that is going to be run, but there has been very little communication from any of the other departments taking up the other areas that affect the community—such as sport and rec, BRACS, community management and all these other issues. I think not informing the community is not the correct way to go about business. It is their community. To arbitrarily dismantle a system, with very little conversation with the people who will be affected, certainly does not bode well for the future. There are problems that are inherent to community life and they affect all communities within the region. If this is the track the government is going to go down, it will make it extremely difficult when a community is left with little resources to manage itself.

Laramba community has a population of approximately 330 and to this stage the community has to do its best to resolve all the issues that affect any community within Australia. There are many issues that I would like the men to speak to you about—not only issues to do with the night patrol but those relating to aged care and different things like that. We have had discussions with the Territory government and the federal government regarding aged care. We spent one day, for instance, on that issue alone. We were told, after we found the appropriate

advertisement in the paper and applied for funding, that there were two places available and two years down the track we may or may not get funding.

So the communities face problems that they need help with, but the communities can on their own cope with some of these problems as well. But we certainly need an interaction. So there are definitely issues at hand but I believe the situation with the management at this stage at Laramba is unsure. My wife handles the financial side of things and the administration and I do everything else. That situation will be for another six months as far as I know. After that, who knows? There certainly needs to be a little more.

CHAIR—For people who are not from the Territory, can you tell us where your community is situated from Alice Springs, so we have an idea.

Mr Monaghan—Approximately 230 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs, so on the edge of the Tanami.

CHAIR—Night patrol is funded by ATSIC at the moment?

Mr Monaghan—Last year's budget carries over for that. So the budget we put in for this financial year will support the night patrol. But after that, next financial year's budget, I am not sure who is picking up the cost for that. I believe it is FaCS.

CHAIR—So you have not heard from the agency that will be responsible for night patrol yet?

Mr Monaghan—No. The only people we have heard from are DEWR, who are doing the CDEP now. I had a meeting in Alice Springs approximately two weeks ago and they are at a loss to know where they are because things have happened so quickly—with little consultation I believe—and things have just been handballed across from ATSIS. We are having all these different government departments now trying to cope with a program that they have had nothing to do with before. It is totally strange to them. Many of the departments may not have dealt with Aboriginal communities in remote areas, which, as I said, have their own inherent problems. It is different from being in the city dealing with Aboriginal people, because our access to facilities is limited and also the understanding of someone who lives in a city is different. Their idea of community life or settlement life might be totally different.

CHAIR—How many people do you have on CDEP in the night patrol?

Mr Monaghan—In total, we have 39 CDEP members at Laramba, but four of those are apprentices under the IHANT building training scheme and four are at Ampilatwatja—three are apprentices and one is a CDEP worker there. So the balance of the work force at Laramba is divided between the women and the men. We perform all of the tasks in the community, be it R and M, rubbish collection—anything to do with maintaining the community and keeping it in good condition. With respect to the night patrol members, not all of them are paid. Ronnie McNamara is a volunteer on the night patrol. We are only allotted a certain number of positions, so if we have more people who are willing to work they go on a waiting list and they cannot work until a position becomes available. That in itself can cause problems. You can have somebody being paid sit-down money who wants to work. The whole idea of the program is to

develop the community—to employ people and make the community work. The people in the community are the ones that need those jobs.

Senator SCULLION—I direct my first question to Mr Monaghan. In November 2002 I understand there was an ATSIC review conducted by Jackie Huggins, Bob Collins and John Hannaford, at the request of the then Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Mr Philip Ruddock. Can you recall being consulted about issues associated with ATSIC and program delivery at that stage?

Mr Monaghan—Not to my knowledge. It would have been prior to my time at Laramba, so I am not privy to that information. From what I have seen since I have been at Laramba, with respect to services and communication from different departments, it is an extremely long-winded and convoluted process. It seems to take a long time to access or get information from different government departments. Staffing is limited at the community level. As I said, it is just my wife and me. Even though we are employed to perform certain roles, we are expected to perform roles for Centrelink and various other departments, whether it be the courts, the police or whoever. All of these things are done at the community level with little assistance from a lot of these areas. So quite an amount of time can be taken up in performing duties other than those that we are paid to carry out. But, to answer your question, no, I am not privy to that information.

Senator SCULLION—Perhaps you could provide a couple of pieces of information on notice. You may not be able to provide the answers today, but it may be useful for the committee to know what the current population is and what the break-up is of males, females and children. If you do not have those figures today, I am quite happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr Monaghan—The population of Laramba is approximately 330. We have 90 children who attend school. I am not sure of the figures for the break-up of the balance of the population. We have in the community a number of elderly people with special needs. They need aged care from the appropriate agencies. With respect to the ratio of men to women, I am not sure, but I can supply you with the figures.

Senator SCULLION—With respect to the principal challenges I am hearing from the community, from the submissions of both Ronnie McNamara and yourself, aged care seems to be a challenge and the need is currently not being met. You believe that some of those issues are associated with poor communication. You seem to be saying that the process is not giving you the outcomes or level of security that you require.

Mr Monaghan—Yes, that is right. There have been difficulties with Anmatjere council. I had a meeting with the CEO of Anmatjere council approximately 12 months ago. He has since left. There are questions about his performance at Anmatjere. At the time there were many promises made. Despite repeated requests to Anmatjere for the services that they are to provide for the Laramba community, none of these services were forthcoming. A temporary CEO was put in place, and we now have a CEO who has taken up that position for three years. I truly hope the funding, which I believe is $6 million and covers nine communities, is forthcoming from Anmatjere and that they give the services they are supposed to be providing to the communities. Until now the only way that the Laramba community has been able to function has been through the CDEP program, by using CDEP workers to do all the maintenance. The rubbish collection

and all the things that need to be done in the community have been performed through that program and through moneys we have been able to get from ATSIS. Up until this stage, any moneys and requests that we were making to Anmatjere have not been forthcoming.

There are many issues that impact upon the health of people at Laramba. I believe the health of people at Laramba is directly impacted upon by the lack of support in areas that mainstream Australia would take for granted. That is something that needs to be addressed. So far this year we have seen, on average, one death every month, and they have all been because of health-related issues, through lack of support. We have an issue at the moment with the department of health. They are saying to us that we need to transport people to town for hospitalisation or treatment. The community does not have the money to do that. We do not have the resources to do that. We do not have the money to maintain the vehicles to do that. Either fortunately or unfortunately, I am a motor mechanic by trade. I try to teach the men to do as much of the maintenance and repairs as they can, because we just do not have the money to maintain the vehicles to the standard they should be at.

Senator SCULLION—How long do you think those circumstances have existed?

Mr Monaghan—When I first came to Laramba with my wife, she was given the job as the administration officer for a period of six weeks. I went to Laramba and I was told at the time no work needed to be done at Laramba. I accepted that. I was quite happy to go out there with my wife and do whatever. When I got there, I was disgusted with the conditions that were there. At the time there were a number of houses—

Senator SCULLION—Can you remember when that was? What year was that?

Mr Monaghan—It was probably June 2003. When I arrived there were a number of houses—there were seven or more—without any hot water, without running water, without electricity and a whole range of basic services. The people at Laramba are paying rent for these homes and I believe anyone who pays rent for a house should have the right to have these problems rectified quickly—and I believe that is the law.

We are talking about the basics of life. There was a range of problems. There were extension cords running across roads from one house to another because the power was not on. When I first went there I did not know these people and they looked at me as being another white fella coming in and telling them what to do. I did not want to do that. Jillery Dixon is the traditional landowner there. He came to me after a couple of weeks, during which time people would not talk to me—they did not talk to me for at least two or three weeks until they got to know me a little bit—and he said to me, 'I haven't got a kitchen sink.' I went over to his house and had a look inside. He did not have a kitchen sink, and he did not have a kitchen bench. I asked him, 'How long have you been asking for this in your house?' and he said, 'Four and a half years.'

I rang ATSIS and voiced my concerns, and they asked me to do what I could within a six-week period. I am also a licensed building supervisor. So I said I would do what I could in that period of time. So we did what we could. I bucked a bit at the prices that people in town wanted to charge. For a kitchen bench, for instance, which was a very basic stainless steel sink set—no doors, no drawers, just two shelves—the price was $4,500. At the time we were not receiving any money from Anmatjere, who are responsible for the R and M. So the men and I built the

kitchen bench, refurbished the house, repainted it inside and outside and fitted new windows, and we did all these things at a cost of approximately $10,000.

There are many issues where I believe there is either a mismanagement of money in the communities or there are outside service providers who believe that they have the right to charge what they please, and that is a practice that needs to stop. The people at Laramba community are paying rent, have paid rent, and they are entitled to the services that are due them—and it should happen without procrastination on the part of other departments.

Senator SCULLION—Do you think that other communities within the jurisdiction of the Anmatjere Council find themselves in the same circumstances, or do you think there are other communities which, by dint of location or whatever other circumstances, are in a better position?

Mr Monaghan—I believe that Laramba community is the better community out of all of the communities that come under the auspices of Anmatjere Council. I have seen some of the others, and the conditions are appalling to say the least. I believe it leaves the people with a feeling of hopelessness when they can see nothing happening. If you keep asking long enough and you keep getting told long enough, then you will just sit down, you will get depressed, and I believe all these problems that they face lead to further problems within the communities—alcoholism, drug use, violence and things like that.

Senator SCULLION—Does this community have a representative on the Anmatjere Council? Do they feel that they are well represented on the decision making body?

Mr Monaghan—Peter Stafford is a member of the Anmatjere Council, and Stephen Briscoe is too. There are inherent difficulties in a council that is run under white man's law per se. The men and women who attend that council from various communities are often reluctant to speak up. They do not have an understanding of the process as such, so issues that need to be raised with council are often not raised and then it is up to the council CEO to make a decision, which may be a personal decision, as to what he does with respect to the councillors. So there is a definite need for training and ongoing training to enable the council members to be able to stand up and speak. A lot of the community members are quite reticent and quite shy about coming forward and speaking. They do not have the skills that we have. Their lifestyle is totally different from ours, and their needs and wants are quite different from ours. Even though the way they do things may seem strange to white Australians it does not mean that it is not a good way of doing things. But we need to sit back and listen to what they have to say. Rather than doing what we want, we need to listen to what they want and need—and their demands are not unreasonable.

Senator McLUCAS—I was wondering if the ladies could tell us what they know about ATSIC and whether they know the government is going to stop ATSIC as we know it. I am wondering what you think about that, ladies.

Ms Groth—The ladies have asked me to speak for them. Yuendumu is quite a large community. It is the largest of the Walpiri communities, with about 1,500 people. We are 300 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs in the Tanami Desert. Alice Springs is our nearest town. We run quite a few services from the women's centre, such as the women's night patrol, which has been going for 10 years, and the strong women, strong babies, strong culture program, which

looks after children who are underweight and also keeps the cultural aspects going. We run several other children's programs.

Because the women are quite unsettled as to the funding in the future for the night patrol, they have gone into business for themselves. Fairly recently they have opened an op-shop to try and earn some money so they are not totally dependent on government dollars. It is a matter of pride to them to stand on their own two feet. It is only subsidising the program; it will never raise enough money to fully pay their own way. But they are extremely proud women, and very hardworking women. They get paid $40 a week for working at night. It is extremely hard. It is a cross between security guard and police work. It involves wresting keys from hoons who are driving around town, dealing with men who are intoxicated and assisting, when asked, with family mediation when there is family fighting going on. It is a very dangerous job.

The women have heard that there is a government push to put funding in a central area—like, perhaps, a community council—and are concerned about this. We are an Aboriginal corporation in our own right. The women's centre was set up because councils tend to be dominated by men and the women just did not have a say. The centre not only runs programs for women but also helps women keep in contact with their families in other areas and keep in touch with Centrelink—because they do not always understand what is happening with Centrelink. We do have a Centrelink office, but some women—because of skin relationships—cannot go there so they depend on the women's centre for that.

A lot of the old ladies do not speak English at all, and it is very difficult. So they rely on the women's centre. Their worry is that if the money is always given to the council the women's centre will cease to exist. We exist only because of the funding that comes through the women's centre. If the funding goes elsewhere, we just will not exist and it will be a big loss.

CHAIR—Just help us here: did you get your funding from the ATSIC regional councils?

Ms Groth—Only some of it. We get two lots of funding from NT Health and one lot from ATSIC.

Ms Walker—Yuendumu Women's Centre was the only one in this region that survived the withdrawal of funding for women's centres in remote areas. ATSIC withdrew the funding seven or eight years ago now. Yuendumu Women's Centre, through the programs that they run, are the only women's centre in this region that survived.

Senator McLUCAS—Could you explain to me the amount of money that the night patrol or the women's centre get from ATSIC? Do you know how much you get from ATSIC for your operations?

Ms Groth—We get $20,000 a year. We were getting $38,000 but it was cut back across the board because they needed to fund other night patrols. It has not been enough to operate effectively, so we have had to look around for other funding and go into business to keep the night patrol afloat.

Senator McLUCAS—Can you tell me how much other funding comes into the women's centre itself from ATSIC, not just the night patrol money?

Ms Groth—We do not get any other funding. That is the only ATSIC funding we get. The women's centre has not had a very happy relationship with ATSIC. The field officer who was coming out upset the women in some way, and they banned her from coming to the women's centre after that. She was not respectful.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you very much for coming. It is a long way.

Senator NETTLE—Maybe Jenny is the person who could answer this question. You said that this was the only women's centre that continued to get funding after changes happened seven to eight years ago. Could you tell us how many women's centres existed at that time and no longer have funding available? How many were there that missed out, given that this was the only one that got funding?

Ms Walker—They did not get funding from ATSIC. They did not continue to get funding from ATSIC. They managed to continue operations because they had other programs running.

Senator NETTLE—Where did they get funding from?

Ms Walker—They got funding from various departments. They had nutrition programs and aged care programs and things running through the women's centre that meant that they were able to continue operations. They were also a separately incorporated body, which made a lot of difference because they could get funding in their own right. When ATSIC withdrew the women's centre funding, it was funding for family resource centres. There is an organisation in town that had to reincorporate and change its name. It delivers remote area services. It is now called Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation, and it used to be a family resource centre. All the other women's centres that had been set up in communities with the family resource centre funding collapsed. The women thereby lost their particular domains within those communities and lost any sort of access to resources. Generally, the resources that do make it out to remote communities are nabbed by the most powerful people in the communities and the women are shut out. These women have done very well in managing to keep the women's centre going, going into business for themselves and being so enterprising.

Senator NETTLE—How many women's centres collapsed because they did not get that funding?

Ms Walker—Somewhere between 12 and 15.

Senator NETTLE—Is the basis of the concerns of the women at this centre—about which I think Maureen was speaking before—that, if the funding goes to the council, they may not be able to continue the work they do?

Ms Walker—If they lose their status as a separately incorporated body then they lose the two buildings they have control over—the women's centre and the coordinator's house—and they will also lose the vehicles. Vehicles are very highly prized. Once the vehicles go, that removes the entire resource base of the women. They have been able to keep going so long and so well because, with all the administrative ups and downs at Yuendumu—the times when there has not been a council clerk, when there has been a fairly poor quality council clerk or when there has been someone who was not really interested in women's issues—their status as a separately

incorporated body means they have been able to continue to provide a service for the women. They have developed a safe house proposal. They were all sorts of dramas with that—the council got the money for the building but still expects the women to do the work. They all work as volunteers; none of them are paid.

Senator NETTLE—I have a question for the women. Can you tell us what sorts of services or support you think the government should be providing, as a priority, to your community?

Miss B. Wilson—The most important things are payback and domestic violence. Payback has still being going on for nearly four years now. We are trying to stop people doing it. All the women are starting to get sick of people fighting over the royalties they get. But we cannot stop these things. Sometimes we get young girls as volunteers, but now we have no-one. The safe house is not fixed yet. We cannot put anyone in the women's centre, because it has no doors. We use our own houses to keep women from being hurt by their husbands. We also use our own houses for people on home detention. We have asked council for more houses with yards so that people can do their home detention there. They could work outside on CDEP and go back to their own house. We have people ringing us at about people who have to do home detention; we have no help for that. We have asked council for a couple of houses but they have not given us an answer on that. We also have kids who are hurt by their parents and have nowhere to say. We have asked old people—grandparents—to help us, but sometimes grandparents do not want to take them.

CHAIR—The committee is wondering whether it may be better if Mr Stafford and Mr McNamara talk to the male senators and the women talk to the female senators for a few minutes. Would you prefer that?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—Would you like the other people to go outside, or do you want them to listen?

Ms Walker—After discussing it, the women said that they do not mind if other people listen.

CHAIR—Thank you. The male members of the committee and the male witnesses will now go out and have a chat, and we will stay inside and talk to the women.

We just want to have a chat about changes. The federal government have decided to abolish ATSIC, and they are going to change the way that organisations and Indigenous people get their money. As members of the federal parliament, we have been asked to meet with and talk to people like yourselves to find out what you think about that. Do you think that it is a good thing, or should something different happen? We really want you to tell us your story. Tell us about what you think the changes will be. Do you think they will help you, or would you like to see it done in a different way?

Ms Fleming—It is good.

CHAIR—The changes are good?

Ms Fleming—Yes, I think so.

CHAIR—The funding for the Yuendumu Women's Resource Centre was cut when ATSIC lost some money many years ago and ATSIC made a decision to cut some funding.

Ms Fleming—We heard about that one.

CHAIR—Do you think the money should go to the departments and you get the money, or would you rather have the money given straight to your organisation?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—What would you like to see happen?

Miss B. Wilson—We would like to have our money going to our organisation—the women's centre—not the council. If it went through the council we probably would not see the half of it.

CHAIR—Are you a bit concerned that the moneys might go to the Yuendumu council?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—You would rather the money went straight to the women's resource centre?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes. Every time we have a meeting at the council the women do not get a say. The men always have the say.

CHAIR—When you got money from the ATSIC regional council before, what sort of money did you get? What was it for?

Miss B. Wilson—It was for the night patrol. She wanted to put money into the council for the women's night patrol and we argued with her. We said, 'We don't want any women's centre money going to the council. We will hardly see the money.'

CHAIR—So when you wanted money from ATSIC for the night patrol did you have to write a letter and say how much you wanted each year?

Miss B. Wilson—Our coordinator wrote letters to ATSIC.

CHAIR—And then ATSIC would decide how much you would get and then you would get the money for the night patrol from ATSIC?

Miss B. Wilson—The last time, a couple of months back, she said we were not able to get it. She kept writing and writing and in the end we got it.

CHAIR—Do you know why they said you might not be able to get it?

Miss B. Wilson—No. The field officer came out and was talking to the women. She started shaking her hands and she did not want to listen to the women. She hurt the feelings of these older women.

CHAIR—So under the new changes, instead of ATSIC having that money for the night patrol the federal government will give it to a government department. What do you think about that government department giving you the money? Do you think that ATSIC should still stay in place—that Aboriginal people should decide where the money is going to go and then you get it?

Miss B. Wilson—Dealing with government, sometimes we get upset by ATSIC. In the last few months we had a rough letter from ATSIC. The women invited the field officer to come out here.

CHAIR—You had a letter from ATSIC?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you remember what that said?

Miss B. Wilson—No.

Senator McLUCAS—At Yuendumu, do you have elections for your ATSIC regional council?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—I come from Cairns, and we have the Cape York regional council for all the people of Cape York—lots of communities. Can you tell me what happens in your area? How big is the regional council?

Ms Fleming—Very big.

Senator McLUCAS—How many people are from Yuendumu?

Ms G. Wilson—Just one.

Senator McLUCAS—When there is a problem with ATSIC, do you go and talk to that person?

Ms G. Wilson—No.

Miss B. Wilson—We talk to that person when the council meeting is on, but he just ignores us. They do not listen to us.

Senator McLUCAS—Is that because he is a man?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—We need a woman on the council.

Miss B. Wilson—Yes, we need a woman on the council.

Senator McLUCAS—The Labor Party is talking about having a woman's place on the councils because then there is always someone we can talk to.

Miss B. Wilson—We have two women on the council, but they do not listen to these two women.

Senator McLUCAS—Are they from Yuendumu?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—But they do not listen to the ladies?

Miss B. Wilson—They try to speak up.

Senator McLUCAS—What the government wants to do is to take away the voting for a regional councillor. I am worried that, if the government takes away the voting, you will not have anybody to talk to—even though you do not get on with that person now. That worries me, but that is my view. Do you think that is a good or a bad thing?

Miss B. Wilson—I think it is a bad thing to take people away. We need a person we can talk to—a person who listens.

CHAIR—If ATSIC were not around anymore, what do you think there should be? Have you thought about that?

Miss B. Wilson—The ladies are saying that it is only one person, a field officer, who they do not like.

CHAIR—So you thought ATSIC was a good thing?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—Why did you like ATSIC? What was good about it?

Ms Fleming—We are discussing this a lot between ourselves because this is the first meeting we have listened to about this.

CHAIR—This is the first time you have been asked about what will happen if there is no ATSIC?

Ms Fleming—Yes.

CHAIR—You need some time to think about what ought to come next.

Ms Fleming—Yes. This is the first time for all of this.

Mrs Dickson—The woman she was talking about was really rough.

CHAIR—There were problems with the staff that worked at ATSIC?

Ms Fleming—It was a white lady.

Senator NETTLE—What is your relationship like with the government departments that you have to deal with—for example, Centrelink, FaCS and those kinds of organisations? If ATSIC goes and you do not get to talk with ATSIC about your funding, maybe you will be talking with government departments. So you will be talking with Centrelink or the Department of Family and Community Services; you will be talking with government officials. What is it like for you to talk to Centrelink about getting money for the women or sorting out people's problems?

CHAIR—For example, you will have to talk to DEWR about the CDEP. What will that be like?

Ms Fleming—This is the first time we have had a big meeting, so we are discussing it amongst ourselves.

Senator NETTLE—Do you deal with Centrelink now?

Ms Fleming—We might, if we need something.

Senator NETTLE—Do you talk to Centrelink to help the women in your community understand what Centrelink is doing? When you talk to Centrelink, do you find them helpful or difficult?

Ms G. Wilson—They help us very well. When we help our people, we ring them up and they give us information.

Senator McLUCAS—When you ring up, what do you ring up? Is it a special phone number for people in remote communities?

Ms G. Wilson—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—That is good. Do they have Aboriginal people on the phone?

Ms G. Wilson—Yes, a couple do.

Senator McLUCAS—Is it better when you talk to an Aboriginal person?

Ms G. Wilson—Yes, women mostly.

Ms Fleming—Men are separate.

Senator McLUCAS—Do you like it better when you talk to a woman?

Ms G. Wilson—Yes.

Ms Fleming—Sometimes when we talk about others at a meeting men get angry. We have been doing a lot of work—Barbara, Gina, Gracie and me. We work together on night patrol with the children and with the families. The first and second time we did people who were petrol sniffing. We did a lot of work with grog and things, but now it is a lot better because we have done a lot of work. We had no sleep. Barbara here was driving. It was a lot of work, but it is finished now. It is people sneaking drink in. The petrol sniffers are too dangerous—burning—but we did a lot. There is a night patrol that is working on finishing that.

CHAIR—So you have been able to work and get rid of the petrol sniffing?

Ms Fleming—It was everything. One house burnt. There was a man burning.

CHAIR—What is the secret? Why has it been so successful? What have you done so that petrol sniffing has finished there?

Ms G. Wilson—We used all the organisations like shops and schools.

Ms Fleming—We had all the mothers and friends dropping in. That is why we did a lot. Not only the night patrol did all the work and finished it.

CHAIR—So the whole community decided they were going to work on this together.

Ms Fleming—Yes. Everyone was worried for our children. That is why we did a lot and finished it—it was too dangerous. That is why we did night patrol work. Men and women together did a lot of work on grog and sniffing. We go around now at 12 o'clock, finishing all the people. We take them to their mothers or fathers. There are too many kids playing out late; we take them to their mothers and fathers.

Senator McLUCAS—Do you make the mother and father responsible? When you take the child to the mother and father, what do you do then?

Ms Fleming—We stop them drinking a little bit—slowly. Petrol is dangerous.

Mrs Dickson—It finished a lot of the time. There is a lot of petrol sniffing.

Ms Fleming—We did a lot of work.

Mrs Dickson—They make a mess as well.

Ms Fleming—Now, anyway the night patrol is finishing and doing all the work. Men and women work together but now it is a little bit quiet. Grog is coming; it is sneaking from Alice Springs.

CHAIR—Before we finish is there one last thing you need to tell us or that you think we need to know? Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Miss B. Wilson—On 1 July or 2 July they got the kids' money.

CHAIR—The $600?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes. It has been terrible for mothers. The fathers go drinking and kids and mothers are being left without money because the husbands took all the money. There has been domestic violence through that.

CHAIR—So when people got the $600 all at once it was not a good thing for the community?

Mrs Dickson—That is right. Grandmothers look after the kids because mothers and fathers take the money for grog.

CHAIR—Is it better if that money is paid in little bits over time?

Ms Fleming—Yes. There was too much money for the kids' money. It is causing this right here.

Miss B. Wilson—We have jail people ringing up me and Gina asking to have people in home detention. And we have no home detention houses. Women and men have home detention in settlement.

CHAIR—In the courts?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—If the court says you can do home detention you cannot do that? Is it hard to do in your community?

Miss B. Wilson—I had two blokes in two years for home detention. I had no room for my other family. I had one call this month but I said, 'No.' I had no room.

Senator NETTLE—It is hard for you to be responsible for people who are on home detention?

Miss B. Wilson—Yes. We try to ask the council for two or three houses.

Ms Fleming—Home detention is a lot of trouble.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for taking the time to come in today.

Miss B. Wilson—Thank you for inviting us.

CHAIR—We really appreciate that.

Proceedings suspended from 10.43 a.m. to 10.55 a.m.

Evidence was then taken in camera, but later resumed in public—

[11.15 a.m.]

ROGERS, Mr Desmond William (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Rogers—I am the chair of the Alice Springs regional council but, as you know, I am here speaking as an individual.

CHAIR—Let us first deal with the formalities. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but, if at any time you want to give your evidence, part of your evidence or any answers to specific questions in camera, you just need to ask the committee for that to occur and if we agree to that we will facilitate it. I want to point out, however, that evidence that is taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate, so the Senate can actually require it to be made public. If we ask you to take questions on notice or find out further information for us we would ask that you try and get that back to us within a time frame of about a month. You may want to start with a briefing. At the end of that we will go to questions.

Mr Rogers—I would like to thank the committee for allowing me to come along today to speak. I have a written submission and I have a copy for the committee, but I would like to read from it, if that is okay. The purpose of this submission is to briefly outline my concerns with regard to the governance model that will eventually replace the former ATSIC structure. I wish to focus on a few inherent difficulties associated with the service delivery, particularly to grassroots Indigenous people in the urban, rural and remote regions.

My first concern is Indigenous partnership in Indigenous programs. This submission does not imply that I oppose the abolishment of ATSIC as put before the Senate because there may well be an opportunity in mainstreaming for improved outcomes and service delivery. Mainstreaming is the government's new way of doing business. However, I am concerned that there would be less opportunity for Indigenous people to participate in the delivery of Indigenous programs and services. This may have a negative impact on transparency and achieving positive outcomes. My first comment to the committee is therefore that, in the new structure of government mechanisms, there need to be mechanisms in place to ensure that appropriate forms of Indigenous participation are adequately maintained. As yet these mechanisms are not clear to me.

My next concern is control of cash and control of money on the ground. Indigenous programs often fail on the ground where there is a capacity for individual community members or the governing council to handle money relating to the program. For example, a program aimed at women's health may have the best of intentions and be based on local need. However, if these program funds are able to be controlled by individuals within the community, in my experience it is almost always the case that funds will be utilised in the self-interest of the individuals or the governing council at the expense of the wider community. These people are able to get away with the selfish plunder of programs, generated resources and opportunities under the guise of self-determination. In my opinion, this is because of weak bureaucrats' reluctance to step in

and/or sheer cultural bullying amongst other members of the community. This control of cash should remain squarely outside of community self-interest. How will the government ensure that these cultural gatekeepers do not prevail within the new arrangements?

As to adequate representation across the community, appropriately, the point of contact for individuals delivering government programs within Aboriginal communities is the administrator or the town council clerk, who is the actual front desk of governing councils within the community. A good administrator or clerk will ensure that all information reaches the governing council, and a good governing council should ensure that all information is then delivered to the appropriate sectors of the wider community. This, however, does not always occur. Therefore, despite elected representation, community members on the ground often do not have a direct input into Indigenous programs that affect them. In some places, this practice has become entrenched. To avoid the occurrence of administrative gatekeeping, government programs need to rigorously ensure that the appropriate community members are consulted.

One of the more successful models of community participation in government programs is an example established through the Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council in New South Wales. This council encompasses a region that forms one of the pilot COAG, Council of Australian Governments, trials sites. Within the structure of the COAG experiment, a number of community working parties, CWPs, have been established. I attach to my submission a copy of the Murdi Paaki CWP for the select committee's perusal. The CWPs are made up of representatives that are specific to the program, and in this way government officials deal with a cross-section of relevant community members who are directly impacted upon by those programs.

This structure enables youths and other community members to be involved in the consultation with government and appears to be somewhat more flexible than the standard model of consulting with the administrator or town clerk as the main point of contact. I would suggest that the government examine the Murdi Paaki model with a view to encouraging a consultative model for government programs that is squarely directed at those who are relevant on the ground. I also attach a draft of a charter for the Murdi Paaki regional assembly, for your perusal as well.

Lastly, I would like to make a brief comment on the structure from which the new Indigenous voice will be heard. There are many proposed models out there put forward by politicians, land councils and Indigenous organisations eager to secure their own place in this brave new world. My principal observation is that the focus is mainly on money, power, influence and kudos rather than on an appropriate structure or an Indigenous voice. On this issue I simply draw to your attention the key principles and values for a national Indigenous representative body that were formulated by a wide range of informed fellow colleagues at the recent Indigenous leaders conference organised by Reconciliation Australia and the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre in Adelaide in June. They are:

- We the Indigenous People of Australia and we alone have the right to determine who represents us locally, regionally, nationally & internationally.
- We are determined to establish a sustainable independent National Indigenous Representative Body that reflects the aspirations and values of our peoples.
- The National Indigenous Representative Body needs to gain its legitimacy from our people.
- Any process to establish a National Indigenous Representative Body must acknowledge who we are, honour our diversity and commit to inclusive processes for all our people.
- Our National Indigenous Representative Body must be open, transparent and accountable to the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- We respect and are committed to the right of our peoples to make free and informed choices for them, their families and communities.
- We have an obligation to respect and protect our right to self-determination, our human rights, our humanity, our First Peoples' status and our inherent rights that flow from that status.
- We have a duty to pursue social justice & economic development for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Our duty is to leave a lasting legacy for our grandchildren's grandchildren.

That concludes my submission.

Senator McLUCAS—Mr Rogers, you were at the meeting held in Adelaide in June. Is that right?

Mr Rogers—That is right.

Senator McLUCAS—That seems to be a sort of overview of the structure that that group of people would like to present as an alternative model. Did it get down to the detail of how that national body could come together?

Mr Rogers—No, it did not actually get down to that detail, but I must point out that there was no comment saying that we did not need a national, regional or international voice. The majority of Indigenous people know and recognise that we do need an Indigenous voice. Whether that should be attached to government and constrained by government is another matter.

Senator McLUCAS—Do you want to elaborate on your views about how that national voice could be constructed?

Mr Rogers—I think that is up to the Indigenous people of this country, but I might point out that there have been five structures set up by both major parties in this country at some stage or other, and both major parties at some stage or other have dismantled those structures, so surely history should tell Indigenous people that we do not want to be aligned or attached to government and to be at the whim of government whenever they see fit to dismantle that structure. So I would suggest—and this is only my personal view—that any structure or body that is developed in the future is not constrained by government, like organisations such as the Farmers Federation and the Canegrowers association in this country, which receive federal funding but are a political voice and are separate from government.

Senator McLUCAS—I want to talk more around that. If you compare it to, let us say, the Farmers Federation, I do not know that they actually do get money from government.

Mr Rogers—They do.

Senator O'BRIEN—They do.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you. So it would be an elected body?

Mr Rogers—That is up to the people of this country. We need to be allowed to get together and voice our views, but under this current process Indigenous participation has been excluded. It was less than two weeks ago that I knew you were coming to Alice Springs. The regional council have not had the opportunity to get together to prepare a submission for this meeting. Yesterday, at a meeting of another committee on native title, I got a phone call at 20 past 12

asking me to come along. A week ago they asked me about coming along as a representative of the regional council and I said to them, 'What about Lhere Artepe?' Their comment was that they did not even know who they were—they did not know who the contact was or the phone number. So I have the concern that all of this process is being rushed without being fair to Indigenous people so they can actively participate in any sort of structure that is developed into the future.

Senator McLUCAS—We are sorry that it does seem to be rushed, but I think that is the government's cycle and decision-making process. We do appreciate you coming along on both days. If you wanted to talk more about what you see as an appropriate structure, even at a national level or a regional level, I would appreciate that. I notice that, in terms of the ATSIC regional councils, you have two regions based on Alice Springs. Do you think they are right? Do you think that the size of the region is the sort of size you would need to appropriately work with Indigenous people or is it the wrong size? Do you have any views?

Mr Rogers—With respect, I do not want to comment on that because—as I said at the outset—I am here as an individual. That is up to the current regional councils in both those regions you refer to: the central remote region and the Alice Springs ATSIC region. But I must go back and say that in this whole process we have just been flooded, so to speak, and we have not had the opportunity to get together and actually analyse this process and present an informed, concise opinion from any of the regional councils, I would suggest, throughout Australia.

CHAIR—Mr Rogers, I just want to respond on behalf of the committee to some comments there. We do have a short time line in which to conduct this inquiry—that is, we are due to report at the end of October, bearing in mind that we will try and get around as much of the country as we possibly can. The submissions close on Friday week, but that is really an indicative deadline. If people need more time, they are welcome to have that. The Joint Statutory Committee on Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund was due to spend two days in Alice Springs, and it was decided that one of those days would be set aside instead to deal with the business before this select committee.

In any event, the committee was established nearly 3½ weeks ago. Yes, the process is rushed, but the committee just has to deal with the time frame it is given by the Senate. The fact is that the legislation has already been through the House of Representatives and the Senate is waiting on this committee to report to deal with the legislation in the Senate. We do appreciate you giving up your time and the efforts you have put in. We also want to let you know that we have not made a decision to come back to Alice Springs but we are still to finalise our timetable of consultations around the country. It may well be the case that we get an opportunity in some other venue to talk to you again, if you want to.

Mr Rogers—I certainly think that is appropriate. For your information, I was in Sydney last week and met with Wayne Gibbons along with all of the east coast chairs. The Northern Territory, South Australian and Western Australian chairs met in Perth last Friday, but I had other commitments, so that was my reason for going to Sydney. I have requested that the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination come to Alice Springs on the 17th, 18th and 19th of next month to talk not only to the regional councils but also to the organisations about this new way of doing business. So I suggest that it certainly would be appropriate for you to come back to Alice

Springs. That would allow us to have considerable input into a regional council submission—so we can get a wider community view on this aspect.

Senator SCULLION—Thank you for your frank and in some ways courageous submission. It is very valuable to have a look at something that does not seem to have any vested interest—which is very difficult to find, as you have indicated, coming from this sort of community. I am very interested in the representative body aspects, and you used the quote that they basically reflect the views and aspirations of the people. There are a number of bodies representing sections of the community in other countries. There is always a balance—if the body is funded by another organisation or government, you are almost in partnership with the devil because that is often who you would like to take to task on certain issues. Can you help me with how discussions may be going in the Indigenous community, particularly around Alice Springs, about the way a representative body can represent issues—and I am trying to embargo that from the program delivery side—such as on human rights and aspirations, as an Indigenous group? From an Alice Springs point of view, how do you think that is actually progressing?

Mr Rogers—As I mentioned in my submission, I think there has been a lot of interest with the demise of ATSIC and a focus on money and programs. There have been vultures circling focused purely on that—the money, the power, the influence and the kudos based on getting their way. I have been privy to quite a number of models, not only locally but interstate as well. Who is at the top of the tree depends on which organisation you are talking to. In this system, I think that is flawed. I would like to have the opportunity to elaborate on some of the things I mentioned in my submission in camera, if that is possible.

CHAIR—That is certainly possible. Do you want to do that now?

Mr Rogers—I think that is the way the questioning is heading, and I would like to answer those questions.

Evidence was then taken in camera but later resumed in public—

[12.05 p.m.]

BELL, Ms Stephanie, Director, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

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

CHAIR—Welcome. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera you can make an application to do so and the committee will give consideration to your application. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera might subsequently be made public by order of the Senate. If we ask you for further information or to take any questions on notice, we would appreciate it if you could try to get those back to us within a month. I invite you to make an opening statement or give us a briefing on your position, and at the end of that we will take the opportunity to ask you questions.

Ms Bell—AMSANT welcomes the opportunity to talk to the committee. The main issues that we wanted to talk to the committee about are Aboriginal health services and the lead role we have taken in terms of Aboriginal health, the crisis in Aboriginal affairs as we see it, and principles about the direction in which Aboriginal affairs needs to go. For people who do not know, AMSANT is a federation of Aboriginal community controlled health services here in the Northern Territory. It has a number of representatives in Top End rural and remote communities as well as in main regional towns and centres.

AMSANT want to reaffirm that Aboriginal people have a right to self-determination. We think that this includes the right to develop our own political and service structures and the right to choose our own representative bodies and to choose the form in which those bodies will represent the Aboriginal people's needs on whichever particular portfolio people have organised around. AMSANT, in its wisdom, does not accept any model for Aboriginal affairs that has not appointed Aboriginal spokespeople. That is premised on the way Aboriginal health services have evolved, which has been at a community level of people determining, nominating and electing people to be on those particular structures.

AMSANT opposes the mainstreaming of service delivery to Aboriginal people, because it has clearly failed, from our point of view, in the past in relation to Aboriginal health. We have tried to lead a way forward in terms of how to work cooperatively in a partnership with mainstream providers and key stakeholders around the delivery of health services. Our main brief has been to ensure that governments do provide relevant services to Aboriginal people where mainstream government departments have responsibility and to ensure that the delivery of those services is carried out through the Aboriginal structures of leadership to engage with mainstream services. Mainstream services need to be more responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

We think that those structures that I have spoken about are relevant in the context of policy and advocacy to ensure that dialogue and collaboration with those mainstream institutions, in terms of their roles and responsibilities, are carried out in a manner that is going to be responsive to Aboriginal people's needs. With respect to the current situation with Aboriginal affairs,

AMSANT supports the model in terms of having regional bodies, with an advocacy policy to ensure mainstream departments provide relevant programs and services through Aboriginal community controlled structures.

Mr Rosewarne—The important thing is that government departments have a responsibility to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to their citizenship rights. In the health sector, this is modelled through the health department holding the funds but the service delivery happening through community controlled organisations. So governments need to be brought to account to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to their citizenship rights, but the appropriate bodies for delivering those services are the Aboriginal community controlled organisations. In the case of health, it is through the HOs. I want to underline that point.

Ms Bell—I think we could also say that those structures have been reinforced and accepted by all governments through both the National Aboriginal Health Strategy and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The other thing we would like to reinforce is the coordination of advocacy. There has to be sectoral collaboration across all departments to ensure that services are happening appropriately. The sectors need to get together to talk about how each of those sectors is dependent on one another to have good health outcomes. Recognition of trying to get collaboration within our sector—that is, health services talking to the health departments—has only really happened since 1995. Aboriginal people have really only asserted their citizenship rights, in terms of getting access to MBS and PBS, since 1995, so it is a relatively new era.

We have not been able to fully get services on the ground, in the communities, where the people are, because, from our point of view, the health financing model of PHCAP has not been fully funded. We have made certain inroads on getting access to health services in the communities where people live, and that is relatively new—since 1995. Until then, Aboriginal people were not accessing MBS at all. We are still a long way from full access to health services. In today's environment, coordination and collaboration across sectors is needed, but we also need the sectors, within their portfolios, to be organised so that they can speak with some authority, in terms of policy advocacy, to ensure that the efforts of mainstream departments are going to meet the needs of Aboriginal people. Those are some of the main points that we wanted to reinforce about coordination and political structures. We see regional coordination as an important step forward.

Mr Rosewarne—It has been the organised political work of Aboriginal people that has improved policy development, provided services and put pressure on governments of both colours. There is obviously a need for the ongoing independent ability of the Aboriginal sector to have that political clout. That has to work at a local level, for the coordination of service delivery, and at a regional and national level. There is obviously a very strong need for good coordination at the regional level. That may be through elected bodies, or it may be through a different model that is similar to the CAO in Alice Springs, which has a series of elected organisations from different sectors coming together to provide a political advocacy and leadership role. The same sort of process has to be mirrored at a national level. I think the important point that has come very strongly out of the AMSANT membership is that Aboriginal people should determine who those people are; it should not be a group that is a hand picked by government. Those advocacy bodies need to be independent from government at all levels to be able to play that political role in forcing governments to the table to meet their citizenship right

obligations and also put loadings on that funding, where necessary, to meet the disadvantage of the sector you are dealing with, whether it be health status, remote area costs or whatever it is in the various other sectors.

Ms Bell—The next point to talk about is that AMSANT does not see any value in pooling the funding allocated to Aboriginal service delivery organisations across sectors. In the health sector we have been able to achieve, through the relevant planning structures, having the Northern Territory government pool what they are already spending on people in the regions and to marry that with the Commonwealth contribution as a means of getting effective health services on the ground in the community, instead of having duplication. We do not see that it would be valuable to pool money across regions or across different zones as a means to have some efficiency. We do not think that would work in health service delivery. There are some benefits to pooling money in regions—for instance, we are working towards a regional hub concept for particular relevant functions such as IT, HR and accounting so as to maximise standards within the health services across regions. So we see pooling as being effective in that context.

The issue for us in terms of Aboriginal health financing dollars under PHCAP is as I have just said: it has mainstream departments working at a planning level to ensure that the allocation of those funds is more effective in working at that partnership level. We think that sectors have to talk to one another, so we have to get the right departments talking to the right sectoral people who will deliver the services and programs so that the needs based planning and the distribution of money can be effectively dealt with. We think these have been some of the strengths in Aboriginal health. We have the right partners at the table. We have been able to do some benchmarking around the broader access to Medicare dollars as well. As Clive was saying, loadings have been placed on particular remote areas where need has been determined, and that factor has been brought in to ensure that the distribution of those dollars will happen appropriately and effectively.

Mr Rosewarne—One of the risks we have seen in the pooling of funding across portfolio areas is that, effectively, it has let off the hook some of the mainstream government departments. ATSIC was constantly seen as the funding source when in fact it was not the core funding source, and that has basically let other departments get away with not meeting those citizenship rights. We believe there is a need for the organisations to get together and for joint planning to take place, but the planning should be separate from the funding and the funding should be on a needs basis and go directly into the service delivery so that you would take out any unnecessary layers handling the money along the way but you would have coordination of planning and coordination of policy and advocacy. In that way the pressure becomes spotlighted quite clearly on governments if they are failing to provide adequate funding.

Ms Bell—I think that is probably a true picture in the context of what has happened to ATSIC. They were expected to have authority across a whole range of portfolios, which they were never resourced to do, and to then ensure that the mainstream funding would happen in a way that was based on need, rather than everybody fighting over an amount of money that was never really going to fulfil the expectation and the need. From our point of view, those are some of the issues that have contributed to the crisis, if you like, in Aboriginal affairs. The mainstream departments do have a responsibility towards citizens and we need to make sure that those rights are delivered in a manner that will meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

CHAIR—It has been a long time since ATSIC had responsibility for health funding and outcomes, but what difference have you noticed in the last couple of months with the demise of ATSIC and with ATSIS having responsibility for funding programs and the move now to mainstream their moneys? What impact has that had on AMSANT or on your organisation, if any?

Ms Bell—From our perspective, the demise of ATSIC has really caused a bit of chaos in the communities. I think it has left a big hole in Aboriginal health leadership—which needs to get itself organised at regional and national levels and then think about those issues that we just expanded on.

Mr Rosewarne—It is the issue of the other coordinating partners that the health sector can work with. For example, ATSIC was one of the signatories to the Northern Territory Framework Agreement on Aboriginal Health and came to the meetings, so there was someone bringing the physical health and environmental health portfolio work. Now there is no organised body or one space that you can go to for that. New arrangements need to be sorted out between organisations on how to have that communication. I think the other issue that Stephanie highlighted is that the creating of uncertainty in the way in which the issue has been dealt with impacts upon the community in broad ways, which may not affect a health service as such but affects the community through the health of the community and the sense of power or disempowerment that that community feels. That has a health outcome. We may pick up that down the track.

Senator McLUCAS—I appreciate your comments about pooling funding. It is a different point of view from what we have heard before, and I appreciate that. Obviously you are for more of a partnership approach with the Territory government. Is that done on a state and territory basis, or is it done on a regional basis?

Ms Bell—No. When the transfer of Aboriginal health occurred, regional planning structures were put in place as a mechanism to start looking at what we could do more effectively at a regional planning level. We also had NT-wide planning structures. There is an Aboriginal health framework agreement, which was signed by each of the federal and state health ministers as well as ATSIC and the equivalent community controlled health organisations. Those planning structures were set up as a mechanism and a means to start looking at better planning, coordination and collaboration in health systems.

Senator McLUCAS—And they were done on a regional basis. How were those regions defined?

Mr Rosewarne—Originally in the NT there were two regions—the Central Australian region and the Top End region—underneath the jurisdiction-wide forum, which looked at various implementation issues and had a series of working parties. A lot of that work was done, and there has been a restructure of the forum, which now has moved into different areas. But there is still regional work being done.

Senator McLUCAS—Did the regions mirror the Territory Health regions or the ATSIC regions? I suppose that is the question I am looking for the answer for.

Mr Rosewarne—Where the dividing line was.

Ms Bell—There were dividing lines. I guess ATSIC sat at the regional levels as well as at the state, NT-wide, health planning level. It was up to each jurisdiction to sort out how they would bring their particular issues to those planning structures at a regional level and at an NT-wide level. The NT-wide level was always the jurisdiction of the commissioners. How ATSIC organised who would attend the regional levels became an issue within their jurisdiction. Does that answer your question?

Senator McLUCAS—Yes, it does. Thank you.

Senator JOHNSTON—Ms Bell, what is the AMSANT jurisdiction? Is it all Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory?

Ms Bell—It is all Aboriginal community controlled health services, where they exist, and also associate members. If a community currently has a service provided by Territory Health and has put its hand up to move forward, to develop a much more community controlled health service, then they can also be a member of AMSANT.

Senator JOHNSTON—So we are talking about Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs.

Ms Bell—And Tennant Creek.

Senator JOHNSTON—What about out in the Pitjantjatjara lands?

Ms Bell—No, the Pit lands come under South Australia, but they are a member of AMSANT as well as their peak body in South Australia.

Mr Rosewarne—Membership of AMSANT is for services, not individual people.

Ms Bell—Yes, it is the services. Kakadu is now a member. The Yuendumu mob and the North Barkly are members. It is all the way up the track.

Senator JOHNSTON—How would you evaluate or assess the current state of Aboriginal health that falls under the umbrella of your agencies?

Ms Bell—I think it is international knowledge that it is quite appalling. The life expectancy is 20 years lower.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am pleased to hear you say that, because I think that honesty and frankness is what we really need on this committee. What is the annual gross expenditure of all of these agencies?

Ms Bell—I could not tell you that.

Senator JOHNSTON—Have a guess.

Ms Bell—I will take that on notice.

Senator JOHNSTON—Can you have a guess? Are we talking $10 million, $20 million, $30 million?

Mr Rosewarne—What we can give you is a figure that was worked out in two studies of expenditure on Aboriginal health in Australia: for primary health care as measured through Medicare access Aboriginal people access health financing at the rate of 41c to the broader population's $1. Even if you factor in Aboriginal access to hospitals and tertiary services, it is still under the average expenditure per head for the non-Aboriginal population. At the moment Aboriginal people are not accessing health financing at the same rate as the non-Aboriginal population in any sector overall. We are not getting the funding on the ground to provide services.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay, but how much funding are you getting?

Mr Rosewarne—The national figure for OATSIA funding is $280 million.

Senator JOHNSTON—How much of that do the AMSANT agencies get—roughly? I am not asking for the figure—you can give me that exactly. But, roughly, how much do you get a year? Surely you would know that figure?

Mr Rosewarne—No. We will take that on notice.

Ms Bell—We will take that on notice and get back to you.

Senator JOHNSTON—How long have your agencies been in charge of this appalling state of Aboriginal health in the Northern Territory?

Mr Rosewarne—I think that is a rather odd statement.

Ms Bell—We are citizens like everybody else in this country. It is really a government responsibility.

Mr Rosewarne—How long has Victorian Health been in charge of the health of the Victorian public?

Senator JOHNSTON—You are the primary service deliverer for Aboriginal health in this territory.

Ms Bell—So are GPs in this country. Are GPs held responsible for the outcome of people's health? I do not think so. I find that comment quite racist, quite frankly.

Senator JOHNSTON—The point is that your agencies have been in charge of Aboriginal health now for how long?

Ms Bell—Some 20 or 30 years.

Mr Rosewarne—The Aboriginal community controlled health sector has delivered primary health care services at a vastly underfunded rate for many years. I think it is a long stretch of the

imagination to say that Aboriginal community controlled health services are in charge of health. Education impacts on health, employment impacts on health, racism impacts on health and government policy impacts on health. I could turn the question around: how long have you been a politician? How long have you been in charge of Aboriginal health and what is the health status of the people in your electorate? What is their life expectancy?

Senator JOHNSTON—I am interested to hear you tell me that you are underfunded when you cannot even tell me how much funding you get!

Mr Rosewarne—I can tell you that we are underfunded on the basis of national ratios of funding.

Senator JOHNSTON—We are not talking about national ratios; I am talking about your agencies. What happens in Sydney and Melbourne is totally different to what happens in the Northern Territory, where the health is appalling.

Mr Rosewarne—We can provide that information.

CHAIR—Can I just interrupt here and perhaps ask you, Ms Bell, to explain for the benefit of the committee the way in which AMSANT's services operate? I think there is some confusion here about Northern Territory government health services, which also exist out there.

Ms Bell—The Northern Territory government is still responsible for the delivery of health care for 88 communities in the Northern Territory. I think that puts it in a bit of a perspective in order for you to understand that the Territory government currently still delivers health services to 88 communities in the Northern Territory.

Senator JOHNSTON—How many communities are your people responsible for?

Ms Bell—Sixteen.

Senator JOHNSTON—Where are they?

Ms Bell—There are eight here in Central Australia, there is one in Tennant Creek, one at Kakadu, three in the Katherine region, one in Darwin and one in Nhulunbuy.

Senator JOHNSTON—And that has been going on for 20 years?

Mr Rosewarne—No. The dates vary.

Ms Bell—The dates of those developments vary. I think it is probably fair to put on the record that the Deeble report, which was commissioned by the Commonwealth government, clearly articulates that the level of funding received by us is not—we only have accessed Medicare since 1995—

Senator JOHNSTON—But you cannot tell me the level of funding. You do not know the level of funding.

Mr Rosewarne—Can I put it in a different way, to explain it in financial terms. Under the Primary Health Care Access Program—Commonwealth funded and a coalition initiative—the per capita figure which has been agreed, to roll out PHCAP, is around $2,000 per head for remote area communities. None of our services are anywhere near that. Possibly Katherine West Health Board is now—in the last couple of years. Other than Katherine West Health Board, none of our services would come anywhere near that—not even 50 per cent of that.

Ms Bell—In comparison, you can look at the mainstream COAG trials, which have just been evaluated. Mainstream citizens were accessing up to 10 to 12 times MBS as a means of managing chronic disease. I think that gives this committee a bit of perspective. This committee can compare the level of funding given to Aboriginal services with the funding given to the COAG trials—the money that they were accessing in the last three years.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am very interested that you are telling me it is all about funding when you do not even know what you are getting.

Senator McLUCAS—Senator Johnston, can I explain to you that, as a member of the Medicare inquiry, AMSANT came to see us. They made it very clear to our committee that they are a group of organisations providing services across the Northern Territory. It is a bit unreasonable to ask these witnesses to be able to tell us the funding allocations of 16 different organisations. It is not their job to do that. They have said they will take that on notice and they will provide us with that information, but we are talking about 16 completely separate organisations. That is like asking a division of general practice what the income is of each of the GPs in their district.

Senator JOHNSTON—Thanks for your concern—

CHAIR—In her opening comment Ms Bell said that there is a new model—called PHCAP—being developed for the delivery of health services, and the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory are putting money into that together. That is being allocated on the basis of outcomes determined by Indigenous people—hence you get the name community controlled health boards. The whole Aboriginal health arrangement is actually changing in this country. Perhaps we can again focus on the terms of reference and the reason we are actually here today.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay, let us do that. Just tell me how and why the government should continue to fund an organisation such as yours, when it appears, on any objective assessment, that your outcomes are so appalling?

Ms Bell—I think that is a very unfair statement to make. Are GPs in this country made accountable for an individual's health outcome every time they swipe a card? I do not think so. We do not get open slather funding or access to the Health Insurance Commission's swiping of a card; our communities do not even have doctors. It is an unfair statement. It puts Aboriginal people at a continuing unfair disadvantage.

Senator JOHNSTON—Just tell me: how do you benchmark how successfully your agencies deliver their services?

Ms Bell—We are required to acquit our grant and to provide performance indicators through the terms and conditions of our grant, like any other agency. A services activity report is compiled by the Commonwealth government. It is submitted to AHMAC on an annual basis, so there is a—

Senator JOHNSTON—What was last year's grant?

Ms Bell—For where?

Senator JOHNSTON—For the terms and conditions of the grant you are talking about. You said that under the terms and conditions of your grant, you are required to submit outcomes and other data. What was the grant you were talking about? How much was it?

Ms Bell—Do you mean the Commonwealth funding grant?

Senator JOHNSTON—Yes.

Mr Rosewarne—Each one is different for each different service.

Senator JOHNSTON—And there are 16 services?

Mr Rosewarne—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—Give me an example of one that you know about. How much would it be?

Ms Bell—Some are $3 million, some are $4 million, some are $2 million and some are half a million dollars.

Senator JOHNSTON—If you average it out at $2 million, you have got $32 million to play with.

Ms Bell—Yes, I suppose you could say that.

Senator JOHNSTON—How many people fall under the umbrella of these 16 agencies?

Mr Rosewarne—The numbers vary quite dramatically depending on the size of the service.

Senator JOHNSTON—You do not know these figures?

Mr Rosewarne—No, not off the top of my head for all 16 services.

Ms Bell—No.

Senator JOHNSTON—Let us come back to the question: how do you benchmark how successfully you are delivering health services into these communities?

Mr Rosewarne—There is quite clear evidence that any population's—or individual's—health is impacted upon by a range of health determinants. Access to health services is one of those. At the moment, for NT Aboriginal people, access to health services is not universal. How you then place responsibility or estimate how much a health service can have an impact are the sorts of questions which AMSANT members are trying to answer. They have commissioned the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health to do a longitudinal study on Aboriginal populations to try and assess that very question, as well as asking what the impact of primary health care services is and which processes work and which do not, to maximise the effect that we can have on people's health.

There is one example I can give where there is data at a local level which would seem to indicate a positive impact from having a targeted health service. Aboriginal birth weights in Alice Springs are on a par with the birth weights of the non-Aboriginal population. When you go outside Alice Springs it is dramatically different. In Alice Springs we have had an Aboriginal community controlled women's health service, which is a birthing service and provides women's health checks and antenatal care. We believe that it may be because of the nature of that service—the way it is able to target the population—that it has had that impact. It is very hard, though, to separate out all the other things which also may be having an impact upon that population.

We have a research project under way now into that, through the CRC. We would like to be able to answer that question in a simple manner and say, 'This is the impact of a primary healthcare service.' Unfortunately, the world does not exist so simply. There are many other factors impacting and to try and develop a research project that can answer your question is a very complex and difficult matter. It is not something you can just glibly peel off and say, 'This much funding went to health; this should be the outcome,' because of all the other factors which impact.

Senator JOHNSTON—How long do you anticipate it will take to ascertain whether you are winning the battle?

Mr Rosewarne—On overseas experience, when you look at similar populations in settler colonial countries—like the US, Canada and New Zealand—you can have quite quick impacts when there is adequate funding. In America there was quite a quick impact, in extending life expectancy for example, when the Indian Health Service was established. In Canada, when the Canadian government took up various treaty obligations and started providing access to services, we saw, over a 10- to 15-year period, quite quick impacts. The same thing occurred in New Zealand.

In Australia we have not had—and we must underline this point—universal access to health services. And we have not had the same sort of coordinated, well-funded support—and I am afraid it does take money—for our sort of sister organisations to be able to provide their services as well. They are the things which we need to see happen in Australia. Otherwise you are probably not getting the best return on your money by drip feeding service development. It needs thorough service development funding.

Senator JOHNSTON—Isn't mainstreaming going to give you the sort of access that these people require?

Mr Rosewarne—You then require the appropriate service delivery bodies to deliver it. Mainstreaming, in terms of financing and service delivery, is not the answer. You need the mainstream government departments to take up their responsibility to fund the appropriate sorts of community controlled organisations that can deliver a service which the community owns, accepts and will utilise. That has been the position of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and various others. You need community controlled services on the ground delivering service but you need them to be properly funded, and that is the responsibility of mainstream government departments.

Senator O'BRIEN—I think there has been a lot of discussion about the term 'mainstreaming'. Health is mainstream at the moment, in the sense that ATSIC is not responsible for it, but it is not mainstream, in the sense that there are a number of community health organisations under your umbrella—and in other states under NACHO generally—who provide services funded in a variety of ways. I understood the Prime Minister, when he made his announcement on 15 April, to be talking about mainstreaming of programs in the sense that there would be no special Aboriginal programs, only programs for the disadvantaged. So perhaps we are talking about different things. I would like to know what your organisation thought were the main limitations of dealing with bureaucracies in getting the best possible outcomes and translating money into programs on the ground. Can you give us any examples of where the bureaucracy costs too much in the context of getting the funding that the parliament provides to communities?

Ms Bell—I will try to respond to that. Since the transfer of Aboriginal health we as a sector have developed structures where we actually talk to one another. We provide primary health care level services and the Territory government is responsible for the secondary-tertiary components. So, on the basis of having dialogue with the bureaucracy and the system, we have been able to work together more collaboratively around how, for instance, the ophthalmologist will deal with remote communities in relation to eye health issues. We have been able to combine our planning efforts to make sure that the services and the money are going out there in a way that will be cost-effective for the department. We have been able to work jointly at a state level and at a primary health care level to muscle the Commonwealth about getting the dollars that they have in their system more effectively applied in those environments.

That sort of regional planning has been effective. It has increased services. It has meant that the ophthalmologist actually goes out to communities and takes equipment with him, as a means of then being able to conduct surgery out in the communities. There is the Commonwealth program of Patient Assistance Travel, but this has meant that the ophthalmologist is going out there and people do not have to leave communities or pay for travel and accommodation. So there have been incremental improvements through those processes and structures as a means of getting the bureaucracy and the mainstream big institutions, like the secondary-tertiary health care systems, to understand how to play their role more effectively and ensure that the rate of Aboriginal people's access is improving their health outcomes.

Mr Rosewarne—In the Northern Territory under the Primary Health Care Access Program the Territory government and the Commonwealth government pool their funds in the development of services. Unfortunately, that has not been the model that has been taken up in all other jurisdictions—Commonwealth PHCAP funds have been put on the ground quite often in parallel with whatever the state is doing. Having that process under the forum and having the

funds pooled is more effective. It is a more effective use of those dollars on the ground. Also in the regional structures I think there has been better coordination between the various Commonwealth funded programs and NT programs. Quite often in the past they have been doing similar things on the ground but have not been working with each other. The health forum's planning processes have certainly streamlined and made more efficient the use of resources.

Ms Bell—Does that answer your question, Kerry?

Senator O'BRIEN—Partly, yes. Perhaps I will frame another question and think about how I might put something else to you on that front. ATSIC has not had any specific health responsibilities since about 1994. What has been the relevance of ATSIC, if any, to the operations of the organisations under the AMSANT umbrella?

Ms Bell—ATSIC itself or ATSIS?

Senator O'BRIEN—ATSIS was created to take part of ATSIC's responsibility from 1 July 2003.

Mr Rosewarne—While ATSIC has not had responsibility for the health service sector, ATSIC still has had in its portfolio area a number of other environmental health and other health issues which impact on Aboriginal people's health. It also would have had a role in advocating around some of the other social determiners of health—in terms of access to education and employment projects through CDEP. So it has had a range of other portfolio issues which impact upon Aboriginal people's health. Even though it did not have health service funding it still had all those other areas that were inside its area of activity, particularly CDEP, housing and those sorts of functions which have a clear impact upon people's health. So when we are talking about health we need to separate health services and the other social determinants. We are arguing that there needs to be strong collaboration across those sectors in order to be able to move forward on all those fronts and not have everybody sitting in their separate little silos. There need to be good regional processes for planning and for coordinating policy and advocacy work in all those areas.

Ms Bell—For health to improve, the other underpinning causes of ill health have to be addressed systematically, as well as at a community level. Another example of where mainstream services are failing Aboriginal people is education. As part of their citizenship rights, Aboriginal people have a right to expect to be educated and to be able to come out of the system with a relevant qualification, something they require to then enter other parts of their lives and move forward. We need to take up the big challenge of education and Aboriginal people: why is the education system failing Aboriginal people? Why are their levels of education 15 years behind those of any other citizen?

There are a whole range of issues, such as access to services. One example in the current environment, for us in health services, is that we have to have an appropriately trained, qualified work force to deliver health services. The work force issue is another major crisis in a whole range of ways. There is a lot of work to be done to bring the quality of life of disadvantaged Aboriginal people up to a level that other citizens enjoy. We need structures and relevant forums, with some intellectual dialogue around how we are going to get there, how it is going to happen.

To blame Aboriginal people continually for their situation does not create a means forward for Aboriginal people to become formally accepted citizens of this country.

Mr Rosewarne—To come back to your question about areas where there are blockages or bureaucratic processes which get in the way of delivery, one of the biggest problems facing many services has been the issue of multiple funding streams and having to balance, acquit and play with all these different little funding sources to try to put together one service. You end up with a fragmented approach because you spend a lot of time just acquitting funds and doing the administration. You also are trying to marry a program which you have applied for funding for to what you actually want to do. There is a range of issues. It becomes very problematic for organisations to get on with their core business, because they are running around doing all this other stuff, spending a lot of time on admin, taking their eyes off the main game, not quite getting done what they want to and not being able to marry community expectations to government funding source expectations. That issue was overcome in health, and that approach needs to be brought into other areas so organisations can be properly needs-based funded, with tenure of funding.

Ms Bell—To come back to Senator Johnston's issue, the issue for health was that until 1995 Aboriginal people were marginalised from the big game. There was $35 billion sitting in the health portfolio when we only had $50 million. As citizens, we were not accessing any of that money. Until we got the legislation on access to bulk-billing changed in parliament, we were not getting the right, relevant access. That is the big picture. We were quite marginalised. It was quite easy to say, 'ATSIC are responsible. These are your citizens, so you worry about these people; we'll just worry about the rest of the country.' This has contributed to disadvantage. We need to take a much more robust approach to getting structures in place that will create the intellectual dialogue we need to move forward.

Senator O'BRIEN—Do you have a formal view on what the Senate ought to do with the legislation before the parliament at the moment? Pass it? Reject it? Amend it? You do not have to answer that, but I am inviting you to.

Ms Bell—The AMSANT membership have not had that sort of discussion. We felt it was important to raise and assert our rights to ensure that self-determination is seen as a part of the next phase, whatever approach is taken—so that we are not then marginalised and so that we are seen as important players in the game. Whatever the portfolio issue, it needs to happen together in a partnership approach, with governments having some dialogue with Aboriginal people around what our needs and aspirations are. We are not happy with our health status either. Who wants to live with a life expectancy of 20 years fewer? I do not think any of you would.

Senator O'BRIEN—I think you are right. I do not think anyone in the room does.

Ms Bell—Who wants the burden?

Senator O'BRIEN—That is right.

Senator NETTLE—Can you give us an example of, or paint a picture of, the difference in the health outcomes that can be delivered in a particular area over time when the health service is provided by a mainstream government department, as opposed to when it is provided by a

community controlled Indigenous health organisation? I do not know whether there is an area that you can focus on or a period since community controlled Indigenous health organisations have existed in the NT.

Mr Rosewarne—At one level it is about having access to a work force to be able to deliver those services. Many remote communities have an Aboriginal health worker or a nurse, with a visiting district medical officer. That is clearly inadequate—even though many Australians in outer urban areas are struggling to find bulk-billing doctors, at least they can get to a doctor. They can get those sorts of levels of check up. In remote areas that is often not the case. What you find as a consequence of that is that people's conditions take longer to get picked up. If you look at the work of the Deeble inquiry and the other expenditure reviews you see that there is disproportionate expenditure on Aboriginal people in the secondary sector. Whilst there is underspending in the primary sector, there is more spent in the secondary sector. That is because people are not being picked up at the primary level and they are waiting to have their conditions treated until they come to hospitals. That is the sort of broad brushstroke that you are seeing because of them not having access to health services.

The work force issue is a fundamental one for us in the health sector. In getting the funding and the services on the ground, we are particularly tied up with trying to get doctors. We know where doctors accumulate—in the north shore suburbs of Sydney and the eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Ms Bell—The AMA can remind you of that.

Mr Rosewarne—They get thinner on the ground the further away you get.

Ms Bell—It is a big crisis.

Mr Rosewarne—Attracting doctors to health services has become a big issue for us. It is an issue which we have put before the Medicare inquiry and other inquiries about how to redistribute the maldistributed work force in this country. It is the sort of issue where you need to have a community advocating and demanding that right to have access to doctors—for many years, governments in the NT in particular have sold people the model which says, 'No, all you have a right to is this part of the work force; you don't have a right to this other part of the work force that gets kept in the cities.'

Ms Bell—We are held to ransom on a number of levels. To be able to move forward incrementally through those planning structures, we have sat down in partnership with the Territory government to look at the key health issues that we need to focus on. We have developed plans around how to be effective in combining efforts to produce those sorts of outcomes.

Mr Rosewarne—To answer the second part of your question I will come back to the example that I used before of our antenatal service and the birth weights we are seeing there. If you have an appropriate service which can be responsive to people's needs, whatever those needs are—whether you label them as cultural needs, access needs or whatever else—you can have an impact. If you do not have a service on the ground you are obviously not going to have an impact. If that service does not actually listen to people when they explain what the priority

issues in their community are, if it does not set itself up in a way which maximises those people's chances of accessing it, you are going to lessen that impact. That is the other part of the model.

Ms Bell—It is very difficult. Through that experience of working at a planning level with Territory Health I found that in the 88 communities in which they are currently still providing services they do not even have an IT system. In terms of outcomes, people on the ground are not even able to then combine that information in order to provide data back to the department, which then has a responsibility to report at a forum level on what it is doing in terms of its efforts in relation to Aboriginal health. They have not even got those basic systems in place as a means of then having some coordination around where to put efforts in the context of the health service delivery level.

Mr Rosewarne—One example of that sort of data would be immunisation data collection. If you have not got those sorts of IT services then you have a delay in getting immunisation up on the register. That can have impacts on people—particularly on a mobile population. Individuals may turn up somewhere else, and there will be no access to their information. As we know, there is increasingly a sort of incentive system around immunisation and if your child is not listed then you can be punished—not because your child is not immunised but because the service you went to was not properly funded to provide an IT service. That is one small example of what that can mean at an individual level.

Senator SCULLION—There are a couple of issues associated with health care in my experience which, if you want to compartmentalise them, are not to do with mainstream health. In an Indigenous context it is all about remoteness. The further you are away from a major centre the harder it is. It is probably the same for most Australians—whilst we do not suffer from the same scourges as Indigenous people do with health, the same issues exist about bulk-billing and access to some mainstream health services.

So the issue is transportation to those services. In some of the small communities we are just never going to have, in any context—in Indigenous or white Australia—movement of services to such small communities. So we are always going to have this imperative of being able to bring people to those communities. The added issue is that, when you are in those communities, if you are coming down from Tennant Creek for specialist services to Alice Springs, with the amount of subsidy you get you do not have enough money to actually stay overnight. So it is a big impost. When people come from some of the remote communities to Alice Springs there is just nowhere to stay. Those are the incumbent issues that are more about accommodation, housing and transport. They may well be better handled than they have been in the past. You are no doubt aware of places like Miwatj health, where we have had breast screening that was dependent on discretionary funding from ATSIC commissioners. Fewer than half the commissioners suddenly made a decision on the importance of breast screening as an issue and so, instead of having a consistent approach for breast screening, it has now fallen apart—because of those things.

If we went with the concept of mainstreaming, do you think there would be an opportunity to give the responsibilities for those things, which are almost side issues but which are so central to the delivery of health, to those areas that could better accommodate or have more expertise in dealing with them? For example, you could say that perhaps transportation would come under the department of transport. As to the accommodation and housing issues, rather than having

them dealt with by the department of health, which is all about human wellbeing and those sorts of issues, do you think that expertise that would lie in other areas would be able to be utilised when we made changes in order to get some better outcomes in areas not directly related to health and the provision of health services? It is more associated with trying to get people to the services.

Mr Rosewarne—I think what you are talking about, though, is the issue of trying to coordinate the knowledge and information sectors to maximise how services can work. Also, some of those questions sometimes do boil down to making choices about how much money is available. Where that happens there is a flaw in the process and we need to overcome that. For example, with the planning processes in Central Australia, we have had a much better set of outcomes for people coming in and utilising services, I think, around things like PATS. By coordinating the work of the primary sector with the hospital we are getting much better compliance. There were basic things like not having interpreters or people at the hospital who could explain what the eye surgery was, for example. So people would come, and then they would leave because they were frightened. There was no support. Quite often I think the programs are there but, if the correct support mechanisms are not built around those programs, they are not going to work on their own. There is a complex level there.

I am not familiar with the scenario that you are painting about the screening, but it does sound like there was underfunding underneath it and there was a choice of where you were going to put your money. Where that happens Aboriginal people end up being disadvantaged. Other Aboriginal people are put in the position of making choices that would not be made at that basic level, I would say, in the mainstream. I think that needs to be sorted out. I think it is about coordination of services to try and maximise what is going on. In Alice Springs there are probably some quite good examples that we could give outside of the health sector—things that are happening in the housing sector around emergency accommodation and work being done by community based organisations about mobility and understanding that. That is the sort of coordinated work which brings about good results.

Senator SCULLION—So the solution that you are pointing towards is like the model that we are looking at very closely around Australia—that is, what we would refer to as the COAG trials. Stephanie said earlier that this collaboration across departments was very essential and you have just alluded to that yourself. We have heard earlier today about the Murdi Paaki example in New South Wales. I understand that that was given as an example of how it can work, as well as the example of Wadeye. So you would put some weight behind the COAG model in terms of delivering other services?

Mr Rosewarne—The principles behind it about coordination, yes.

CHAIR—I think that Senator Johnston has a number of questions that he is going to put on notice for the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. Is that right?

Senator JOHNSTON—I will just canvass them briefly by saying that they are to do with accounting. They are to do with the gross amount of money that is received by each of the 16 agencies that make up AMSANT, the number of employees and the number of vehicles et cetera. I would just like to see how much there is and where the money goes. I will put all of those on notice for you.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for your time and for appearing before the committee today.

Senator McLUCAS—I think we should write to the Northern Territory government too and ask them the same set of questions—and also the Queensland and Tasmanian governments.

Proceedings suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 1.52 p.m.

GUY, Ms Delia Elizabeth, Head of Division, Independent Living, Anglicare Northern Territory

SKINNER, Ms Patricia Mary, House Manager, Disability Services, Anglicare Northern Territory

ACTING CHAIR (Senator Johnston)—Can I mention to those people in the gallery that, at the end of the formal witnesses, we will be available to hold a forum session wherein any person who wishes to can take five minutes to introduce themselves and then bring forward any issue within the terms of reference. If anyone is not aware of the terms of reference, I am sure that Mr Tim Watling will assist them with that. You can give us first-hand, strictly within a five-minute period, anything you want to bring to the committee's attention concerning ATSIC, funding generally and what might be good and successful policy into the future. That is a very broad description from me and is not intended to be binding. Mr Watling will give you the formal terms of reference.

I welcome the witnesses from St Mary's Family Services. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence or part of your evidence in camera you should make an application to do so and the committee will consider your request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate. Should you need to take any questions on notice, you may ask to do so and you can provide that answer within a 30-day period. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Guy—I point out that St Mary's Family Services is our historical name. It is the name that is associated with the organisation, but we are now known as Anglicare NT.

Ms Skinner—I am a house manager in men's disability services with Anglicare.

ACTING CHAIR—I now invite you to make an opening statement.

Ms Guy—Anglicare NT has a long association here in Central Australia. We are probably the largest non-Indigenous non-government organisation here and we work with Indigenous clients, most of whom have high needs, with quite profound disabilities. At this time, all of our program areas are in Alice Springs. However, we have been invited to begin to consider setting up residential programs within communities, so perhaps we are a little bit at the crossover in terms of why we are gathered here today and what is happening. It is about moving health and people and the services back into the communities and empowering those communities to take care of their people.

ACTING CHAIR—Is that all you want to say as an opening statement?

Ms Guy—Yes, thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—That is fine. I would like to ask a few questions to paint in a bit of the background. How long have you been involved in the area of Aboriginal affairs generally?

Ms Guy—Outside of Anglicare, I have had quite a long association. I have worked in the criminal justice system. I have worked on a remote community.

ACTING CHAIR—Which one?

Ms Guy—At Balgo: Wirramanu.

ACTING CHAIR—In Western Australia.

Ms Guy—Yes, just over the border.

ACTING CHAIR—I am familiar with that.

Ms Guy—And now I am working here with Anglicare.

ACTING CHAIR—What about you, Pat: where have you been and what have you done with respect to Aboriginal people?

Ms Skinner—I am an Indigenous person. I grew up in Victoria and moved to Alice Springs. I started working with Anglicare in 2001, and I have worked my way from being a casual through to being a house supervisor. I am now trying to get more Indigenous people into the support work area with disability services.

ACTING CHAIR—What sort of facilities does Anglicare have in Alice Springs for Aboriginal people?

Ms Guy—We have a campus out on the south Stuart Highway. On that campus we run an education program for 30 kids from remote communities—they come in for school and they go home. We have the children's disability houses.

ACTING CHAIR—Is it like a boarding school or a hostel?

Ms Guy—No. It is a house-parent model, where we have separate houses and house parents. We have about five houses for adults throughout the community, off campus. We also have other programs that we run, including supporting mental health people, and we have general accommodation areas. But mostly our work is with those with disabilities: that has been our longstanding work here in Alice.

ACTING CHAIR—What sort of disabilities?

Ms Skinner—Where I am it is high-support needs. We have five residents in the houses and four of them are in wheelchairs. We have one who is mobile who is a renal patient.

ACTING CHAIR—So he has to have dialysis every week?

Ms Skinner—Three times a week. They are all high-support needs: full-on personal care, from toileting through to assisting with meals, and non-verbal—we only have one verbal client.

So the pressure is on the support workers to read their needs and meet their needs and give them a quality of life.

ACTING CHAIR—How many workers have you got out there on the campus?

Ms Guy—Throughout the organisation here we have about 80 people, and because the houses are residential houses the work is 24/7. It is a matter of great sorrow to us that many of our staff are non-Indigenous. Pat in particular is working hard and looking at different models so we can encourage more Indigenous staff and set up some mentoring and also work with Footsteps Forward and look at different ways of working.

ACTING CHAIR—What do you know of the current plan to abolish ATSIC and the service provision that flowed from that organisation and its service delivery arm? What is your opinion and view of that? You made a comment about services coming back into the community. Tell us what motivated you to say that and what your perspective is on the changes that are being made.

Ms Guy—From a personal perspective, I have had a long-term interest in health and social issues. I am currently completing my master's in primary health care, so I am hopefully gaining qualifications to be able to support communities. I see the health and social issues as, if you like, a burden that we all need to carry. My definition of a good society is one that does not have such an enormous gap, with people really struggling. As we know when we look at just the pure evidence base, the health outcomes are quite appalling. Organisations such as Anglicare have a strong, sound structure and have responsibilities in terms of skilling and empowering people and building the capacity of communities and individuals to support their own communities.

Perhaps service delivery within communities would be a little bit too difficult with some of our clients that Pat has been talking about, and there may always be a place for residential places. However, I think we need to offer a variety of options whereby people are adequately cared for with their needs being met in the communities and then perhaps offer respite or ongoing care when necessary here in Alice Springs. It is not always easy to do that. We have a small number of people spread over a large area and it is very difficult, particularly with allied health and getting commode chairs and physiotherapists out. Those skills are very light on the ground here in Alice Springs. Perhaps whatever model health care in general is under there are always going to be those difficulties. However, I still feel that we should not stop trying; we should keep going.

Senator O'BRIEN—Do you believe there should be some sort of democratic structure for the Indigenous community to have a say in matters and affairs that affect them? Do you think there should be some sort of representative organisations?

Ms Skinner—Yes, I definitely think that there should be Indigenous people in places of authority, or whatever you like to call it, so that people at the ground level have access to them to make it easier for us to work our way through the systems, because I find it a lot easier talking to one of my own people than sitting here talking.

Senator O'BRIEN—They keep us separated just in case!

Ms Guy—I was employed by an Aboriginal health committee and my role was to build their capacity. I was only there for about three years. That needs to be ongoing, not just something where one person goes in for a while and then says, 'That job is done'. This is about raising the capacity of the whole community in terms of access. For instance, the tendering process now for even quite small sized grants can be quite complicated. There are time lines and structures to be met and it takes a high degree of literacy. Even for some of us who are used to that sometimes it can still be a bit of a hit and miss process. That is actually quite a complicated process. So, while we can talk about having a democratic process, we cannot walk away from the fact that we create quite complex systems and then expect people to be able to access those systems, whether for funding or just on a personal level, perhaps for some basic health needs. I have developed a few papers on different models of structure around capacity building—I am unsure whether that could be a submission; perhaps I could develop it—just by virtue of the fact of being out there. One dreams of what could be.

ACTING CHAIR—I am sure we would appreciate it.

Ms Guy—Okay.

Senator O'BRIEN—The evidence we received from AMSANT representatives this morning talked in part of the issue of pooling together funding for services from so many different areas, making multiple submissions and being accountable to each of the funding bodies to account for and report on the outcomes and the meaning of criteria for those particular programs. Is that an experience that your service has?

Ms Guy—It will be, more and more. At the moment it is not, because we are block funded, particularly in relation to our high-need clients. So in fact, for an organisation that could cope with complex funding arrangements, our funding is actually quite simple.

Senator O'BRIEN—That is the third model!

Ms Guy—Yes. But when you are out there in those communities and you know that there is funding available, the difficulty is in even finding that and then having the time to access it. You may know that the funding is there; it is about actually finding out where and how you access it and then working out the criteria. For instance, one time when Wirramanu came together in a strong way was when there was funding through the Strong Family, Strong Community, Strong Future Project—I think that is what it was called. That was a good collaborative effort by many of the organisations in the community, but it required a person whom we had there by chance, who was a PhD student. So we were looking for somebody with quite high qualifications, and that was quite a successful grant that we were able to access, but there was a lot of luck on our side too. I think in communities where there are such complex social needs we cannot rely on luck. There has to be more than luck; otherwise, those communities just get left behind in funding rounds—they just miss out or they hear about it when somebody else accesses those funds and it is too late.

ACTING CHAIR—Senator McLucas, do you have any questions?

Senator McLUCAS—No, I do not, thank you. I do apologise; I had another thing I had to do, but I will read the *Hansard* to see your evidence, Ms Guy.

Senator SCULLION—Ms Guy, this question is about a theme that has been touched upon a couple of times this morning: that is, the apparent absence of education to allow people to understand the full framework of funding that is available, and—perhaps even worse—the lack of understanding about the services that are currently available. Given the apparent failure on a number of fronts to communicate that issue effectively, do you think there is a role to play for NGOs, in view of what I suppose is their very close relationship in a number of ways with the communities which we are trying to target with this education? Do you think there is a role for NGOs like Anglicare to play there?

Ms Guy—I do. One of the strong points of organisations such as Anglicare is their structure and their financial accountability. Those structures are already in place and the audit process is there, so that is actually a good place for auspicing finance and resources to sit. Also, for instance, if Anglicare were to mentor a community organisation and to take on that role responsibly—not just do the work but explain the work and know what is happening—then you would be building all the time. I personally believe that one of the strongest structures that has sustained communities over time is HACC. In some communities they are only very small programs, but when problems occur—and perhaps the HACC service stops—the knowledge is there in the community and is very quickly regained. That is because HACC services have touched most people within that community. They have either worked for HACC or received its services. It is a very good structure and it is very practical.

ACTING CHAIR—For the sake of the transcript, what does HACC stand for?

Ms Guy—Home and Community Care. I am not sure about the funding, but I think it is a Commonwealth-state arrangement. It provides services for the aged and disabled out in the communities. That structure ensures that there is a base level of services. In a lot of communities HACC will work collaboratively with a clinic, so you get a crossover of skills and role modelling between people who work for HACC and people who work in the clinic. You also get a crossover of the client base, so you get people going to houses and knowing when people are okay and whether medication is being taken. HACC is a service that is probably in every community. I see it as a very good model. It is not always perfect, but perhaps it is a framework that other services can be attached to. It has a very strong training component. It brings people in, and it also takes training out to the communities.

ACTING CHAIR—I take it that Anglicare applies for funding from the Commonwealth for various programs.

Ms Guy—We do. Most of our funding is a state arrangement.

ACTING CHAIR—Through the Northern Territory government?

Ms Guy—Yes, through the health department.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you personally sit down and draft the submission in support of that sort of funding?

Ms Guy—It depends. For instance, for block funding for our largest program, disability, which is essentially divided into adults and children, we have service plans.

ACTING CHAIR—Could you explain what service plans are?

Ms Guy—A service plan is where we are given money and certain outcomes are required. We need to achieve those outcomes and be accountable. This process seems quite simple—and it is. It seems like the more complex organisations would have the ability to cope with the more complex submissions. But for us it is quite seamless: we have a certain number of clients that require care every year, and certain documentation is generated by Territory Health. That documentation comes to us and we sign off on it. That is a very easy way to go. But that is not the reality for—

ACTING CHAIR—No. Is that because Territory Health look to you as a provider and want to keep you doing what you do?

Ms Guy—I suppose it is. It is also about good relationships. It is about that historical, collaborative way of working. We have the area of 'challenging behaviours', which is causing some concerns. We are looking into the future and predicting where the areas of work will be. So there are areas for collaboration. Territory Health looks to non-government organisations such as Anglicare to begin to gather evidence and to begin to develop some frameworks and models for ways of working in the future. That is part of the nature of the work and perhaps it is also part of the nature of the way work is accomplished in the Territory.

ACTING CHAIR—How do you become aware of the various programs and funding opportunities available for the three levels of government—I suppose even local government has some funding opportunities—and how to access them?

Ms Guy—Often we are approached by virtue of the organisation and the historical nature. Our most recent program in Anglicare is the personal support program, which is Commonwealth funded. We were aware of that. I wrote those submissions myself, and we were successful. That was 2½ years ago.

ACTING CHAIR—What sort of money are we talking about?

Ms Guy—It is not really a lot, and the arrangement is actually quite difficult.

ACTING CHAIR—What is not really a lot? I might be surprised.

Ms Guy—We have been allocated so many clients, and it is quite a new model for us. As I explained before, we were block funded. This is all very new for us; it is only a month or so old. This is very technological. We use the computer and electronic data. We feed into Centrelink. When we see a client that is recorded and we are paid a service fee for that one visit. We are paid three rounds of service fees over a matter of 12 months, although we may see that client many times when they come back and as we move through a case plan. We have struggled with setting up that system. Again, we have a lot of resources that we can pull in. We have had to buy a new computer and bring in technicians to help us work our way through the electronic data that is required. It will be okay in about six or 12 months as we work through it. So it is actually quite complex. I guess, in terms of financial resources to the organisation, it will be one of our smaller programs.

ACTING CHAIR—What is your annual turnover roughly in terms of dollars?

Ms Guy—Here in Central Australia it is $7 million to $8 million. Anglicare NT is going through an amalgamation with Anglicare Top End. I think we are now looking at about $15 million to $18 million.

ACTING CHAIR—Is that for the whole of the Territory?

Ms Guy—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—We have heard about service provision on the ground from a number of witnesses. I am particularly interested in the remote night patrol group. Do you have any contact with them?

Ms Guy—We do not as Anglicare, but I am aware of the work that they carry out.

ACTING CHAIR—What about the NPY Women's Council?

Ms Guy—We do. We offer respite services.

ACTING CHAIR—So you try and assist them when they need help and things like that?

Ms Guy—We do. One of the major issues for service delivery here in Alice Springs is access to suitable accommodation. This is an ongoing problem because the needs are far greater. I am alluding not just to our disability clients there but also to our mental health outreach clients' need for accommodation. There are some issues peculiar to Alice Springs in regard to accommodation. With the NPY Women's Council we do try to assist people. As I say, we are block funded for so many clients. If at all possible—sometimes we have more clients than we are funded for—we try to assist in that way. They would be respite clients. We also have one or two units that sometimes we are able to accommodate some of NPY's respite clients in.

ACTING CHAIR—How do you communicate with them? Do they just ring you up and say that they have a problem?

Ms Guy—It is pretty much like that. Sometimes it is about favours.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you see any role for coordination?

Ms Guy—We do.

ACTING CHAIR—Tell us about that.

Ms Guy—Okay. We are beginning to develop our own models for respite in terms of Anglicare NT. As a consequence of the amalgamation we now have a head of division for community care and another for respite, so I am the head of one division and another person is the head of the other. That person is located in Darwin and has only recently joined the organisation. As he gathers steam, we will begin to look at models of how we can actually work

in a much more effective and collaborative way. Respite is an ongoing issue, and this is a way we can support communities.

ACTING CHAIR—Who do you see being the coordinator and the liaison between your organisation and Aboriginal communities—or even settlements and the small groups we have around Alice Springs and things like that? How do you perceive that functioning effectively?

Ms Guy—We have nominated a person to do this—a current staff person who has lived in remote communities. She is finishing off a project now, and she will move over into this position. We feel quite strongly that this is a way that we can support communities. The way that respite has historically been run has been more on a personal basis and we want this person to be there. I have already written to Territory Health. I did that sometime ago. I asked them to keep us in mind if a suitable house—those physical resources—becomes available. That has been quite warmly received. They know that we wish to run a respite service from that house. Getting accommodation is an issue and also getting, say, a four-bedroom or five-bedroom house is difficult.

We have just modified four units out on our campus whereby we can have an overnight carer that can access the other three units and we can set up a bit of a different model. The director and I do believe that we need a few ways of perhaps accommodating the higher need people or perhaps people who may just need a few hours a day, but we also need to give families a rest.

ACTING CHAIR—If I were to describe your organisation as one that is at the coalface—and you know what that means: actual day-to-day delivery of service directly—the Aboriginal groups that I have described to you, such as the night patrol and the women's council, are obviously very much at the coalface. I perceive that they have had a lot of difficulty getting funding in the past. Is that just something I have picked up today or is that actually the case? Is it true that because they are so community based no-one really understands what they do?

Ms Guy—I would agree with that. It is very difficult and the needs in all the communities they access are overwhelming. I do not know a lot personally about their organisations but I can certainly understand their frustrations and also perhaps, as you say, those of the coalface workers. But to put in submissions and to ask for submissions really requires a person just for that. They often do not have the resources they can call on. Peak bodies such as AMSANT are also trying to roll out their health zones and do a lot of work, so an enormous amount of work is carried by them.

ACTING CHAIR—What I am trying to get at is that any new model that wants to be successful needs to relate to service delivery on the ground and to ensure that adequate funding is provided on the ground, without a huge bureaucratic overhead.

Ms Guy—Sure, and organisations such as NPY do work so closely with the communities. As I say, I see some similarities there with HACC services, although that is probably not quite correct. I do believe NPY work closely with allied health. They would be a good conduit for getting that money into the communities, without perhaps as much of the bureaucratic way of doing things you find in larger organisations such as Anglicare.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. During my short stint acting as chair of the committee it has been a joy to listen to your evidence. If there is anything further you want to tell us or put to us, please let us know by 30 July, if possible.

[2.25 p.m.]

ANDERSON, Ms Alison, Regional Councillor and Central Zone Commissioner, Central Remote Regional Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

KNOWLES, Ms Vicki-Lee, Policy Officer, Central Remote Regional Council, Indigenous Coordination Centre Alice Springs

LOADES, Ms Rhonda, Deputy Regional Manager, Indigenous Coordination Centre Alice Springs

CHAIR—Welcome. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but should you at any time wish to give your evidence, any part of your evidence or any answers to questions in camera you can make an application to do so and the committee will give consideration to your application. I have to point out, though, that any evidence that is given in camera can subsequently be made public if the Senate orders that to be the case. If we have any questions that we want you to take on notice or if we want any further evidence from you, we would ask that you try to get that back to us within about a month. I invite you to make an opening statement, Ms Anderson, and then we will go to questions.

Ms Anderson—Thank you, Chair. I would also like to acknowledge the deputy chair and other senators. Thank you for giving us this opportunity. I think we have come to a time in Aboriginal affairs where we need to get things right. I have a written submission from the Central Remote Regional Council, which I will table. It is a full submission with some case studies, as well as evidence to prove that mainstream services have not delivered to Indigenous people in my region, the central remote area. I also have an apology from Clarry Rabinya, the Chair of Central Remote Regional Council, who is today attending the full land council meeting out at Lake Nash.

Our submission includes appendix A, the regional council chairs' meeting in Sydney. I think the main thing that we need to concentrate on there is the fact that you have the minister's adviser, Russell Patterson, actually saying formally at that meeting that mainstreaming has never worked for Indigenous people. That is evidence that has come from the minister's adviser to the 35 chairs from right around the country. In appendix B we have the ministerial direction prior to the separation of powers between ATSIC and ATSIS of April 2003. Appendix C is the ATSIS new ministerial direction in June 2004. Whether that new direction has actually cut off any kind of policy influence to the new ICCs, in the minister's new direction it is quite clearly stated that the new Indigenous coordination centres will not be influenced by any ATSIC policy. So there is a contradiction in the minister saying that ATSIC regional councils will still influence direction in policy and priority when in fact, in her latest direction, she has killed that off. Appendix D is an overview of central remote discretionary funding from 1997 to 1998. Appendix E is extracts from the regional council meetings of 6, 18 and 21 July 2001. Appendix F is extracts from regional council meeting minutes from September 2001.

Appendix G is on the proposed Central Australian regional authority model, which was well attended by organisations in Central Australia, and specifically Alice Springs. It was held here,

and Aboriginal people had input into future directions after ATSIC. Appendix H is the minutes from the strategic directions workshop held in Alice Springs to discuss future governance models. Appendix I is the central mode economic framework study. Appendix K is the Central Remote Regional Council housing model. The Prime Minister announced with Clare Martin only a week and a half ago that this is the model in which the Commonwealth in collaboration with the Northern Territory government will try to take that direction, with no real acknowledgement of the Aboriginal people on the Central Remote Regional Council who took the initiative to pursue that model. That model is working because it has come from Aboriginal people who know about the disadvantages of Indigenous people in remote Aboriginal communities.

I would like to read from the submission. This submission has been prepared by the Central Remote Regional Council. The chairperson of the Central Remote Regional Council sends his apologies as he is attending a CLC meeting at Lake Nash to discuss with traditional owners the changes made to Indigenous affairs administration. The submission states, 'There has been very little information communicated to Aboriginal people on the changes occurring. The 1800 number that was established for queries is useless in a region where 90 per cent of residents are traditional language speakers.' The submission continues, 'Commissioner Anderson, NT Central Zone Commissioner and central remote regional councillor'—that is me—'agreed to present this submission on the regional council's behalf after central office refused to approve her travel to the CLC meeting.' I speak seven Aboriginal languages. In my area I can communicate with people from the eastern side to the western side of Central Australia and in the south all the way down to Western Australia. So I have the ability to communicate with my people and, through ceremonies, I have participated in my law and culture. I know the problems that exist in Queensland, in Western Australia, in Central Australia and in the Top End.

The submission goes on to say, 'The regional council is concerned that she is being treated with disrespect after her hard work and has chosen to afford her the respect she deserves by asking her to present this important submission on our behalf.' The submission says that Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group within Australia. Our collective health status is comparable with fourth world countries. Our life expectancy is up to 20 years less than that of our non-Indigenous counterparts. Housing requirements in the remote parts of Australia are at a crisis point, and antisocial behaviour is having an enormous effect on the social cohesion of our communities. Suicide rates amongst our young people are among the highest in the world. Indigenous incarceration rates are disproportionately high, and our population numbers continue to keep us marginalised in the political arena. This is despite concerted efforts by Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders to address the range of complex and compounding issues. The submission says further, 'Our vision statement clearly describes our position in relation to where we see the future'—that is:

> Aboriginal law is the first law of the land; it is unchanging and must be respected. A new relationship must be established between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people based on mutual respect and recognising full Aboriginal self-governance on an equal basis. It is the only way we will achieve real benefits for Aboriginal people.

To this end, the provisions of the ATSIC amendment bill and the information on the replacement structure constitutes a denial of the right of Indigenous people to self-determination. This is of considerable concern as self-determination needs to be enhanced and strengthened to bring about positive change. It is contrary to the aspirations of Indigenous people. The potentially destructive

impact of the move from self-determination to mainstreaming will be seen in the immediate future. Our concern is that once again we will be experimented on and that, in another five to 10 years time, we will be back to discuss what went wrong. We are concerned that the real issues about ATSIC have been overlooked in the current debate, which has focused on a couple of members of the elected arm. There needs to be recognition that the practical application of the ideal of self-determination was limited in practice by the bureaucratic culture that informed ATSIC from the start. Coombs and Wolfe both saw ATSIC's bureaucratic culture as an impediment to the innovations required for the successful implementation of elements of self-determination.

The Central Remote Regional Council are proud of our equitable funding record and we will include details of our 1997-98 to 2002-03 funding allocations in our written submission. The committee will note that the majority of regional council grants were allocated on a formula or per capita basis. With the announcement of the separation of powers and establishment of ATSIC/ATSIS, the Central Remote Regional Council devoted a considerable amount of time to documenting ATSIS program policies, discussing these policies with communities and organisations in the region, and familiarising ATSIS staff with their content. We have been disappointed to receive feedback from our communities that these policies have not been adhered to by ATSIS staff.

The ATSIC Amendment Bill increases the power of the minister and the bureaucracy over ILC and IBA, whose powers as independent statutory authorities are severely diminished. The ILC and IBA will be given the ATSIC assets. Effectively, they will become part of the national estate. Some of these assets, such as the land where Yeperenye Shopping Centre is, were gifted from churches for the benefit of Aboriginal people. It has been ATSIC and Aboriginal representatives and organisations that have developed this gift into a business worth over $8 million.

All major government inquiries into Indigenous affairs funding point to the failure of mainstream agencies in states. The failures incorporate funding failure to the degree that the Commonwealth Grants Commission recommended that extra conditions attached to grants be sought that target some of the expenditure of mainstream special-purpose payments. The failures of mainstream agencies are numerous. In our written submission we intend to provide a detailed case study on the waste and policy failures in the health department in relation to the PHCAP roll-out, whereby Health disregarded the advice of the elected arm and, as a result, wasted millions.

The Central Remote Regional Council support the development of a framework for physical equalisation similar to that employed by the Grants Commission, where disability measures are used to weight allocations according to agreed principles. It is our experience that the exercise of funding discretion by bureaucrats is riddled with the same conflicts of interest, grudges and resentment of particular organisations that the ATSIC elected arm was accused of.

ATSIC is an example of policy failure, not of philosophy failure. The principles of ATSIC that have Indigenous people freely exercising their political, cultural, social and economic rights are fundamental and in no way flawed. What are flawed are the constructs to achieving these principles. We demand the right to have a direct role in determining the policies and priorities affecting Indigenous Australians. The diversity of Indigenous Australians needs to be reflected at the national level so that the most marginalised amongst the marginalised—women, young

people, elders, remote and bush people—have a national voice. Additionally, a regional structure must be retained—a representative structure that receives direct funding; has the ability to hire its own staff; has an internal, clearly defined separation of powers; and is driven by needs based decision-making principles.

To this end the Central Remote Regional Council has already entered into partnership arrangements with key stakeholders to undertake an economic framework study to gain a picture of the current funding in the region and the service gaps and to do qualitative research into service satisfaction. This information will drive the advocacy and collaborative partnership development of the current regional council with the newly established ICCs. In the future—post June 2005—dependent on the outcomes of the High Court challenge of the board of commissioners, the economic framework study would form the basis for regional authority decision making.

Just to go back a little: we feel, as Indigenous people, that it is vital that we maintain some form of democratically elected national voice so that we do not lose the links that allow us to report the failure of the Australian government at an international level and make sure that, as the first people of this country, we have a voice at a national level. You cannot hide from the fact that the failures in ATSIC have been driven by the bureaucrats in ATSIC and now ATSIC/ATSIS.

CHAIR—Thank you. The three-person panel that the government appointed to undertake the review of ATSIC handed down their report last year. They put up four possible models: the status quo, which, at the time, was a division between ATSIC and ATSIS, with ATSIC's roles and responsibilities more clearly defined; regional authorities; larger regional councils; or mainstreaming. Do you have a preferred model out of those four alternatives?

Ms Anderson—We went on the model of still maintaining the separation of powers. We agreed with the review that we should have a separation of powers, which, as a matter of fact, we already had in ATSIC anyway. The board of commissioners and regional councils never really had the delegation to do the stuff that the bureaucracy did. If you look at the Clarke trip to Ireland, which was a major media alert in Australia, that was signed off by a staff member. Everything to do with Commissioner Robinson and Commissioner Whitby was signed off by the bureaucracy. At the end of the day, nobody holds the bureaucrats accountable.

The submission we put into that review actually said that we would throw open our jobs as commissioners to a direct election. In the submission we said that we do not want to be elected as regional councillors first and then go through the process of getting elected as commissioners. Why not throw our hats right out there and nominate as commissioners? If we lose, then we do not go back as regional councillors—unlike how you people get elected. When you lose elections as a minister, you go back as a backbencher. We actually said: 'No, we don't want to go back as regional councillors. If you lose the commissioner elections, then that is it—you're out.' We had a model that still had the 35 regional authorities—that is what we were going to call them—right around the country, and the national chair elected by all members of those councils. This would maintain a democratically elected voice at a national level.

CHAIR—Some people have expressed concern that the lack of a democratically elected body will mean the bureaucracy could be less transparent and have less accountability. What is your view about that?

Ms Anderson—They are people who speak from their own professions. Have a look at the ATSIC elections. People are not forced to vote at ATSIC elections, but the turn-up we get at ATSIC elections is better than what you get when people are forced to vote for you. People go out in droves to vote for Aboriginal people who stand in ATSIC elections. It is very important that we maintain some form of a democratically elected national voice.

CHAIR—There has been concern expressed, though, that, with the move to mainstreaming of services and funding, the accountability and the transparency as to how funding decisions are made and where the money goes will not be there. There are concerns that bureaucracy will basically take control of the money, whereas—as it was put to us yesterday—if you maintain an elected position, the accountability is in the election of that person.

Ms Anderson—Absolutely. Every report that you have had come back to you—from *Many Ways Forward* to the Commonwealth Grants Commission and the Productivity Commission reports—has told you that mainstreaming is failing Indigenous people in this country. We have been the most accountable organisation, the most scrutinised organisation in the country. We have had nine unqualified audits done in ATSIC during the very short time of 12 years, unlike the government and the mainstream agencies.

Take my community of Papunya, which is 270 kilometres west of here. Last year, because we had the ability to bring someone in and train them—an Indigenous man—and then send them back into the community, that person realised that $16,000 from Centrelink was not going into one community. That is an indication to you that Aboriginal people are not accessing the services of mainstream Australia. They do not know how to do it and mainstream Australians do not go out and sell themselves to Indigenous people. They do not have the ability to do that. They do not have Indigenous people working in these organisations who speak the 365 dialects and can interpret to these people about their rights to access mainstream services.

CHAIR—What is your understanding of how, under the changes now being put in place by the government, the government will receive policy advice from Indigenous people? Is it your understanding that it will just be through the appointed expert national body? Is there any other mechanism for Indigenous people to influence policy development in the government?

Ms Anderson—If you have a look at the recent direction, as I said in my opening remarks, the minister has killed off any kind of policy and priority advice from ATSIC, which includes the regional councils. In one direction, she absolutely killed that off. The ICCs or the associate secretary that you now have—you can create fancy names for fancy people now such as the former CEO of ATSIC/ATSIS, Wayne Gibbons; you have 'Associate Secretary' sitting under Bill Farmer's name—still have not educated Aboriginal people about how their policies will influence mainstream agencies.

CHAIR—What flaws can you see in this current system?

Ms Anderson—In my opening remarks I said that there has not been any information sent out to any organisations and there has been no information sent out to remote Aboriginal people, not even in language. They have an 0800 number. They do not know how to contact people. I have had calls galore, even from Queensland last week, from people very concerned about their night patrol programs that have been cut off. In Central Australia just a week and a half ago, when the

staff have made an allocation, there have been major cuts to organisations here in Alice Springs and in remote Aboriginal communities without consultation, without the scrutiny that we went through as regional councils. The scrutiny we were under as regional councils was absolutely enormous. If we gave you $5, Kerry O'Brien, and we took $5 away from you, Chair, we had to have a reason for that $5 coming off your allocation. The staff, the bureaucrats, are not being put through the same process. Without consultation they have just gone and taken $20,000 from an organisation, $100,000 from another organisation, and they expect those organisations to deliver programs.

CHAIR—Finally, Ms Anderson, what do you see is the way forward for Indigenous government? We do not have copies of your submission here. Are you suggesting that the model in that submission from Central Australia is one model we should look at?

Ms Anderson—Yes. You are always going to have many models but it is about us collectively as Indigenous people in Australia or in the states getting together and saying, 'This is the best possible model that will have an impact on service delivery to Indigenous people,' and us as Aboriginal people collectively working together to say what model is best for us. History quite clearly shows you that imposed models, imposed policies and imposed ideas of how the non-Indigenous society feels that Aboriginal people should operate and live have not worked. History shows, on every socioeconomic indicator, that you have failed. I think that opportunity now needs to be given back to the Indigenous people to determine their own future.

CHAIR—Before going to other questions, I want to acknowledge Pat Miller, who has joined the public gallery. Pat is the deputy administrator for the Northern Territory.

Senator O'BRIEN—Can you, perhaps on notice, provide the committee with details of reductions in funding that organisations have received? My understanding was that the government indicated there would be no reduction in services. It seems to me that, if there has been a reduction in funding, it would be reasonable to expect that that will affect services. I would appreciate it if you could, either now or on notice, give us details of the funding body, the amount of funding and change, and the service that is intended to be provided with the funding.

Ms Anderson—Not a problem. We will do that for you.

Senator O'BRIEN—What does the community that you represent suggest the Senate should do with the legislation?

Ms Anderson—I think that first of all the Senate should give Aboriginal people the opportunity to come up with a model. There needs to be thorough consultation nationwide. People are going to have different models in each state, but as individual Aboriginal people we need to come together to say what kind of national model we as Indigenous people right around this country would prefer. I think that we have until October to try to come up with some kind of structure. It is about putting a core group of Indigenous leaders together to talk about that national model.

Senator O'BRIEN—What do you mean by 'putting them together'? Are you suggesting that government should put them together, that this committee should put them together or that those people will come together of their own volition?

Ms Anderson—The people have already come together. I think that, to get a national structure, the government or this committee is going to have to come up with some form of getting these people together in one place to talk about a national structure. At the moment you have the Northern Territory talking about their structure and Queensland, Western Australia and New South Wales talking about their structures, but no-one is really getting together to say what kind of national structure they would like. So I think this committee should take the liberty of calling a core group of people together to talk about some kind of national framework.

Senator O'BRIEN—How should we select those people?

Ms Anderson—I do not know. I do not think I am here to give you that advice.

Senator O'BRIEN—We need all the help we can get.

Ms Anderson—You have people that represent health and people that represent real service delivery and heads of combined Aboriginal organisations in each state. And there is Tangentyere Council. That is my recommendation for the Northern Territory—someone from Combined Aboriginal Organisations or Tangentyere.

Senator SCULLION—I would like to touch on a couple of areas, perhaps in clarification—or perhaps not. With regard to self-determination, I understood you to say that you felt that there was an aspect of ATSIC that could clearly be seen as a process of self-determination for Indigenous people. That was self-determination—you were making your own decisions and moving forward—and that is now gone. Is that pretty much what you were telling us?

Ms Anderson—No. I am saying that ATSIC, as a structure, had some elements of self-determination. I can tell you that, as an Aboriginal black woman who comes from a remote Aboriginal community, for the first three years of ATSIC's life I thought, 'No, I'm not going to stand for regional council, because that is something that has been created by white people.' But I entered ATSIC, and ATSIC has given me, an Indigenous woman, the ability to question mainstream agencies about why they are not delivering appropriate services.

You may know Councillor Armstrong and Councillor Rabinya. Any of the staff members sitting here would tell you that when Clarry Rabinya entered ATSIC you could not get boo out of him. ATSIC gave him the ability to stand up and say to the state and Commonwealth governments: 'You have not delivered appropriate and necessary services to Indigenous people.' That is what ATSIC did. ATSIC was unique in the sense that it had democratically elected Aboriginal people from the grassroots right up to the top level. It was the only Commonwealth agency in this country that had Aboriginal people advising their minister first-hand about the disadvantage in this country. That is the self-determination that we had.

Senator SCULLION—In terms of that self-determination, I understand that there is an important role—almost an advocacy aspect of ATSIC—which is continuing very well and appropriately to advise government on their failures or otherwise. What about ATSIC itself? ATSIC was responsible for the delivery of a number of programs. From the evidence we have heard and from my own experience, we would not say that the outcomes have been anything that anybody can pat themselves on the back about. The Indigenous community in Australia, as you have evidenced, is characterised by some of the worst disadvantage of any community in

Australia. ATSIC has some responsibility for that. You have to balance self-determination but, if we have given that self-determination and those programs to ATSIC and the outcomes are not acceptable, what do we do? The other day I heard a definition of insanity, which was, 'to continue to do the same thing and expect a different outcome'. How do we find the balance between the self-determination aspect, which I think is very reasonable regarding an advocacy group or a voice for Indigenous Australia, and ensuring that there is responsibility and accountability to the wider Australian public to ensure that Indigenous Australia has some justice and equity in terms of the delivery of programs?

Ms Anderson—How is it that you make mainstream Australians, who are eligible to accept funding from mainstream agencies, accountable when you have had three major reports—four with the ATSIC review—that have come back and told you as the government in this country that they have failed Aboriginal service delivery miserably? Are you reforming or destroying Centrelink or Health?

Senator SCULLION—I am not doing any of those things. I am asking you for some advice—

Ms Anderson—I am asking you the question.

Senator SCULLION—I am on this side of the table. You can have a crack at me in a moment if you can answer that question. I am not attacking ATSIC. I think everybody recognises that, whether it is ATSIC or mainstream, in something such as health we have not done it well enough.

Ms Anderson—I will answer your question. ATSIC has never been responsible for health, education or welfare. That is the responsibility of mainstream agencies.

Senator SCULLION—If you are saying that ATSIC is not responsible for those things, then there really is not a question to answer. I accept that. In terms of the regional councils, as you said, they were a white man's creation and in some ways perhaps have not had the ownership in Indigenous Australia that they might otherwise have had. As I understand it—and it has certainly been on the public record—between now and July 2005 the principal role and agenda for the regional councils will be to focus on what mechanism will replace them. The government has clearly said it may or may not be an elected body but it really is up to Indigenous Australia to devise some mechanism under which they believe they can widely consult with constituents and that that whole process can refer to. As a commissioner, how far along the road do you think the regional councils have gone in considering their future and the way that they structure an alternative process?

Ms Anderson—I remember, leading up to 1 July, the Prime Minister and Senator Vanstone put it on the public record in the media that things would go very smoothly and that nothing would change—it would be business as usual. The staff within the ICCs do not know what they are doing, the regional councils do not know what they are doing and I do not think DEWR or anyone else knows what they are doing. If we are talking about accountability to taxpayers, I think the question needs to be asked of the government by this committee: 'Why are all the Family and Community Services staff, at this very moment, in Darwin on taxpayers' money?' They went to Darwin last Thursday night to have a briefing on Thursday and Friday to see what

their future jobs are going to be. They happened to stay on in Darwin on Saturday and Sunday to continue the meeting on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. If that had been done by regional councils, any Aboriginal organisation or us commissioners, we would be on the front page of the *Australian*.

Senator SCULLION—I take it from your response that there has not been a great deal of—

Ms Anderson—Absolutely none.

Senator SCULLION—There has been a considerable response from the regional councils about that. Let us hope that, in the time between now and July, that is further considered. I sympathise very much with the issue of maintaining this advocacy body to keep everybody honest. It is a very important role for a potentially nationally elected—

Ms Anderson—Before you go on, can I just correct something? It is not the regional councils that are not moving things forward; it is because the government failed to inform them what they want. The direction is not known by the regional councils. I would like that on record: it is not the regional councils; it is the government.

Senator SCULLION—I am sorry. I thought it was very clear and I have certainly heard it on the public record. It was my understanding from the questioning of the department in an earlier session that the role of the councils was clearly to provide between now and July 2005 an alternative structure, and they did not write out a representative body; it was an open book and that was the responsibility of the regional councils as a central role between now and July 2005. However, I will, now that it is on the record, be able to check whether or not that has been communicated. I do not see anywhere in these changes the government suggesting that a nationally elected Indigenous voice will be prevented from happening in any way.

Ms Anderson—John Howard came out and said that he would hand-pick a group of people to sit at a national level to give him advice. That is on the public record.

Senator SCULLION—But that is not an Indigenous national body. I am not trying to be argumentative about this. What I am saying is that that is an advisory body. That is not a representative body, because it has been selected; that is part of a government process. They are certainly not replacing what you are intending. I am saying that a nationally elected Indigenous voice or a group of people has not been provided against. We have not said that that should not happen. So why do you think it will not happen?

Ms Anderson—I cannot understand your question.

Senator SCULLION—I will make it a little bit simpler. In other parts of the world they have national Indigenous voices that have nothing to do with government at all, as appropriate. So why would government be involved in any way in selecting a national voice? Why can't we just have a process where people consider having a national Indigenous body? Why should it be up to others or government to organise that? I would have thought that there would be consideration now for people to have a voice outside of any government control at all, because, as you say, that is the most appropriate way to have it.

Ms Anderson—I still cannot understand where you are coming from.

Senator SCULLION—I do not want to have someone jump on me because I am comparing farmers with Indigenous people, but, because we only have one Indigenous body, allow me the comparison with the National Farmers Federation. I can compare it with other Indigenous bodies overseas, but basically government does not fund them to have a national voice. There are national Indigenous voices in Canada, for example. The government does not pay them or have anything to do with them; they have a voice in any event that is completely separate.

Ms Anderson—I understand your question now. You need to stop before you confuse me and so I can answer you. If the government would give us back our assets instead of making them a national estate all the time, we would be like the Farmers Federation as well and would not go cap in hand to you to have some form of national body. If you keep on stealing our assets, of course we are going to be deprived and dispossessed. That is what it is—it is theft. You continue to steal Aboriginal people's assets. You have done it through the formation of all the statutory bodies that you have created. Go back and have a look at the formation of the NACC, NAC, DAA and ADC. What has happened to Aboriginal people's assets in the history of Aboriginal affairs? They have been rolled over into national estates. Where have they rolled over to now?

Senator SCULLION—If it is a resource issue, you will need some resources. Perhaps this is something you can take on notice—and no doubt you are considering this at the moment—what would be the nature of the resources to run an organisation that did not deal with any of the program delivery but just dealt with being a national voice and being an advocacy group, if you like? I do not think we have seen one in a separate form. What resources do you think they would need, both human and financial resources, just to do that particular aspect?

Ms Anderson—No problem. We will get back to you.

Senator McLUCAS—Ms Anderson, in your opening remarks you talked about the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory making a joint announcement. That is not something I know much about. Would you mind explaining what that agreement was about.

Ms Anderson—When the premiers from the states and territories met in Canberra at I think COAG there was a joint press release put out by the Chief Minister, Clare Martin, and the Prime Minister, John Howard. I think a bilateral is being signed off in the Northern Territory this week between the Chief Minister and some of the Commonwealth agencies on where ATSIC's money is supposed to be going and how our money is going to be used. There was a joint press release put out—without any acknowledgement of the Central Remote Regional Council—about how they are going to use our housing model. That is our model where we build the capacity of our Indigenous people in remote Aboriginal communities to build houses. We put the houses out there and give them the ability to train—without being tokenistic—to get real certificates. I will get Rhonda to explain that because she has been a driver, along with our regional council.

Ms Loades—I am deputy regional manager, policy, at the Alice Springs regional office. I am currently a staff member of DIMIA but we are operating on a policy of 'business as usual' so I am still providing policy advice to the Central Remote Regional Council because they are lacking an APS 6, a senior policy officer. I have worked with the Central Remote Regional Council since 1998.

The central remote model is a good model. It achieves a number of objectives. The regional council sat down and looked at the issue of housing. They looked, firstly, at the bad quality of the housing being built in communities—they were often jerry-built—and, secondly, at the lack of appropriate design. Houses would be built and five years later they would be collapsing around people's ears. There were no employment outcomes. Chair Rabinya got very frustrated because IHANT had three consultancies and three consultants came back and said that there was no way they could get employment within remote communities.

Anyway, they pursued the model, which was to establish six standard designs. So, rather than communities being granted an amount of money and then it being up to overburdened town clerks and other community staff to organise construction, construction is organised centrally. That means that, if you live at Kintore, you are assured of as good a quality house as if you live somewhere closer in Santa Teresa. So that was the standard design element. The savings we made by organising construction on a regional basis rather than on a community basis were put into the employment and training program.

On five remote communities we have four apprentices who have all completed certificate II in general construction. They are now studying for certificate III. In two years time we will have 20 fully trained builders on five remote communities. They are currently building two houses per year. This has been project managed, and it was won on competitive tender by Tangentyere Council. These houses are now being built more cheaply by our trainees than by mainstream builders. The very positive effect that it has had on the communities is enormous. When we have been out to places like Ampilatwatja—because the Central Remote Regional Council rotate their meetings around communities to get the fullest impact from people—the communities have basically said, 'That's it now. Thank you. This is the way we want to do everything.' That has been the aspiration of the regional council.

Ms Anderson—It has been driven by the regional council—and that is Aboriginal people—even with bureaucrats saying that it was going to fail. They now realise that it is working. Senator Vanstone took the liberty of being at one of our communities only a few months ago to look at a house that these young fellas had built. She took the opportunity to have her photo taken with a donkey rather than look at the way the house was built and by whom.

Ms Loades—The houses have also passed audit. DCDSCA—that is, the Northern Territory Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs—went and audited the houses. The training houses passed the audit. It was the mainstream construction where they were saying, 'Okay, go back and relay that slab,' and 'Go back and put the tie-downs in the roof.'

Ms Anderson—This was after mainstream builders built four houses with one septic tank, doors that were too short at the bottom and concrete slabs that would crack even when the brickies would come in. The houses were being done cheaper and better by Indigenous people. I can tell you that the feeling is great. That program has enabled Aboriginal people to dream about tomorrow and plan for the future for their families.

Senator McLUCAS—The point you made in your opening comments, Ms Anderson, was that that model has now been adopted Territory wide.

Ms Anderson—That is right.

Senator McLUCAS—That is a great story. There would be an enormous amount of pride, I dare say, among those young workers.

Ms Anderson—But no thanks to our regional council.

Senator McLUCAS—Another issue that is dear to my heart is: how do we as a community, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, encourage women to be involved in our decision making processes? It is something that troubles me as a politician—how do I encourage other young women to be involved? You, as the only woman commissioner, must have some thoughts about this as well.

Ms Anderson—Absolutely. I was hoping that you would not ask me that question, because I do not really want to give you the answer. I was going to make this remark in concluding, after all the questions. I am an Indigenous woman who has had the opportunity to come from grassroots. I was born down the creek; I was not born on a bed. Certain people gave me the courage and the ability to go on and get the small education that I have. But ATSIC has given me greater things. It has enabled me as an Aboriginal woman to have a future and dream about a future. It has given me the ability to realise something that I now see with the abolition of ATSIC.

I thought that as an Aboriginal woman I could live in both worlds and understand the non-Indigenous world, but I have now learned from four years at this level that the non-Indigenous world is full of lies and deceit. I have seen it in Senate estimates questioning, in the way bureaucrats lie to senators. I have seen the ability of public servants to get rid of statutory bodies. I do not like to say this, but I know that for you people, as duly elected politicians in mainstream Australia, the machinery of government and the public servants that you have to deal with mean that it is not really what you want but what the public servants want that happens in this country. I no longer want to accept and believe in myself that I can live in both worlds. I am quite happy living in my little black world and understanding the truth and reality of black disadvantage. I know very well as an Aboriginal woman that nothing will ever change, because there is no equity, there is no justice, for Indigenous people in this country.

Senator McLUCAS—You said very strongly in your statement that we needed to have a direct election. In your mind, is that a direct election on a national basis?

Ms Anderson—Absolutely, yes.

Senator McLUCAS—So you would nominate nationally.

Ms Anderson—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—You would not break that down to states?

Ms Anderson—No. I think that we as Aboriginal people have to throw ourselves up nationally. I have great support in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. If ATSIC or some form of national structure were to continue I would bet you that I would be back in as a

commissioner if we stood nationally, because I am about transparency and openness and I do not like the lies and the deceit that I see.

Senator McLUCAS—The alternative point of view is that if you had a state based election then people would be known within their state—not someone like you who has got a national profile but someone who is starting on a career of representation.

Ms Anderson—I think having direct national elections gives people the ability to build their profile. They can start at a state level by having portfolios in different areas and then build up their profile. I got my profile, well before I became an ATSIC commissioner, when I challenged the former Northern Territory government about lack of service delivery to my community in education and health. My community was the first community to get World Vision to deliver health to a remote Aboriginal community 10 years ago because of lack of service delivery from mainstream agencies at a state level.

Senator McLUCAS—You made a comment about the high level of turnout for ATSIC elections. Would you go the next step and make voting compulsory?

Ms Anderson—Absolutely, yes. The board has put in that submission and regional councils have also put in that submission to make ATSIC elections compulsory.

Senator NETTLE—I want to thank you for your appearance before the committee today. It has been a really informative and powerful message that you have been able to bring as an Aboriginal woman from a remote community, and we appreciate that. You have already given us some really good stark examples of the way in which the mainstream community has not been able to deliver the same kind of outcomes as Indigenous communities. The housing project was a great example of that. You spoke in your opening remarks about another example of that in public health provision.

Ms Anderson—Yes, the Primary Health Care Access Program.

Senator NETTLE—I know you have handed in a written submission on that; we do not have a copy of that here. Would you like to make any comments now for the record about your concerns in that area or is it all addressed in that submission?

Ms Anderson—Vicki-Lee can say something on that.

Ms Knowles—In terms of the PHCAP, the health status of Central Australian bush people and town people is so poor that we were excited at the potential to have additional dollars coming into the region through the MBS scheme. The regional council got on board with the PHCAP contact team, which was made up of members of Territory Health and Commonwealth Health, and really wanted to work closely with them on making this work in the region. We felt that the region had missed out for far too long in terms of doctors and infrastructure and that this was an opportunity to create some equity, not just in comparison to our non-Indigenous counterparts but also across the region.

One of the main things PHCAP wanted to do was first of all to develop a community controlled plan and also to develop a health service plan. The health service plan was very much

about working with communities and for them to identify their needs. By them identifying what the issues where we would create a level of ownership around that for them. It was not about looking at statistical information purely on its own and, if we use Papunya as the example, saying 'The problems at Papunya are renal disease and substance abuse.' It is much more about letting that bubble up from the ground and letting them identify the issues which are relevant for them. By kicking goals in certain areas we could then actually do some of the other, harder, stuff.

The other component was developing a community control process whereby ownership of the issues would happen at the community level via a governance structure of a health board, similar to what has been developed in Katherine west. I do not know whether you know about the Katherine west health board, but it is a structure whereby, at a zone level, representatives get together to decide the priorities for the region and what the funding allocations against those priorities would be.

One of the things that the regional council was particularly concerned about was the development of another governance structure in some of our communities. If we use Yuendumu as an example, Yuendumu has 25 governing committees which govern things from dog control right through to the community government council. Competition for funding actually creates division in communities, and various committees are often pitted against each other. We thought that there could be a greater rationalisation of that where, rather than creating another layer, we could strengthen and develop existing structures within communities and take interested key people from those committees to sit on a governing process—not so much a structure—for setting priorities within the region.

The regional council was really clear that, if communities were being expected to jump on board a health board model then development, capacity building, ongoing training and a slow process were what needed to occur. Unfortunately, the advice from the regional council was never adhered to—I was involved in some of this stuff—and this was despite the fact that Ms Anderson constantly thumped the table, telling people, 'You are not doing it the right way and as a result you will not get the outcomes you want—that is, greater community ownership of the issue.' Consultants were brought on board from external sources to do the community planning and the health service planning with the communities. They were brought on board in November 2002 and had a brief to finish the consultancy by March 2003. The regional council continually expressed concerns that this is a time of year in Central Australia when major ceremonial business happens and that people would not be in the communities, including the senior people—although it is not for me to judge—whom you would need to engage to get a process like this up and running. But timelines and pressure from the Commonwealth meant that it had to happen over that key ceremonial period.

I was involved in some of the meetings at the community level, and I came back and expressed my concerns to Ms Anderson about the agendas that were going on—people were, firstly, not understanding what was going down. There was a misconception that if you sat at the table and nodded your head that meant yes. Those of us who work with remote Aboriginal communities know that that actually means no. There was no time to slowly walk people through it. This was a major change in the way primary health care services were going to be delivered in the region. I need to state that this is my personal opinion. I felt that some of the consultants had an agenda to prop up AMSANT and that process. I felt that there was a bit of power play going on about creating a little bit more of an empire for people. Communities were

saying, 'We don't necessarily want to have health boards,' and they were being told, 'To access the money you have to have a health board.'

The result is that we now have these wonderful plans for the four zones in Central Australia but very few dollars have hit the ground and there is no community ownership of either of those two plans. It seems to me that, if people were just able to let go of the power and listen for a change, we could have made a real difference with this program. Instead our health status in Western Australia is incomparable to that of anybody in Australia.

Senator JOHNSTON—Who is making the decisions? Who is rejecting the plans?

Ms Knowles—Even though ATSIC sits at the table as a partner in the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum, I think one of the key issues was the inability of other agencies to accept the legitimacy of ATSIC—to accept that they come to the table as duly elected people. I do not believe that the machinery of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum recognised and respected the role of ATSIC. ATSIC was seen as coming to the table with a small amount of money, particularly environmental health money. In comparison to the contribution made by the other people sitting at the table, that was seen as a drop in the ocean, and therefore we were seen as junior partners. There was never a real respect and understanding of the role ATSIC played as a representative at the table.

Senator JOHNSTON—Why do you think that was the case?

Ms Knowles—I think it is about ego and letting go of power. I think it is about historical ways of doing business. I think it was because people believed that ATSIC did not have a role to play in health.

Senator JOHNSTON—Who are the people in the forum?

Ms Knowles—The forum is made up of AMSANT, the Commonwealth health department and Territory Health.

Senator JOHNSTON—So it was a bit of a club that was not prepared to listen to on-the-ground advice?

Ms Knowles—Absolutely.

CHAIR—Are you talking about bureaucrats?

Ms Knowles—Yes, bureaucrats.

Senator JOHNSTON—And Aboriginal bodies with vested interests.

Ms Knowles—Yes. There were power struggles. That will happen everywhere, and we would be naive to think that it will not. But the unfortunate thing is that it made a difference on the ground. People were still not receiving the level of services that they needed on the ground.

Senator JOHNSTON—What is the solution?

Ms Knowles—When another representative body for Indigenous people is established, the government should make it really clear to their agencies that it is a serious organisation that needs to be listen to. The government needs to send a message to their own agencies that, whatever the representative body, it is an equal partner in the journey and not, as I have often said to Ms Anderson, the poor country cousin.

CHAIR—So you think there should be a representative body. Under the proposal at the moment, we have a nationally appointed body of experts, becoming the equivalent of an ATSIC advisory body to the minister, and the mainstreaming of programs and funds. There is nothing in between.

Ms Knowles—As an Indigenous person, I believe strongly that we need to have a duly elected representative voice. What that will look like at a regional and national level I do not think we have had enough time to explore. But I absolutely and categorically believe that we, as Indigenous people, need to have a direct say in our future from the legitimate base of being elected by our people to do that.

Senator JOHNSTON—What is the definition of 'direct'?

Ms Knowles—From my perspective, 'direct' means that I put myself forward in my community and they elect me to speak on their behalf.

Senator JOHNSTON—Do you think ATSIC fulfilled that definition?

Ms Knowles—Actually, I do think that. But there are always going to be people who slip through the cracks—people who, because they are representative, do not get elected. That happens in mainstream politics as well as in Indigenous politics. I have forgotten your question.

Senator JOHNSTON—I was going to suggest that we have a dichotomy in Indigenous standards inside Australia, and I am just interested in whether you agree or not. We have a group of people who are concerned, skilled and articulate and who want to be represented, understand what that means and want to have a voice. We have another group of people who are light years away from that who are desperate for service delivery on the ground but do not know how to articulate their needs. The problem that I perceive ATSIC failed to grapple with was how to fulfil the two representative functions. Do you accept that?

Ms Knowles—Absolutely. One of the problems that we have in this country is the grouping of Aboriginal people.

Senator JOHNSTON—The one-size-fits-all model?

Ms Knowles—Yes, we were never one people prior to and after colonisation or dispossession, whichever word you want to use. I think the gap between the remote and the urban context is wide. It is huge.

Senator JOHNSTON—Let us just hypothesise that we have a new model. How do we go about establishing fair representation for those extremes?

Ms Knowles—I do not know.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am not sure I know, either.

Ms Knowles—I sometimes think that we actually have to split the country. Regardless of where you are in this country—whether you live in Sydney in Redfern or whether you live out here—we are disadvantaged. But the reasons for that disadvantage, in my opinion, vary. In the urban centres it is about access. You have all the services there. It is about appropriate access to them. So there is a different level of conversation that needs to happen. In the remote areas you do not even have the basic human rights stuff. That changes where you are in your head. I find that people in the urban centres are a little bit more political than those in the bush. But that is not to say that politics does not happen here and why in the Central Australian context it is so important that people in fact vote and elect those that they trust to be able to progress their journeys.

Senator JOHNSTON—But isn't the problem one of having a predominance of active, articulate, urban people charting the course for Aboriginal self-determination or policy direction to the disregard of the non-urbanised Aboriginal people? Forgive me for using these very hackneyed phrases. If we are going to have a representative body, how do we reconcile the fact that one group is going to want to get the job done fast, has the capacity to do it and does not want to take the other group with it? They are worried about themselves.

Ms Anderson—I will answer that. I think we get back to the situation of categorising who is black enough to receive a service here. I think it goes back to—

Senator JOHNSTON—I am interested to hear say that. What you mean by that? Tell me what you actually, practically mean by that?

Ms Anderson—What you are saying is that the educated, urbanised black brothers and sisters in the city are not black enough to receive any money from ATSIC.

Senator JOHNSTON—No, I am not saying that. I am saying that they have an ability to be representative and to participate.

Ms Anderson—But they are still black.

Senator JOHNSTON—Yes, but to participate in a representative body.

Ms Anderson—They still put their hand up at every ATSIC election to stand for their people. It does not matter if they are one per cent black or 100 per cent black, if their people elect them democratically to stand in elections and be their voice, then they are their voice.

Senator JOHNSTON—I agree with you. I am not saying that. What I am saying is: how do we get a representative body to focus on the people with the most need when representatives do not come from there—when those representing are people who have a much removed standard of living, by and large, from those people who are not urbanised? How do we reconcile that?

Ms Anderson—It is just a matter of changing the numbers you have to represent people in some form of structure. If you are saying that the disadvantage is great in remote and rural communities, then what you do is increase the participation rather than dismantle a whole organisation that has actually built so much capacity in the short 12 years that it has had the ability to do so.

Senator O'BRIEN—Much like your upper house does.

Senator JOHNSTON—So you are saying that the model should be weighted to protect those in most need who are non-urbanised and who are remote?

Ms Anderson—Not 'protect', because it goes back to assimilation. I will always refer back to assimilation. I hate that word, Senator.

Senator JOHNSTON—Sorry, 'protect' is the wrong word. I should have said to 'favour'.

Ms Anderson—That is right. I think we have to get away from the situation of anybody saying that if you are one per cent Aboriginal you are not black enough to speak on behalf of your people.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am not saying that.

Ms Anderson—It is like saying that a bloke who is half Greek and half Irish is not Greek enough to represent the Greeks. I hate to say this, but it is like saying that Philippe, a French bloke who is a policy adviser to Latham, is not—

Senator O'BRIEN—He is Tasmanian.

Ms Anderson—Yes. It is like saying that. I think you people need to get away from the mentality of continually categorising us as to whether we are black enough. I can tell you that my father was a full-blooded Aboriginal man. The reason I am this colour is that some white man came into this country and raped my grandmother.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. I am not actually saying that. I think you are ideally suited to assist me, and hopefully the committee, as to how we reconcile the issues that Ms Knowles and I were discussing, in that you have the dichotomy between—did you understand what I meant by 'dichotomy'? The difference between—

Ms Anderson—No, because you use some big words and, like I told you at the beginning of my speech, I have very minimal education in your area, okay?

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. The difference between the ability of urbanised, articulate—do you know what articulate means?

Ms Anderson—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. In talking about the difference between the ability of urbanised, articulate Aboriginal people and remote, tribal, non-urbanised Aboriginal people, I

used the expression 'There is a light year of difference between the ability of those two people to articulate their needs.' In terms of representation, you say we should weight the remote people, we should give them extra votes, if you like.

Ms Anderson—And another thing is that we have a language barrier. I will say something to you in my language. You did not understand a word that I just said to you in my language. What you are addressing is an ability for you to communicate with remote Aboriginal people. You are addressing the ability that has not been given by the mainstream education department to my people in remote Aboriginal communities. So you are actually admitting a failure of mainstream education to remote Aboriginal people.

Senator JOHNSTON—Just tell me how you think we can arrest and repair the situation that you are talking about through a representative body. How do we get representation for remote people that is, in fact, representative?

Ms Anderson—It is giving them the ability by, like I said, increasing the numbers on any kind of structure to represent people who have the language and ability to communicate in your foreign language, so that you know exactly what we are saying; but you, in return, acknowledge that we need to make sure that we maintain our identity of who we are. To most of us, English is a foreign language. It is my seventh language.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. With the legislation that is coming through the parliament, do you understand the role and function of the Office of Evaluation and Audit?

Ms Anderson—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—You do. What do you understand that they will do?

Ms Knowles—It is our understanding that they will be auditing and providing that level of stuff to our funded organisations. They will be auditing and evaluating—

Senator JOHNSTON—The outcomes and the success of the money that is spent.

Ms Knowles—Of our funded organisations—not the mainstream.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am not sure that is correct.

Ms Knowles—I am just telling you what our understanding is.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. My understanding is that they will be auditing and evaluating service delivery by any organisations, including government. Do you think that is going to make some sort of difference, when I say that to you?

Ms Knowles—I absolutely think that if it is a two-way street, if it is about mainstream auditing and evaluation, then it is absolutely going to make a difference. As Ms Anderson has already highlighted, many of our organisations—and ATSIC as a whole—are the most scrutinised organisations in the whole of the country. So to have that same level of microscope focused in the opposite direction—

Senator JOHNSTON—At the bureaucracy?

Ms Knowles—Yes, at the bureaucracy—I think will be shocking to you.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is what we want to hear: we want to hear you tell us what you see as some of the solutions.

CHAIR—Do you think the act is not strong enough then? The proposal is that the OEA will do that for government departments and may do it at the direction of the minister. Do you think that is not strong enough? Do you think they should do it as a matter of course rather than at the minister's discretion?

Ms Knowles—Absolutely.

Ms Anderson—Absolutely. I think that ATSIC has failed because of some of the elements the minister has put in there, to put herself as the primary contact person throughout the ATSIC Act. If she is sincere then I think she needs to do what the chair has said—over mainstream service providers as well as Indigenous providers—without her having too much input into choosing which ones will be audited and scrutinised, as she has done to ATSIC.

CHAIR—We will have to finish there. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 3.42 p.m. to 3.57 p.m.

GRIFFIN, Mr Michael Paul, Representative, Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs

HOOSAN, Ms Eileen, Key Spokesperson, Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs

DODDS, Ms Patricia, Lhere Artepe

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Hoosan—I am not employed by any organisation. I was elected at a public meeting to present this submission on behalf of the CAO.

CHAIR—I have some formalities to get out of the way before we start. We prefer all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any time during the course of your evidence want a private session with the committee you would need to tell us why. If you want to give part of your evidence or answer any question in a private capacity, you have to make an application to the committee and if we agree that that is fine then we will accommodate that. Any evidence that is given in private may at some stage be made public if the Senate wants that to occur. If we ask you to give us further information or take questions on notice and give us the answers at a later stage, we would like you to try and get those back to us within about a month. I invite you to make an opening statement and provide us with some background. Then, as we have done with other witnesses, when you have finished we will go to questions.

Ms Hoosan—It is our pleasure to be here today to present the CAO's submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs. First of all I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of Alice Springs, who are represented here today, the Lhere Artepe community and also acknowledge our deputy administrator, Ms Pat Miller, who is here today with us.

We are here today to promote Indigenous interests in the Alice Springs region. We represent the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs—a forum that already exists to provide leadership and services, and to develop consistent policy across the broad spectrum of Indigenous affairs. No other organisation in Central Australia is better positioned or offers a clearer, more unified voice than the combined Aboriginal organisations. Combined Aboriginal organisations recognise and respect the self-determination of others but, as individuals, work towards common goals, working together. We work towards unity, a clarity of vision and the courage to take action in uncertain times. Our submission gives voice to a genuine, authentic Indigenous perspective shared by the service providers, communities and landowners in this region of Alice Springs. We recognise that every region will have its own needs and will require its own solution given the uncertainty in our environment. We have adopted this local regional model, which we will present to the committee, as the best possible solution for our region. On behalf of the CAO, we welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission in detail or we are happy to be cross-examined.

CHAIR—Mr Griffin, do you have anything that you want to add?

Mr Griffin—No, I was going to speak to the model.

Ms Hoosan—This submission of the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs was authorised by a general meeting of members on 14 July 2004 at the CAAMA music studio. Executive members Eileen Hoosan and Michael Griffin were delegated to present our submission to the Senate select committee. With regard to the terms of reference concerning the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004, the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs welcome any positive changes to the ATSIC Act which may increase the directness, efficiency and effectiveness of Indigenous programs and policies in this region and nationally. However, the abolition of ATSIC and the regional council by July 2005 threatens Indigenous representation at the Commonwealth level and deprives regionally based Indigenous organisations of their united voice. In recognition of the need for adequate representation and to ensure the unity and effectiveness of policy and programs at the regional level, we propose our own model of regional governance designed to dovetail precisely with the Commonwealth's plan.

With regard to the proposed administration of Indigenous programs and services by mainstream departments and agencies, as we understand it the Commonwealth proposal is to administer regional policy and programs via Indigenous coordination centres, ICCs, acting as a whole-of-government office with staff from multiple agencies. Viewed generally, this mainstreaming and the whole-of-government approach should offer economies of scale, as well as an enhanced capacity for coordination and control of all Commonwealth services to Indigenous communities, organisations and groups. In a like manner, our proposed model for regional governance offers similar benefits, yet retains adequate representation and allows us to speak with a single, united voice for the Indigenous organisations of Alice Springs. With regard to section (c) 'Related matters', our proposed model is presented, I believe, and I ask Michael to speak to our proposed model.

Mr Griffin—If you turn to page 5, you will see a model presented that has been prepared over the last four months in consultation with all the Aboriginal organisations of Alice Springs. I will just briefly go through and describe what is in front of you. As you can see, down the left-hand side of the page is where we have the bureaucracy, and we have deliberately set that up in this way so we can have a separation of powers and separation of funds so that grants could be administered and managed via the government. As we work down the page, you can see that we still accept that we have to have agreements with government and a regional plan to work to. They will generate service agreements—contracts—and therefore provide services into the community and then organisations.

We have not actually specified the major stakeholders. We have accepted that community organisations, service delivery needs and landowners are all part of what we need to consider. Various sector representations will be held within the CAO. We have organisations here in town that, for instance, deliver employment services. They are experts in that field, and we feel that we should use them as a resource, as in the other areas of training, education and everything across the board, basically.

From that, the regional authority, which would be comprised of representatives of those forums, and native title holders would develop policies and liaise with government departments, politicians and so on. It would also monitor the agreements that would be in place. The CAO authority would be able to make comment and understand what the needs of the community are and make sure that they are enacted.

We have not gone any further with how we would deal with that in other regions, but we are aware that other regions, like the Barkly, the central remote area and Larakia in Darwin, are looking at similar plans. Representatives from the CAO could be put forward to those larger forums and then from there to a national body.

CHAIR—We will stop there and ask you some questions.

Ms Hoosan—We would like to spell out the proposed model.

CHAIR—We all have a copy of your submission.

Ms Hoosan—Quickly, the proposed model is built on the pre-existing foundations of a CAO in the Alice Springs region. Most key Indigenous organisations, landowners, organisations and service providers are already members of the CAO, providing a direct, legitimate and economical starting point for reorganisation in a post-ATSIC environment and offering minimum disruption to existing programs and policies. The Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs is the only regional group that can legitimately claim to speak with one voice across the entire gamut of Indigenous affairs and service provision. All other local organisations either represent purely sectoral interests or subsume broader issues under a sectoral banner.

As outlined, the model precisely matches the Commonwealth's policy of regionalism in Indigenous affairs and a whole-of-government approach. The authority would be concerned primarily with liaison, facilitation, policy priorities and the monitoring of agreements. The forum would be concerned with directly advancing the sectoral interests of service providers, landowners, organisations and other participating groups. Member organisations acting in each sector would meet separately in committee and take decisions to the authority for ratification. In turn, the authority would speak with one voice on regional interests and ensure the unity and cohesiveness of policy and priorities across the board.

To prevent the possibility of conflict of interest, the proposed model separates policy and priority goals from control of allocated funds—like ATSIC and ATSIS—thereby maintaining the independence of member organisations and promoting the maximum degree of flexibility for the management and administration of funds. On behalf of its constituent members, the authority would directly negotiate a joint regional agreement and regional plan with the Indigenous coordination centres or other relevant government agencies and departments. Such a move is consistent with the regionalist approach established under ATSIC and with the devolution of programs currently advocated by both major political parties.

The model can work effectively with any national body, regardless of its ideology, structure or processes. The structure of the proposed model reflects the special needs and interests of this geographic area. It would best utilise a regionally based relationship with funding agencies and provide an ability to liaise effectively and efficiently with government, Aboriginal and other

service delivery agencies. Finally, the proposed model would best preserve the participative, democratic traditions of Indigenous organisations and maintain a principle of self-determination in a post-ATSIC environment.

Senator SCULLION—I will touch on a similar question asked of other people giving evidence. We talked about how regional councils or representative groups were somehow elected or unelected. I know this particular regional authority would represent in a general sense a coalition of groups that are already delivering. As outlined, we have got combined Aboriginal organisations, but there is mention of facilitation, liaison, policies and priorities. Under a regional authority, who would the people be? Would they be representatives of just that organisation, and how would they get there? Have you thought that through?

Mr Griffin—All the combined organisations come from the Aboriginal organisations in town, which have memberships and elections. They put people forward. The thought is that those people would come through to the regional authority and would therefore be unelected members.

Ms Hoosan—This model is a genuine representation of Indigenous people who are interested in their organisations. It is the best grassroots election of Indigenous people who serve on their organisations. From there they can represent the organisation at the regional authority.

Senator SCULLION—I am not being critical; I genuinely want to understand. It is probably difficult to be nice about it. What about those people who are not necessarily represented by these organisations? Would you say that these organisations somehow represent everybody in this region or are there people who would perhaps fall through the cracks—who would belong to organisations that are not represented or in fact who are just not a part of those organisations?

Mr Griffin—Because we link with the native title holders, we feel that we basically represent everybody who is here.

Ms Hoosan—I understand your question. I suppose this Senate committee would be concerned about the proper representation of Indigenous people in any organisation or structure. But in Alice Springs it is a small community. We have public meetings. We try to generate interest from most of the Indigenous people here. Some do not choose to be involved in representation at this level but we do have access to people who are involved in the government sector. So there is a choice for people to be involved in Aboriginal affairs here in Alice Springs.

Senator SCULLION—The Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs make up a group of organisations that provide a lot of the service delivery. I am very impressed by the coalition and communication in a whole range of service delivery areas. There is absolutely no question that you would be able to provide representation or authority from the Alice Springs area. But I understand you are talking about a joint regional agreement. What about those communities that are further away—often outside of the normal footprint, if you like, of influence from those organisations? What about those people in the remote communities or communities that are more regional rather than directly associated with the Alice area?

Mr Griffin—They are serviced by the central remote area. Alison touched on how she thought that system worked. Within our system we would make contact with those groups. We do have interaction. Alice Springs provides services to people who come from outlying areas.

We need to know their needs and they need to know what our capabilities are. So there has to be one forum that they can come to.

Senator SCULLION—I have only just seen this document. When you talk about a joint regional agreement, could you give me an understanding spatially or geographically of how big this region would be?

Mr Griffin—Basically, it is the Alice Springs regional area—the town area.

Senator SCULLION—So that is where it is embargoed to.

Ms Hoosan—The regional council boundaries would be what we are talking about.

Senator JOHNSTON—I notice the people whom you have identified are from a whole range of groups—and I do not profess to know what the acronyms stand for—but I take it they all have an area and that extends to certain places. I see there is one from an outstation—a person with the surname of Martin, whose first name I cannot identify, from an outstation with a very complicated name.

Ms Hoosan—Ingkreerke.

Senator JOHNSTON—How far out is that?

Mr Griffin—It services areas north of town, but it is located in town.

Ms Hoosan—People live in communities west of here and the north of town. I would not be able to tell you the distance, but there are representatives here today.

Senator JOHNSTON—Thank you for the submission. I am very interested in it. It says to me that, in a relatively short time, you have come up with a model to replace ATSIC that is regionally based. I am interested in how that process went. Was it a great shock, and was there much of a problem when you came to understand that ATSIC was going to be abolished? What was the response of local people?

Mr Griffin—The response was that, as combined organisations, we realised we had to meet. We had to come up with another strategy. We accepted that change was coming and we had to formulate a structure that best represented the service delivery to the people whom we look after. We also looked at it in a positive way and said, 'Maybe we can get some other outcomes here with government that can improve the way that we deliver services.' We believe that, with the combined organisations, people who represent that group are best placed to understand the needs of their client group, if you want to call it that. They know what their requirements are. There is also an ability in this plan for the combined organisations, in consultation with the native title holders, to do self-assessment—to look at how we operate. We are always being assessed by government. Under our regional plan, we would like to look at the way we deliver services, to be frank and honest with each other and to ask: are we hitting targets, achieving goals and being effective?

Senator JOHNSTON—In your model that you have put to us—which I am very impressed with, given the short time you have had to be able to bring everybody together, and that in itself must have been a huge task—why do you need a joint regional agreement and a regional plan? When I look at the model I see government departments and funding, and then I can see service agreements straight into those communities, into the organisations et cetera. What does that little box on the left-hand side do?

Ms Hoosan—We considered the whole-of-government approach and, while the money is coming from the Commonwealth and the state, we support the facilitation of bilateral agreements with government agencies. We support agreement between individual organisations and the funding agencies.

Senator JOHNSTON—I note that, but I see that you have an intermediary. You have a joint regional agreement, so you bring everybody together and they interface one-on-one with government. It seems one step too many to me.

Mr Griffin—We are hearing things that are becoming more national policy type words—'urban', 'remote' et cetera. We are saying that in Alice Springs we have a unique set of circumstances. We have urban based people, we have people from outlying communities and we have people who have to come to town for various other reasons, so we need to form a regional plan that reflects that. Also, we have other issues within the town that change from time to time. We need to be able to update that agreement and also monitor it, and we need government involved in that. We need to say to government, 'These are the kinds of priorities we're looking at for the delivery of our services,' and those priorities might change. That is what we are saying. So a national policy will not work here.

Senator JOHNSTON—I understand that, and I think that answers my question. I can see a lot of merit in that now that you say you want to have government tailoring its general outlook for your community and that is going to be encapsulated in a regional agreement, highlighting the objectives of what the people on the ground actually want. And then we do the service contracts after that?

Mr Griffin—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is good. Why have you chosen the term 'authority'? What do you understand to be the meaning of the word 'authority'? Why is it not a council, a commission or anything else?

Mr Griffin—We have tossed that around and we are not completely settled on it.

Ms Hoosan—We thought it sounded good.

Mr Griffin—It is just something we have chosen at this time. It could be anything. It is just a name at the moment.

Ms Hoosan—We even thought of the 'Coalition of the Willing'.

CHAIR—It might be a genuinely willing coalition this time.

Senator JOHNSTON—Some of us might like that and others might not. On the next page you have your interaction with a national body. In town there are a very large number of organisations—how many did we say, roughly?

Mr Griffin—Twenty or so.

Senator JOHNSTON—Those organisations that go forward are going to have more representatives—there are more people who are interested—and more articulate people. What safeguards have you thought about for the remote and outlying people who are not as articulate, who do not have as many organisations and whose communities are smaller but whose needs are often greater? How do you reconcile those concerns in the democratic process that you envisage? First of all, do you accept that that is a concern? If it is, how do you address it?

Mr Griffin—I understand the concern. Maybe it could come down to, as we stated before, voting power—there could be an additional vote for remote and outlying areas.

Senator JOHNSTON—I want you to think about this because it is very significant to say the answer is vote weighting. That means that someone gets disenfranchised to some extent, greater or lesser, so I am not sure that is the right answer. I am not sure I have the right answer, but I would like you to think about that because one thing the future plans really need to deal with is how we take everybody along equally, if you follow what I am saying.

Mr Griffin—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—In proposing a regional authority model what regard have you had to the fact that the legislation proposes to retain the Torres Strait regional authority as the only regional Indigenous body with national recognition? Or were you not aware of that?

Ms Hoosan—Yes, we understand that. We did look at the Torres Strait Islander model but we believe in a smaller model to that in the region of Alice Springs with our members and our communities.

Senator O'BRIEN—I take it from what you are suggesting that this regional authority would replace the ATSIC regional councils.

Ms Hoosan—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—I take it from your submission that you are not saying that this is a blueprint for other regions but just for this region.

Ms Hoosan—We are speaking on behalf of ourselves.

Senator O'BRIEN—Should we look at this as something to consider for other regions? Is there a way that we should approach that?

Mr Griffin—We had a meeting here some four or five weeks ago—and NT representatives were present—of other organisations of other regions. They indicated that they were going along in similar ways and they were developing a plan. They saw a need for a plan that represented

their area, and we workshopped that. So basically I think you will get feedback from those groups of a very similar nature to what we are presenting.

Senator O'BRIEN—So you believe that this concept has reasonably wide support in this Territory?

Mr Griffin—Yes.

Ms Hoosan—This is a working model; this can always change. It has changed, in fact, about four times, but we did table this at a Northern Territory meeting in Katherine. When was that, Michael?

Mr Griffin—Two weeks ago.

Ms Hoosan—Michael spoke to this model. Since then we have changed it a bit. We are proud of our regional authority model. It has the support of the organisation and the Indigenous people here, and we think that this model can be taken anywhere in Australia by other Aboriginal people.

Senator O'BRIEN—So if we were to speak, for example, to the representative of the landowners here, the Central Land Council, are they supporters of this model?

Ms Hoosan—The Central Land Council has been involved from the beginning of our meetings. The director came to our last meeting. There were changes made on his suggestion. We see this model as being in a partnership with the model that the land council is proposing.

Senator O'BRIEN—They have some slightly different—

Ms Hoosan—They have a central regional model.

Mr Griffin—They see a bigger picture model, where we would be a member. We are worried about that because of the different ways that we deliver services in Alice Springs. We would like to be able to have the independence to operate our organisations and deliver our services in a manner that is most suited to us. You just touched before on landownership—landowners. We have consulted with the Lhere Artepe group, the native title holders. It is very clear who they are. So, as far as we are concerned, we believe that we have gone through the proper process there.

Senator O'BRIEN—How would the landowners be represented in your model then? Many people would see the Central Land Council as representing the land-holders. Is that how you understand this?

Mr Griffin—No, that is not how it is working now.

Ms Hoosan—The Central Land Council is an organisation. It will have its representative here. At the same time, there is recognition for the traditional owners of this region, who already have their own organisation, the native title Lhere Artepe body. So we do work well together. We recognise individual organisations' responsibilities. That is why we think our regional model is pretty good.

Senator O'BRIEN—So this is based on Alice Springs, basically?

Mr Griffin—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—And the rest of the Territory would be under some other structure?

Mr Griffin—Those other regions, as I said before—like the Barkly region—have indicated that they would go along with something like this. We are aware that the Larakia people in Darwin are meeting and have suggested a similar plan—or are working towards a similar plan.

Senator O'BRIEN—What sort of bureaucracy do you envisage in this CAO regional authority?

Mr Griffin—For a start, it does not require funds. It might need to be resourced with a small secretariat, but we do not see it as being a full-blown organisation. We see that the people would volunteer their time to it from their organisations. It would meet on a monthly basis, I guess.

Senator O'BRIEN—But other organisations are sometimes funded as well, aren't they? Would it be effectively cross-fertilised financially by those other organisations' time?

Mr Griffin—Certainly there has been a commitment by all organisations to support the CAO. Although we have not approached that issue, I do not think that would be something that would be too difficult to do.

Senator O'BRIEN—If you proceeded with this model, how many regional authorities would there be in the Northern Territory?

Mr Griffin—At one point they were talking about 16. The detail of that has not yet been fully developed.

Senator O'BRIEN—How would you categorise your views as to the legislation? Could you give us three sentences on what we should do? What do you think the Senate should do with the government's legislation?

Ms Hoosan—It should take our submission—

Senator O'BRIEN—That is a given.

Ms Hoosan—and use it as a model from the grassroots. I do not think other people have taken the opportunity to develop that. We invited the minister, Senator Amanda Vanstone, to come up here. We advised her, when the legislation was being passed to abolish ATSIC, that we were concerned about our future. We are not going to sit back. We are going to take the first step and be a part of this Senate committee process.

Senator NETTLE—I want to ask you about our term of reference where we are looking at the impact of the mainstreaming of services. In the second diagram in your model it appears to me—and I could be wrong; please let me know if I am reading it incorrectly—that you have services being provided both by Aboriginal service provider organisations and by

Commonwealth and state government agencies. I am wondering whether you have a view about the effectiveness of outcomes in service delivery when those services are provided through a government agency compared to when they are provided by an Aboriginal service provider.

Mr Griffin—That is very relevant because we do work with state and local government. At the moment, that is done in a disjointed manner. There is no actual forum to pull that together. For example, we have contact with the NT government over water issues. The bores are owned by the government but not maintained by the government. We are not able to rectify that because there is no body that can do that. By working together in that regional plan or agreement we hope to coordinate that kind of service delivery—because they have a role to play.

Senator NETTLE—Do you have a view as to whether particular services should be provided by the Territory government or the Commonwealth government and other services should be provided by Aboriginal service providers? Using water as the example, do you believe that responsibility for that should be devolved to various Indigenous community organisations? You do not have to have an answer to that specific question. I just want to give you the opportunity to express a view, if you have one, on that issue.

Mr Griffin—Ultimately we would like to be able to deliver the services to our people through our own organisations. We think we are best placed to do that.

Ms Hoosan—There is an opportunity for joint regional agreements with Commonwealth and state agencies through strategic planning, collaboration and coordination. We believe that the CAO would be a vehicle for the organisations to benefit from a relationship with the Commonwealth and the state governments.

Senator NETTLE—We were talking with Ms Anderson before about Indigenous organisations being involved in the auditing of mainstream organisations who may be providing services where there is not an appropriate Indigenous organisation to provide those services. Do you have a view about the value of that or what role your proposed regional authority may play in that?

Mr Griffin—We see that we would have a role in that. We would want to make sure that any funds we received from government—whether it be local, state or federal—would be used in an effective, proper manner. We would not want to see the money not being spent effectively.

Senator NETTLE—My question was not so much about funds being provided to you but rather, where service provision was being delivered by a state or Commonwealth government agency rather than an Indigenous organisation, what role you see for the auditing office that currently exists within ATSIC or your own organisation in auditing the delivery and effectiveness of that mainstream service to Indigenous people.

Ms Hoosan—It is two way. The CAO would function as a monitoring of agreements between the Commonwealth and the organisations. Organisations are familiar with how the ATSIC Office of Evaluation and Audit worked. We certainly would not sit back; we would monitor the outcomes from all the Indigenous moneys. That is the opportunity that this regional model would provide for Indigenous people. Particularly in Alice Springs, we could say: ‘Where is the

health money? Where is the employment money? What are the outcomes? Who is responsible? Is there an opportunity for regional agreements?'

CHAIR—The members of your Combined Aboriginal Organisations have signed up to this agreement. Where in your plan is an organisation or a representation that would look, say, at education outcomes? There is IAD, but I am talking about early childhood, preschool or primary school outcomes.

Mr Griffin—In that sectorial representation, there would be other people who may well be stakeholders in education—it might be IAD with the department of education or other bodies. They would meet separately and that would be brought forward to the combined organisations.

CHAIR—You would not specifically have an organisation that represents education stakeholders?

Mr Griffin—Not an organisation.

CHAIR—I am trying to get a handle on education outcomes.

Ms Hoosan—Through the forum, you have the opportunity to call people who are interested in education to work out policies and priorities. There will be an opportunity through the regional authority and the regional plan to address the issues of education.

CHAIR—Tangentyere Council has Indigenous employment. I see with Desart and Imparja there are arts and culture, but education seems to be missing. Indigenous business and economic development also seem to be missing. How will those outcomes be looked at?

Ms Hoosan—The Institute of Aboriginal Development is part of the CAO. They support the facilitation role of CAO. Not all organisations are interested in education. It will be those organisations and government agencies that have an interest in education that will be facilitated by the regional authority, along with whatever government agency. The ICC will monitor Commonwealth government policies as well. We see government working with us on policy direction and the monitoring of agreements.

CHAIR—I am still a bit confused about how that would work. Congress is at the table with you. Because education is a huge area, would traditional owners be elected onto the authority to provide policy direction for education?

Ms Hoosan—We would hope the regional authority would provide Indigenous people who have an interest in education. We have had a number of public meetings. The opportunity is there. History will show that those who are committed to the cause of Indigenous people will participate in that process.

CHAIR—The current proposal of the federal government is to have a national advisory committee of appointed experts in particular fields. We have heard a lot of evidence today from people who want a directly elected national body that provides advice to the federal government. What is the view of the organisations that you represent?

Mr Griffin—I believe it is the same: we would like to see people being directly elected to represent us at a national level.

Ms Hoosan—We do not really have a firm position on that. My position is that the government should have representatives from different sections. People who are involved in education and employment should be elected to national committees. We do not have a problem with the government appointing Indigenous people for their skills.

CHAIR—Are you suggesting a model that has a combination of both directly elected and appointed?

Ms Hoosan—A combination, yes.

CHAIR—Is that your personal view or the view of the organisations you represent?

Ms Hoosan—It is still up for discussion, but the way to be representative of all issues across Indigenous affairs is to have people who are involved in those areas elected to the national bodies to have representation along with people who can provide skills for the development of Indigenous affairs in Australia. There has to be a national Indigenous body. In most other countries with indigenous peoples, they do have representation. It would be a shame if this standing committee does not recommend some form of national representation for Indigenous people.

CHAIR—We are trying to get a handle on what form that should take—whether they are appointed experts, elected representatives or a mixture of both.

Ms Hoosan—A mixture.

Senator JOHNSTON—We are in Alice Springs for two days. Yesterday we dealt with issues surrounding the funding of representative bodies—and when I say 'representative bodies' I mean bodies that are recognised as having a responsibility under that national native title legislation. Along with the chair, I invite you in the brief time that we have—and I know that is unsatisfactory but it is better than none, I suspect—to give us any thoughts, submissions or comments that you might have with respect to the state of funding for rep bodies, other resources that are available to them and generally the interrelationships with other organisations, including strategic planning, the setting of priorities, claimant applications pursued outside the native title body structure and non-claimant applications. Those aspects are part of the strict terms of reference. I believe you want to make some comments about native title matters. We can be very broad—if it is touching the terms of reference, that will be fine.

Ms Hoosan—I would like to turn over to the Lhere Artepe representative at the table, Ms Dodds. The Lhere Artepe are native title holders and are familiar with what they see as their future.

Senator JOHNSTON—Ms Dodds, what is your position and role in native title matters?

Ms Dodds—I am the representative of the Antulye people. There are three groups in this area—Mparntwe, Irlpme and Antulye—and we came together to fight for our native title of Alice Springs. In doing so, we won native title in 2000.

Senator JOHNSTON—So you had a determination made by the Federal Court?

Ms Dodds—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—Congratulations.

Ms Dodds—There are other representatives here, too, from the Mparntwe group.

Senator JOHNSTON—If they want to come forward they can, but it is all right if they do not.

Ms Dodds—There are some things that we have been struggling with. I think Betty Pearce talked with you yesterday morning about her issues. We have fought a long time and worked very hard in the last few years trying to get funding—and all of us are volunteers from the three estate groups.

Senator JOHNSTON—Are you a representative body under the act—

Ms Dodds—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—or are you just a claimant group?

Ms Dodds—No, we are a body corp. We are registered.

Senator JOHNSTON—You are a prescribed body corporate?

Ms Dodds—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—A prescribed body corporate is a bit different to a representative body, is it not? A representative body is a regional body that brings together and administers the funding and is responsible for, pursuant to the terms of the act, the functions of organising and coordinating native title claimants within a certain area. For example, the Central Land Council is a representative body under the act.

Ms Dodds—We are on our own. The land council has done its job, and we run the organisations ourselves and have become independent. They come in and support us on different issues, and if we need vehicles.

Senator JOHNSTON—They helped you with lawyers, anthropologists and all the things you needed?

Ms Dodds—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—Now you are the body corporate that administers what has been given to you by the determination?

Ms Dodds—Yes. We have worked very hard, trying to do the things that we have to do in dealing with governments. Our biggest issue is that the land council are still going to represent the native title of Alice Springs in the big meetings nationally for funding. We feel that we have been set up to fail from the beginning because no funding has come directly to Lhere Artepe to help us run our office and to do the things that we need to do for our people.

Senator JOHNSTON—What do you need to do for your people?

Ms Dodds—One is, like I said, working with organisations to monitor what is going on in the town area. At the moment, we do not have people to help us run the office because of the lack of funding. There are people who do the administration of our office and they have had to do that voluntarily. Most of the work has been full on, because most of our people do not just live in town—they live out in communities up north, in Santa Teresa and in the outskirts—and we have to monitor that to bring them in town.

Senator JOHNSTON—Have you applied for funding?

Ms Dodds—Yes, we have.

Senator JOHNSTON—To whom?

Ms Dodds—The Northern Territory government.

Senator JOHNSTON—Under the Northern Territory land rights act?

Ms Dodds—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—When you made that application, did you set out exactly what you needed the funding for?

Ms Dodds—Yes, we did.

Senator JOHNSTON—How much did you need?

Ms Dodds—I am not sure of the amount now.

Senator JOHNSTON—Could you let us know?

Ms Dodds—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—What was the response?

Ms Dodds—We still have not been told anything. We are about 12 months down the track and are still waiting.

CHAIR—To whom did you send that request for money? Was it to Minister Ah Kit or to the Chief Minister?

Ms Dodds—It was to the Chief Minister, and we are still waiting. Our role in Alice Springs has changed a lot. We have just signed an agreement with the Northern Territory government for a development in Alice Springs. We have formed a partnership to develop that area.

Senator JOHNSTON—Are these the lots that have been recently released?

Ms Dodds—Yes. We have managed to get 40 blocks out of that and they have to be sold soon.

Senator JOHNSTON—Why did you not incorporate your request for office and administration funding into that agreement?

Ms Dodds—We have not received any money yet to do anything about it.

Senator JOHNSTON—But did the agreement with the Northern Territory government deal with any of those administrative issues?

Ms Dodds—I think they were part of it. I am not sure at the moment because I was not involved in doing the submission. We all feel that we have been set up. We have our native title—

Senator JOHNSTON—And now your problems have just begun: you have won the battle and then things really start to—

Ms Dodds—Yes, and it is getting worse because there is no funding to do the things we have to do.

Senator JOHNSTON—So you need funding, but what about advice, direction and assistance? Legal advice would be a big matter.

Ms Dodds—Yes, we need legal advice and things like that. We get a little from the land council, but they have not been very helpful lately.

Senator JOHNSTON—Why not?

Ms Dodds—I do not know their reason.

Senator JOHNSTON—Do they have a conflict of interest with other claimants?

Ms Dodds—No, our battle here has been won.

Senator JOHNSTON—Why would the land council, of which you are a member, not provide you with ongoing assistance?

Ms Dodds—I do not want to get caught up in that. We have two representatives from Lhere Artepe on the land council, and we have just recently been given those two positions. So some things are moving fast and some things are moving very slowly.

Senator JOHNSTON—I understand.

Ms Dodds—We have arms and legs everywhere.

CHAIR—But the main issue is that, now that you have won your case, neither the federal government nor the Northern Territory government has given you money. We heard from Betty yesterday that there is no money coming to support the body corporate now that you have won your case. Is that right?

Ms Dodds—Yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—How many blocks have you recently released to the Northern Territory government?

Ms Dodds—I am not sure, but I think they got 43 blocks and we got 40.

Senator JOHNSTON—So they settled with you and the payment, if you like, for the 43 blocks was the 40 blocks of your own land?

Ms Dodds—Hang on, you are confusing me.

Senator JOHNSTON—Am I right about that?

Ms Dodds—I will tell you how I see what happened. We signed the agreement and we let our native title go, and that has gone back to crown land. What happening is that the developers—

Senator JOHNSTON—So you have allowed for some extinguishment over these lots?

Ms Dodds—Yes. That will happen after the blocks have been sold, but it has not happened yet. We have just got Frampton in to advertise and to sell our blocks and it is up to us what we want for them.

Senator JOHNSTON—How much do you think you will make out of the sale?

Ms Dodds—I would not have a clue.

Senator JOHNSTON—But there will be some money.

Ms Dodds—Eventually, yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—The development, servicing, surveying and subdivision of those blocks will be done by the Northern Territory government.

Ms Dodds—Yes. That has already been done.

Senator JOHNSTON—So that is probably why they are not handling your funding application: they are saying that you will have some money from this. Is that right?

Ms Dodds—That is probably right; we will wait and see.

Ms Hoosan—The CAO is concerned for the native title body in Alice Springs because ATSIC administered the native title program. Our concern is that we have not been advised where that goes now.

Ms Dodds—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you, Ms Dodds, Ms Hoosan and Mr Griffin.

[4.57 p.m.]

TURNER, Mr (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I did indicate that, before winding up this afternoon, if people wanted to speak to the committee they could have five minutes to do so. I welcome Mr Turner. Can you give us your full name?

Mr Turner—There are family here, and for cultural reasons I cannot say my first name. I am going to be short and sweet. I am addressing you politicians. ATSIC was doomed to fail from the start. We all know that. You committee members represent the two main parties. I have listened to a lot of stuff today and I am pretty appalled at some questions from the deputy chair—those addressing my people as 'these people' for a start. We are part of this nation. You must remember that we are the first people of this land. The biggest problem here is that, no matter what you discuss in your Senate inquiries, if you do not listen to the people, they are going to fail. Both parties have set many of these organisations up, and they have failed. I remember an old uncle of mine who has passed away saying that ATSIC was doomed to fail. You have created these problems.

Until a treaty is signed and enshrined in the Constitution of this land, you people who are supposed to represent the people have a lot to answer. You are too frightened to address that issue. You must get in your legislative body—your parties—and stop mucking around with the Indigenous people of this land. You can make it a better land if you get off your butts and process that treaty. There are a lot of experienced people out in the Indigenous community who will tell you what should be in enshrined—we tried to get it in reconciliation. ATSIC has collapsed for the exact reason that each government is involved in this corruption. You run down people because they do something silly. You politicians do as much silliness as they do. You have been elected by the people, not your party or the rich and powerful. You have created a lot of these problems; you have tried to divide and conquer the Indigenous race.

Interjector—Excuse me, but I think you should treat this Senate committee with respect.

Mr Turner—I am treating them with the respect they should have.

CHAIR—Mr Turner, we are fairly short of time, and we do have terms of reference that we are working to, and they do not go to reconciliation or to the treaty specifically. I ask you to be brief and perhaps wind up what you want to say.

Mr Turner—I think you have got to come together and work for the good of everyone. I am trying to treat you with respect, but I heard comments today that showed disrespect to our people. If you as politicians do not give respect you do not get it back—okay? Due respect to the family up the back, but I have been here all day and some of the comments are pretty bad. You need to search your souls.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Turner. I thought, in fact, this morning that the Senate committee went out of its way to be culturally appropriate and accommodate women we had from

Yuendumu and men from the night patrol. It is the first time that I am aware of that a Senate committee has split and spoken to men in a particular room and women in another room.

Mr Turner—That is very good.

CHAIR—So we note your comments and thank you for appearing.

Mr Turner—I do hope when you go around Australia you listen to what the people are saying. One last comment: this nation will be great if you work with the people. If you keep trying to divide them, it will not work. With anything people put up, you have to start working with them. Always remember that. The greatness of a nation depend on how it treats its Indigenous people—the first people. If you treat them badly, your nation suffers.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 5.03 p.m.