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Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Indigenous employment

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Monday, 7 November 2005

Members: Mr Wakelin *(Chair)*, Dr Lawrence *(Deputy Chair)*, Ms Annette Ellis, Mr Garrett, Mr Robb, Mr Slipper, Mr Snowdon, Dr Southcott, Mr Tuckey and Mrs Vale

Members in attendance: Ms Annette Ellis, Dr Lawrence, Mr Snowdon, Mrs Vale and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Positive factors and examples amongst Indigenous communities and individuals, which have improved employment outcomes in both the public and private sectors; and

1. recommend to the government ways this can inform future policy development; and
2. assess what significant factors have contributed to those positive outcomes identified, including what contribution practical reconciliation* has made.

*The Committee has defined 'practical reconciliation' in this context to include all government services.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 11.20 am

BURNS, Mr Ronald Kenneth, Training Adviser, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

O'NEIL, Mr Dean Spencer, National Manager, Indigenous Employment and Training, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

CHAIR (Mr Wakelin)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into Indigenous employment, and I welcome you all here today. As you would be aware, the inquiry is seeking a general oversight, with particular focus on positive outcomes and best practice around Australia. In advising you of that, you understand that this committee is a part of the parliament and we ask that it be accorded that respect. I welcome representatives of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. You have made a submission, but do you have a few comments you might like to add by way of a general introduction?

Mr O'Neil—No.

Mr Burns—No, I do not think so.

CHAIR—In your submission you talk about being demand driven and the sorts of incentives that you would see as part of a demand driven process in the national training system. Can you give us further information on that?

Mr O'Neil—With respect to Indigenous employment?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr O'Neil—'Demand driven' is industry led, and it is basically making the system easier for industry to access government research, programs, access to the VET system and that sort of thing. We are working on partnerships between industry, communities and government. That is central to what we do. At the moment, we play the part of accessing programs or assistance for industry and guiding them on how to use them. It is probably a question of red tape that gets in the way, but with respect to industry accessing the pool of talent that is out there in the Indigenous communities, due to high unemployment and that sort of thing, that is what we see as demand driven. They need certain bodies with certain qualifications. We see it as industry saying, 'These are the skills that are lacking out there in the areas that they need to access.'

Mr Burns—From a general point of view, with the training system, ACCI's position is that it ought to be a demand driven system, in that employers are creating the jobs, and the training ought to be delivered in such a way that it meets employers' needs. That is what we mean by a demand driven system.

CHAIR—Thank you. Can we look at those impediments and why it may not be occurring as well as it could, from your perspective?

Mr Burns—From the Indigenous perspective?

CHAIR—Yes. You might talk generally. You can merge into the general mainstream and Indigenous specifically.

Mr O'Neil—With the Indigenous perspective, there is a whole series of things: literacy and numeracy, basic education levels of English, and that feeds into high drop-out rates in primary and secondary schools and that sort of thing. That leads on to these kids having the basic skills to get, say, cert I and II through a TAFE. It is all circular, from our experience. There are social issues, educational backgrounds, community issues, cultural issues—these are all barriers that stand in the way of these kids getting into employment. Where those barriers have been overcome, it has been very successful from what we have seen.

CHAIR—The question becomes: what are a couple of factors that have allowed them to be overcome? You have probably touched on them. That leads me into a double-pronged question. Do you have some examples of where you can really identify the positive, or specific examples where you could say: 'This is a positive example of Indigenous employment. This is why it happened that way and it is just a credit to everybody and is getting good outcomes for everybody'?

Mr O'Neil—Just two weeks ago in Broome, we were running a focus group on some Indigenous marketing materials. There is something called the Kooljaman. It is a safari resort. They have got four kids who are full-time employees doing cert II and cert III. The resort itself is actually owned by two different communities, who have non-Indigenous managers running it for them. These kids, after speaking to them, are looking at long-term hospitality careers. They are fired up incredibly about promoting the hospitality industry within their communities. They are going back every day. Families are seeing this thing and thinking, 'Wow. We can get into it.'

So what has happened there is that the community has formed a partnership with local business councils, TAFE and industry for hospitality training. The community are co-owners of this resort, so all these cultural barriers are taken into account automatically because they are involved. So a lot of those barriers are removed because of these strong partnerships between the industry and owners, basically, and the community. It is going to be very successful. These are the first four. Strangely enough, they have owned the property for a while and these are the first four kids that are going through. They are talking about having their own resorts and that sort of thing. Ongoing travelling maybe—

CHAIR—What do you reckon was the main ingredient that brought that enthusiasm?

Mr O'Neil—I think the main ingredient, from what we have learnt from up there, was the non-Indigenous managers of the resort who took a really strong stance.

CHAIR—That is a pretty important point.

Mr O'Neil—They said, 'Right. We need to get the local kids in here.' That, again, was a necessity as demand was driven by the resort. They said, 'Okay, we can use either backpackers who are there for a couple of months and leave or we can tap into the local market for a secure, stable work force.' They said, 'Right. We've got to change our policies to focus on the Indigenous community.' That is what they did and it is proving to be very successful.

CHAIR—The need is the mother of invention.

Mr O'Neil—Exactly.

CHAIR—With regard to costs, your submission talked about rural-remote setting. We are probably moving away from that. It seemed a pretty viable setting itself. But the cost to provide training is higher than a normal unit cost in urban areas. Can we just get a picture about that, what that means and what we might do to overcome it?

Mr Burns—Before Dean answers, when you asked your previous question, you asked about impediments. The example we had in Broome was a great example. Dean is right: these were very impressive young people. But the difficulty that they were facing and that the TAFE in Broome was facing was being able to deliver that off-the-job component of the training. The TAFE teachers were driving 3½ hours up to this resort to deliver this every second week. That was the only way that they could deliver it because obviously the young people could not come off the resort. That was just a concrete example of one of the impediments, which leads to your next question about the rural and remote—

CHAIR—The distances.

Mr Burns—The cultural difference and so on. I will let Dean speak about the learning and training modes of Indigenous people. But the best way to train young Indigenous people is not the way you can use for non-Indigenous people in remote and rural regions. That is why these TAFE teachers were doing this travelling—because they realised the importance of face-to-face demonstration and so on.

CHAIR—Which leads into some significant cost implications et cetera.

Mr Burns—Yes.

CHAIR—Dean, did you want to talk about this cost, as per the submission, of providing training? I think we have heard a pretty good example but there might be some other comments you want to throw in there.

Mr O'Neil—No, I think Ron hit the nail on the head. It is about the remoteness; it is about connecting the kids to the TAFEs. Where we have seen communities take an active part in industries and with businesses, it is because they do not have the skills required, so they need training. How do we get them the required training? That is for the remote and rural areas. In metropolitan areas, it is different. There are separate issues as far as kids attending classrooms and that sort of thing are concerned. Again, socioeconomic issues come up when kids have to pay for TAFE and that sort of thing. Even when I as an Indigenous kid went to school, there were financial incentives to go to school. There was a $3 cheque each fortnight as a reward for going to school. I do not even know if that still goes on anymore.

Dr LAWRENCE—Thank you for your submission. What came through to me was that ACCI does not seem to have any direct responsibility or programs, if you like, that deal with some of the issues you have raised. Is that a correct impression? You do not run programs in training or working with employers or whatever?

Mr Burns—Our major method of operation is to work through our members. ACCI does not run programs, or rarely runs programs. Usually any programs that are run—having been negotiated through contracts with government in a whole range of areas—are passed on to or subcontracted to members. The industry association or the state and territory chambers of commerce would actually run the programs.

Dr LAWRENCE—Obviously that is something that we could follow up. One of the questions I always have in these areas is about how your approach seems to be to guide industry on how to use government programs. I wonder if your employer members regard themselves as having any special responsibility to Indigenous people, other than finding out the programs that they can be part of. Do they take the initiative? If so, does ACCI work with them to provide them with the tools, for instance, and the understanding to deal with some of the communities, both remote and urban?

Mr O'Neil—Yes. It is funny that you should mention that. The Australian Hotels Association has just spent some time on that, although I do not know the exact time frame. I was at the Accor hotel group, which has been running specific Indigenous training packages off their own bat. For most employers, the financial assistance is actually secondary. Their primary goal, due to the skills shortages, is to find people to fill positions. The Indigenous community is another pool of talent that they can access. It is up to us to assist them and the programs they run on retention and recruitment.

We released our employment strategy for industry last June. That is a basic template for our members to take and tailor to their specific industry. For instance, the Master Builders Association of Australia would take that, tailor it slightly and say, 'These are the steps we need to take on recruitment, training our managers for cultural awareness and those sorts of issues,' and then they would set up a mentoring system. These are the steps they need to take to recruit Indigenous kids and to keep them in their positions. The assistance is helpful, but it is still secondary. We would assist them with recruitment in every way possible.

Dr LAWRENCE—One of the things that is very clear is that it is not just Indigenous people who need education in these matters.

Mr O'Neil—That is right.

Dr LAWRENCE—Often the workplace is not particularly friendly to them—culturally and in lots of other ways, too. Some workers are quite hostile to Indigenous people.

Mr O'Neil—That is right. A large component of that is making sure that the staff who are there are appropriately trained in cultural difference. That is the key component for any employer of Indigenous people.

Dr LAWRENCE—Apart from writing it down, are you aware of any programs that assist managers with educating their work force? It is a bit of a problem, I think. I am not aware of very many things that do that.

Mr O'Neil—No, there is not. There are people out there who are qualified to train but, if the employer does not ring me, then they have to go through the phone book and find someone who is qualified—

Dr LAWRENCE—If they are lucky.

Mr O'Neil—to train somebody. So that is my area. If a company like Accor needed that kind of advice they would call me and I would put them in touch with the right people to run training programs within their organisation.

Dr LAWRENCE—I note—and we were talking about this a moment ago—that you indicate that the cost of training is very high and the normal competitive tendering for training clearly does not work in some of these remote communities. One of the problems that exists at the moment is that the government—and it is not the only government—is forcing that template onto regions and indeed groups that it does not really fit. We were aware in Perth of the urban Indigenous community wanting some connection with Indigenous organisations and people in order to feel comfortable. I think that some of those Indigenous-specific programs are being pushed aside in favour of big providers who can at one level do the job but who may well be alienating the very people they are supposed to be helping. I would be interested in your comment on that.

Mr O'Neil—I have not come across any of our members having those sorts of problems. Once again, we are very large, but I can see that with the tendering templates they—especially individual communities and such—might be drowning if they tried to access the mainstream stuff. But, again, I have been working with the Darebin council in Victoria, who are doing a small business strategy, providing advice on the sorts of steps to get involved with the federal side of things. I do not know much about the state stuff.

Dr LAWRENCE—Do you as an organisation have a look-see at what works and what does not work, evaluate programs and feed that back to government?

Mr O'Neil—Yes, we do.

Dr LAWRENCE—Do you do that fairly routinely?

Mr O'Neil—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—Because that is one of the problems in this area.

Mr O'Neil—Yes. We provide strategic advice under a contract that we have with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on what is working and what is not. We advise them on ways to make system better.

Dr LAWRENCE—I have a final, provocative comment. Mutual obligation is something that Indigenous people are required to be part of, with shared responsibility agreements and the like. It often strikes me that the government side and the business side are pretty much exempt from any punishment if they fail to deliver, whereas Indigenous people can be subject to some fairly unpleasant consequences if they do not shape up. Do you have any view about that?

Mr O'Neil—That is right. As you say, we are under no real obligations. But it is plainly obvious that anything that has been successful in Indigenous employment and training areas has been close and equal partnerships. It would be idiocy, from the employment side of things, not to stand up and say, 'We take responsibility for X.'

Dr LAWRENCE—Encouragement rather than coercion.

Mr O'Neil—Yes, that is right. It is difficult to sign up private enterprise by saying, 'You have to do this.' They would say, 'No, we don't,' unfortunately.

Mr Burns—One of the issues that you raised earlier about the difficulty in an urban environment of being able to meet the needs of urban Indigenous people specifically does come back to some structural things. The whole of the delivery of vocational education and training is based around funding models that require a critical mass. That is part of going back to a demand led system. Because we need a critical mass we therefore produce a whole lot of this but we cannot produce a small number of that. So there are some structural issues around as well that are creating that situation.

Dr LAWRENCE—So there are some flow-on and negative effects.

CHAIR—Going back to Carmen Lawrence's point about the advice that you tender to government, what sort of advice does the body that you are a member of—the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council—provide? How often does it meet? What is its role? Are you on that body?

Mr O'Neil—I was. Unfortunately, AITAC was a subgroup of ANTA, which is no more. It is no longer in existence, but at the time of the submission it was. I was on the board. We provided policy and strategic advice to the ANTA boards on Indigenous vocational education and training.

Mrs VALE—Does that also include any of the new products that you were developing?

Mr O'Neil—As far as ACCI goes?

Mrs VALE—Yes.

Mr O'Neil—No. They have had input—any documents that we write, they would maybe provide comment on, but they would not provide what we do up to the government.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I just have one question because I want to give my colleagues an opportunity to ask questions. I do not know if you can answer this, but, out of your broad membership, if I asked you to indicate on a scale between one per cent and 100 per cent the level of interest and keenness by employers to engage with the Indigenous community generally from an employment and training point of view, could you make a judgment as to where that sits? That is a difficult question because in some parts of Australia there may not be a great number of Indigenous people, so it is a generic question, but I would like to take Carmen's question a bit further.

Mr O'Neil—The difficulty also is that the fields of expertise of some of our member associations do not bring them into contact with the Indigenous population. I would say on average that it was probably 60 per cent. All our members that I speak to are very keen, but I do not speak to all our members all the time.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—No, of course not.

Mr O'Neil—But those I have spoken to are ready to implement recruitment strategies and all those types of things.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Is that tied more to the skills shortage than to anything else?

Mr O'Neil—Yes.

Mr Burns—A lot of our members, too, replicate the federal structure. So when we talk to them we are only talking to the national body, and the national body has state bodies who are much more in contact with locally based employers. So what we get is filtered to some extent. While we can talk about the national body, there may well be some state bodies where that level of interest would be higher than what Dean said and some where it would be lower. It is very hard to get a complete picture because of that federal structure—and I don't need to speak to you about federal structures!

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—No, you don't; I understand.

Mr O'Neil—For instance, the Northern Territory chamber of commerce has an excellent Indigenous employment training strategy, whereas Tasmania is still—

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I understand those differences; it was just a general question—

Mr O'Neil—But I would say—

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—about the level of interest.

Mr O'Neil—I would be comfortable saying it was at least at 60 per cent.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Thanks.

Mr SNOWDON—You referred to the advisory council, which no longer exists. What avenue is there now for the government to take advice of this type?

Mr O'Neil—The Department of Education, Science and Training are currently developing the new VET arrangements. Within those there will be a capacity for an Indigenous advisory group. There will be a whole host—an Indigenous advisory group, one for disabilities—of special subcommittees that will advise the—

Mr SNOWDON—But currently there is a void.

Mr O'Neil—Currently, yes.

Mr SNOWDON—I am interested in your membership and your observation about the willingness of people to be engaged. What is the transfer rate from people who have an interest in being engaged to actually being engaged? If 60 per cent have an interest and are supportive, what percentage of that 60 per cent actually go and do something?

Mr O'Neil—At the moment that percentage is fairly low, but it is up to me to change that.

Mr SNOWDON—What are the factors that are determining the low transfer rate?

Mr O'Neil—It is expertise. They do not want to go in blindly. I think that is basically it. They do not have the expertise to access communities. They do not know how to talk to communities. They do not know how to set up a strategy. For a recruitment strategy, for instance, the process is to find the right publications to put an advertisement in and that sort of thing. I think that has been their main barrier—the expertise in how they go about it.

Mr SNOWDON—Does your organisation have much to do with the Minerals Council?

Mr O'Neil—No, I don't believe we do.

Mr Burns—No, not a great deal.

Mr SNOWDON—Do you have much to do with major mining companies?

Mr O'Neil—No, we do not. If we do, we talk to individual companies. We have never had any formal sort of connection with them.

Mr SNOWDON—What I am leading to is this: with Argyle Diamonds, for example, 20 per cent of their employees are Indigenous and 46 per cent are local.

Mr O'Neil—Those are models that I have looked at. I have been having conversations with the Minerals Council and places like that, because they have very successful employment initiatives. I would not hesitate to say they are almost the perfect employer for remote Indigenous communities, because they are in the area and the communities are an employment pool that they have formed partnerships with to access.

Mr SNOWDON—The lights have gone on only in the last 10 years.

Mr O'Neil—But at least they have gone on. I have been looking at what the Minerals Council and individual companies have been doing, and we would love to run programs with them, but as they are not one of our members—

Mr SNOWDON—What about the relationship between major companies and their contracting companies? For example, I do not know if this is true, but say Argyle has got an employment policy; no doubt they would argue that any company that contracts to them will adopt a similar approach. I can imagine with the construction industry, for example, where there are a plethora of small companies which are contracting to major companies, it would be a little

more difficult to get people to take up the sort of approach that you might be leading them to. Do you have any experience or observations to make of that?

Mr O'Neil—No, unfortunately I do not. I have not come across where they have run those sorts of programs.

Mr SNOWDON—Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR—In your submission that you put in in May, you talked about releasing an employment strategy framework for industry. Did that occur?

Mr O'Neil—It did.

CHAIR—Wonderful. Are you happy to table that?

Mr O'Neil—If you would like, I would be happy to table that.

CHAIR—Thanks very much. I did not expect quite such an instant response.

Mr O'Neil—I thought it might come up. This was publicly released shortly afterwards.

CHAIR—You were very clear about CDEP in the presentation. You had quite a clear feeling about the direction that should take. I invite you to make a comment about CDEP.

Mr O'Neil—I do not think CDEP is as effective as it wants to be. There is one problem with CDEP that I do not like, and that is the fact that those who are on CDEP funding are considered employed. I think that taints the overall numbers. I would like to see something similar to the Work for the Dole scheme, where those people are still considered to be unemployed. That would give a truer picture of what is going on. CDEP funding is wonderful while it lasts. It is under review at the moment and, as I think everybody would know, that funding is probably not going to last, or it is going to be harder for communities to access.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr O'Neil—I think they are heading in the right direction in trying to create employment opportunities within communities where they become self-sustaining. That is a great idea.

CHAIR—You have heard the saying about CDEP: CDEP is on the road, not a destination in itself.

Mr O'Neil—That is right. If accessed properly, it is a valuable source of assistance that can help train communities, but I have not seen it do that yet.

CHAIR—Very good. Thank you.

Mrs VALE—Thank you for coming along today, and I do apologise for being late. In your submission you talk about limitations for the Indigenous Cadetship Program, especially in

relation to the traditional trades. How would you like to see it expanded? If you had your druthers, how would you like to see that work?

Mr O'Neil—The basic concept of the cadetship program is to place tertiary Indigenous kids on a scholarship with an employer—a government department, usually. I have yet to come across anybody who is on a cadetship program within a private enterprise. I received a cadetship when I was at university, so I am a recipient of that—and very thankful too.

I would like to see that promoted to employers, to connect them to the TAFE system and TAFE students, and a scholarship system connected to private employers in the traditional trades. Students may be doing their TAFE component or doing research full time at TAFE. Then if they are doing a plumbing course with a plumber there is a connection placing them in employment after they have done their training. I think that is the key component of the cadetship program. They helped you get your degree but the cherry on top was there was employment at the end of it and you were being trained specifically for that position.

Mrs VALE—I see. But that is not the commitment at the moment?

Mr O'Neil—No, not as far as the traditional trades at that level. The cadetship program at the moment is purely focused on tertiary education, and you have to be in university to apply for a cadetship.

Mrs VALE—Do you have any idea, then, what you would like to see government doing? What encouragement do you think government could give to industry or private enterprise? Probably if you are talking about trades you are really talking about small business people, aren't you?

Mr O'Neil—Yes.

Mrs VALE—Do you have any ideas about how we could encourage small business people to offer that very important reward at the end of the student's time?

Mr O'Neil—Yes. That also brings up the other problem with the cadetship program, which is whether the employer can afford to wear the cost of the training they are undertaking. The way the current system is, the employer often picks up the HECS and pays the student a base salary while they are away at university, so they are not accessing their skills. The employer pays the student that salary, picks up tuition fees and all that stuff. Probably the most difficult question is whether a small business can pick up the cost of someone being trained off-site. Whether it can be addressed by government subsidies I do not know.

Mrs VALE—Perhaps tax offsets?

Mr O'Neil—Possibly, yes.

Mrs VALE—Usually that is more important to small business people.

Mr O'Neil—Yes, tax incentives. Another thing would be just promoting that there is such a program. It has not been—

Mrs VALE—It has not been promoted for trades businesses.

Mr O'Neil—No, it has not. Like I said, at the moment the cadetship program is purely targeted at universities.

Mrs VALE—But there is really no reason why it could not be targeted—

Mr O'Neil—Exactly. There is no reason why it could not be targeted at—

Mrs VALE—And it might actually hit a better target if it is.

Mr O'Neil—That is right. We have found that Indigenous uptake into the TAFE system, for instance, has increased a lot. But, once again, there is the question of going from the TAFE institution to employment—

Mrs VALE—Is there anything that, as a national body, you can feed down to your feeder organisations down at grassroots level about this particular cadetship? Is it worth promoting internally from within your organisation? I am talking about promoting trades.

Mr O'Neil—Yes. If the system was set up so it was there ready to use, we would promote it widely through all our—

Mrs VALE—So we should have a look at it very closely and see how we can mould it or direct it so it is more focused on trades, rather than tertiary education in the traditional sense.

Mr O'Neil—Yes. I think it is halfway there. It is just that at the moment it is focused on universities—on tertiary education and people getting degrees. Even at that level, I have yet to come across anybody who has gone into a cadetship in private enterprise. They have all been into government departments, as far as I know. I think it is a great way for government departments to access tertiary educated Indigenous students into the mainstream, but I think it is too narrow. I do not think it is reaching its full potential.

Mrs VALE—Maybe there is an avenue there that we could recommend.

Mr Burns—We have been promoting very strongly through our membership the idea that they need to start to look at alternative labour sources. The traditional one is always the young and in most cases non-Indigenous people coming out of school. There are a whole range of other ones that we do not need to get into. But the fact that the Indigenous population, unlike the rest of us, is not an ageing population—it is to actually going the other way—means that it is a significant, perhaps untapped market that we have not looked at.

Mrs VALE—I understand, too, that it is very difficult to get a tradesperson in the country. I am told it is really difficult in any country town to get an electrician, a plumber, a builder, a brickie, a chippie or whatever.

Mr O'Neil—That is why we are seeing if we can form partnerships with the minerals guys out there who need those people setting up townships and those sorts of things—those who do

have access to traditional trades, tradespeople and communities. I would love to form some closer ties with the Minerals Council and the mining companies. I think it is a wonderful idea.

CHAIR—I think we are just about done. I will leave it open if anyone else has anything to say. You might like to sum up or mention anything we have overlooked or that has come to mind before we close off.

Mr Burns—As someone who has done some work with Dean on this I would like to say that there is a need, if this is going to be successful, for it to be a two-pronged approach. I think one of you mentioned that too. It is not just a matter of encouraging young Indigenous people to think about training for a career in a trade or something; it is also about working with employers and making sure that, first, they recognise the potential and, second, that we identify what the impediments are and work out some sort of strategy whereby we can assist both sides. Interestingly, it is not just Indigenous people. I think that in some of our other traditional trades we have to target employers and say that they really have to think about this. Somebody expressed it as farmers eating their seeds, that what we are doing is just using up the existing resources. But, in this case in particular, I think there does have to be that two-pronged strategy because it would be dreadful to encourage all of these kids to go into TAFE and do the training and then have them come out and there is nothing for them.

CHAIR—It is a really interesting point. You may have noticed this issue in today's press—I'm sure you would have already—as well as the issue of when someone has trained and who is going to poach them and those sorts of things, which you would be well aware of.

Mr O'Neil—I think in the area of Indigenous employment and education and training their needs to be greater communication between all the parties. There are programs happening in government all over the place and they come so close to doubling up it is frightening. They are not talking to each other.

CHAIR—Good comment.

Mr O'Neil—This has been a problem for as long as I have been in the education system. They just do not talk to each other.

CHAIR—I suppose it is being a bit adventurous, but you wouldn't be able to name a couple, would you?

Mr O'Neil—There should be closer partnerships between DEST and DEWR. I believe those two departments play a key role because they take people from education to employment. These two should be working hand-in-hand every step of the way. Unfortunately, within the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations there are sections and branches that do not know what is going on.

CHAIR—You also mentioned the specific advice on Indigenous issues relating to employment. You may have already mentioned this—I do not recall it—but I understand that you put a significant amount of effort into that in terms of how you advise your members and tell them what you think is important. Are you able to give us anything else on that? It is probably in here anyway.

Mr O'Neil—Yes, that document is a basic template. It also outlines the recommendations for the steps you would take—recruitment, using the right publications, talking to the right people, using your local chambers and who would have the specific Indigenous newspapers where you would advertise and those sorts of things. We outline all of that and what programs there are and what assistance there is. Ultimately, I am there to assist them in any way possible. That is basically all outlined in that.

CHAIR—Terrific. Thank you, and thank you for your leadership too. I think many are coming to it, we would say, a little late, perhaps. But they are coming to it, and it is great. We appreciate your time here today.

Resolved (on motion by **Dr Lawrence**, seconded by **Mr Snowdon**):

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

Committee adjourned at 11.59 pm