COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Indigenous employment

MONDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2006

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Monday, 6 February 2006

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: Mr Garrett, Dr Lawrence, Mr Snowdon, Mr Wakelin and Mrs Vale

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 10.03 am

ALDRED, Mr Tom, Executive Manager, Natural Resource Management Division, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

HUNTER, Mr Colin, Acting National Manager, Cargo and Shipping, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

HURRY, Mr Glenn, Executive Manager, Fisheries and Forestry Division, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

SHANNON, Mr John, Policy Officer, People and Strategies, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

THOMPSON, Mr Ian, Executive Manager, Rural Policy and Innovation Division, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

YUILE, Mr Peter, Executive Director, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

CHAIR (Mr Wakelin)—I declare open this public hearing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee, which is inquiring into Indigenous employment. I welcome representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Yuile—I am also a deputy secretary in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. I have been with the department now for about five months.

Mr Shannon—I work in the Management Services Division of the department and I coordinate the Indigenous Cadetship Program. I am also involved with graduate recruitment.

Mr Yuile—Col Hunter has recently returned from Cairns, where he was the manager of the North Queensland AQIS office. I thought the committee might be interested in someone who has had direct experience with our staff both in Cairns and in the Torres Strait.

CHAIR—Thank you. You have put your submission in, but if you would like to add to that—

Mr Yuile—I have a few comments.

CHAIR—with a bit of an oversight for a few minutes, then we will go to questions.

Mr Yuile—I also have an update since the last report, which I can table for the committee. That expands on some of the information contained in the earlier submission, particularly in relation to the department's FarmBis program and developments in relation to the department's participation in the Northern Territory overarching Indigenous bilateral agreement, which is a territory government to federal government agreement. As I will outline shortly, there is a subsidiary element of that which deals with natural resource management, which we will have an involvement with.

I would like to make some opening comments to put our submission into a bit of context and to clarify where we see ourselves on issues of Indigenous employment. There are two fundamental ways in which the department has an impact on Indigenous employment: firstly, as an agency engaged in government policy and program delivery and, secondly, as an employer in its own right. As the committee would be aware, the department has responsibility for developing more competitive, profitable and sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries and enhancing the natural resource base to achieve greater national wealth and stronger regional and rural communities.

We do not have any direct policy or program responsibility for issues relating to Indigenous people as such. We do not have health or education programs in that sense. However, the department's portfolio interests are obviously largely located in rural and regional Australia, where a significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are located and where rural industries are significant employers in various areas. The outputs, programs and priorities of the department and the interests of a range of Indigenous people and communities intersect, and we will be able to say a little bit more about that through the course of questions. Our portfolio responsibilities in relation to, for example, biosecurity and natural resource management are also issues which intersect with the interests of Indigenous communities, particularly in preserving and developing their country.

In implementing portfolio programs, opportunities can be created for Indigenous employment. In some instances these partnerships involve direct employment of Indigenous people by the department and in other cases the department secures the services of Indigenous owned or controlled enterprises to deliver services on our behalf. So there are two sides to our employment engagement. I would like to touch on four areas in terms of programs that the department delivers. They are a bit more detailed in the submission.

CHAIR—We have the submission in front of us. I am sure the members would have read it.

Mr Yuile—The areas that I need to mention include work in natural resource management, where our department, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment and Heritage, is working with the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination to develop and deliver natural resource management projects under the overarching bilateral agreement with the Northern Territory government on Indigenous issues. This is part of the Australian government's new Indigenous service delivery mechanism, and a natural resource management schedule—which is a supplement to the overarching agreement—will provide scope to support proposals within a shared responsibility agreement and/or as a regional partnership agreement between Indigenous communities and government agencies at national, territory and state level. The key focus will be establishing activity plans for governments and Indigenous communities to work together on issues of common concern. Tom Aldred's division is particularly involved in that.

FarmBis is an element of the Agriculture Advancing Australia package. Indigenous participation in FarmBis training opportunities has been significant, with contributions of some $6.46 million of the second FarmBis program being provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for some 4,571 training places. The average course duration for the training was 30 hours and the most common industries for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were around wild capture fisheries, beef and vegetables.

The other interesting thing to note is that the courses in managing people and general business management were apparently the most popular amongst the Indigenous participants. Perhaps Ian could say a bit more about that.

CHAIR—Which one was that?

Mr Yuile—Around business management and general managing people programs.

CHAIR—The HR type things?

Mr Yuile—Yes. I think you have some detail in the submission on the aquaculture and forestry strategies. Glenn Hurry can certainly speak in more detail about those. The only thing to note is that we are participating both with traineeships, cadetships and graduate intake within the department. My latest information was that we had four Indigenous cadets in 2004, and we are expecting three cadets this year. Those cadetships are for 40 weeks, I think, of training and then 12 weeks of work experience.

We are also, within AQIS, exploring the opportunities for traineeships in the north. We are particularly interested in trying to get senior secondary school kids for a couple of years to have work experience with us and then after those two years, if they are interested, to explore employment opportunities with AQIS.

CHAIR—Good, thank you. Can I just open up the questions, then I will go to Carmen Lawrence. Do you have a general idea of the sort of Indigenous employment within the industries that the portfolio covers? Do you have a global view or a national view about how many Indigenous are employed within the agricultural fishery industry?

Mr Yuile—Some work has been undertaken by ABARE to do some of that work. I think it is unpublished at this stage, Chairman. Do we have the figures? I know I saw some.

CHAIR—You can take it on notice, that is fine.

Mr Yuile—It is quite difficult, as you know, because people need to self-identify for a start, but they have done some detailed work around each of the industries, for both male and female employees and also by sector. That could be quite helpful. I know it is not published and I would like to get the agreement of the secretary, but it would be likely to help.

CHAIR—That would be quite useful to get, I think, if there is an indication within that about those industries.

Mr Yuile—It not only covers the actual delivery of agricultural work but also the ancillary services in support of businesses.

CHAIR—My next question is related to the COAG type approach, the whole-of-government focus that we are hearing more about from government. I just wondered what was the connection across? For example, does your secretary have a linkage to a COAG trial as part of the COAG—

Mr Yuile—No, we do not manage a trial in the same way as DEWR or transport or one of the other departments for those COAG trial areas. We do participate in a whole-of-government deputy secretaries committee meeting, which I have been nominated for and Ian Thompson has been to, because I have not been available when they have held that meeting. We are also involved in the Public Service Commission review of Indigenous employment. Most recently, I know there were a number of graduates last year identified for programs in Canberra. A number of Indigenous graduates in various places around Australia, for whatever reason, decided that they did not want to leave their towns or their country and we were asked, as I know a number of others were asked, to see if we could place graduates locally. So that whole-of-government engagement in trying to assist with those particular employment placements—

Mr Aldred—If I might add, the work that we are just beginning on a natural resource management schedule to the Northern Territory bilateral agreement is probably an example of where we are engaging in that whole-of-government process. While the portfolio has not led one of the trials, we are certainly engaged with the Department of the Environment and Heritage in doing those sorts of things.

CHAIR—I will go to two areas, forestry and aquaculture. I would appreciate a quick comment on those. With forestry, what do we know about current projects and Indigenous employment? Do we know very much? The focus of the inquiry is on positives. It is easy enough to find the negatives and we have had a litany of those over the years. What we are looking at specifically is the positive. I was just wondering whether there was anything in forestry that comes to mind? I have a couple in mind that I have had mixed reports back on. Do you have anything on forestry?

Mr Hurry—We have got a national strategy on Indigenous engagement in forests that we have started, but it is early days to us. One of our early areas of interest is Tiwi Islands.

CHAIR—Funny you should mention Tiwi Islands.

Mr Hurry—I suspected that was one you had a level of interest in. Whether it heads into native timber use or more into plantation timber is an issue for us to discuss with the community.

CHAIR—I might come back to that.

Mr Hurry—It is one I do not know a lot about but if there is some specific information you need on it, I am happy to take it on notice and get back to you, which might be more use.

CHAIR—I would appreciate that. Just a quick comment on aquaculture. Where do we think we are at?

Mr Hurry—I can cover aquaculture for you. We have had a small aquaculture program under way now for about three years. We initially set up a program with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, a little unit. We thought it was an industry that had the potential to add value to communities but it was one that we needed to take along fairly steadily and that is what we have done with a range of communities. We have some small projects under way at the moment. The crablet one in Darwin that we have highlighted in here is probably an example of how we have managed to pull together some funding from a number of organisations to get

something up and running. In a discussion with NT Fisheries last Friday, they said that the little crablets were in there and going fairly well.

Given its location, it has perhaps a couple of functions. It can be a good commercial venture itself but in the future it may well also be able to provide some training for people from other Aboriginal communities who have an interest in aquaculture. I suppose what we deliberately tried to do with this aquaculture one was to grow it slowly and begin to grow the expertise in the communities as we went along, not try and put a lot of money into something that ended up falling over and actually not being of long-term benefit. It has been a deliberate strategy to take this fairly steadily and with an aim to put real jobs in communities for Aboriginal people, not to spend a lot of money on consultancies. I know we spent some on consultancies, but the prime aim of this has been jobs for Aboriginal people on communities.

CHAIR—With regard to FarmBis, are some states and territories taking it up more than others? My memory is that this is a shared state-Australian government operation. What has the states' response been like? In other words, there are two parts to the question: what is the spread like across Australia, and what is the states' and territories' response to it?

Mr Thompson—FarmBis is funded jointly by the Australian government and the respective states. It is administered by forming a planning group in each state, which then sets the policy direction and then it is administered by an administering agency in the state. I do not have the details of Indigenous participation state by state. My understanding is that in most states there has been a focus on raising skill levels in Indigenous communities starting to become involved in managing land, running beef property as I said, some in vegetables and in fisheries. I believe the strongest emphasis has been in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and parts of Queensland where there are large Indigenous populations with ownership and management responsibilities for land.

The programs for training Indigenous people have involved cooperative arrangements with the Indigenous Land Corporation, and the Indigenous Land Corporation representatives are often on the planning groups.

CHAIR—So ILC is your main partner?

Mr Thompson—Outside of the Australian government and the states, the ILC also becomes a partner in practical delivery, targeting and those sorts of things.

CHAIR—In terms of the states' participation, my experience has been that there has been some reluctance and debate about how this money has been spent. That is in the broad program. Obviously, this is a mainstream program.

Mr Thompson—Yes, it is.

CHAIR—You mentioned the states that perhaps they were a little more predominant in. In terms of the states' willingness to fund, particularly, an Indigenous issue—

Mr Thompson—As you say, there is often a debate between the Commonwealth and the states about where the priorities should be in some of these areas, but the program itself is

operating in all states now except for New South Wales and the ACT. The arrangements are settled down in those other states, and I have not sensed any problem with the priority placed on Indigenous people.

CHAIR—You have those figures on the breakdown of who is doing what anyway, and that might be valuable for us to have a look at. Thank you very much.

Dr LAWRENCE—I have a few general questions. To what extent do the programs that you have described here—particularly the Landcare program et cetera—depend on the availability of CDEP, in some of the remote communities particularly? That is something that is floated for change, so I am interested to know to what extent you are currently with people on CDEP.

Mr Aldred—There is certainly some interaction with a range of projects; not necessarily formal arrangements at a program level or those sorts of things but in the way that, for example, the National Landcare Program or the Natural Heritage Trust would fund projects. A number of those would have additional funding or partnership funding from a range of other sources, and CDEP plays a role in a number of those projects.

Dr LAWRENCE—This is slightly unrelated, to some extent, but is a Western Australian and Northern Territory question that you might expect, given some of the contemporary controversy over the incursion of Indonesian fishing vessels into northern waters and the plundering of the trochus, in particular. It has been an almost 15-year project to restock. To have it so dramatically decimated has led to calls, as you know, for Indigenous people to be more directly involved in the policing of those incursions. What are you doing, if anything, at the moment to engage the Indigenous community? They are very keen. The Western Australian government has a couple of initiatives. I am not sure of the Northern Territory, but there has been a cri de coeur from the people of Western Australian to do something about it. It is a serious issue.

Mr Yuile—By way of introductory comments, Glenn can perhaps talk a bit more about the illegal fishing side of it, but I think that is a classic whole-of-government issue, where you have the interests of the Customs Service, the Fisheries Management Authority and the state and territory governments. In our case also, in the Quarantine Service, we have the associated biosecurity issues.

Dr LAWRENCE—They are coming into land and setting up camps and all that sort of thing.

Mr Yuile—And also the vessels that might carry various pests and diseases. There is a whole-of-government effort going into that area, and perhaps Glenn might want to make a few comments.

Mr Hurry—Biosecurity, quarantine and fisheries are three issues that interest this department because of potential incursions. There are two proposals that have been sent to us—a joint one from the Northern Territory and WA and one from the Northern Territory about Aboriginal sea rangers—and we are considering those at the moment. One of the initiatives that the department has been quietly growing relates to quarantine, where we monitor with Aboriginal people some of the quarantine issues, both in Cape York and across the northern part of Australia. It is how you look at marrying some of these things together in a productive way that is probably important to us.

Dr LAWRENCE—But it seems like an obvious source of intelligence and on-the-ground expertise. These people know the country well. Whether you are talking about sea rangers or management on land, they seem like a fairly untapped resource to me when I look at the communities. Some of them are doing it through CDEP—I know they are doing their own programs—but its removal, given that that is mooted, could create some problems.

Mr Yuile—It is a very important issue for me in terms of wearing my AQIS hat. As you know from the submission, the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy has been in place now for nearly 15 years. Indigenous people have been a critical element of that strategy, which covers the area from Broome through to Cairns. I will invite Col perhaps to say a few words, but certainly we directly employ Indigenous people and Torres Strait Islander people in the strait and the islands in the strait. Also we have Indigenous people in Darwin, Bamaga and in the west. You would know better than I do.

For example, up in the Kimberley region we have a liaison officer located in Broome, who is a non-Indigenous person. He has lived most of his life in the north and has a lot of contacts with a range of language groups in the Territory through his army involvement and involvement on the land. He has been a terrific resource for us in bringing people together. I was up in Kalumburu at the end of last year, just seeing what we were doing up there both with the Indigenous community and in terms of our monitoring of the disease status of the area, and the Indigenous elders certainly are a part of guidance for us in terms of when we go onto country and where we go. Over the years AQIS has contracted Indigenous people to guide us onto their land when we are doing surveys and monitoring, and we are interested to see how we can take that a bit further now.

This fellow in Broome is particularly charged with building awareness, particularly amongst the kids—touring all the schools in the Indigenous communities—and then seeing how we might engage, and what is the best way to engage, the community in that monitoring and surveillance work. As you say, they are as concerned about the disease status of the country as anyone, and that is true across the north. We recently gave a quarantine award to a gentleman from the Tiwi Islands for the work he did for us up there as a ranger. Col might want to make a few comments, because it is part of our strategy.

Mr Hunter—I would characterise it in two ways: there is the direct engagement, where we employ Indigenous Australians in our work and where we are required to intervene with things such foreign fishing vessels and the like and do our border work, and then there is the engagement of Indigenous Australians through other contracted services, where we are working through capacity-building projects—people who own the land, who operate the land, who will notice changes to their environment or to the pest and disease status of their particular environment. We are out there training and educating those people and providing them with skills so that they can come back to us and give us an idea when there is a change to that land or environmental status.

It is a capacity-building sort of thing and it operates very much at a level which can be built on. At the moment there are two people in the Northern Territory who predominantly focus on this community liaison type of work and work with people who own the land. Likewise, as Peter has just outlined, in Western Australia—in particular, in Broome and north of Broome, in the

Kimberley—a lot of that capacity-building work is currently under way and growing. That is also happening in North Queensland, on the cape.

Dr LAWRENCE—Is that providing employment or is it just education for the people—

Mr Hunter—It provides employment insofar as we directly engage and employ Indigenous Australians to undertake work on our behalf. That is one side of it. On the other side of it, it provides employment specifically through the contracts that we run with those local communities. When we are teaching people and making people aware of some of the biosecurity risks to northern Australia, they then give us information and do work on our behalf on a fee for service basis.

Dr LAWRENCE—In relation to permanent employees of the department, what is the current percentage of Indigenous employees?

Mr Yuile—It is about 1.3 per cent or something like that. It varies, of course, by program. For example, in our NAQS program which we have just been talking about it is 55 per cent.

Dr LAWRENCE—But across the board it is only about 1.3 per cent?

Mr Yuile—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—What contribution are the various cadetship programs making to your recruitment? Is it improving your capacity to take on Indigenous Australians in the Public Service?

Mr Yuile—It is certainly improving our capacity. What I cannot tell you—and I would like to be able to, but I have just come back from leave—are the retention rates, because we have had cadets over the last two years. We are taking, hopefully, three this year. I have not been able to determine whether we are keeping these people, but John might know that.

Mr Shannon—Yes. We have three currently with the department and we are looking to take on another three. We had our first cadet finish the cadetship at the end of last year. They have been retained within the department and, in fact, have won a position on the graduate development program, so they are continuing to be trained.

Mr Yuile—One of the things that we are trying to do is to use the cadetships, depending on what the student wants—whether they want a mainstream into a graduate program or stay within a region. Traineeships is the other area that I am keen on, at least within my own area of responsibility in the department. Picking up your point about some of these children in remote areas, if we can get them on traineeships in some form and have them engaged, understand our operations better, but also give them some particular focus for their work in those communities, and then after they finish school—or at least for those still at school, whether we can then build them into further employment opportunities, or contracting arrangements. That is something that I am keen to explore a bit further.

Dr LAWRENCE—Thank you.

Mr GARRETT—Quickly on the traineeships, cadetships and employment, are you setting out real goals and targets in terms of the number of people you would like to see employed in time?

Mr Yuile—We have not done that. Departmentally we have not yet struck targets. At this stage, we have been working on making sure that we can get the best fit and can sustain that employment. We have not had—not in the time I have been in the department for the last few months—a discussion about employment targets, although in the case of AQIS we are looking to see if we can expand the traineeships in the north. But I do not want to set a target on it, because I feel that I need to have a better handle on the differences between the regions—I do not think they are homogenous and one size does not fit all necessarily—and I also want to make sure that I have the management support to sustain people there. I have not set a target as such within AQIS. John, I do not know whether the department has set targets.

Mr Shannon—No, the department generally has not set targets.

Mr GARRETT—I would second what Dr Lawrence said about the AQIS side of things, but my particular interest is in those interrelated programs/strategies that you have: National Indigenous Forestry Strategy, Landcare and Natural Heritage Trust. I would like some more information about the National Indigenous Forestry Strategy. Is it intended that you would be working with private enterprise in terms of the forestry programs?

Mr Hurry—As I said to the chair, a lot of this is in its early stages of development. We have not said that we would not work with anybody in this, because we think that there is probably a mix of investment and interest which will lead us to the best results. In some of it, it may well be just communities; in others it might be co-investment from communities and outside interests in developing forestry initiatives on communities. I guess that is part of employing the Aboriginal officer in the national forest industry council—so that there is an industry overlay on this as well—because at the end of the day we are trying to sell the product from the forestry investment to return a dividend by way of income and employment to the community. Aquaculture is probably the same. We will end up with a range of different investment strategies for different communities, depending on what suits them.

Mr GARRETT—Is there a strategic relationship between two or three of those programs? I am thinking particularly of the sorts of sustainable forest practices that could take place in places like Western Australia, but that links into whether these areas have conservation agreements on them or who has the rights to exploit the resource in those areas. I am wondering whether two or three things kind of kick in with one another.

Mr Hurry—I do not think there have been any great levels of discussion, but Tom might have a better handle on that. There is absolutely no intention that any of these practices—be they aquaculture or forest—be unsustainable or be conducted in a way that is detrimental to the community in the long term. That is part of the base that we are starting from.

Mr Aldred—We probably do not have an absolutely formal connection between the different programs. There tends to be coordination across the department, often on a project level, so that if particular people are looking at a program, under the Natural Heritage Trust they would cross-check with Ian Thompson's area or with Glenn's area to find a way in which projects might be

improved or how we might do collaborative funding and so on. The portfolio has an overall strategy on Indigenous clients. That has been around for a little while and it is about trying to make sure that we do a bit of the work across the portfolio at that sort of project level.

Mr Yuile—Am I right that you are getting at the idea of cocktailing of the strategic developments in an area? Correct? We already have a close connection and close working relationship with the environment department in the natural resource management area through the NHT and through the Landcare arrangements; indeed, in the forestry area we have been working together with them. The NRM schedule offers an opportunity to do just that, within a framework that both departments sign up to and with the NT government. It is not just our resources but also the resources and interests of the NT government. That is yet to be obviously realised, but it seems to me that that is an obvious way in which to bring those programs together.

The chair mentioned the various pilots that have taken place around Australia. I was involved in another portfolio before I came here, up in Halls Creek, and it was a real struggle to help both Commonwealth and state program managers think outside of their particular box—to say, 'Well, how do we bring together my work on Landcare', or whatever it happened to have been, 'and how do we still deliver on the outcomes which governments are looking for within the program?' for a total program effect. That is an area that governments are struggling with and working on.

Certainly in the case of those pilot programs it was a really interesting experience because there was a high level—I would say a higher level than I have ever seen—of collaboration around the Commonwealth departments looking at, 'Well, yes, we have got an imperative. We've got milestones and so on of things to meet, but if we hold off for six months and connect it with this particular program, what is that going to do on the ground with those communities?' Then, of course, whole of government is at the horizontal level; the all of government section with local government areas and with the states, that is really hard yakka. My observation was that there was an enormous amount of goodwill and, at least when I left the portfolio, we were starting to see some traction on the ground. But we have to think about different ways of doing things from what we have in the past, and accounting.

Mrs VALE—To go a bit further than that, Peter, that is intergovernment departments talking together and having a focus and having a strategy. Tom said that the department has a strategy for Indigenous clients. Does that mean that every so often you fellows all get together and think about what potential there is out there in the remote communities that can be exploited for economic opportunities for local Indigenous people? Do you actually sit together and focus on that or is it that, from time to time, things come up and present themselves and you think, 'That will fit within this box'? Do you know what I mean? Do you sit down and focus on the possibilities and the opportunities that might be out there in a cohesive way?

Mr Yuile—Yes.

Mr Aldred—We have not to date had a formal cross-portfolio structure to do that, but I would say it happens—I hesitate to say in an ad hoc manner—in an informal manner, where a whole heap of the officers who are engaged in Indigenous projects and so on basically talk to each

other across the department. To date, there has not been a formal quarterly meeting of, say, divisional heads to look at those opportunities.

Mr Yuile—One of the things that the secretary asked me to take on when I came into the department at the end of last year was to do just this; to see about bringing together our departmental effort. It is a fact of life for government departments, of course, that you run programs and you have certain goals you try and meet and very often the best way to try and get traction on the ground is to have a locational focus rather than a program focus. Whether it be at Halls Creek or down in the South Australian lands or whatever, having a locational focus helps you then to ask, 'Okay, how do we bring these things together?'

That is one of the things we are starting to work on. I have had at least one meeting with this group and some others to ask, 'Okay, what is the level of activity across the department? Are we getting the synergies? In terms of outcomes on the ground'—your question, Mrs Vale—can we bring some of this together? Can we do things a bit differently?' As I say, the locational focus tends to be the best way to make some things concrete. We have started and we have a quite specific mandate to bring that together for the department.

Mrs VALE—Do you have any time frame in doing anything like that or is it still very new?

Mr Yuile—Some areas of the department have a long history of engagement with Indigenous communities and employment, both within the department and beyond it. Others are newer. I have to report back to the secretary in this first quarter about where we are as a group and what our goals and objectives might be in terms of bringing our programs together.

Mr Aldred—In particular, some of the more significant coordination effort is done through a joint team that manages the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality between the Department of the Environment and Heritage and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. A lot of the work that we are starting to do on the NRM schedule to the Northern Territory bilateral agreement is done through that sort of mechanism.

Mr SNOWDON—I want to go back to the issue of quarantine and its relationship with Aboriginal communities. On 7 November a letter was written to Senator Macdonald, the then minister, and Senator Chris Ellison from the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation at Maningrida seeking $250,000 funding, which they would match dollar for dollar, for a program to provide sea ranger services to AQIS and Customs. What happened to that proposal?

Mr Hurry—The specifics of that—

Mr SNOWDON—Can you take it on notice?

Mr Hurry—Yes, I will. I can come back to you on that, but it is under consideration in a package of things that need to be considered.

Mr Yuile—The government is considering a package of arrangements in relation to the illegal fishing and biosecurity issues. I am aware that that letter was sent to Senator Macdonald, and that has been part of the consideration.

Mr SNOWDON—I want to pursue that, because I am a little bit bemused by the lack of response, frankly. This is not a recent event. That community has been actively intervening with foreign fishing vessels for 18 months to two years, with very little assistance, except communicating to AQIS or Customs that they have found a vessel. I am a bit concerned that there has been no proactive attention to this issue by either yourselves or Customs. I know these communities very well. These people are doing this on CDEP, so they are using their welfare entitlement—well, it is not a welfare entitlement, it is a work program—to do this work, and all they require is assistance from the Commonwealth, including training and partnering. This could be done across the Top End.

It seems to me that there is a real issue here about the government not seeing the potential of this already, and I am strongly of the view that they have been very tardy in reacting. Last week I think they discovered three vessels up creeks. The whole biosecurity question is right in their lap.

Mr Yuile—The government has been actively engaged in looking at not just that issue but other issues as well in the north, and that has been very much a part of ministerial consideration. I am not in a position to tell you the outcome of that at this stage.

Mr SNOWDON—What is the relationship between your department and the issuing of licences for fishers around the coast, if any?

Mr Hurry—Most of the inshore licences are issued by the states. The licences that the Australian Fisheries Management Authority issues are generally for outside the three nautical miles.

Mr SNOWDON—What about the interaction between your department and recreational fishers?

Mr Hurry—There is a discussion going on, both in the west and in the east—and about longtail tuna in the north—about resource sharing, which picks up the interests of the recreational charter groups and the commercial groups, to try and get some separation. We are starting to more actively engage rec fishers than we have in the past. The issue of Indigenous fishing will become part of that overall resource sharing agenda.

Mr SNOWDON—I want to give you an example. This does not relate directly to you but it does relate to the issue of fishing. Some four or five years ago the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation in Maningrida applied for a trepang licence from the then Northern Territory government. A trepang licence was issued but it was issued to a Tasmanian company, so there is a trepang fisher sitting out in their harbour knocking off the fish and exporting it to wherever, and the local community do not get a zack out of it. There is a real issue here about the coastal waters—and, indeed, the offshore waters—especially in the Arafura Sea area, where there are Aboriginal people willing to fish who do not get a look-in with the licensing regime because they do not belong to big companies. Is that an issue which is going to be considered?

Mr Hurry—There is a fairly long history, I understand, to the issue of trepang licences in the Northern Territory and how they ended up being purchased by Tassie Seafoods. I understood that

a number of them were in Aboriginal hands and were sold to that company over the years, but I would have to have a look at it and have a more detailed discussion with you about it.

Mr SNOWDON—That is fine.

Mr Hurry—It is an NT government issue.

Mr SNOWDON—What is your relationship with Indigenous protected areas?

Mr Hurry—In a fisheries sense?

Mr SNOWDON—No, not only fisheries but in terms of biodiversity and the gamut of things you talked about earlier in terms of land maintenance.

Mr Aldred—We do not have any particular legislative responsibility or particular arrangements within the government. The managers of those areas would certainly be entitled to make application under Natural Heritage Trust funding and a range of other programs.

Mr Thompson—Indigenous protected areas fall within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. Once an area is declared an Indigenous Protected Area, it is frequently the case that applications will then come forward for Landcare or Natural Heritage Trust funding to do something on that parcel of land, whether it be managing it for sustainable productive uses, in part, or improving the biodiversity on those parcels of land.

Mr SNOWDON—Can you get us a list, if there is a list, of where Indigenous protected areas have been able to access those sorts of resources through your agency.

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—I want to ask specifically about one organisation, Dhimurru Land Management, in north-east Arnhem Land. Are you aware of it?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—They spend a lot of time picking up fishing nets.

Mr Hurry—Yes, they do.

Mr SNOWDON—And saving turtles. Have they had any interaction with you guys?

Mr Hurry—Yes, over a period of about four years there has been some ongoing interaction. They produced a video and they have been working with DEH particularly in the north for the funding for that. I could get you the details of the interaction and the funding, but it has been ongoing. They were involved in a number of meetings in Darwin with us and they came and had a talk to the Australian Fisheries managers at one time about how we could better interact over this problem. It is mostly fishing gear that floats around in the gulf and washes up on that Arnhem Land coast and it is an issue that they have done a lot of work on. I know DEH particularly have tried to work with them to help them out.

CHAIR—That is a good interchange. Thank you very much. We appreciate that there are things that are on notice and no doubt we will work together on that.

Mr Yuile—We will get back to you on that, particularly on those numbers you asked for.

CHAIR—Thank you very much to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

[10.52 am]

DUKES, Mr Craig Thomas, Acting Director, Workforce Policy and Development Section, Policy and Analysis Branch, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

McLAUGHLIN, Ms Joy, Assistant Secretary, Policy and Analysis Branch, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

PODESTA, Ms Lesley, First Assistant Secretary, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the Department of Health and Ageing. As you would appreciate, we have your submission. You may like to add—can we say, very briefly—to what you have already presented to us because we will often have a conversation about things as we see them and the sorts of things that we are seeking from the inquiry. Could I invite you for just two or three minutes to summarise. You may be able draw out of that document in responses to our questions and I will allow a little time at the end just to summarise; you might like to summarise.

Ms Podesta—I am happy to do so.

CHAIR—Thank you, just to add to the submission and then we go into a conversation about where we think it is at.

Ms Podesta—Of course we presented this fabulous, many page overview, but we will just draw upon that and have a discussion with you about the points. I think the most important thing to emphasise is that the health and community services sector is a major contributor to Indigenous employment. The 2001 census showed that the sector's workforce comprised 10 per cent of all Indigenous Australians in employment, so we are very conscious of our responsibilities as a major employer of Indigenous Australians across the sector.

Our workforce policy is guided by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce National Strategic Framework, which was endorsed by all the health ministers in May 2002. We are happy to go in more detail around the objectives and the activities within that framework. The framework seeks to influence the mainstream health workforce as well as the Indigenous specific sector, but it is OATSIH—that is our acronym. I hope it is okay to use OATSIH as a term?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Podesta—OATSIH is the acronym for the office in the Department of Health and Ageing. It is the OATSIH funded services that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care that probably are the most relevant in this inquiry. These organisations have significant potential to employ large numbers of Indigenous Australians and they do provide employment avenues for young Indigenous Australians. The critical numbers here, I think, are

that as at 30 June 2004, the primary health care services funded by OATSIH employed 2,597 full-time equivalent staff, of which 64 per cent, or 1,662, are Indigenous.

The majority of the Indigenous staff are employed as Aboriginal health workers—that is, 620. About two-thirds of these are female. There are approximately 197 full-time equivalent doctors, six of whom were Indigenous at that stage, and there are a total of 275 nurses that include 24 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses. We have a number of strategies and activities in place to continue to build Indigenous employment in the health sector. We will talk about those in some detail.

We have also put a significant investment into the development of a national competency and qualification framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers. Health workers represent the majority of Indigenous Australians who are employed in the health sector. I know many of you will be familiar with the role and the work of Aboriginal health workers. The new health worker competencies will provide nationally consistent standards for training and workplace skills as well as ensuring safety to practise in clinical settings. They are both equally important.

It is expected that the health worker competencies will offer employers a greater range of opportunities to design their health worker workforce.

CHAIR—You are just getting into detail there.

Ms Podesta—Okay, I will not go through that.

CHAIR—We only have a minute to go and then we go into—

Ms Podesta—We provide substantial support to the peak bodies, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association and Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses.

CHAIR—We would very much welcome the document for us to go through at some point; but keep going.

Ms Podesta—Okay. We also provide scholarship schemes. The other two areas that we are happy to provide additional information about are some of the work happening in the whole-of-government trial in the APY Lands and some of the employment opportunities arising from that work. The Department of Health and Ageing is a lead agency in the COAG side in the APY trial.

CHAIR—Your submission states 42 per cent participation versus 58 per cent for the national mainstream, if I can put it that way. What are some of the main inhibiting factors to getting stronger participation than we currently have?

Ms Podesta—By Indigenous Australians in the health workforce?

CHAIR—Yes, remembering that this inquiry is about the positive. There is a positive story here. Having participated in health inquiries into Indigenous health et cetera over the years and a whole range of inquiries, we are aware of some of the positives particularly with Indigenous

health. But what, in your view, would be two or three of the main inhibiting factors in getting that up further?

Ms McLaughlin—I think for the health workforce, education is critical and it starts with primary school and high school retention. We find that getting people into our scholarship schemes is quite challenging, and there have been times when we have struggled to get the number of outcomes that we would expect. Most of them are mature age. We do not get a lot of school leavers, so high school retention probably is a major issue and health status is another. The poor health status of Indigenous Australians must contribute to unemployment.

CHAIR—What are some of the strategies to overcome it, in your view? We are starting to see some things actually making the impact that we would like to see.

Ms McLaughlin—From our point of view, running a primary health care program, essentially, we consider that improving access to high-quality primary health care is making an impact on health, particularly for children. There are some notable improvements in child health in areas that have good quality primary health care available and where services are focused on child health. If we can continue to improve the health of children, I think we can improve their participation in education, and that is where we will start to make a bigger impact.

CHAIR—In terms of Indigenous issues, are there particular cultural matters or other matters that are so obvious to us that we should be paying more attention to them?

Ms Podesta—We commissioned some research into how we can encourage people into health courses, and the need for strong and ongoing role models is critical in communities. Encouraging young people to see health opportunities—working as doctors, working as nurses, working as health workers—as viable, satisfying career options is critical. I know, from discussions with members of the National Indigenous Council, that there is a need to talk to young people in year 7, in year 8 and in year 9 about the types of opportunities that are available to them.

CHAIR—Let me come to the COAG trial that you mentioned. Clearly, I have some knowledge of it. Nganampa Health is the lead agency.

Ms Podesta—It is one of the agencies.

CHAIR—It is the lead agency in health provision.

Ms Podesta—Absolutely.

CHAIR—It was predominantly started by white Australians, with some Aboriginal health workers. Are there any strategies coming out of the COAG trials which encourage far stronger participation by Indigenous people in this industry, particularly in that particular trial?

Ms Podesta—The trial is focused particularly on employment opportunities through two projects, the Mai Wiru and the PY Ku network. I will just check whether Nganapuri is a part of that network.

CHAIR—Through NTY?

Ms Podesta—Through PY Ku.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms McLaughlin—There are two projects: the Mai Wiru stores policy, for which Nganampa is the lead agency, and PY Ku network, which is a network of rural transaction centres across the land, for which PY Media is the lead agency. Both of those have a significant focus on Indigenous employment, so employment of local Anangu people.

CHAIR—That is not specifically in health?

Ms McLaughlin—No.

CHAIR—There does not appear to be any strategy emerging where we are going to see more Indigenous people employed in Pitjantjatjara lands. That is what I wanted to raise with you as an issue which I think is quite vital.

Ms Podesta—The critical issue in regard to the COAG trial has been identifying what things the community want us to advance there, and the stores policy and the PY Ku projects have been the two that have been identified as priority projects. But Nganapuri is part of our primary health services. It is part of the general workforce initiatives that we are already promoting across all of the primary health care services and the competencies framework for Aboriginal health workers. Nganampa will also benefit from the work being undertaken there. We have regular discussions with the major employers around strategies to identify potential Aboriginal health workers—how they can attract them, how they can keep training them and how they can retain them.

CHAIR—But we are not achieving that.

Ms Podesta—No, but in terms of employment levels at the moment, we have progressively increased the number of Indigenous Australians employed in primary health care services. It is a clear objective within our services. As I indicated, it is always a balance, because the capacity to provide quality care is the primary purpose of the services. It is about making sure you can meet both objectives reasonably.

CHAIR—You can see that I am not convinced by what is happening within the trials at the moment, but I would be interested in any feedback that you have on that.

Dr LAWRENCE—You talked about the training and improving the number of Aboriginal health workers, in particular, who are retained. Part of the problem has always been, as you know, that there is a limit—a ceiling—which they do not often go far beyond, and there is a sense with many people that I have spoken to over the years—although I think it is now less of a problem—that there is nowhere to go and that there is just a single classification almost in their minds. That, I suspect, contributes sometimes to the lack of motivation. Are you making any progress on that, in providing career paths for health workers to progress through the system?

Ms McLaughlin—There are some changes. The new health worker competencies, which will be implemented from 2007 for the practice stream, go from certificate II up to advanced diploma. That will give people more of an educational path. One of the things that we will be

talking about is to what extent that can be articulated into enrolled nursing and further qualifications. The Northern Territory government has implemented a registration system for health workers. There are now a number of Medicare items that are open to health workers there, which increasingly professionalises the occupation.

Dr LAWRENCE—I think in your submission you mention that something like one in six of the positions that are currently held by Indigenous people are CDEP. What impact would the cessation of CDEP have on the delivery of primary health care, in particular, and on employment opportunities for Indigenous people? Do you have a sense of that?

Ms McLaughlin—If CDEP was to cease, it would have one of two impacts. Either there would be a reduction in available staff or there would be an increased cost in funding the same level of health service.

Dr LAWRENCE—From another source.

Ms McLaughlin—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—In relation to the success or otherwise of health outcomes—the shared responsibility agreements—are you participating in the construction of some of these agreements and to what extent, at this stage, would you judge them as successful (1) in employment, because that is our focus, and (2) in health care outcomes? There has been some recent publicity again about the poor people in the Mulan community, who are constantly the focus, and it is quite clear that the original success in reducing trachoma has faltered, not to put too fine a point on it, and it has probably never had anything to do with bowsers either. I am not wishing for you to comment on the politics of it, but are these agreements likely to improve health outcomes and employment, in your experience to date?

Ms Podesta—We have a key role now on health issues with regard to shared responsibility agreements. The department has a number of solution brokers now working with—

Dr LAWRENCE—Solution brokers?

Ms Podesta—Yes, working in Indigenous coordination centres. There is a direct relationship between the department and communities through the ICCs. We have invested in a number of shared responsibility agreements that have had direct employment outcomes. We mentioned two in our submission, including the nutrition and training centre attached to the local store in Wanarn. A key activity is a retail training program to support store employees in non-CDEP paid employment. We have also provided $200,000 to the Cape Barren Island Community Wellbeing Centre, which will employ local people. We are also involved in negotiations for two more health focused SRAs, which will include additional employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their communities. They are not finalised yet.

We certainly look to see what opportunities are available for employment; opportunities within the SRAs. Our primary focus in an SRA is to ensure that the policy objectives are realisable and that SRAs are not being negotiated which give an impossible health outcome but rather a realistic health outcome.

Dr LAWRENCE—There are other questions that I could ask, but there are other members of the committee, so I will leave it.

Mr SNOWDON—Have you done any longitudinal studies on the retention of health workers?

Ms Podesta—I do not think we have. Could we take that one on notice?

Mr SNOWDON—Yes.

Ms Podesta—I do not believe so.

Mr SNOWDON—I have been involved, directly and indirectly, with Aboriginal communities for 30 years. I know a lot of people trained as health workers who no longer work as health workers and may not be working at all, so I would be interested to see what work has been done to look at the skill base in Aboriginal communities where health workers have been trained and no longer work as health workers. That would be a useful exercise, I think. What interaction do you have with NGOs working in the health sector or associated sectors?

Ms Podesta—Can you give us a bit more detail?

Mr SNOWDON—Fred Hollows, for example. Fred Hollows has a stores project which has been operating out at Barunga and Beswick and Bamyili, in the South Katherine east area. Has there been any interaction between your agency and Fred Hollows about that work?

Ms Podesta—About the stores project?

Mr SNOWDON—Do you provide any money?

Ms Podesta—I do not believe Fred Hollows has approached us for funding for that project. We work regularly with the NGOs on all of the activities.

Mr SNOWDON—You are not aware of this project?

Ms Podesta—No, we have had a number of discussions. The Department of Health and Ageing is not the lead agency on stores. I always hate to answer a question by saying, 'It's not our department,' but I will just explain it.

Mr SNOWDON—It is not your department?

Ms Podesta—Family and Community Services have taken the lead on the stores. In terms of the relationship with Fred Hollows and the project officers there, I met with them in Alice Springs recently to talk about what they were doing in their work, making sure it fed into the work around the stores project, so in the sense of where we need to work together, absolutely. But I cannot pretend that we can tell you every detail about the overall work on stores policy across government because we are only a contributor to it. We do not run the whole thing, so I cannot tell you if Family and Community Services has funded Fred Hollows around that. I am

happy to take it on notice. In terms of a working relationship with the NGOs, it is a partnership and that is how we work.

Mr SNOWDON—I assumed it was. But the reason I asked the question is that the limiting factor behind that and similar projects is that it is reliant on private sector funding or people making donations. To get someone to sponsor a similar exercise somewhere else is increasingly difficult. I have seen their project and they indicate that there are a number of outcomes: there are health outcomes; there are employment outcomes. Non-Indigenous people who used to run the stores no longer run them. Indigenous people now run them and it makes a difference to a whole range of things obviously. But there are difficulties in getting people to sponsor these sorts of activities on far more than a local basis and I wonder what involvement your department may have in contemplating with other agencies how you might engage in providing underwriting costs of those sorts of projects.

Ms Podesta—As part of the whole-of-government arrangements, there have been a series of bringing together the initiatives around stores, to talk about coordination and activity. It is an interesting area, because it is an area where in many places individual communities have developed their own way of running stores, so it needs to be done in a way that is sensible and sensitive. Certainly we are very concerned to ensure that there is the best opportunity for fresh, nutritious food available in the stores; that they are run appropriately; they are well managed; that they can potentially be a source of income for a community; and that there are employment opportunities for local people. I think there is agreement on all of those things.

There have been a series of meetings across government, put together through the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, about contributing to the range of initiatives around stores.

Mr SNOWDON—In terms of Indigenous health organisations, what role, if any, does your agency have in providing governance training for boards of Indigenous health organisations?

Ms Podesta—Governance training. That is one of those interesting questions. We do not provide governance training per se.

Mr SNOWDON—No.

Ms Podesta—The way an organisation is funded, in Health—because we have a 20-year experience of funding health care services with communities—is that a health board is established and they operate, and they take responsibility. The local OATSI office in the state or territory keeps a close working relationship with the health board. In the development of a health board, we certainly can put an investment into a health board around development activities and training and activities. If a health board is unable to meet its obligations, we often provide additional support and services to ensure that they understand fiduciary or governance responsibilities, as required. It is more as partners with the health boards. We will identify where there might need to be an opportunity for additional training, but we do not have a training program per se. By and large, the health boards run as organisations.

CHAIR—I am wondering whether the member had somewhere particularly in mind.

Mr SNOWDON—I can think of a range of places.

Ms Podesta—Can you?

CHAIR—I think we both know who the particular organisations are.

Ms Podesta—From time to time, some of them do get into trouble, there is no question.

Mr SNOWDON—My concern is that they get into trouble. We do not want them to get into trouble in the first place. The reason I asked the question is that, if I was setting up a new organisation, one of the first requirements I would have would be for governance training. Is it part of your primary funding for any organisation that the Indigenous leadership of these organisations understand their responsibilities and how to manage staff, for example.

Ms Podesta—There are two areas of responsibility there. The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination does provide a range of governance training; that is available through them. But we, as part of our development process with a potential new health board, would enter into a contract with the community and identify what types of support might be required. I will not name one, but I only recently signed off a contract for a range of development activities to lead towards the health board being a fully functional health organisation over an 18-month period. It is a bit of a case by case basis and funds are available within the OATSI health budget for that purpose.

We constantly work as part of the community development function within OATSI to work with communities to identify potential new partners to enter into running health boards.

Mr SNOWDON—Thank you.

CHAIR—As a matter of interest—I accept that you are not directly responsible—do you know what Indigenous employment would be in the stores?

Ms Podesta—No, but we can take that on notice and provide that information for you.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mrs VALE—Sorry, what was that?

Ms Podesta—Indigenous employment levels in each store.

CHAIR—At management level, and I understand the issues around the management of the stores.

Mrs VALE—Thank you for coming today. There are lots of questions I would like to ask.

Ms Podesta—It is much broader than employment really, isn't it?

Mrs VALE—It is. To get down to some detail—and Joy has talked about the poor health status of Indigenous people and that having a real impact on their employment opportunities, and you also spoke about the stores policy—is the major reason for their poor health status the lack of proper nutrition, or is that too simplistic to say that?

Ms Podesta—Yes.

Ms McLaughlin—The causes of poor health status in Indigenous people are really quite complex. It comes from a whole range of factors. You can look across education levels, employment, environmental health, housing, and health behaviours as well. If you look at all of those together, you could not really attribute health status to one or the other; it is really the interaction of all of those factors that leads to poor health status.

Ms Podesta—We have recently signed off on a thing called the health performance framework, and this is designed for a quantitative measurement of the impact of all governments on how they are working across health delivery. It covers all Indigenous-specific services and programs and mainstream services across the continuum of care. It looks at health outcomes, the determinants of health such as socioeconomic factors, including employment, and health behaviours, as well as health system performance. That is so complex it has three tiers, 18 domains and 90 performance measures, so it is a recognition that the factors are so complex and interlinked but all governments have signed off on collecting and reporting on that data.

Mrs VALE—I suppose it is like what comes first, the chicken or the egg? You cannot have good employment levels if you have a real health issue here. Obviously, nutrition is a consideration, if I can say that, and probably a relevant consideration would be hygiene and the access to good water supplies and things like that.

Ms Podesta—Environmental factors; without question.

Mrs VALE—What opportunities do you have through your stores policy? How do you take the stores policy and how do you use that as an opportunity to perhaps increase or to improve nutrition amongst Indigenous families and even when it comes to proper hygiene. Do you have any access to encourage education in that regard?

Ms Podesta—Maybe I should give an example of one of the projects funded in the Northern Territory at the moment, just to explain that project and hope it will illustrate some of the answers around that. Within health there is a framework agreement and there are local arrangements for a consultative forum between the Aboriginal community controlled sector, the state government and the Australian government to identify priorities for activities and work and investments in new approaches. In the Northern Territory, there has been a project which has been hiring a number of nutritionists who work within communities. That project has worked closely with stores and closely with the health services, to identify not only activities—and they range from taking young mothers and their children, showing them how to cook, prepare, build snack packs for kids—

CHAIR—Can we just draw this back? I know it is all related and I know how long is a piece of string; but can we draw it to the employment factor. We need to remind you. Just have employment in there now and again.

Ms Podesta—It relates to improving the health status within communities so that you can encourage young children to stay at school and therefore think about employment opportunities by completing their primary school. I will not give any more details about that, but it is working with the stores to encourage not only the availability of food but also people making choices and

also taking some responsibility, so it includes recreation activity programs particularly for young and older women to encourage them to move et cetera. It was difficult to give an employment relationship back to that specific question.

CHAIR—I have participated in a number of inquiries on Indigenous health and I know that it is very involved and we could be here for a long time. We do need to remember our terms of reference from time to time.

Mrs VALE—I am sorry, Chair. I really wanted to understand that connection because I have not participated on that.

CHAIR—Yes, I understand that, Danna, but we need to draw this part of our proceedings to a close. Do you have a question?

Mrs VALE—No, I can see I will probably have to do some independent reading on that subject.

Mr GARRETT—You start off by identifying the agenda and the necessity for increasing numbers of people to train and then when we get to the end of the submission we look at funding for training and we see that there is a provision for a certain amount of money for the training organisation or the network to do certain things. I am interested in the way in which the network interacts with educational institutions, what 'sharing resources, information and strategies in overcoming barriers' actually means and who it is shared with and to what end and whether it is evaluated or not—in other words, what happens when you do this?

Ms McLaughlin—The RTO network is predominantly about supporting those organisations to work with each other, although they have their direct relationships themselves, back to DEST and to what was previously ANTA. At the policy level the interaction occurs between DEST and ourselves. It is policy interaction and us attempting to get a greater focus on health education through DEST's programs, working with them on a range of things that are currently around, such as through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council, which advises our minister.

We currently have a major focus on workforce, so we have a number of things being developed between health and DEST at the moment, particularly with a focus on VET and pathways through VET training, which link back to the RTOs but they are predominantly VET training organisations. So it happens on a number of levels.

Mr GARRETT—So you are identifying those strategies or programs that are current, which you believe will, if properly implemented, increase both your recruitment and your retention of whatever the particular aspect of training is; and you are directing that back to, in this case, DEST. Is it an emphasis exchange? I am asking a very simplistic, perhaps even a naive question, but I want to know what happens.

Ms McLaughlin—We are the Health Department. We have an interest in getting staff into health services, so of course we go to DEST and say, 'We'd like more emphasis on getting people into health related courses.' The other thing that we have been doing quite a lot of with DEST and some of our partners in the non-government sector, is looking at what are the

barriers—what are the things that are stopping Indigenous people going through the pathway of school and VET education?—and then coming back to DEST with those ideas and those suggestions.

Mr GARRETT—I am interested in that because you do see a lot of people coming into the health field in Aboriginal health and working there, apart from the point that the member for Lingiari made. I do not know how it works at the education interface. When they come into the education system, apart from the fact that they have capacity to access resources, scholarships or whatever, are they faced with a set of competing possibilities in terms of a career path, without a particular educational emphasis given to them in this early school, late primary, early secondary period, which says, 'Look, this is something which Aboriginal people have done and have done well and we think you can really make a contribution to community.' Do you push the education end of things in terms of recruitment from that perspective?

Ms Podesta—Absolutely, and part of the reason that we invest so heavily in AIDA and CATSIN is to encourage the mentoring and support for undergraduates in those courses. A critical part of their relationship is to identify the students who are able to, who make a decision, and to support them as part of their course, so there is a substantial investment by OATSIH in the peak bodies. Part of their function is to do that, because we recognise it is not an easy ask, to ask an Indigenous student to enter into a long course. We also know that, if you graduate as an Indigenous person in this country, the opportunities available to you are significant.

From our point of view, we have a selfish interest in ensuring that we maximise the numbers who are retained in the health industry. We have tried to identify where there might be some structural, but primarily there are personal issues around supporting those people through their courses—and, indeed, as they graduate—to be part of the network and be supported as a very personal service that is provided to the undergraduates and to the young graduates.

Mr GARRETT—Can we generalise and say that there is a need for additional resources to help people in the supporting mechanisms and roles on the way through?

Ms Podesta—There might well be. Certainly it is part of the ongoing discussions with DEST. As Joy indicated, we are looking at the requirements or opportunities that there might be within the VET sector as well. It is probably less well developed at the moment. That is partly because it is primarily a state responsibility, but we are working with the state governments through our Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Health—there are a lot of committees in Aboriginal affairs. Aboriginal health workers are primarily supported through the VET area, trained through the VET area. We can support Aboriginal health workers there.

CHAIR—Craig, can we just be reminded of your title.

Mr Dukes—Acting Director, Workforce Policy and Development Section.

Ms Podesta—The current Director of Workforce has just been seconded to Prime Minister and Cabinet as part of our development program within the Public Service for Indigenous staff.

CHAIR—With regard to development focus at the moment, what are you currently working on? Is there anything in particular that comes to mind?

Mr Dukes—Most of the things that are listed in our submission are the major workforce activities that we are doing. We are trying to increase the number of Indigenous doctors and nurses—those sorts of things. That is the main activity that we are involved in at the moment. Through the Puggy Hunter memorial scholarships, we are trying to support more Indigenous people through medicine, nursing and the allied health professions.

Dr LAWRENCE—Obviously the area of primary health care covers a whole range of skills and needs. Environmental health has been mentioned a couple of times. It strikes me, when I visit communities, that it is an area where there are not enough staff. I am not asking you to comment on the Commonwealth's allocations because that would be a political question. But, generally, do you think that there is a role for a greater number of primary health care workers, particularly in areas like environmental health? That would obviously provide not only improved health outcomes but opportunities for employment. It has always struck me that that is the poor relation of the health care mix: plenty of doctors and nurses in one sense, in comparison to the people on the ground who are dealing with things like dust levels and disposal of waste in an appropriate way and a clean water supply—all those sorts of things.

Ms Podesta—I was responsible for environmental health before I came to OATSIH, so you are probably asking the right person. As you are aware, the employment of environmental health workers is a state and territory responsibility. We have certainly put a significant amount of work into the development of improved competency training for Aboriginal environmental health workers and there has been a good working relationship through the environmental health council, particularly sponsored by the Australian government for the development of competencies. We play a strong role in the advocacy of employment levels of Aboriginal environmental health workers. Within some communities there is a need for additional staff.

CHAIR—I have a question on the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination. It refers to the development of the 20-30 year vision to significantly improve the life of Indigenous people. Would you like to comment on that time frame, in terms of health improvement—which goes back to my earlier theme—having a significant impact on employment outcomes? Are you aware of the 20-30 year vision that they are talking about?

Ms McLaughlin—As I understand it, the 20- to 30-year vision that they talk about is in the context of shared responsibility agreements. It is about working with communities to develop a 20- to 30-year vision.

CHAIR—Are you aware of their approach to it?

Ms McLaughlin—Yes.

CHAIR—Have you considered how these health improvements might make an impact on employment, based on that long-term approach?

Ms Podesta—I do not think that we have particularly focused on what the employment outcomes will be. We have certainly put an enormous amount of attention into how we will be able to measure improvements in health status for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across a range of areas, and we have seen the relationship of income and employment levels to employment opportunities and health status for people.

CHAIR—We are trying to understand the whole-of-government approach. It has been touted as one of the solutions, one of the ways we might all understand this issue better, but we are not getting a lot of evidence to suggest that the departments have broken down the barriers and are working together and focusing in a general way.

Ms Podesta—It is hard for me to comment on that. We work very cooperatively and closely with our colleagues from departments and people within communities on the development of shared responsibility agreements. Where communities have identified a need to undertake activities which have an employment and a health outcome, we certainly try to make sure that we can align the resources and the support. I think we mentioned a couple of the shared responsibility agreements, but we are very conscious that they are still relatively new and are being rolled out progressively.

CHAIR—They are about three or four years old.

Ms Podesta—Yes, but they are progressively rolling out now.

CHAIR—Not a shared responsibility but the COAG trials—

Ms Podesta—No. I am talking about the shared responsibility agreements particularly. We have certainly put a lot of focus and emphasis on the health outcomes within SRAs.

Ms McLaughlin—The big projects in the South Australian COAG trial in the AP lands certainly do have a focus on employment and involve quite extensive cross-government working relationships. We expect, for example, through the Mai Wiru stores policy, to have around 45 Anangu employed in local stores.

CHAIR—I expected a little bit more on the benchmarking and what we might expect to try and achieve. I will leave that as an open question, and we value your input in the weeks ahead. I do not have any further questions, unless you have anything to conclude with.

Ms Podesta—I do not think so. We have had a good range of questions and, as I said, we are happy to take on notice any additional questions or queries that you might have.

Mrs VALE—On the basis of your exchange just then, will there be any response from the department about the issue of the connection with intergovernmental programs and policies?

CHAIR—I would hope so. After the discussion, the officers might consider that, and we might be able to develop it a little, at least, and to involve this broader-ranging approach which I thought was happening, but I do not see a lot of evidence of it at the moment.

Ms Podesta—I want to make sure that I am very clear.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Podesta—You would like us to give you some additional information about the involvement in shared responsibility agreements and the relationship between investment in

health improvements and employment and, through the COAG trial sites, what relationship we have seen in terms of improvement of health status and employment opportunities.

CHAIR—The very specific part was the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, with its development of the 20-30 year vision. What consideration has your office, and the department generally, given to it? Where does that lead, particularly with reference to us? I appreciate the great difficulties and challenges and all the rest of it, but our role is to try and develop this specific part of it and we would be grateful for anything you might like to add.

Ms Podesta—We will be happy to provide that.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 11.40 am to 11.51 am

ALLAN, Ms Lyn, Acting General Manager, Indigenous Culture and Arts Support, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

BASSER, Ms Sally, General Manager, Indigenous Arts and Training, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

BEAN, Ms Lynn, Acting Deputy Secretary, Arts and Sport, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

BUETTEL, Mr Rohan, General Manager, Public Broadcasting, Broadcasting Division, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

McCORMACK, Mr James, General Manager, Access, Information Economy Division, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. I will go straight to Mr Snowdon.

Mr SNOWDON—Thank you. I notice in your submission you talk about broadcasting services in the bush and you make comments about the lack of suitably trained Indigenous broadcasters and administrators. Are you referring there to the BRACS program?

Mr Buettel—Yes. The BRACS program resulted in about 80 broadcasting services in remote Indigenous communities. Since that time, there have been additional facilities established in other Indigenous communities. Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services covers both facilities that were originally put in under BRACS and facilities that have subsequently been put in other communities.

Mr SNOWDON—What is the nature of those services currently? When we talk about Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services, what are we in fact talking about?

Mr Buettel—Under the original BRACS program, both radio and television transmission equipment was put in remote Indigenous communities, and those facilities enabled retransmission of services that were delivered by satellite across the whole nation, so retransmission terrestrially in the local community so that people could pick up those services with just a normal television set or a normal radio receiver. In addition, those facilities included equipment that enabled people to broadcast from their local community. For example, a local person is able to switch from the network satellite-delivered signal to their local desk and broadcast from there. Members of a community might broadcast for an hour or two hours a day to bring people up to date with events that are happening in that local community.

Mr SNOWDON—How many communities are we talking about? What is the nature of the capital infrastructure in place to provide those services currently and what upgrades have taken place over the last five or six years?

Mr Buettel—The government recently announced a decision to install an additional television transmitter in the 80 BRACS communities. They announced $2 million in funding for that project, which was to be made available through the Community Broadcasting Foundation. We identified 150 communities and were able, through the bulk purchase of equipment, to look to installing an extra transmitter in those 150 communities. We are expecting that roll-out to occur in the coming six months.

Mr SNOWDON—Would the bulk of the people who are employed in these community arrangements be on CDEP?

Mr Buettel—Yes. Some of them may receive additional top-up funding on top of CDEP through the Indigenous Broadcasting Program.

Mr SNOWDON—What would the impact of this program be if CDEP did not exist?

Mr Buettel—If those organisations ceased to receive CDEP funding, without any commensurate arrangement for funding from another source, that would cause difficulty for the broadcasters in those communities concerned.

Mr SNOWDON—In terms of the people who are employed, what proportion of them have undertaken any training and where have they undertaken that training?

Mr Buettel—I do not have figures on the exact proportion.

Mr SNOWDON—You can take that on notice.

CHAIR—Get back to us on that.

Mr SNOWDON—I am aware of a number of places that train BRACS broadcasters, particularly Batchelor.

Mr Buettel—I can give you figures in relation to Batchelor. In 2005-06 our funding allocation to Batchelor was $174,000. In 2005 we supported the training of 77 Indigenous students in broadcasting at certificate III and certificate IV and diploma levels. Twenty media students graduated in 2005 and many students are continuing training.

Mr SNOWDON—Can you provide us with an analysis, in numerical terms, of the number of students who have gone through that type of training, at Batchelor and elsewhere, and if they are still involved in the broadcasting industry?

Mr Buettel—We will seek to do the best we can. I am not sure that we will necessarily have figures on those still involved in the industry.

Mr SNOWDON—I am sorry to be rushed, and I am being rude, but I have to leave here in a moment. Unrelated to that matter, what are the funding arrangements for language and cultural centres and what is the spread of these centres across Australia?

Ms Bean—Through the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records Program, we funded 46 organisations in 2005-06 to undertake 76 activities. The total amount of money for this year is $8.53 million. In terms of the distribution across the country, I will take that on notice.

Mr SNOWDON—Could you also provide us with the process by which language centres/cultural centres are able to acquire funding? I do not need you to give it to me now.

Ms Bean—I can give it to you now, but if you are in a hurry you might prefer that I do not.

Mr SNOWDON—I will leave now, but it will be on record, so that is not a problem.

CHAIR—We will accept that at a later stage.

Mr SNOWDON—My apologies for being rude.

CHAIR—Thank you for accommodating that. You might like to add, because time is pushing us pretty well, a couple of minutes of summary. I will signal that I would like to hear about the arts. Can we include there the issue of how we link this to the employment? How do we enhance the employment, the main issue?

Ms Bean—I have a relatively short opening statement, as I understood the committee was interested in a number of issues from the portfolio, and hopefully I can cover them.

CHAIR—We have a specific brief and I have a couple of specific questions. We are interested in the broad but time will press us.

Ms Bean—That is fine. We deliver services to Indigenous Australians across all sectors: arts and culture, broadcasting, sport, telecommunications and information technology. The two key areas in relation to employment are as an enabler of employment through telecommunications and through IT infrastructure and access, and through the programs which support Indigenous cultural organisations and activities, which include broadcasting, culture and sport.

CHAIR—Hard to precis it in about 90 seconds, isn't it?

Ms Bean—It is. I am precising as I read.

CHAIR—We understand that.

Ms Bean—Good employment outcomes for Indigenous communities, and individuals in remote areas particularly, are largely ineffective without basic communications infrastructure—for example, telephone and internet access. That is dealt with under the TAPRIC program, which stands for Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities, which has, since 2002, attracted about 1,200 communities with an estimated population of 110,000 people. The outcomes for that have been improving the take-up and effective use of internet services and increasing awareness of telecommunications opportunities, for example, in the creation of tourism facilities or web sites designed to promote and sell Indigenous art. There are further

measures that have been announced in August 2005 to build on the experience from that program.

A number of the former ATSIC's programs arrived in the department from 2004 onwards, covering broadcasting, culture, sport and languages. A large number of these employ CDEP participants and there are some directly funded by us. Often in remote communities particularly, these organisations are the only contributor to economic development. For example, the NACIS program provides funding to 50 art centres and arts advocacy organisations, through which hundreds of established and developing artists are supported to produce artwork, develop their skills and have their work promoted and sold. They are not normally employed directly by the art centres but they use the services provided through the centres to produce works for sale and to generate income for themselves and their families.

The languages program supports a number of activities supporting Indigenous linguists and language workers. There is considerable potential for providing Indigenous employment and training through interpreting and translating services. Similarly with the sports program, there are opportunities for Indigenous people to be engaged with national and state sporting organisations. I think that is about it.

CHAIR—Thank you. We really appreciate that, because we are limited in our time. The issue of culture: do you have some definitive statement or some views about this whole issue of culture? In terms of government adding value to culture, how do we go through that process? I have to connect, by my own rules, to employment—in other words, how do we actually manage this in a way that respects the culture, the taxpayer and then the employment potential?

Ms Bean—I think there is a direct impact in the sense that, as I said before, Indigenous people can exploit—although that is a harsh word—their culture for profit, essentially. They can produce artworks that reflect their culture, they can have dance companies and there are a lot of Indigenous music groups that are all using elements of their traditional culture, in some cases blended with a more Western influence, to deliver goods or services that people want to purchase. What the government can do there is provide the underpinnings that enable people to make use of that unique culture. That is essentially what happens with the art centres and the languages services et cetera.

CHAIR—Staying with the arts, in my experience I do not think that I have ever seen an Indigenous person actually running an art centre. I do not say they do not, but it is a rare thing, in my experience. I wondered whether you have any thoughts, or may well have seen that, where an Indigenous person may be running it and developing it themselves. There are generally white people running it and working with Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women, to help them with these various pieces of art. You may be familiar with the Fregon group that had some publicity in recent times, with the international connection. Is that your experience? Are there any thoughts about how we engage our Indigenous people in the management and development of the art centres themselves?

Ms Bean—I cannot say that there is no Indigenous person running an art centre, but you are correct in that it is largely—

CHAIR—In fact, I am wrong. I can think of one person, in Adelaide; but go on.

Ms Bean—I do know of a couple of instances where Indigenous people are involved in the management of the peak organisations—for example, Desart and ANKAAA. However, I agree it is an issue and it is something that we are working towards. I think part of the response to that is about increasing the skill levels—that is, business skills. It is not so much how to paint, it is what goes along with it in business and marketing management. We have been working on some initiatives to extend those business skills.

Dr LAWRENCE—You note in the submission initially, and you have referred to it again, that in the Indigenous Broadcasting Program, for instance, there are not any senior salaried positions held by Indigenous people because of a lack of suitably trained Indigenous broadcasters and administrators. You have indicated in your programs a desire to do something about that. Are you seeing any progress toward that? It is not the only area—we just touched on another—where Indigenous people tend to be employed at the very lowest levels in the organisations and do not progress up through training opportunities being provided for them; employment.

Mr Buettel—I would not say that that is an across the board outcome at all. Some of the larger Indigenous broadcasters, like 4AAA in Brisbane, are run by an Indigenous person. There are some clear strong management skills amongst some individuals. It is a situation that is changing. In the last election the government committed $2.2 million funding over four years for training for community broadcasting, again funding that has been provided through the Community Broadcasting Foundation. That funding is aimed particularly at management skills, station management skills, as well as basic broadcasting, and it will go for training across the community broadcasting sector as a whole; but we are expecting that Indigenous broadcasters will be able to benefit from that funding.

Dr LAWRENCE—You also mentioned the Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities—I hesitate to pronounce the acronym—and that you are targeting 1,200 communities for broadband. What sort of take-up have you had to date? My follow-up question is: are you using those new technologies as a means of facilitating training broadly, not just in broadcasting but also in Indigenous arts and language et cetera. It is, presumably, an opportunity to marry content with the technology. Are you trying to drive that marriage?

Mr Buettel—Yes. I think TAPRIC has worked as an enabler for other economic activity. Just to give a couple of examples, art sales such as the Tiwi Art Network Aboriginal Corporation and CTC at Condobolin and Wiradjuri Art Group receive funding for a web site under the Indigenous Communities Online Program. We have also had informal feedback from communities indicating that job seekers are using newly available internet access to do job searches.

The provision of infrastructure in places where previously there was none has, in some cases, supported the creation of sustainable economic activity such as the creation of tourism facilities; for instance, Chilli Creek in Western Australia and Iga Warta in South Australia.

Dr LAWRENCE—Are you linking up with the main training institutions?

Mr Buettel—I am perhaps not familiar enough with the program to comment on that aspect, but I will take that on notice.

Mr McCormack—In addition to TAPRIC, there is the Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund, which is designed to get broadband out into regional and remote areas of Australia. There are a number of areas with high Indigenous populations which are benefiting from that program. One of the elements of getting broadband out there is providing a mechanism whereby they can undertake training in their home locations as opposed to having to go into one of the major cities to do it. That is happening. As broadband is deployed more widely in those areas, we should see a further increase. There are a couple of projects under the CCIF, including one in the Northern Territory at Charles Darwin University, which are designed to do exactly that; get a capability into Indigenous areas so that they can train without having to leave their homelands.

Dr LAWRENCE—Yes, because that is often a major obstacle.

Mr McCormack—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—You are probably aware that, in relation to the visual arts, for some time it has been proposed that a proportion of the resale value of an artwork go to the original creator or creators. It has always seemed to me to have particular relevance to Indigenous artists, who are often on the low end of the value adding chain. It is only when it gets to art galleries and into the international market that the real money is made, and the Indigenous communities miss out. Do you have any ideas about ways of improving the economic benefit of Indigenous art, particularly the visual arts, in terms of resale of those works?

Ms Bean—The entire question of resale royalties is under consideration by the government.

Dr LAWRENCE—Yes, it has been for some time.

Ms Bean—Yes. It is actually not the responsibility of this portfolio. Aside from resale royalties, we have been doing some other preliminary work. It is, in a sense, equipping people to deal effectively in the marketplace so that they do not get ripped off. To me, that is a significant part of the problem.

Dr LAWRENCE—Did you want to add to that?

Ms Allan—Only in the context of, from our portfolio's perspective, the funding of art centres. Art centres operate to ensure that the artists are dealt with fairly and are represented culturally appropriately in the marketplace. If they do not have an effective art centre, they often do not have access to representation. Our support of art centres is a way to ensure the best benefit back to the artists.

Dr LAWRENCE—What coverage would you say you have of that market at the moment through your art centres?

Ms Basser—The NACIS program funds 50 organisations. There is a substantive amount in the Northern Territory and scattered across various other areas. One of the projects that ANKAAA undertook over the last year or so was the development of a brochure for people wanting to purchase Indigenous art. For the potential consumer, it explains how to make sure that they are buying genuine art and outlines the issues around fairness and recognition and those

sorts of things. I think that has had quite wide distribution through mainstream tourism and other places in terms of getting that work out.

One of the other things this has funded is some work around helping to train Indigenous artists and/or art organisations to deal with copyright issues and management in a business sense—how to negotiate those issues—through a project run by Viscopy in New South Wales, which has a national reach.

Mr GARRETT—How many people are employed in the Indigenous culture and language programs and, of those, how many are on CDEP?

Ms Bean—I do not have the figures with me. I can take it on notice. I do not know that we have exact numbers, but we will go as close as we can.

Mr GARRETT—Did this come across from ATSIC?

Ms Bean—Yes, it did.

Mr GARRETT—Given that there is quite a strong need to comprehensively archive and record language, and you identified a shortfall in the number of people that you would like to see working in these programs—

Ms Bean—There has been a significant study done on what is out there on the ground with languages.

Dr LAWRENCE—There has been a report in the last few days—in the *Australian*, I think—suggesting that a lot of languages were being lost at a catastrophic rate.

Ms Bean—Yes. A significant report has been done over the last 18 months, which is basically mapping what is going on. That has obviously just been released within the last few days. I think there is a copy on the DCITA web site. That is the basis that we will be starting from—the benchmark—to take forward policy development, because there are a number of languages that are endangered.

Mr GARRETT—I think that is right, and there may be a strong case for expanding this program. What are you providing to those 50 organisations in the way of resources?

Ms Bean—For languages?

Mr GARRETT—Yes.

Ms Bean—There are 46 organisations. I do not have an organisation by organisation breakdown but I do have a state by state breakdown. New South Wales got $1.1 million, the Northern Territory got $2.0 million, Queensland got $507,000—

Mr GARRETT—Is it possible for us to have an organisation by organisation breakdown?

Ms Bean—Certainly.

Mr GARRETT—The assertion is that these particular employment programs, when they are undertaken, can provide high levels of community cohesion and self-respect, which I am sure is true. Can you provide us with some examples?

Ms Bean—In relation to languages or generally?

Mr GARRETT—Just in relation to the culture and language programs.

Ms Bean—I am sure we can provide you with some examples. There are actually three programs. There is the National Arts and Crafts Industry Support program, which is the art centres.

Mr GARRETT—Yes.

Ms Bean—Then there is the Indigenous Cultural Support program, which was formerly known as the Regional Arts and Cultural Support program, which is about culture but at a more community level. It might be art centre related but not necessarily; it can be music, dance et cetera. Then there is language, which is separate again. All of those, particularly outside of the urban areas, are working with the community at some level. If you want specific examples, I am happy to take it on notice for you.

Mr GARRETT—For the purpose of clarity—I am still wrapping my head around it—do you have guidelines on how they operate?

Ms Bean—Yes.

Mr GARRETT—Do they operate within a community? They don't operate within an art centre? How is that determination made?

Ms Bean—All of the program guidelines are on the web site. The distinction is that the NACIS program—the art centre program—is about the operational funding for art centres. The Indigenous Culture Support program is open to anyone to apply—and it can be an art centre—and is for a community based project; it is more project funding than operational funding. That is a fairly rough distinction.

Mr GARRETT—On another aspect, the National Arts and Crafts Industry Support program, can we have more detail about that—it probably is on the web site. How is it working? How much has it budgeted for? Are you measuring the outcomes of what you are doing, because I know it relates to increase in output effectively?

Ms Basser—The budget for this financial year is $4.4 million. As I mentioned before, that is provided to 50 organisations to undertake 52 activities, and includes funding to the key advocacy organisations Desart and ANKAAA. At the moment we are working on getting better data for measuring the exact outcomes through the program. We are also working with ANKAAA and Desart to get a better understanding of the program. We are trying to align the program and we have modified the guidelines slightly for the next round, in terms of the government's Indigenous art centre strategy and action plan, which is a whole-of-government plan that looks across the whole sector. This program we see is really about an industry support program; how

to support the sector to grow and develop, and strengthen as an industry. We know it has a key strength in terms of tourism and all sorts of new linkages that are happening with art and the overseas interest in art, as well as the local interest. There are strong links with the cultural program as well. Many people, both Australian and overseas, are looking for accessing and learning more about Indigenous cultural experiences, as well as understanding and accessing art. But in terms of measurement, we are looking to develop better measurements and how we are seen, but the sector is growing and thriving.

Mr GARRETT—Do you have baseline figures on employment?

Ms Basser—In terms of employment, artists are not employed by the art centre, but there are people employed within the management of the art centre. The art centres contribute to economic development in a number of ways. There is the potential for Indigenous people to be trained and learn about the nuts and bolts of managing an art centre or helping to pack the paintings, distributing the paints and the artworks. We know there are a number of people on CDEP who have learnt those skills. Coming back to the issue of the art coordinators, I know that many of those non-Indigenous art coordinators are very committed to training and developing young Indigenous coordinators, and there is a commitment across the board for that. Then there are the artists: there is income coming through the art. So there are three prongs. I do not think we have numerics across all of the art centres but I am happy to go back and see what we can provide.

Mr GARRETT—Industry development is really the key to it, isn't it, because of the potential scope for increasing and enhancing economic and cultural development? It has already had such phenomenal growth. In terms of industry development has there been an evaluation of the impact that bootlegging and copying is having on artefacts particularly, in terms of the creation of artefacts within a community? In the media there has been reference to the challenges that are faced by not having a way of properly regulating the activity of unscrupulous art dealers. Have you given some thought to this within the context of this industry program or in other ways? I know you have.

Ms Bean—Dealing with the latter, that is something that various governments and agencies of government have given a lot of though to over a number of years. An attempt was made about five years ago to introduce an authenticity labelling scheme but it kind of collapsed. That was not one that the department was directly involved with. That was a collaboration between the Australia Council, I think, and ATSIC at the time. I still think that that kind of thing is the way to go—it certainly has potential—but there were extreme difficulties in getting agreement. I went to Bali for Christmas and I found dot-painted didgeridoos. It is out there and it is something that we are constantly working on. I do not think that we have a perfect answer at this stage.

Mr SNOWDON—In terms of Central Australia, the rip-off merchants and crooks who are involved in the art industry probably do three or four times as much business as the art centres. Is anything being done to get a program where all art dealers are registered and some way of oversighting those people they employ to do art in these sweatshops?

Ms Bean—There is nothing specific about to be introduced. They are certainly issues that we are thinking about. There is the Indigenous communal moral rights bill around that at least is trying to—

Mr SNOWDON—That is moral rights, isn't it?

Ms Bean—It is. That is another path, I guess—the copyright path.

CHAIR—What was your first point? You had two points, didn't you?

Mr GARRETT—Yes, the first one relates to general bootlegging and copyright materials within the created artwork or artefact.

Ms Bean—There is no doubt that it is an issue. There is no government decision at this stage on the way forward.

Mr SNOWDON—What does that mean?

Ms Bean—It means we are doing a lot of work on it but there are no decisions yet.

Mr SNOWDON—What are the parameters within which you are working? What sort of discussion is taking place? What are the options that are being canvassed?

Ms Bean—Obviously there has been a lot of work done in the copyright area and we are doing a lot of work in the training area on strengthening the underpinnings. Direct regulation of dealers, for example, is not something that the government has asked us to look at at this stage. There are a number of other initiatives that are not government initiatives. For example, there is a code of conduct—I suppose is the best way to put it—amongst the reputable dealers about how they will engage with it.

Mr SNOWDON—I am not worried about them, though.

Ms Bean—No, that is right.

Mr SNOWDON—I am not worried about the people that come forward and say, 'We're reputable.' I am worried about the crooks.

Ms Bean—There are some measures available in the general law. I am not the best person to speak about it, but some of the trade practices—

CHAIR—It has been around a while.

Ms Bean—It has. It is a difficult issue. There is no doubt about that.

Mrs VALE—I would like to go back to the trainees in broadcasting. Could you tell me the number of Indigenous trainees you have in broadcasting across Australia?

Mr Buettel—Just last week we went around our network of staff throughout all the states to try and get a handle on that figure. From the answers that came back, we found that there are 98 full-time Indigenous employees in broadcasting funded under the program, 67 part-time employees and 78 trainees. That is across the nation.

Mrs VALE—The funding for traineeships is probably best described as fragmented. How do you ensure some kind of continuity for trainees to complete their training?

Mr Buettel—That is not necessarily the responsibility of our department. It is a responsibility of the organisations that accessed the training funding.

Mrs VALE—So your department does not actually provide funding directly for Indigenous trainees in broadcasting?

Mr Buettel—Not across the board. We do directly fund the Indigenous training that goes on at Batchelor. As I said, there were about 77 trainees there in the last year, but we do not have a remit for training across the board.

Mrs VALE—Do you work with other agencies to ensure funding for training?

Mr Buettel—The short answer to that is no.

Mrs VALE—What about the private sector? Is there any way to access any funding from the private sector, or have you known if there is any private sector working in training Indigenous broadcasters?

Mr Buettel—There is certainly other training in the public sector. I am aware that both ABC and SBS do some training of Indigenous staff in broadcasting. I am not aware of any across the board training programs in the private sector, but there may be individual instances here and there of Indigenous people being taken on as trainees in commercial broadcasting organisations.

CHAIR—We are way over time. We will have to conclude it there. It was very interesting, thank you. Will you just take on notice: do your departments have any involvement in shared responsibility agreements, and can you let us have that, please.

Ms Bean—Yes, we do, and we can certainly provide that.

CHAIR—Thank you; and thank you very much to the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts.

[12.33 pm]

BARTLEM, Mr Lex, Assistant Secretary, Staff Development and Post Issues Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

MUNDINE, Ms Karen, Executive Officer, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Program, Images of Australia Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

ROBERTS, Ms Sarah, Manager, Graduate Recruitment Program, Staff Development and Post Issues Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Does anyone have anything to add about the capacity in which they appear?

Mr Bartlem—I work within the corporate management division of DFAT. As head of that branch, I am responsible for all recruitment into the department.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under the oath, you would be aware that these are proceedings of the parliament. Would you like to make a brief addition to your submission? I apologise for the need for brevity but, as you appreciate, we are tight on time.

Mr Bartlem—Thank you. It will probably be brief because I have been in the branch three weeks, learning about it all. Firstly, on behalf of the department we would like to thank the committee for the invitation to appear before this inquiry. In our efforts to advance the interests of Australia internationally, a key goal is to project a positive image of Australia. We seek to do this by promoting a positive and accurate image of Australia's peoples and cultures, including Indigenous Australians. We also seek to ensure that our overseas representation reflects the cultural diversity of Australian society.

We seek to provide Indigenous Australians with employment opportunities and for these employees to serve in Australia and overseas. We currently have 35 Indigenous employees in the department. Of those, 10 are currently serving overseas. We seek to promote awareness of employment opportunities through increasing our outreach activities with Indigenous communities and networks. In 2004 the department established an Indigenous task force, which concentrates efforts to promote the recruitment, career development and retention of Indigenous employees. It is also a forum for Indigenous employees to discuss issues with senior management of the department.

The Indigenous task force initiated and oversees an Indigenous recruitment and career development strategy, which ensures that DFAT continues to attract talented Indigenous Australians and also to increase the number of Indigenous Australians employed in the department. We ensure that Indigenous employees receive advice and access to appropriate training and career development opportunities. We also aim to foster an awareness of Indigenous Australia within the department.

The 35 Indigenous employees that we have at the moment represent 1.76 per cent of our overall staff—that is, an increase from the year 2000 when we had 26 employees representing 1.3 per cent of staff. We will soon take on four new Indigenous starters. One will start next week in our 2006 graduate recruitment intake and three new cadets are due to start in the Indigenous Cadetship Program in March this year.

In addition to these efforts, we have an international public diplomacy program, which includes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program, which is aimed at creating unique platforms overseas to showcase Indigenous cultural products and industries and the industries that support them. We also have a sponsorship agreement with an athlete, Patrick Johnson, who is a member of the department's staff.

CHAIR—There is a very clear national interest, but I am trying to understand the domestic employment in a wider context than just within the department. I am not sure that I can link it. You are Foreign Affairs and Trade. Obviously trade is essential to our national wellbeing and therefore employment. We talk particularly about our export industries, as well as our imports, as being high paying or improving pay and creating opportunities that are essential to our growth. Where are the Indigenous opportunities? I take it, within the department; and I thank you for that.

I am trying to understand where at an international level, we might be promoting the opportunities for tourism, which is outside your parameter but part of our national image, at the same time as understanding our own industries and trade and the Indigenous involvement with those. That is probably much broader than your view with regard to your brief, but can you just give us a general context, as you see it, within our national wellbeing?

Mr Bartlem—Of course, Austrade, which comes under the portfolio, does specific international trade promotion work as well. I could touch on Aboriginal art, for example, and my experience in that area which is not here; but my recent posting was in Paris. I was the consul at our embassy until June last year. Ms Mundine can probably talk about it as well; it is probably in her brief.

There is a new museum being opened in Paris later this year specifically focusing on indigenous art from around the world, not only Australian Indigenous art. In the lead-up to that, our embassy in Paris has been very active in the last 12 to 18 months hosting Aboriginal art exhibitions to make sure that, when the museum opens, Australia is already being focused on by the media, which it is very strongly in France. The exhibitions have been extremely popular. A lot of the exhibitions have involved Indigenous artists from around Australia going to Paris to be present during the exhibitions, and I know that that has created a lot of interest and sales, which are going largely, I would hope, directly back to the communities. With the opening of the museum later this year, that can only increase. It is an incredible museum, and Australia has a very strong focus and a very strong position.

CHAIR—That addresses perfectly my trying to get the national interest and the international focus.

Dr LAWRENCE—Related to the question that you might have heard asked of the previous department, it is fantastic that you are promoting Indigenous art. Presumably, there is a broader

program of presenting culture, language, dance et cetera—and perhaps you could elaborate on that in a moment—but the flip side of the promotion of Indigenous art, in particular, is the protection of the genuine article. I wonder if Austrade, in particular—it is probably a bit outside your immediate brief—sees that it has a role in attempting to do that, because some of the competition, as was said earlier, does not come from within Australia, it comes from outside.

Mr Bartlem—I do not know exactly what we are doing on that.

Ms Mundine—Within our brief, we ensure that all of our missions and posts around the world are working through reputable dealers. We work with our colleagues at DCITA, Austrade, Australia Council and other peak bodies within Australia to send out the information wherever we know there are shonky dealers or otherwise. We are out there continually alerting posts to that and also getting feedback from them when they hear about things or come across things. Quite often our embassies and high commissions are approached by people, and we try to work with people back here to do thorough searches and, if necessary, send the word out further. It is really a matter of educating our posts and working with our colleagues back here to get the information out.

Dr LAWRENCE—Can I ask you that broader question that I alluded to, which is the role that the department plays in promoting images of Indigenous life, culture, history, language and all of those things that are part of the international public diplomacy that you described, just to get a feel for what it is that you are doing.

Ms Mundine—A large part of the program that I run is a touring visual arts exhibition. We have three exhibitions at the moment, which are touring around the world. Again, it is more a role of coordinating with our colleagues back here and it is about providing information and resources, as much as possible. Until recently, we worked very closely with ATSIC in terms of developing appropriate images, contacts and information sheets to educate a broader international audience.

We work with peak organisations within arts, crafts and cultural organisations to promote the work that is happening here but translating it to an international audience. We work with a number of key cultural agencies, such as the National Gallery and the National Museum, providing introductions into international forums.

Dr LAWRENCE—I guess part of the problem, with the demise of ATSIC, is having a reference group for, as you say, the culturally appropriate and preferred modes of communication that Indigenous people have about their own Aboriginal culture.

Ms Mundine—That is right. We still work very closely with our state and territory compatriots—a combination of Commonwealth, state and territory—other peak organisations and also community organisations if necessary.

Dr LAWRENCE—You mentioned the visual arts, but often Austrade and associated organisations, for special events that are conducted overseas, will use Indigenous performers and so on. Is that something that you are responsible for or is it left to the individual missions or trade functions to decide how to represent Australia's Indigenous people?

Ms Mundine—It is a combination. What we try to do with our program is send out guidelines and reinforce the appropriate images and the appropriate ways of representing Indigenous people.

Dr LAWRENCE—I have seen the odd very peculiar representation of Indigenous culture.

Ms Mundine—It is a large world out there, and sometimes our posts are a little bit too outposted. As much as possible, we try to—

Dr LAWRENCE—Maintain some quality control?

Ms Mundine—Absolutely, and that is changing a lot. The number of posts and embassies out there doing things, but still coming back and seeking guidance and reference, is quite encouraging. They are not key markets for DCITA and the National Gallery but they are important to us. For example, Dhaka is one of the places where our *Kickin' up dust* visual arts exhibition took off. It had huge media, with positive stories coming out of that.

Mrs VALE—On another issue, you talk about your lateral recruitment. What is lateral recruitment and have you had any success with it?

Ms Roberts—We have various programs through which Indigenous staff join the department, the main ones being the graduate and cadetship intakes, where we sponsor students. We also try to get people to come into the department at other levels and into other kinds of positions other than the generalist policy positions, which those are. Ms Mundine is an example of a lateral recruit, and we have a staff member working in the passports office in Perth. It depends on the opportunities that come up in our recruitment programs. As I said, the graduates and the cadets are our main recruitment source.

Mrs VALE—Do you know how many of the 35 Indigenous employees that you have at the moment come from remote areas?

Ms Roberts—That is quite a difficult question for us to answer, because we do not have data on it. Given that the majority of them come through the graduate and cadetship programs, they are coming from tertiary institutions. While we know where they have come from in their studies, we do not necessarily have data on their point of origin. We have people coming from all over Australia. Of our current cadets, I think we have one in South Australia, one in Tasmania and one in New South Wales. Of those that are going to start in March, we have representatives from Queensland, Victoria and here in the ACT.

Mrs VALE—Thank you.

Mr GARRETT—In relation to recruitment in terms of cadets and graduates, as to whether there has been some thinking given to upping the ante in terms of your capture, it is a modest figure.

Ms Roberts—It is, and we are trying to promote the opportunities that exist in DFAT. We have an Indigenous employee network in the department, so we are trying to tap into their contacts at universities.

Mr GARRETT—That is a good idea.

Ms Roberts—It is a matter of increased outreach and promotion. We have written to all the Indigenous study centres at universities. We are gearing up for our annual campus visits program at the moment, so we are seeking to do separate sessions with the students through Indigenous study centres. We are doing one at the ANU next week, for instance. Again, we encourage our Indigenous employees to come with us to promote those opportunities. One of the obstacles that we face is promoting awareness of the employment opportunities that exist at DFAT. For some, relocating to Canberra is quite an issue.

Mr GARRETT—Thank you.

CHAIR—If there are no further questions, I think we are just about done. I have one right out of left field. In relation to the indigenous peoples of the world, as you move around the world you find that there are many streams to this story. For example, not that long ago there were indigenous people in Taiwan. Within your department, do you become aware of that in terms of the overall issue? You may have many briefs and issues, but it occurs to me that you have an opportunity to perhaps meet and mix with other indigenous people. Are you aware of anything that happens there?

Ms Roberts—In some of our embassies we have a direct aid program. We had one when I was posted in Brazil. It is generally a very small fund, which is separate to AusAID funds, and it is used with a public diplomacy brief. We invite applicants to submit small projects which we can fund. We used to interact with indigenous communities in Brazil and fund some of their small employment projects.

Ms Mundine—There is a similar program in the South Pacific for sports. On the cultural side, we have been involved in a number of events where we have cultural exchange happening between indigenous communities.

CHAIR—Thank you. Do you have any concluding statements?

Mr Bartlem—No. Thank you very much.

[12.51 pm]

NOONAN, Mr Philip, Head of Tourism Division, Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

CHAIR—I welcome the representative of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources. You may be aware that the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, but these hearings are legal proceedings of parliament. As there is no submission, it would be useful for you, in three or four minutes, to give a summary of where you see the relevance to us in terms of industry, tourism and resources. There are obviously huge employment implications in all of this, and naturally enough therefore for our Indigenous people. We have been made aware of the opportunities as we have moved around Australia; tourism is one of them, but that is but one string to the bow.

Mr Noonan—Thank you. Interest in my division is on the tourism side rather than Indigenous policy as such. There is an unmet demand for Indigenous tourism, both at the international level for tourists coming into Australia and for domestic tourists. Demand is higher among international tourists than domestic tourists, but almost 50 per cent of Australians are interested in a more immersive Indigenous experience, according to research that we have undertaken.

Generating sufficient supply of Indigenous tourism product has been a problem. In the Tourism white paper, the government analysed that problem as being difficulties that Indigenous people have in setting up and maintaining viable businesses, and introduced the Business Ready Program for Indigenous Tourism to try to address that. It is a four-year program, up to the middle of 2008, and will involve $3.8 million over that time frame. The idea is to recruit a total of 10 mentors over the life of the program and their task will be to provide advice to potential Indigenous businesses on how they can develop and sustain their business over time.

That program is obviously not very far under way: only about six months into the operation of the first six mentors, each of whom have recruited about 10 businesses. Therefore, it is not possible for me to give you any information about the impact that it is having. Our focus will be on whether tourism demand is met but certainly, if businesses can be sustainable and develop, that will have a beneficial effect on Indigenous employment.

CHAIR—Thank you. I would like to reiterate what I have said previously. This department is one of the great opportunities for Indigenous people in terms of employment outcomes and it is pretty vital for the future. I am surprised that we do not have, in this whole-of-government era, information which might give us some indication about the opportunities and, and if you find out some information, I would be very grateful to get it. We might make inquiries of the other sectors—that is, the industry sector in particular and the resource sector—because we are well aware of issues around native title and that type of thing.

Coming back to international tourism potential, we have figures that are somewhat more optimistic than these. I will go with these because there is a little bit more credence. If we have 50 per cent of international tourists with an expectation or an interest, do you have any idea how many of those people might actually have that expectation met?

Mr Noonan—I can give you the numbers of international tourists who currently avail themselves of an Indigenous experience while visiting.

CHAIR—In percentage terms?

Mr Noonan—Yes. It is 754,600 for the year ending September 2005, which is about 15 per cent of all our international visitors to Australia. I am now going to talk about expenditure: this is expenditure by people on their whole trip. They stayed a total of 32.1 million nights, accounting for an average of 43 nights per trip, and spent a total of $2.7 billion, accounting for an average of $3,600 per trip. Those two figures are much higher than the figures for international tourists generally, so those international tourists who avail themselves of Indigenous experiences are worth much more to the economy of Australia.

CHAIR—That is worth knowing. Thank you. From that we can deduce that there is certainly an unmet demand.

Mr Noonan—Yes.

CHAIR—Then the question becomes, how much do we know about why? How are we going with that question?

Mr Noonan—We do not have figures on the quantification of the unmet demand. We have done some surveys, which I can leave with the secretariat, which have been qualitative surveys.

CHAIR—It may be that the product is not there. It may be the marketing. We have been told that there are two or three icons in Australia and, therefore, other things get pushed to the back. There is that sort of discussion.

Mr Noonan—Certainly international tourists tend to come to a few major cities, concentrating their efforts on Sydney, Melbourne, Gold Coast, Cairns, and it is a general problem for Tourism to encourage what we call dispersal of tourists into regional Australia, and a further issue to encourage them to move to the area where Indigenous cultural experiences might be most readily available. For instance, there is very little Indigenous cultural supply within Sydney, even though this is our largest market. We have to weigh that against the survey information which shows that people want to experience Indigenous culture in an Indigenous setting, by which they mean an outback setting when you ask them.

There are a few factors to be balanced out. There is also a question of whether, when tourists come to an area where they could get an Indigenous cultural experience, there is enough supply of the kind of quality experience that they want, because tourists tend to want the best of both worlds. They not only want to get something that is authentic, they also want to have a pleasant time and have their 4.5 star hotel at the end of the day. The way to address that is to build up the businesses within those areas and then to build an infrastructure around them, and that is what the Business Ready Program is focused on.

Dr LAWRENCE—I would have thought from your own data, and maybe I misunderstood it, that the sorts of people who are interested in immersion in Indigenous culture are not all that fussed about four- and five-star hotels. They are the sorts of people who quite happily go into

Indigenous communities and sleep under the stars in a swag. If they are staying that long, they are probably prepared for something that is a little less than salubrious, so maybe it is a question of the presentation of the experience; an elaboration of the fact that it is not just going into a community but there are other elements to it like cooking your own food and sitting around a campfire and whatever else may be the case. That is about promotion as much as it is about availability. I will leave that with you for the moment.

Quite aside from the question of the presentation of what I know is called a product in the tourism industry—it always seems a little odd to me; the Indigenous product—there is the question of the employment of Indigenous people across the board. With a lot of our big tourist centres—whether you are talking about Cairns, North Queensland, the Northern Territory, Broome, Central Australia—there are lots of opportunities for employment, but it often seems that Indigenous people are not participating in the numbers you would expect, given those locations. Do you regard it as part of the department's brief to try and facilitate the employment of Indigenous people, in tourism more generally and associated industries, or is that something you regard as someone else's responsibility? I was surprised you did not mention it in your presentation.

Mr Noonan—My focus would be on tourism issues. To the extent that tourism industry bodies employ Indigenous people in providing tourism experiences, if that meets a tourism need then that is something that I am interested in, but we do not actively involve ourselves in increasing Indigenous employment as such because it is really tourism that we are focused on.

Dr LAWRENCE—Except that it may be that the two are somewhat related. Some of the people coming to Australia probably never see an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander person in their time here, although they clearly want to. In some senses, it is part of what they are wanting, even if it is having someone working in the hotel or the restaurant or the vessel that takes them out to the Great Barrier Reef or whatever. In a sense, it is an important part of the tourism experience.

Mr Noonan—That is true. Providing a tourism experience that contains an Indigenous element is one way in which you can try to meet this demand for Indigenous experiences, and that is certainly something that Tourism Australia has in focus in its marketing to various overseas markets. There will be a group of people who will be prepared to go to the outback for an immersion experience but there will be another group who want to have some exposure to Indigenous culture but really want to stay in the main cities. That is another area where we are also weak in the tourism product that we have at the moment. For example, if you are looking for an Indigenous experience in Sydney, the opportunities are very limited.

Dr LAWRENCE—I personally happen to think there is a vast, untapped market for a local Australian experience too. To give you a regional example in Western Australia, CALM, which is the Conservation and Land Management body in Western Australia, runs programs involving Indigenous people demonstrating, along the banks of the Swan River, their knowledge of the place, the plants and animals, the use of artefacts and so on. That is always fully booked by local people and, because it is so well done and involves both people with western botanical expertise and the Indigenous knowledge, it is grabbed with both hands. They cannot keep up with demand. I would think that there are programs of that kind where you are going across areas of government—I just put it to you as a proposition—where there is a lot of potential. These are

being funded out of the department but they always more than pay for the cost of presenting them.

Mr Noonan—You have given an example of a public sector area, but if a business were to have a similar proposal they would be able to work within the Business Ready Program to acquire business management skills. We run another program called the Australian Tourism Development Program, which has a particular focus on regional projects, where they may be able to take their business to the next level. It is not focused on Indigenous in particular but there are a number of grants that we have given to Indigenous businesses under that program.

Mrs VALE—How do Indigenous people with an entrepreneurial spirit know how to access these programs?

Mr Noonan—The Business Ready Program was advertised at the time when we were seeking the mentors. Once the mentors were selected, it was up to them to select the 10 businesses that they were going to work with. We basically leave it to them to work out the mechanics under which they get that done. Each is focused on a broad region at the moment. We only have six, so they are quite broad regions.

Mrs VALE—Are they in each state?

Mr Noonan—I can give you some information on where they are. There is one based around Parkes, a second one in South Australia—Thebarton is the location of the mentor—Sanderson in the Northern Territory, Smithfield in Queensland, Broome in Western Australia and another in South Australia at Meadows, but that is focused on the central part of Australia.

Mr GARRETT—Thanks, Philip. I am glad we had the opportunity to speak to you in person. It is quite useful. Are there any other programs that the tourism division has in place or is contemplating with reference to Indigenous employment in tourism?

Mr Noonan—Another program that would have the same impact as the Australian Tourism Development Program is the Tourism and Conservation Partnerships Program, under which we fund projects that enable greater use of national parks and other conservation areas. Again, a number of our grants have gone to Indigenous organisations under that program. So far the main grants have been around developing business plans and feasibility studies. That is another quite new program.

Mr GARRETT—With regard to the Business Ready Program, am I clear that it is just about mentoring?

Mr Noonan—Yes.

Mr GARRETT—It does not involve capital, infrastructure, advice, training?

Mr Noonan—No, it does not. It is only $3.8 million and eventually there will be nearly 100 businesses working under it, so it is advice.

Mr GARRETT—Just advice?

Mr Noonan—Yes.

Mr GARRETT—Do you have a statistical base which enables you to identify how many Aboriginal people would be both directly and through CDEP and other arrangements employed in tourism in the country?

Mr Noonan—No, I do not. We only have the ABS breakdown about tourism employment, which breaks down to Indigenous and non-Indigenous, but I think the ABS lists all industries that could have something to do with tourism and grossly overestimates the number; so I do not have a number that I can answer that question with.

Mr GARRETT—I want to pick up on what Dr Lawrence said and affirm her remarks to you. It is very clear that there are substantial opportunities for tourism experiences which both involve Aboriginal communities and happen in remote and regional Australia but they have two characteristics to them: one is that they are not generally 4½ star and the other is that they would be low-volume exercises.

Mr Noonan—Yes.

Mr GARRETT—Will you be developing, or have you thought about the desirability of developing, a specific strategy in consultation with Tourism Australia and the relevant bodies to grow the number of low-impact and low-volume but high-value experiences that could be undertaken within Australia?

The reason I say that is that, for those of us who travel around the country, there are numerous possible opportunities, and you have probably identified some of those in the mentoring program, but what tends to happen is that if someone seeks high volumes of tourism numbers the thing becomes unmanageable quite often for the community or the people involved. It seems to me that you need a specific strategy and a way of dealing with that particular kind of tourism. Have you given any thought to that?

Mr Noonan—I think that is probably the role of Indigenous Tourism Australia—

Mr GARRETT—I was just about to come to that.

Mr Noonan—which Aden Ridgeway heads. While they have only been set up in the last few months, I think that they will be looking at those kinds of issues. Tourism Australia sees the marketing of Australia's Indigenous experiences as a very powerful marketing tool of Australia generally, so we want to make the best use of it. How we connect the demand that we know is already there and can be built up through good marketing to a supply that is sustainable within the communities is a difficult question, and I wish Indigenous Tourism Australia the best of luck in finding the answers.

The short answer to your question is, yes, there is a focus on how we put the two sides of the chain together, and Business Ready is a part of that so that, at the most junior level of establishing a tourism business, you have somebody who can lend you a hand and make sure you do not go completely off the rails at the outset.

Mr GARRETT—Thank you.

CHAIR—Do we know approximately how many grants have been made for the Business Ready Program for Indigenous Tourism?

Mr Noonan—At the moment there are six mentors, and in a second round of selection that will get under way next month there will be an additional four added. Each has about 10 businesses that they mentor.

CHAIR—So we are getting up towards 100.

Mr Noonan—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you know how many of those businesses would be Indigenous? Would any of them be Indigenous, I suppose is the question?

Mr Noonan—Yes. This program is very much focused on Indigenous businesses.

CHAIR—Is it exclusively Indigenous or does it have a mix?

Mr Noonan—I am not aware of any exception to the rule of Indigenous businesses, but perhaps I could take that on notice.

CHAIR—Thank you. Obviously, there is an Indigenous tourism experience which may not involve people who are Indigenous.

Mr Noonan—That is true.

CHAIR—It is the definition I am looking at, but the focus is clearly on Indigenous people in those businesses.

Mr Noonan—That is right.

CHAIR—Thank you. Are you familiar with—this is the language of our wonderful system—the Indigenous coordination centres? Are there any of those within the Indigenous policy area?

Mr Noonan—I am not familiar with that environment.

CHAIR—This question, therefore, will have to be on notice. The focus of our Indigenous coordination centres since the demise of ATSIC is what it is, but particularly in remote areas there is the mapping of existing and potential jobs in the area and developing a five- to 10-year local jobs for local people plan. What information has been collected in this project in terms of tourism employment opportunities and how does it connect to your various agencies and to your own department? Perhaps you can take that on notice.

Mr Noonan—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you have any comments you would like to add?

Mr Noonan—No.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Noonan. It is very much appreciated.

Mr Noonan—Thank you.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Garrett**, seconded by **Mrs Vale**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 1.15 pm