



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

## Official Committee Hansard

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES  
STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

**Reference: Indigenous employment**

TUESDAY, 18 JULY 2006

KUNUNURRA

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS**

**Tuesday, 18 July 2006**

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

**Members in attendance:** Mr Slipper, Mrs Vale and Mr Wakelin

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

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

**WITNESSES**

**ADDIS, Mr David (Ralph), Chief Executive Officer, Wunan Foundation ..... 1**  
**COATES, Mr Murray, General Manager, East Kimberley Job Pathways ..... 1**  
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**Committee met at 9.09 am**

**COATES, Mr Murray, General Manager, East Kimberley Job Pathways**

**GUMMERY, Mr John Charles, Chief Executive Officer, Kimberley Group Training**

**ADDIS, Mr David (Ralph), Chief Executive Officer, Wunan Foundation**

**TRUST, Mr Ian, Executive Director, Wunan Foundation**

**CHAIR (Mr Wakelin)**—I declare open at Kununurra this morning this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and I thank everyone for being with us. I particularly welcome members of the Wunan Foundation. I would open by saying that it is unusual for us to have cameras and all of that sort of thing. I understand that everybody understands that they were going to be here. They are from the Department of Parliamentary Services and they are recording the committee work of the parliament. It is just to let people know from time to time what we actually try to do out here.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Is that pooled footage—7, 9 and 10?

**CHAIR**—No. I welcome you to our public hearing, although I do not feel as if you are guests, because this is your territory and we are guests in your territory. Of course, you know that our inquiry is about positive examples of Indigenous employment. It is about some of those positive factors, but of course it is about the inhibiting factors as well. I add that these are regarded as proceedings of the parliament and we ask that they be acknowledged as that.

**Mr SLIPPER**—If you do not tell the truth, we lock you up—is that right, Mr Chairman?

**CHAIR**—No, that is not right at all. But I am obliged to say that there is the issue that we are part of an extension of the parliament. I am not sure who wants to start off with an opening statement.

**Mr Addis**—Ian was the founding chairperson of the foundation eight years ago, so it is probably worth while to start there.

**Mr Trust**—The foundation started as a result of an initiative by the previous ATSIC Wunan Regional Council. That was the governing body here, of course, for the East Kimberley. I was the chair of the regional council at the time. In fact, I was chair for nine years all up. Basically, what we wanted to do was set up an organisation that did something about the future of economic engagement and employment opportunities for our people here in the East Kimberley.

We set up the foundation to have a commercial focus using investment opportunities in the region. For instance, the foundation owns all of these buildings here and where the ICC office is located as well. We set it up basically to try to create an organisation that would be sustainable after ATSIC finished. Even back then we knew that it would not last forever. We wanted something that would be innovative and an initiating sort of organisation in terms of creating employment opportunities for our people. That is how the foundation started.

We had a guy who came in briefly to hold the fort for us for I think less than a year. Ralph is basically almost the founding CEO of the organisation. We have been fairly stable over all of those years. Our objective over that time has been to try to create an economic base here. I think the initial limit we set ourselves was \$10 million worth of investments over the first 10 years.

**Mr Addis**—It was seven years.

**Mr Trust**—Yes. So we are a fair way down the track in meeting that first objective. A spin-off of all of that, of course, was to try to create employment opportunities and training for our people here because, as you probably know, we have a high unemployment rate here in the East Kimberley. Very few of our people come through the education system and graduate probably beyond year 10. The other thing I would mention is that the Wunan Regional Council also set up and created Kimberley Group Training. That was also an initiative of the regional council.

The thinking at the time was that we needed two specialised organisations: one to concentrate on developing and creating the economic backbone, I suppose you could call it; and the other to focus on employment and training, which was the charter of Kimberley Group Training. So they were the major initiatives at the time, which was about seven or eight years ago. I think it was in 1997 that we started. And that was basically the motivation behind it.

**CHAIR**—Thanks very much, Ian. Can we go to others who might like to just tell us where you fit and how you see it?

**Mr Addis**—Yes, I will just give my spin on the foundation. When they set it up they had a very clear picture of what they wanted to achieve. They wanted to achieve an organisation that had sound governance, was sustainable and robust, and had an economic base, so that it could do things without being dependent on government—which is not to say that it does not want work with government, but is to say that it wants to work in a more balanced way.

In the first seven years the sole aim, almost, was to set up that robust organisation and get the capital base to a certain level, which I think gave the organisation quite a bit of focus and drive through that period. That—in addition to certain other activities that we have evolved into doing—was achieved in June last year. So phase 1 finished 12 months ago, and phase 2 is to look at how we best use that foundation to achieve significant social benefits and basically build a better future for people in the East Kimberley.

So in the last 12 months we have significantly invested in two major social enterprises, one being Job Pathways, which Murray will talk about shortly, the other being a governance support business that works with remote communities to help them do what they do better and more sustainably. So I think the foundation has had a fairly planned development. We had seven years of getting set up and then we were into phase 2, which is about how we use what we have to deliver something better for people. To put that in some context, in the last 12 months we have gone from an organisation of about eight people to an organisation of about 30, 32 or 35 at the moment. That certainly puts some pressure on us but it is part of a fairly coherent plan, as you will see in the papers you have.

I suppose the other key thing that I think stands out about what the regional council has set up is that there are linkages between all the different activities. There is a focus on helping people



go forward in their lives. It is not about welfare. And whatever we do has to be sustainable. And one of the key issues includes using our core competencies in governance, financial management et cetera to support things like KGT, which means that they can focus on what they are good at, which is traineeships and apprenticeships. It also makes things like Job Pathways possible without the organisations having to build their own backbone. Having that strength at the centre allows social enterprises to be run effectively and in a managed way. It remains to be seen how successful we will be but I think it is a reasonably robust model.

What else is there? I suppose the current environment, in terms of the changes that have been driven from Canberra, certainly presents some challenges on the ground, particularly for remote Aboriginal organisations and so forth. It sometimes can be a little bit hard for people out there to understand, but for organisations like us things need to change. The challenge is to make sure that the change is a positive one on the ground rather than just change for change's sake.

You know, there are some pretty compelling issues that are faced by people here in the East Kimberley and the demographics are such that if we cannot start turning around some of the trends in the next zero to five years, the situation will be significantly worse in 10 or 20 years. So I think there is a real window of opportunity at the moment in the East Kimberley to make some headway. It will be interesting to see whether, collectively, we can achieve that positive change.

**CHAIR**—That is excellent. Thank you.

**Mr Gummery**—Ian has already alluded to the fact that Kimberley Group Training was an initiative of the Wunan Regional Council, and it was formed in 1997. When I came on board, Kimberley Group Training had 45 apprentices and trainees and was fairly heavily reliant on an Argyle contract. In the time frame since then, we have grown to an organisation which now employs 270, 220 of whom are in apprenticeships and traineeships. We also do a lot of work for the Department of Education and Training with Aboriginal skill based traineeships and work readiness programs. We were a little organisation which has grown into a rather large organisation. We have also set up offices in Broome, which we started only two years ago. We had more than 100 employed in that region.

We also face a number of challenges in this area, and one of those is that there are more employment opportunities out there than we have suitable applicants for. So the greatest challenge that we face at the moment is looking at the number of people who have fallen through the cracks. That is one of the reasons we are in partnership with Wunan, with the Job Pathways program, so we can try to bridge that gap so we can actually get people ready for employment.

**CHAIR**—That is a classic WA issue at the moment.

**Mr Gummery**—Certainly. Working with the schools is critical to us but, as far as sustainability goes, we face the same challenges. From a government level, I really do not think they understand the complexities of what we do as a group training company. To add to that, out of those 250-odd people we employ, about 80 per cent are Indigenous people. We work with a lot of young people who have a number of disadvantages. We have employed our own numeracy-literacy teacher to work out at the Argyle Diamond Mine. We are implementing some

new programs around this area to try to get not just young people but also people in general ready to go to work.

**Mrs VALE**—How many did you say are employed?

**Mr Gummery**—We have 220 apprentices and trainees and we have about 50 who are school based. There are about 270 in total now.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Are you still an Indigenous group training—

**Mr Gummery**—No.

**Mr SLIPPER**—So you now will assist the general community, with a heavy focus on Indigenous people?

**Mr Gummery**—Yes. Eighty per cent of the people we employ are Indigenous people. I think that just falls into line, because the major population here is Indigenous, so that is where we are going to get our labour pool from and that is the area we need to concentrate on. We are certainly not an Indigenous group training company. One of the initiatives of the Wunan Regional Council was for that reason. So we certainly do put a focus on that, because they are probably the most disadvantaged people in the region. But we are here for everybody.

**CHAIR**—Press on, John. We will come to questions shortly.

**Mr Gummery**—We have had a quantum leap in what we do. I think the most difficult thing, from my point of view, is when we look into funding arrangements and joint policies through state government, which also comes through federal government. The normal answer is, ‘We understand your issues. We understand that you are in an area where a lot of people are disadvantaged.’ However, I do not think people really do understand. You have to be part of it and you have to be here for a period of time to really understand the complexities of it.

As a group training company, we get funded through the Department of Education and Training. That money, as far as I am concerned, is nowhere near enough for the amount of work. We are not in the south-west; we are in a remote part of the country and we are dealing with difficult kids who have so many social issues it is unbelievable. Our field officers are not normal group training field officers. They are social workers; they are having to go into the houses to deal with family issues. So there is a multitude of other things that make our organisation a very complex organisation.

**CHAIR**—And they are things that lead to the outcomes and the positive outcomes that we are all looking for.

**Mr Gummery**—Having come from a group training background, I know that most group training companies run their field offices with probably a 60 to 80 field officer ratio to client. Up here, the maximum we can get is 45. However, if you look at our funding model, that does not relate into that.

**CHAIR**—That is an excellent point. That is something I hope we will see in neon signs in our efforts today. That is the sort of stuff we have got to get.

**Mr Gummery**—It is just critical for us. Our field officers are employed as field officers. We do not employ them as social workers. They do not have the skills to go out and deal with the drugs and the alcohol issues that we see. They do not have the skills to go out and look at people and say, ‘This person needs more numeracy and literacy training.’ We need more people on the ground to get more outcomes. I think we are really talking about outcomes and sustainable employment. If we do not have the resources to put into these young people, they will probably always end up being welfare dependent. It is something that we are working through with DEWR.

We are working closely at the moment to try and get another person on the ground to help in that area, but there is certainly a need for more people. I think the state and federal government need to understand, especially from the Kimberley Group Training point of view, the complexity of the people we have to work with and the issues we have to deal with. It is the simple things. For example, we have a huge area—we cover the whole Kimberley region—and I think everyone knows about fuel costs. But, if you talk to the state government about that, you find it is not part of their joint policy. The cost of running this organisation is huge. We feel that, even though it is acknowledged, it is not really fully understood.

**CHAIR**—It is certainly not backed up from time to time, especially if it is a fuel cost issue, in terms of the formula.

**Mr Gummery**—We feel we have a lot more to offer, but we can only do what we can do within the parameters. We work within our budgetary restraints.

**CHAIR**—I love the way you are all addressing it: ‘We are looking on a “can do” basis and an outcomes basis’ and ‘If we had that, we could deliver this.’

**Mr Gummery**—Definitely. There is no question about that. We have the skills here to do it. I suppose the other issue that I would bring to people’s attention is the difficulty we deal with in getting skilled people into the region. It is all right for government organisations to say, ‘Yes, we certainly need to look at the people who have the social issues and the housing issues.’ However, we also need to look at the other side of it: if we are going to get skilled people in here to lift all this other stuff up, we need to have the houses and the facilities to put skilled people in here and not have skilled people leave within three months because we cannot provide them with adequate housing and the costs associated with that.

We are going through the heartache at the moment of trying to find a skilled person as an operations manager. We cannot find anybody because everybody at that skill level wants their \$80,000 and they want a vehicle and they want housing. That is just one of the things that we face up here. It is an issue that is really hard for us to deal with. We want to get skilled people in so we can actually raise the level of skill of other people through training so we can get better outcomes. I think sometimes we forget the top end as well.

**CHAIR**—We will go to Murray and get a snapshot, and then we will go to discussion.

**Mr Coates**—As I already mentioned, Job Pathways is a joint venture between KGT and Wunan. I think it was an opportunity to operationalise a number of the outcomes that were probably happening already but we were able to focus on them. East Kimberley Job Pathways has really only been in existence since March this year. We have tried to bring a fresh and new look at actually how to get those outcomes on the ground. The other key thing we are really focusing on is sustainable jobs. There can be a fair bit of churn out there where people stay in jobs for a couple of months and then drop out and end up back on your doorstep.

I think you probably already heard the philosophy from Ian and Ralph around the fact that we are looking at changing people's lives, not just churning them through a system. We have come up with a different way of going about it and, although it is still being bedded down, it seems to be very successful. We have placed 18 people in the last couple of months. We have implemented a no-dole program in conjunction with the Beacon Foundation at the local school. We brokered that between the local school and the Beacon Foundation and got some support from Argyle. I guess we are a silent partner in that.

The other key thing we are trying to do is develop the partnerships within the region to try and bring whatever resources are out there and make sure that they are being used efficiently. Of course, there is no funding or support for that and that is where the backbone of something like Wunan is crucial to enable us to do that sort of work that is not part of, if you like, the mainstream funding. That is already proving successful in terms of just getting people together, getting them talking, getting them sharing ideas, getting them to be aware of what each other offers and reducing duplication. Those sorts of things are already starting to have some impact. I do have a small presentation here that a number of us put together, if you want me to go through that at any stage.

**CHAIR**—Could you give me a rough idea of the time?

**Mr Coates**—Five minutes.

**CHAIR**—Wonderful. Thanks. Go for it.

**Mr Coates**—Do you want that now?

**CHAIR**—Yes, let us do that. Do you think that is the most appropriate thing now, to have a crack at it, to set the context?

**Mr Coates**—Yes, I think so. I think it will probably open up a number of the issues. I think we have already covered a lot of this.

*A PowerPoint presentation was then given—*

**Mr Coates**—Most of this presentation focuses on job pathways, because I guess from Wunan's point of view it is the operational part of getting job outcomes and very much focuses on the 'work readiness' stage of a person's life. If you like, KGT is working with people around work readiness. We are working one step back, before people are work ready. It is a joint venture, a new organisation that draws on the experience of both Wunan and KGT. It is an Indigenous organisation that focuses just on Indigenous people.

We are focusing on three key prongs, if you like. The first is school retention and school-to-work transition. I guess that is our future investment. That is saying that, to break the cycle that currently exists out there, we really need to start thinking about what is happening to kids today so that in the next generation we are not having the same sorts of issues. The second one is employment, which is around today. It is focusing on people today who need employment. The leadership issue is another investment, if you like, where we are looking at developing a program for Indigenous people to develop through into senior and middle management positions, where they will be able to take responsibility for services rather than have people like me sit here and do it.

These are the sort of people we look at. We estimate that the market, if you like, is split up like this. You have about 10 per cent of people that will probably never work. About 50 per cent of people really do not know that they are interested in employment. They could get into work if they had some pretty intense—very intense—support and mentoring. I think John alluded to that in that it is about more than just work skills. It is about social skills, about being able to communicate and about having good self-esteem. We will look at a case study in a minute that maybe pulls out some of those. The third area is people who are interested and need work readiness training. A lot of those people, with the programs that are currently available, do move into employment quite successfully. The fourth area is looking for work. The people in that fourth area are snapped up so quickly that we do not even get to see them. They are gone. Of the people in the third area, some are snapped up fairly quickly and tend to go to large organisations that have the infrastructure to support somebody who needs a little bit more support.

Job Pathways is really working in areas two and three. We are working with people who do not even know what employment is about or that it is actually an option for them. When I talk about ‘work readiness readiness’, we are really down that end of the scale. That is just a brief overview.

**CHAIR**—Can I get a clarification? That is a brilliant offering to us, I think. What age category are we looking at? Are we looking at school years 8 to 11?

**Mr Coates**—We are probably looking at ages 18 to 40.

**CHAIR**—While this is a brilliant analysis, or endeavour, that you show us, it is scary as well.

**Mr Coates**—It is.

**CHAIR**—It is bloody scary.

**Mr Addis**—I will say this just to put it in a bit more context. Going to the numbers in the East Kimberley, about 80 per cent of youth are unemployed and about 73 per cent overall are unemployed. Probably a large proportion of that 80 per cent youth unemployed are Indigenous people who might not necessarily be long-term East Kimberley residents. It probably masks some even more challenging numbers. Down at the remote communities, real employment is less than five per cent. There are some pretty big mountains to be climbed.

**CHAIR**—That is a great backup. Back to you, Murray.

**Mr Coates**—Here is a case study. I am not going to read through all this. There are three stages to this case study. There are the preschool and school years, which I guess are birth to 18; the next slide I will show you is beyond that; and the next slide is what we think needs to happen. There are some fairly negative things in there, and I do not want it to appear as a negative case study. The point of this is simply to demonstrate some of the complex issues that we are actually dealing with.

**CHAIR**—I call it a reality check.

**Mr Coates**—Yes, and John alluded to that very well. We are dealing with some extremely complex stuff. We are not talking about just getting somebody, offering them a job, teaching them how to drive a bulldozer and away they go. I guess this sets the scene for some behaviours that we experience 10 years down the track. This is the cycle we have to break, basically.

**Mr Gummery**—I could give you an example on the family issue.

**Mr Coates**—This is a real example.

**Mr Gummery**—We live alongside an Aboriginal family. They have been there for near on two years. They are absolutely brilliant. We have never had a moment's trouble. But I have never seen the kids go to school. Just recently their power has been cut off and now they are cooking their food out in the backyard. I think, 'My God, what have we done here?' because this is a situation where, probably, that lady has never gone to school herself, so she does not see a need for her children to go to school. The bus pulls up every morning and blows its horn but nobody gets on the bus. We really have to get down to the social issues before we can go anywhere else. Encouragement needs to be given in the family at home. We need people working at that level before we can get the kids to school. We can blame the education system, but we are not even getting these kids to school. That is an example of a lady who lives right alongside me. There has never been a moment's worry and she seems to look after the kids, but obviously she is struggling. It is sad.

**CHAIR**—So it is a case of nonparticipation in the education and employment areas.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes.

**Mrs VALE**—So she has had the power cut off?

**Mr Gummery**—It appears so.

**Mrs VALE**—Therefore she is not managing whatever money has come into her household appropriately.

**Mr Gummery**—No.

**Mrs VALE**—Perhaps there should be some sort of stewardship to support her in some way.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes.

**Mr Coates**—Some role modelling.

**Mr Gummery**—Who is responsible for that? Who does that? I have been sitting back thinking, ‘Do I need to ring somebody?’ but not really knowing what to do.

**Mrs VALE**—But who would you ring for that kind of role?

**Mr Gummery**—That is the question. I do not know whether to get involved or not, but I see a lady who obviously looks after her family well.

**Mrs VALE**—Are there any volunteer groups or church groups in the area that do that sort of stuff?

**Mr Gummery**—I do not know.

**CHAIR**—You are bringing up so many issues here, Murray. We had better let you complete your presentation.

**Mr Coates**—This next line deals with the post-school years. Some things start bubbling to the surface. We start to get some feedback from what that person has experienced in the first part of their life. I think a lot of it is around role modelling. We all probably grew up seeing our mums and dads going to work and seeing the importance of that.

**Mrs VALE**—This case study seems to have a problem to start with with the undiagnosed intellectual disability.

**Mr Coates**—Quite possibly.

**Mrs VALE**—That seems to be the beginning of it, because anything else really relates to that for her.

**Mr Coates**—I could probably paint you the same sort of case study and leave that line out. I could introduce you to a whole mob of people. I guess that leads to the question, ‘Where do we go from here and what does the individual need?’ We have already touched on this, and I think we have covered in terms of the suite of services that deal with more than just that person’s employment needs—more than just how to use a computer or how to be a functional construction worker.

**Mrs VALE**—You are really talking about lifestyle skills, aren’t you?

**Mr Coates**—Yes.

**Mr Gummery**—Exactly.

**Mrs VALE**—And there is no government department that actually does that, because in our culture that is assumed.

**Mr Coates**—That is right. It is about going and finding people and working with them on their own ground as well. A skills centre would have to be a pretty specific centre and a pretty special place for people to actually come to that. We need to go to them. In fact when we are doing work readiness courses some of my staff spend the first two hours of each day going around, finding these people, picking them up and getting them to TAFE.

**Mrs VALE**—What you are actually talking about is ‘enculturing’ in a different way to the culture that is dealt with in Indigenous communities. You are talking about a culture of, if you like, white economic society. That is what you are really talking about, isn’t it?

**CHAIR**—I think we need to return to the presentation.

**Mr Coates**—We have asked ourselves how we actually make this work on the ground in terms of moving people from CDEP or other Centrelink benefits—or not on any benefits at all—into some sort of meaningful employment. This is the basic model we are using. There are a lot of words behind this.

As it says up the top there, it starts with industry knowledge and information. We are focusing quite keenly on ensuring we know what jobs are coming up and which employers are interested in taking people on rather than doing training for training’s sake. For example, we are recruiting for a construction course because we know there is a need for construction. So, if we know that is the case, we go out and recruit for those positions, which probably does not sound all that different but it is quite a movement away from what has traditionally happened.

**Mrs VALE**—You are really putting the horse before the cart, aren’t you?

**Mr Coates**—Yes.

**Mrs VALE**—In the other cases it has been the training first and then looking for the jobs to fit the training.

**Mr Coates**—I think that is from desperation to keep people busy and engaged and some of that that some stuff.

**Mrs VALE**—Yes. But it is setting up a very disappointing mindset if it fails.

**Mr Coates**—Yes. The key thing with this whole process is the transition periods. If the transition periods are managed properly you will get an outcome. If the transition periods are not managed and there is downtime, it is all over. You start again and you start your investment right from the beginning.

**CHAIR**—You continue the engagement.

**Mr Coates**—Absolutely, and the upskilling, the building of confidence and trust and all of those issues.

**CHAIR**—And the ownership of the baby.



**Mr Coates**—Yes. So we recruit specifically. At that stage, the case management mentoring starts. We engage a whole range of different things that are needed. Again, John highlighted the enormous amount of different services that need to be pulled in to make that happen. Then we do some basic work, readiness training, which is normally an eight- or ten-week course, which is a mixture of living skills, developing routines and then employment skills. So, for the construction one we have been talking about, we will do things like learning how to weld, learning about woodwork and that sort of stuff. But there will also be an equal component in terms of life skills and, importantly, for developing routines—being at TAFE at eight o'clock in the morning, because once you start working that is what is expected. Then people move directly into pre-identified jobs. And then—and this is the important bit which seems to be missed a lot of the time—we want to be around to help that person transition into the next job, particularly in an area like Kununurra, which may have a lot of dry season work and wet season work.

We have all had experiences where you go into a job and you think, after three or four months, 'This really is not for me.' It is no different for the people who we are working with. We want to be there to support them for up to 12 or 18 months, which may be one or two job transitions. If we lose them after they have got into that first job, that whole investment that we have spent—which can be extremely expensive—is out the window. It is gone. It is another transition that we have not managed. So that idea of long-term case management is a really important part of sustainable employment, otherwise we are just getting back into this churn.

**Mr Gummery**—I would like to make a comment on Murray's behalf. One of the roles of our group training company is to get people through their trade. Basically at the end of the four years they will either get picked up by their host employer or will have been given the skills. One of the things from a group training perspective is having that ability to monitor them at three months and six months. The transition is critical. Something that Wunan and Job Pathways have identified is how we do that. I think that is an area that is very critical. Job Pathways needs the ability to do that, whether it is financial or people on the ground, because it is about sustainable employment.

Our role really finishes when they finish their traineeship or their apprenticeship. Even though we are now monitoring them at 16 weeks and 32 weeks, I think, by the end of that that is the end of our role. So it is critical for somebody else to be able to pick that up. The group training company is really there to get people into employment and through their apprenticeships and traineeships. There needs to be another organisation that picks that role up to make sure they are given the support. Once again, we are dealing with people with a lot of social issues. It is critical that we have a system in place that does that.

**Mr Coates**—I think that has to be done with a reasonable case management ratio as well. John's staff operate with about one staff member to 50 trainees or apprentices.

**Mr Gummery**—We are trying to get it to 50 but, realistically, we would be battling. We should not be doing any more than 40.

**Mr Coates**—So that is one hour a week that John's staff can spend with each person. We have just gone through some of the issues that are around. With Job Pathways we are trying to keep the staff ratio for case management at one to 10. And even that is extremely challenging at times.

**CHAIR**—Just to clarify: we talked in terms for mainstream of one to 60, one to 80 and down to one to 40, and you understand the reasons.

**Mr Coates**—Moving on to the positive stuff: these are some of the things that have contributed to our being able to get traction on the ground and start getting positive outcomes. We have a mixture of private, public and not-for-profit investment. Job Pathways has been seed funded also from some commercial foundations, which has had flow-on effects to things like our ability to move resources around quite quickly and, when we see a need, being able to make a decision, move the resources and get on with it. Sometimes that can be difficult to do when you are under quite detailed contracts. The private sector has been fantastic in how they have supported us and allowed us to have that flexibility.

As a group, Wunan, KGT and Job Pathways—and I think Wunan drives this and drives it exceptionally well—have developed this supply chain of solutions. For example, there is a project at the moment called Something Concrete, which is a construction business. We have six trainees at the moment, who are all Indigenous, building tilt-up houses. Not only does that solve some of the housing issues, which may also develop into a commercially sustainable business; at the same time it provides a through-flow of trainees who are work ready and move into a job. The idea is that they will then be able to move out into other employment areas in the construction area. They will not stay with us forever; they will move through.

Wunan has the hostel and other accommodation options—again, that provides traineeships—and also the movement from Job Pathways to KGT. So, again, Job Pathways may get a person up to a level where they can apply for a traineeship or an apprenticeship, KGT will then take them over and get them through their traineeship or apprenticeship and we then pick them up at the other end. In other words, we have a constant chain that links everything together, provides the options and manages the transitions quite successfully. The other key thing I think I have touched on is employment prediction—where are the next bunch of jobs coming from and what skills are needed? We have put a fair bit of effort into that as well.

At the moment, we are also drawing a line with employers regarding work experience—we try to reduce the never-ending work experience line. We are saying, ‘If you want to take Billy on, that is cool; it will be three months and that’s it. If at the end of three months you don’t have a job, we’re not going to continue to support this, because potentially that’s cheap labour.’

**Mr Addis**—You do not provide continuing subsidised work for employers, because they just end up taking it for granted and they are not focused on the kid.

**Mr Coates**—With the new CDEP changes, with 52 weeks, which I think is a very positive thing, we also have a bit of an advocacy role in saying to employers, ‘Every week you keep that person on subsidised employment is one more week that that person does not have for alternative training.’ We walk a fine line. I will continue on that theme. Positive outcomes have been achieved because of our ability to respond quickly and to be flexible. We are dealing with a diverse range of people and needs and are able to relate to the clients and the industries within the area, which is an absolutely key thing. We are trying to develop models that do not depend on the personality of staff member A or staff member B, which is pretty tough. But that whole thing about relationships between the people you are working with is extremely important. That

is about developing meaningful relationships with local industry as well with the people for whom we are finding employment.

On offering longer term mentoring and post support: I think I have discussed that and how crucial that is. That leads into things like financial management, because all of a sudden you have a job and you have money. What do you do with it? How do you plan for it? How do you keep hold of it rather than giving it away to your mates? All these new issues start coming up when you have a job and you start to earn a bit of money. There are all sorts of family issues that start to come about, particularly if you have kids in the household. How do you manage child care? How do you manage different family relations around all that sort of stuff? That post stuff is almost as important as the pre stuff; otherwise, it falls over and we do not get the sustainability.

**Mrs VALE**—Quite frankly, the things you have articulated are also challenging for a lot of people in the wider Australian community. It is not just Indigenous people who have those problems; they are very real issues for Australians in my electorate. It is not easy.

**Mr Coates**—Absolutely. I guess it is probably a bit more difficult with some of the people we work with, because they may not have numeracy and literacy. They do not have access to the web so they cannot get on the web. A lot of information provided to them is just not accessible et cetera. I totally agree with you that there is an extra barrier or two.

**CHAIR**—We are back to the word ‘sustainable’. In the mainstream, the evidence is that it is probably more sustainable. Here, I hear the word ‘sustainability’ but, if you do not manage some of that, the frustration will mean some drop out.

**Mr Coates**—And we would go round and round in circles and be having this conversation in 10 years rather than making this sustainable so that we don’t have to.

**CHAIR**—Hang in there.

**Mr Coates**—As for further innovations, further things that we are looking at, I believe the competitive model around a lot of the job placement does not work. We are assuming that there is a market in existence where there is not, which leads on to things like dual reporting of outcomes. For instance, if two CDEP organisations work together to find Murray a job, only one of those CDEP organisations can report that outcome. So why would I bother going and working with another CDEP? In fact, I will keep all my good people away from any of the other CDEPs, and probably only put people on my CDEP if I have a chance of finding them a job. So all the CDEPs in this are working a lot more closely together these days, and very strongly believe that we should be able to have dual reporting, even if I record 0.5 of an outcome and the other CDEP reports 0.5 of an outcome. Ultimately, at the end of the day, that is how we are measured. That is where DEWR says, ‘You are a good boy’ or ‘You are a bad boy.’ That sort of false market indicator creates a whole lot of behaviours that really are not for the benefit of the person who is looking for a job.

**Mrs VALE**—And it creates a whole lot of responses and consequences within government departments which are not accurate.

**CHAIR**—It is a great innovative suggestion too, I would suggest. It is really addressing getting right into it.

**Mr Coates**—Currently the only way you can have funding under the STEP program is if you directly employ people with the sort of people Job Pathways are working with. That is an extreme risk because you also have to pay their salaries. So if a person joins us and is with us for, say, a month we have to pay their salary for that month. They could drop out of that month and we don't get anything for it. The financial risk is huge. We like to think there are some other ways—I can elaborate on that if you like—of funding the STEP program. It is a very valuable program.

**CHAIR**—It would be good to do that now.

**Mr Coates**—Probably the easiest solution is that STEP should be able to make some up-front payments, rather than have to wait to reach first and second milestones. In an organisation that is working with people who have high support needs, we need time to engage them, to win some trust, to get them back on track, to get some rituals in place. That is probably the main change.

**Mr Addis**—One other significant policy change in STEP recently is that—we understand—there has been a move that STEP is only available to people who direct employ, which means for the big corporations it is worth their while getting together and organising a STEP contract for a group training company. They direct employ, just because of the way that group training is structured. Other organisations, such as Job Pathways, have more of a catalyst role. Job Pathways is ineligible for STEP, which means that you cannot have a STEP contract. It works with 15 or 20 small employers, and none of those small employers are going to go out and get that resource on their own. So it means STEP is only going to apply to bigger players, which in an environment like this, a small business environment, is not that sensible.

**CHAIR**—I presume the bottom line of that is missing some significant opportunities.

**Mr Addis**—Absolutely. You can see why they would go that way. In the past probably a fair amount of STEP resources have not generated a lot of result. I think they are probably chucking the baby out with the bathwater.

**Mr Coates**—The next point here is focus on quality, rather than volume. That is something the three organisations here have done very well. Instead of having 230 people on our CDEP and getting whatever outcomes, we have reduced our CDEP to 60 this year, but we are going to turn over those 60 people a couple of times in the year, and get people jobs and be able to focus on those people rather than manage a whole conglomerate of people.

Whether you are managing CDEP or you are managing a large corporation, managing people takes time, resources and energy. So we are about the first bit—focusing on the quality and moving people through. We have a very low average number of days on program, according to DEWR. I think it is about 70 days, so most people spend 70 days with us before we move them into employment.

**Mr Addis**—An unsubsidised job.

**CHAIR**—That would be a national record, wouldn't it? This is the whole issue around CDEP. It really does challenge this whole concept about CDEP being not the destination but part of the journey. You have heard that a few times.

**Mr Addis**—Yes. The other issue with CDEP is that it sets up an incentive to have as many people on as you can at the time because you get paid for having someone on. You do not really get paid that much for getting them into a job.

**Mr Coates**—You get less for supporting them after they get a job.

**Mr Addis**—For instance, Job Pathways would financially be a lot better off if we went out and got 250 people, just let 200 people sit there and stew and focused the resources for the whole 250 on the top 50. You could do that, but it does not have much integrity and you would end up spending your time on people whom you could not really help to move forward. So I think CDEP probably should look at how it helps. How does an organisation like Job Pathways, which is very much focused on turning people over, tailor CDEP to suit that situation and to provide proper incentive? To a certain extent the IEC, the Indigenous Employment Centre, does that, and that has been a good model, I think.

I suppose the other issue that I would raise about both of these, CDEP and IEC, is that the resources that come through the standard formula are not reflective of the difference between, say, Sydney or Newcastle and Kununurra. The IEC dollars are exactly the same, which to us seems a bit bizarre. CDEP has a slight loading, but it is nowhere near reflective of what you are dealing with in terms of costs of operating or the market, the clients up here. It is unrealistic.

**CHAIR**—I do not want to put words in your mouth, but it is about the investment for the opportunity of an outcome. I do not want to gild the lily, but I am thinking of making the formula a bit stronger to recognise the outcome, particularly if you are in these sorts of conditions at the moment.

**Mr Coates**—I would just focus on the outcome and then on maintaining that outcome, rather than having the outcome and all having a party and saying, 'Well done,' and the person—

**Mr Addis**—Floats through.

**Mr Coates**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—I will just add, to move on, that the way you see CDEP is surely the ideal use of the CDEP.

**Mr Coates**—The last point there is about long-term support for transitions. I have probably hammered that home fairly well, but that seems to be the bit of the formula that constantly gets missed. It is about the outcome and it is about the 13 weeks and then the 26 weeks. But there is not much to support that and I think it encourages organisations to place people and leave, which is a bit of a problem for long-term sustainable employment.

The other point I would add, which I do not have there, is the importance of catalyst support within the industry, driving some of that change on the ground and supporting some

organisations that know regions rather than trying to have a national approach. We need organisations that know regions, have the contacts, are aligned with where government wants to go, can align the community and can make those real changes on the ground. That can be hard to quantify from time to time, and I understand why people struggle with funding for that, but that is where Job Pathways has done well with some of the private sector investment.

Coming from more of a business, R&D type model where they understand that, if they do not invest in their business, four or five years down the track they are not going to have a business, they have recognised that we need to apply some of those ideas to changing things on the ground if we want to see change. Rather than just having new or different programs or tweaking the programs, it is about investing in capacity building and catalyst building at a local level. There is a lot of stuff out there that, with a little bit of catalyst and a little bit of bringing together, could achieve amazing changes, and you can get them reasonably quickly.

**Mr Addis**—There is an almost exclusive program focus from government. There are only resources available to do a CDEP program or an IEC program; there are no resources available to get players in the region thinking more creatively, working together more creatively, collaborating, bringing in partners from outside et cetera. It is all that more strategic stuff that would probably drive change more effectively.

**Mrs VALE**—Is it because we have a more national view, rather than a regional-specific view, looking at the drivers in regions, which are totally different all over Australia?

**CHAIR**—Or is it the inherent attitude to risk from within government?

**Mr Addis**—I think government struggles with the risk required to innovate effectively.

**CHAIR**—‘Keep it simple. I cover my backside. I do not get into trouble. I am sweet with the cabinet’—with all due respect—‘and with the secretary of the department,’ or whatever. It is all of that sort of stuff. It just seems that the ability for government to be innovative is almost a contradiction sometimes.

**Mr Coates**—I think it is not always about being innovative, either, or some of those political processes; I think it is sometimes just the ability to have partnerships with government on the ground that can agitate and talk local language about local issues—

**Mrs VALE**—It is relevance.

**Mr Coates**—and solicit the relationships that make a difference. That is very difficult to do, whether you are a government or in the private sector or whatever you are, from a head office in Perth. I think that large corporations struggle with this as well. The way they tend to do that is to have group general managers or group directors that operate.

**Mrs VALE**—Murray, it is not impossible to have that regional focus; it is just a matter of being aware that you need it and actually putting the apparatus in place. Of course, in anything that comes out of Canberra, they paint pictures with a national brush. It is a very broad-brush approach, and you have heard that analogy before. It does not really address some of the very specific areas that you are raising now—even to the point of that policy you were talking about

before which seems to reward the top-end people being kept on the books, not supporting the other people. And that is really what we want to do. We really want to sustain people in having jobs, and yet we are not rewarding that effort. To me, that is a very strong message we have to take back to Canberra.

**CHAIR**—Can I just tease that out a little, because I think we are onto something that is so critical to understanding where the government is coming from and where communities, particularly regional communities, are coming from. In terms of building competence for the sorts of processes that I talk about, which were slightly critical about government processes but build competence, if you are working at this sort of level and you can see the outcome and you can have confidence that those dollars are going to give you the outcome then you are able to do it. But, if you are more remote, it is that human resource management in building competence with you people, who are obviously committed and able to make it happen. Tell us, in all of that, how do you manage risk? Can you talk a little bit about that? You people are innovative; you have had a crack at things. How do you manage your risk? What is your attitude to risk?

**Mr Addis**—At a foundation-wide level—

**CHAIR**—You were saying earlier that you have stretched yourself.

**Mr Addis**—We certainly have! We are pretty step-by-step. We did not jump in until we had the basics in place. We have a financial buffer from our commercial portfolio, which is great. We have partnerships with the philanthropic sector, which help us to fund into new ventures as we are doing at the moment. We keep an eye on things pretty closely. Job Pathways is not a big thing at the moment. It has gone a long way in three or four months, and as long as it continues to produce good results and show that it can be sustainable, we will continue to back it, but we will keep monitoring it fairly closely. So we are comfortable that we can accommodate the size of risk at any point in time.

**CHAIR**—You mentioned the word ‘philanthropic’. To keep the confidence of your philanthropic backers is part of this as well.

**Mr Addis**—Absolutely. We have to be able to deliver. It is one thing to get some dollars in and go, ‘Woo-hoo!’—

**Mr Coates**—Also, I guess in some ways some of our philanthropic backers are harder on us than some government departments are, but in a different way. In terms of their risk management and them wanting to get bang for their buck, they are pretty hard on that sort of stuff. But we do not have to write lots of reports, we do not have to focus on one number, and we do not have to focus on a whole range of stuff. So a lot of our risk management around that sort of stuff is also being out there and talking to people, as well as the counting stuff.

**CHAIR**—And understanding the risk. Because you are out there, you are understanding it in a way which others won’t and don’t. I am a bit blown away.

**Mrs VALE**—This is good stuff.

**CHAIR**—We are operating at a different level.

**Mrs VALE**—You have explained it to us and we have a grasp of what you are saying. What opportunities have you had to tell government? What mechanisms are in place for you to actually get feedback to government about the concerns that you have raised?

**Mr Addis**—Broadly speaking, DEWR have been pretty supportive. It has taken a while to get their confidence and get them to understand what we are trying to do, because some of the things we are trying to do are probably not what they typically deal with in CDEPs and IECs. But I think they are really coming on board. I would have to say that DEWR has been pretty good really.

The state government has been reasonably supportive. The history of KGT is that the state has been reasonably well engaged and supportive, although it is not always easy to have a clear relationship—it is not easy to understand. There are not really a lot of formal structures in place to provide feedback to government. Policies tend to come out and we never have an opportunity to discuss those. We have irregular discussions with senior people in the bureaucracy. They tend to be informal rather than formal and not policy focused so much as focused on what we are doing. There is the regional partnership agreement process, which is under way at the moment, which may provide a better structure for communication with government and achieve some real coordination of government resourcing into this sort of stuff. It remains to be seen how that pans out. Do you have any comments, John?

**Mr Gummery**—Probably from Kimberly Group Training's point of view, the Department of Education and Training have been really supportive. However, once again, joint policy is set across the board, so it does not matter whether you are a group training company up here or elsewhere.

**Mrs VALE**—It is a broad brush thing.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes. We do get rural or remote location expenses, but group training companies only get X amount of dollars from the federal government that has to be divvied up across all the group training companies. But, once again, there is no focus on the issues that we have to deal with, such as the field officer to client ratio. Even though they understand it, they are restricted in what they can do. For those that do not know, our joint policy was frozen for three years. We received \$169,000 a year contribution towards our group training company. In that period of time we grew from 45 to over 200 and yet our funding was frozen. So we have really struggled through that period of time.

**Mrs VALE**—So the funding is not based on the number of participants that you have in the program?

**Mr Gummery**—It is, but because it was frozen it was taken from the time it was frozen. So we were totally disadvantaged.

**CHAIR**—It was a conscious government policy to freeze it?

**Mr Gummery**—Yes: 'Just freeze it until we put a new program in place.'

**Mrs VALE**—And it took three years to put a new program in place?



**Mr Gummery**—Yes. So we have been disadvantaged there from a federal government point of view. Once again I acknowledge DEWR. They are supportive. However, they need to have a clear understanding that group training companies are employers. If you are applying for funding from them they quite often think, ‘You have already got three or four STEP funding programs.’ What they have not taken into consideration again is that Kimberley Group Training is probably the largest employer of Indigenous people in the Kimberley region. They need to recognise us as an employer, because we are doing all these good things, putting people into employment and training that is sustainable. They need to recognise us as an employer and not just say, ‘Okay, you have already got two STEP programs. We don’t want you to have another one.’ That has been an issue that I have dealt with at state level and an issue that I think they need to recognise a lot more.

**Mrs VALE**—I would like ask you and I would like to come back and ask Ralph the same question: you mentioned before that in your particular area the funding model does not fit exactly with what you want to do or with your objectives. I think you said that it does not fit the needs of your objectives.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes.

**Mrs VALE**—Do you have any mechanisms whereby you could actually inform that back to DEWR or your funding authority? If you have not, if you had your druthers how would you like to see it implemented?

**Mr Gummery**—The mechanism is sort of there. We go to all the GTWA meetings and, through our Western Australian body, that is always conveyed back. I meet with the Department of Education and Training on a regular basis. But, once again, the issue of field officer to client ratio is not part of their formula, so it is not taken into consideration. We are looking at a ratio of 40 to 51, whereas a normal group training company could look at 60 to 80. We battle to find the costs of employing another field officer. By the time you put a vehicle in, and with the costs of living in this area, you are probably looking at \$150,000. That is not part of the funding model. So how do we go about shoring up that so that we can get better outcomes? That is one of the issues. To answer your question: no, there is no real mechanism—

**Mrs VALE**—Where information can be fed back up the chain.

**CHAIR**—You might talk to the ICC or some other group?

**Mr Gummery**—Yes. We talk very closely with the Department of Education and Training, but how that gets to the next level, I cannot answer.

**Mrs VALE**—On the same thing, if you could think about this and come back to it, Ralph: if you had your druthers, how would you put that kind of reverse mechanism in place, with which you can get your needs clearly articulated where the policy makers are? Perhaps you could think about it too, Murray, because, to me, that seems to be something that really is important. You have some really specific challenges here that probably are not even contemplated, let alone recognised, in Canberra. To me, it is a concern as to how we can do that reverse information.

**Mr Addis**—My comment on that is that the way that the policy and programs are delivered is that they come from Canberra as ‘this is what government wants.’ There is very little interest in what organisations out here that are grappling with the challenges see as important, workable, practical or effective. That is just not something that enters the equation. It seems to me that that is probably where the discussion needs to start—if you want to get 100 people into a job this year, what sorts of resources and investments can we do? What will the measures of success look like? How do we tailor an investment package around the outcomes that we both want to get? Instead of that, we ask: ‘How do we fit into that one over there and this one over there?’

**CHAIR**—That is the national brush you were talking about earlier, isn’t it?

**Mrs VALE**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—I have one question before I hand over to Mr Slipper, who has a couple of questions. I think it might lead into Mr Slipper’s questions a little bit. As we were talking earlier in Murray’s presentation, something occurred to me about enjoyment of work and the difference, if you like, between mainstream and where we are trying to go this time. ‘Enjoyment’ may not be the word, but I mean appreciation, linkage and connection—you mentioned your neighbour. Could you talk briefly about appreciation, enjoyment and linkage? I am sure it will lead into what Mr Slipper mentioned to me that he would like to talk about it.

**Mr Gummery**—I think that is a fairly critical element. One of the things we are trying to introduce into the job pathways in the New Apprenticeships access programs that we are running, and probably leading onto that, is the culture of TAFE. I work in the TAFE system, and one of the changes we have had up there in recent times is that the new regional manager has sat down and listened to the people like us talk about trying to engage young people into programs. TAFE basically just puts people through short course programs. They turn them over and the same faces come back again and again. One of the critical elements from our point of view was sitting down with the TAFE lecturers this year in a boardroom and saying, ‘If we don’t change the way that TAFE delivers their training to Indigenous people, we’re going to continue to get one outcome out of 10.’

In the New Apprenticeships access programs we built in things like communication skills and team-building exercises. We do things like using the local dragon boat. We took them out onto the river. In the front of that dragon boat was me, the CEO and the lecturer from TAFE. There were paddles crashing and banging and everything. There was a total lack of communication and team-building skills. By the time we had them back we had rung the *Kimberley Echo* and said, ‘Come and get a photo of this.’ The reporter heard them coming through the entrance to Lily Creek and he said when he got back that he had never seen the boat go so fast. We sat that group of guys down on the lawn afterwards and said: ‘What was this all about? Can you relate this to your work? They said: ‘Yes, we can. If we work as a team we’re going to be able to produce the goods.’ We put things like that in. We put self-esteem programs in. We took them out to the grotto and put them on the flying fox to overcome their fears. So we built a fun element into their training.

We were trying to come up with models that would attract people into that culture, which is hard. A lot of these people are going into the TAFE system, hitting a brick wall and bouncing back out. Until we break that down and develop a culture that is more acceptable within the

TAFE system we are always going to struggle. That has started to happen here. I take my hat off to the guy. I know him well because I taught him once. It really is starting to work well.

**Mrs VALE**—He thinks outside the square, does he?

**Mr Gummery**—We are thinking outside the square. We do not have the perfect model. We did try, with another group we did recently in business administration, putting in a bit of department. People came in and taught them about hairdressing, how to do their fingernails and how to present themselves. We are trying to think outside the square. By doing that we are starting to encourage an idea that work can be good and they can enjoy it. But we need to build the fun factor into the work readiness program because most of these people we are talking about are people who have fallen through the cracks and do not know what work is. I believe the programs we are starting to implement with the college are building that in.

**Mr Coates**—It is also about taste testing. We are dealing with a lot of people who may have never worked before or had really good role models, as we have discussed. For some people it is about being able to go out and taste test and ask themselves: ‘Do I really want to work in the sugar mill? Do I really want to be a carpenter?’ rather than telling them, ‘Bang, you’re into a job; enjoy it.’

**CHAIR**—But in this guideline, this approach, as you said, there are set periods—

**Mr Addis**—Yes. I think the other thing is there is a big change to try and shift people off welfare into jobs. That gets communicated to organisations, funded bodies and blah, blah, blah. It never gets communicated to people. There is nothing wrong with saying: ‘Look, guys, the world’s changing. You’ve got to start thinking about what you’re going to do in your future and how can you take control of it,’ and just communicating with people.

**CHAIR**—There might be individual value in it for yourself.

**Mr Addis**—Absolutely. Treat people as human beings.

**CHAIR**—Get a positive message out there for individuals—that is a good one.

**Mr Addis**—These guys are not thick. They have different life skills than we all have but they are not thick.

**CHAIR**—You get TAFE involved and it is a team effort.

**Mr SLIPPER**—I was told that Clare Martin, the Northern Territory Chief Minister, said that in the Territory—and I realise we are not in the Territory—there were more people trying to get Indigenous people into jobs than there were people to get into jobs. Do you have a comment on that? In other words, more people were trying to get Indigenous people into jobs than there were available people to take those jobs.

**Mr Addis**—There is certainly a lot of resource in and around getting people into jobs. There are certainly a lot of jobs available and the challenge is that there are not enough Aboriginal people with the job-ready skills to take them up. Most of the resource gets focused on: ‘We have

got to get you a new job next week,' rather than dealing with the issue that probably 50 or 60 per cent of the people you try to move in that direction need some intensive work before they will be at that point. Effectively, that is where the resources have not been concentrated in the past.

**Mr SLIPPER**—I am impressed with your general evidence. With respect to the prior employment history of Murray, John and Ralph, have you been professionally involved forever in Indigenous affairs or have you been in the mainstream community, then you have brought those skills into Indigenous employment? It seems to me that there is a real industry out there of people whose entire career path has been in Indigenous affairs, that there is not sufficient cross-pollination with other sectors of the community and that both sectors could do with this cross-pollination and exchanges of ideas. That way, you are more encouraged to think beyond the square. We will start with Murray.

**Mr Coates**—Before I took up my current role in Job Pathways, I was the deputy CEO of the second largest disability provider in New South Wales. We provided services across the whole of New South Wales in employment, housing, living skills training—the works.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Not especially in Indigenous organisations?

**Mr Coates**—Indigenous people were part of the population that we serviced, particularly when we were up in Townsville, Moree, Narrabri and some of those places, but certainly that was not our focus.

**Mr Gummery**—I come from a trade background and then went into lecturing at TAFE. That was my first real contact with Indigenous people—guys going through training. But my main exposure has been since coming here, and I have been here four years. I have certainly learnt a lot, but there is so much to learn in this industry, especially how you deal and work with Indigenous people. It is a huge learning curve. One of the things that really concerns me is that a lot of people will turn up on your doorstep, they come in for a day and they are gone. I have been here four years. I believe I am just getting an appreciation and an understanding, more than anything, of the complexities and the issues these people deal with—their history, social issues and all that type of thing. It worries me in that sometimes we do have a lot of people—politicians come in here, they go and that is the last we hear of them. There needs to be an acknowledgment of the people here who are working on the ground, who have the skills, the knowledge and the ability to take it forward.

**Mr Addis**—I am a chartered accountant, so I come from a background in commerce, which is very different from the environment in Indigenous affairs generally. You have to make a dollar, you have to change things, you have to be a bit more aggressive than most of the corporate sector in Indigenous affairs. Our staff have a good range of skills backgrounds. We have people like Ian who has a 30- or 40-year history of seeing what comes and goes, seeing what sticks and what doesn't et cetera, so we have a really good balance and the board is obviously a big part of that.

**Mr SLIPPER**—As I said, I was impressed with what you told me. I can see that you have brought experience from other sectors and of course there is a benefit from that in what you are doing today. We had someone from a group training company give evidence in, I think, Cairns.

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr SLIPPER**—He said there were problems as far as placing Indigenous tradespeople and Indigenous apprentices in—for want of a better word—mainstream construction companies because of the cultural aspects of Indigenous life which see, for various reasons, Indigenous people not turning up—whether it be because of a funeral, a ceremony or something like that. I think that guy admitted that it was more difficult to place Indigenous staff members for that reason. Have you had a similar problem here?

**Mr Gummery**—I do not think we have had those same issues. One thing I will say is that up here in all the trade related areas we are working in, employers in this region are absolutely open to engaging Indigenous people in apprenticeships and traineeships. There are those cultural issues that need to be considered. We have a very good relationship with our host employers and we explain that this may occur from time to time.

Obviously, up here a death in a family can mean a long distance to travel. Now, most of our employers are very open to that. We do not have any difficulties engaging people in the building trades. We do have difficulties with outside subcontractors who come in and do a big project without engaging Indigenous people in those areas. So I think that is something to build into contracts. The subcontractors come here and they want to build a house. Even if it is built into their contract that they have to employ Indigenous people, they ring up and their first reaction is, ‘Oh, we don’t really want anybody but it’s part of our contract.’ So we need to change that culture, but in general we do not have any problems.

**Mr SLIPPER**—I think in Cairns, where there are quite severe penalties if construction is not completed on time, businesses are worried about this, because people might absent themselves for a very good reason, and that would mean that the construction project would get behind and there could be penalties imposed. Do you think the contracts here are more flexible for that reason?

**Mr Gummery**—We have never had any problems in that area. Most of the contractors we work with are very obliging, and I can only say again that up here the mind-set of the business people in the area is great, fantastic.

**CHAIR**—In Cairns we had a group called Tjapukai—a tourist group. In Tjapukai, of 100 people employed, 85 per cent were Indigenous. And this issue that Peter refers to is certainly very much there, but in that enterprise they were able to convince the employees that the show must go on because they were catering for performances regularly. And they were able to spread the job to allow for this sort of issue. So there are two parts of it.

**Mr Gummery**—If you are looking at the funeral type situation, we do not make any compensation. We abide by the award, which allows for three days. And we say, ‘Basically, guys, you need to get yourselves back as quickly as you can.’ However, we would go out and explain the situation and most employers would accept that. Once again it is that pastoral care and having a link in between. So we have a field officer working closely with the host employer. The field officer can explain the circumstances, be in contact with the young person who is the apprentice or trainee and make sure that they are looked after, not only from the point of view of

getting them back to work but also with respect to those issues that the young person may be dealing with at the time, because it is a big thing.

**Mr SLIPPER**—And I imagine you have been successful in encouraging people who have to absent themselves for these valid reasons to notify you, or notify your employer or the person with whom they are working, that they are not going to be there. I think a no-show would be incredibly frustrating. You would not know whether the person had disappeared or whatever.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes.

**Mr SLIPPER**—So do you have a high level of success in encouraging people who have to go away for some reason to give you notification so that the business is able to make other arrangements?

**Mr Gummery**—Yes. It is not an issue with us at all. It runs very smoothly. We have arrangements with Argyle diamond mine, which is one of our bigger employers, so that the guys actually get five days bereavement leave. And that is to cater for the travel to and from the mine. So we work on an individual basis with individual host employers to set it up.

**Mr SLIPPER**—This committee is a standing committee and an all-party committee, although the three of us today happen, by coincidence, to be from the government party. I was quite appalled, yesterday, at a statement made by a witness accusing this government of right-wing policies and effectively getting stuck into Indigenous people et cetera. And while I respect that different people will have different views on Indigenous policy, this government, in my view—and I think objectively—has really sought to bring about practical reconciliation. And we do not just talk in slogans. We have endeavoured to improve a lot of aspects of Indigenous life and, while not everyone will agree with what we have done, I think we are motivated the right way.

Although this is an inquiry into good news Indigenous employment stories, I was just wondering whether you might have any general comment or any suggestions to the government on Indigenous policy in relation to employment on how we could do a good job even better.

**Mr Gummery**—Have you got any thoughts on that, Ian?

**Mr Trust**—The question was asked earlier. In terms of the model and the strategy we have here for getting employment outcomes, economic development and so on, we have found it hard to get the message across to the people at the executive level in government or at the departmental level. How do we get the message across that this is the sort of model that they should be looking at and maybe trying to emulate around the countryside? We just have not been able to get much traction in that area.

I think that there are issues in terms of the policy stuff that was mentioned earlier about that broad-brush government policy approach. It does miss the mark in trying to get better outcomes in isolated areas like the Kimberleys, where more of a regional approach would probably do a lot better and would get a lot of better outcomes. Issues like corporate governance, for example, with some of the organisations that we deal with—I am not really sure what the perception is about whether these organisations are going to have a role to play in the longer term.

There has been a lot of information in the press about violence, sexual abuse and so on in communities, and we do a lot of work with Kalumburu community, a couple of hundred kilometres out from Kununurra here, and also Turkey Creek. But we have found that, if you can bring stability in their corporate governance and how the community conduct their business, you can effect a whole lot of other changes as well, in terms of better family stability, kids going to school, improving the number of kids that go to school every day. It has a flow-on effect across the board. That is also linked to law and order types of things: having a police station based on location, of course, contributes a lot as well.

But I think there are things in regard to broad policy and getting the information out to the policy makers as to whether some of these sorts of strategies should be looked at. I am on a couple of national boards. I am on the Indigenous Land Corporation and I am also a member of Indigenous Business Australia. They are organisations that are involved in specific areas. There is also the National Indigenous Council, which provides policy advice to the government or the minister—I am not sure which it is. But we do not have any direct links with organisations like that in terms of policy. I doubt whether most of them, apart from maybe one or two, know that we exist. They would not have a clue about the sort of work that we do. So there seem to be some breaks in the system—

**Mrs VALE**—Gaps.

**Mr Trust**—Yes, as to how it links back.

**Mrs VALE**—That is the message that I was getting.

**CHAIR**—That is an excellent response. We were mightily impressed with the Indigenous Land Corporation, by the way. Mr Galvin gave evidence in Adelaide.

**Mr SLIPPER**—I am someone who believes that as a country we have to do what we can to redress Indigenous disadvantage, but governments need political support from the community to do that. That is why I think the point that you raise about corporate governance is so important. When the newspapers get hold of stories—and I know it happens in non-Indigenous areas as well—where people are clearly ripping off the system, clearly stealing from the wider Australian community, there is a reaction from the electorate. The electorate tells the government: ‘Well, you’re just throwing money at Indigenous affairs. You’re wasting money.’ Whereas, when you get some of these good news stories out there, I think the community does want to improve Indigenous disadvantage. If we can show that Indigenous organisations are as well run as other recipients of public money then I think the government is encouraged by the community support it gets, because the community can see positive outcomes and not just a focus on process.

**CHAIR**—It is a cycle, isn’t it? The community is encouraged; the government is encouraged.

**Mr SLIPPER**—The government gets the political will to provide the resources that are undoubtedly necessary. But, when you had Pauline Hanson running around, she highlighted a number of outrageous instances, and of course there was then a reaction in the community and the government therefore found it more difficult to provide the resources. I think some of the good news accountability stories that are out there now are helping the government to get the community support to spend the money that needs to be spent.

**Mr Addis**—The government obviously has a clear and pretty pragmatic reform agenda. I do not think that is necessarily thought through five years in advance—this is what I am seeing. It could be that I do not understand it well enough, but what I am seeing is the idea of changing what we know needs to be changed, but there is not a clear vision of where we are changing to. I think there is a lot of risk that there will be lots of babies chucked out with the bathwater in that process. That reform agenda is not being clearly communicated through to people who need to understand it so they can adjust and move with the change process. But I think that is an incredibly difficult thing to do, because you have very tall, deep, complex, unwieldy bureaucracy between ministers and senior policy makers and the local ICC, for example. I think that is a really important issue.

**Mrs VALE**—Sometimes when governments come up with policies, they have to seek advice from their departments on how to implement them. Sometimes that is why everything does not change, but it keeps changing and it never really changes. Do you know what I mean? You keep repeating the same mistakes.

**Mr Addis**—Yes, but that also—

**CHAIR**—What Ralph has said is immensely valuable. I really appreciate the feedback.

**Mr SLIPPER**—But Ralph has just highlighted what is a more general problem in Australia. I do not think it is as much of a problem now, because we have this *Intergenerational report* looking at where we are going to be in X number of years time. But because we have only a three-year parliamentary term, governments of both colours over the years have probably looked at the electoral cycle, and they would probably say a four- or five-year term would be much better in so far as the government would have more time to implement policy and to plan, whereas now you have an election, you have to implement your promises in the first budget, and by the time the second budget comes along, you have to have one eye on the electoral cycle. So we lurch from election to election, which is unhealthy. I think what you say is dead right, but I do not think it only relates to Indigenous affairs.

**Mr Addis**—That is only mid-cycle.

**CHAIR**—I notice in the document, you mention the Productivity Commission and you have drawn all of the resources together in terms of where you are coming from. I welcome it, and I think we all do.

**Mr Addis**—We have aligned our strategy with the government's peak level strategy in terms of the COAG indicators. We think we are delivering reasonable progress against them, yet we are struggling to get engagement with the government about how we go forward. We want to get cracking.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Have you contacted Barry Haase? Have you spoken to Barry?

**Mr Addis**—No, we have not.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Maybe you should.



**CHAIR**—I am sure he would welcome it. He is one fellow who would really welcome that.

**Mrs VALE**—Yes, Barry is a good fighter.

**CHAIR**—But he has a particular view about these issues.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Contact his office. When he is here, I am sure that he would drop in.

**CHAIR**—He served on my committee last parliament. He has a view that would not be incompatible, without presuming what Mr Haase might say. I have a few things I want to go through, and I know that Danna is also very keen. I will go through my list, and then I will go to Danna. The No Dole program—the Canberra changes that you have touched on, I think we might develop that a little bit more in terms of specificity—the school retention, the ratio of caseworkers and the regional costs related to Jobmate are some of the things I want to go through, but back to you, Danna.

**Mrs VALE**—Ian, how long did you say you had been involved with the foundation? Was it from the beginning?

**Mr Trust**—Yes, I was involved in establishing it in the first place.

**Mrs VALE**—This was part of your vision?

**Mr Trust**—Yes.

**Mrs VALE**—Can I formally say congratulations. Right at the very end of this paper, I think the last sentence was that your foundation does not receive any government funding. Is that right?

**Mr Addis**—No.

**Mrs VALE**—It is not funded by any government?

**Mr Addis**—That is a lie.

**Mrs VALE**—Is it? Okay, it says ‘any recurrent funding from the government’.

**Mr Addis**—Yes.

**Mr Trust**—That is correct.

**Mr Addis**—CDEP contract is all we have, which largely goes to KGT and Job Pathways.

**Mrs VALE**—You are to be congratulated, you really are. You have looked at a problem and tried to solve it yourself without relying on government to do it. Murray, is it possible for us to have a hard copy of the presentation?

**Mr Coates**—Sure.

**Mrs VALE**—I personally found some of the case studies and the things that you articulated very useful. Thirdly, you deal with DEST and DEWR. Which other government departments do you deal with?

**Mr Addis**—Myriad state agencies and the ICC and FaCSIA, which are one and the same.

**Mrs VALE**—If those government departments were of a mind to put out a questionnaire about the objectives they would like to reach—the kinds of objectives that they want in the end—and were to ask you for suggestions about how you would get there on a regional basis, would that be a help? I am just trying to think of that linkage that we have identified. There are some gaps in the links that get information back to government departments so we can inform the people who inform the government when it comes to policy how they could put policy in place and reach the objectives that they want to meet.

**Mr Addis**—I think, if you put out a questionnaire across the East Kimberley, you would get 1,000 different answers and the bureaucracy would probably be left with the question of—

**Mrs VALE**—How to put this together.

**Mr Addis**—how to distil something sensible out of that. So I think it is probably going to have a fair few challenges. We have a view of the world where there are some important drivers that we see in the region, but we might see them differently to the way that other groups, organisations or communities see them. People have different levels of understanding and sophistication et cetera, so I think it would be quite challenging to do that.

**Mrs VALE**—What is the solution to getting information back up the line?

**Mr Coates**—I am not sure there is one solution. I think that catalyst role that I was talking about before is very important. I do not believe that can be done by any government or government department, because of the amount of flexibility and responsiveness and the different ways of building those relationships and, more importantly, trust. You need somebody who can move and groove and pull people together, take on different agendas, look for similarities, get people to see other people's similarities and channel them in one direction.

**Mrs VALE**—Do they need regional managers in the field? We were discussing earlier how big corporations handle the differences across the nation, across the world. They have more regional management.

**Mr Coates**—I think that could be a way forward—again, as long as it was not somebody attached to a government department, because then, not only have you got some of the competition that happens between the not-for-profit sector and the government sector, you also have the competition between the individual departments. So, if you attach that person to a particular department, they have particular agendas within their department et cetera.

**Mrs VALE**—I can see you understand.

**Mr Coates**—It gets very, very messy, whereas the catalyst role that we have been able to succeed in has been around the idea that, ‘We’re all on the same side here.’ We can demonstrate that we are getting outcomes from what we are already doing, not just by saying, ‘We’ve got this airy-fairy idea that seems really nice,’ but by saying: ‘Look, here it is. This is what we have demonstrated. This is what seems to work. You may have a different bunch of people. Sure, we can chip some edges off and we can look for some more similarities and put some of your innovation in it as well, but ultimately it has to keep chugging along and it has to keep moving.’ You have to keep pulling those people together and developing the trust. So I think that is a very good idea, as long as it is not attached, as I said, to any particular department.

**Mrs VALE**—Did you have anything you wanted to add to that, Ralph?

**Mr Addis**—I think government by its nature is a centralised structure. The control is in Canberra or Perth and it operates through a departmental hierarchy. It is almost impossible for the people on the ground, say in a region like this, to have their main focus on what has been happening on the ground in terms of getting people into jobs or successful schools or whatever, because they have a hell of a big bureaucracy above them that they have to understand, compete within, operate within and succeed within. So their driving motivations cannot be 100 per cent focused on what happens in the East Kimberley, and I think that is a big structural challenge.

**Mrs VALE**—I hope that, if any departmental person reads this report—and we hope they do, and I understand that a lot of them do actually read the reports that come in from the standing committees—they will hear loud and strong that you would value some mechanism whereby you could get your specific information and your specific challenges back to them so hopefully there would be some understanding and some flexibility in supporting you to do your job. Could I put it in those terms?

**Mr Addis**—Yes, though we do not want to sound overly critical.

**Mrs VALE**—Of course not. It is a matter of providing information. I hear what you say about the fact that you do get support from these particular government departments but that there is a lack of awareness and understanding about some of the specific challenges that you have.

**CHAIR**—I want to sift through a few things, and I will direct this to Murray because he is from New South Wales. You mentioned a name which has become a part of our inquiry. Are you familiar with the Aboriginal Employment Strategy, Dick Estens and Cathy Duncan out at Moree and the issues there?

**Mr Coates**—No.

**CHAIR**—I will leave that then. Can you give us a picture of the No Dole program and what it means?

**Mr Addis**—The No Dole program is run by the Beacon Foundation, which is a national organisation focused on employment. We have partnered with them on our housing project to create real jobs. Murray has also been able to get them to come in on the No Dole thing, so there is a broader relationship with Beacon. Murray can talk about the details of No Dole.

**Mr Coates**—I think part of the value of No Dole for this area too is that it is something we have imported into the area, and therefore it does not have any baggage associated with it. Speaking broadly about No Dole, its charter says that at a transition stage in the life of a young adult they have three choices: they can go to further education, they can go and get a job or they can go on welfare. It is that simple. It is not complicated. No Dole works through a series of education supports. There is certainly no peer pressure and they work very hard on making sure there is no peer pressure. They get students to sign up to a charter to say: ‘When I reach that point, I will not choose the third option—that is, welfare. I will choose further education or I will choose going into a job.’ That is the easy bit.

The hard bit swings in behind that, where we do most of our work. We make sure that those kids are supported sufficiently so that they can put a resume together, that they have chosen the right career subjects and that they can do structured workplace learning while they are at school. Industry comes in and talks to them about what different industries require and the fact that if you do want to be an electrician and join KGT, you have to stay at school because you have to have a minimum level of numeracy and literacy et cetera. I guess it is a two-part component: you have choice and you sign to say that you will only take those two choices; industry, school and everybody else needs to then get around those kids to make sure that there are structures, programs and opportunities in place for you to exercise your choices.

**CHAIR**—To me, it links back to this enjoyment process and the appreciation of and connection with the workplace as a really strong, useful and most positive life option. That is what you are saying, and I have not come across that before. We have debated it as committees and all the old baggage that you talk about is brought out. This has been debated for many years in the parliament, as you would imagine, and you end up with a bogged down debate. So it is refreshing to hear where you are coming from. You have the freedom of expression that sometimes we do not have because we end up locked down.

**Mr SLIPPER**—That Beacon program is a very worthwhile program. That organisation operates at Maroochydore High School as well in my electorate and it is just first rate. I think the point that you make about needing to give the kids support so that they are doing away with that choice of going on the dole is a real option and it is vital.

**Mrs VALE**—I think the value of that program, and Peter is right, is that you are making these young people focus, and that is so vital. If they are focusing their mind, they are actually thinking about those options and that is such a very powerful thing that you are doing for them.

**Mr Coates**—Very briefly, the strength of it is that it has brought a whole lot of other programs together. The school was doing a whole lot of stuff that fits under the No Dole program anyway and it was doing a great job at that career transition stuff. But it has pulled together the school, LCP—which is the local community program, which is another federal program through DEST—et cetera. It has pulled all those together, and it actually has three different programs totally focused on the one thing.

**CHAIR**—What it looks to do, no doubt, is one of my other points earlier with the school and, now, the school retention, obviously. It is a no-brainer, isn’t it, if you can get school retention? Can we deal with ratios a bit—the regional specific. This is the cost. You have talked about fuel costs and that sort of thing. Let us talk about that. I think that is a pretty valuable part of our

inquiry in terms of our recommendations about how we recognise this stuff. I wonder whether we should not just link into the actual related job market. In government we do not talk as much about outcomes, particularly job outcomes. I hope I am not confusing you in the sense of the case-worker ratio or whatever you want to call it—and you have given some pretty interesting statistics. Can we touch on that and your costs and maybe even relate it to the outcome job market. I am trying to find a way that the parliament or a party of any persuasion and the bureaucracy can be a little more comfortable with it, if you get my drift.

**Mr Gummery**—From our point of view, at the end of the day we are trying to run a business, and the 50 to one ratio is just unrealistic for the issues we have to deal with. It would probably be easiest for me to give you a couple of examples. One of the issues we had to deal with was out at Argyle 12 months ago. One of the apprentices out there became very agitated and we could not understand what the problem was. We had to get the field officer from Argyle personnel to go down to talk to him. He had a thing in his mind that his room was actually haunted—spirited. This is the sort of stuff that people may laugh at, but this was a reality. This was actually happening with us. We went through a process, along with Argyle personnel, where our field officer went to Warmun. They had to talk to the elders. The elders arranged to go to Argyle and talk to this young person to try and encourage him to stay there. In the end, they actually went in and smoked his room.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Smoked?

**Mr Gummery**—Yes—smoked the room, which is a traditional ritual. They went through that process. That young guy did not go back into that room, but through that whole process of engaging the elders and the people who had a better understanding of these issues, we were able to keep that young person employed. Putting that into time, it was something like a month's work for that field officer to deal with that issue, because it was not just that week of trying to engage people and trying to keep him on track. Once again, there was that supporting mechanism.

**Mr SLIPPER**—So obviously that company is pretty good.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes.

**Mr Addis**—They are amazing.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes, they are amazing. Another issue—

**CHAIR**—I want to finish on the corporate, but we will cover that.

**Mr Gummery**—Yes. Another example is one of the young guys we had who, through his money management, had got himself into personal difficulties. He was at the point where the police picked him up and took him to jail. We engaged the family once again. He was a good young person, but he did not understand what happens if you do not pay your bills. Once again, Steve was over there every day, talking to the police, talking to him and engaging the family. The family came along and supported him and said, 'He hasn't got a criminal record.' Our whole thing was for this young person to understand that, if we could help him, if the mine could help

him—it was another mine one—or if his family could help him, that was the first preference, because we did not want him to have a criminal record.

**CHAIR**—That is one aspect of cost, but can we talk specifically about regional cost? We can talk about fuel, time, distance—

**Mr Addis**—In WA, the labour market has probably shifted 20 to 25 per cent in the last two years. John employed an operations manager 12 months ago on \$65,000. Now they would cost \$90,000.

**CHAIR**—I have a brother at Port Hedland, in labour hire—

**Mr Addis**—It is incredible. It is the same with residential housing and fuel. Costs have shifted up across the board in the last two years—probably 15 to 20 per cent—as well as starting at a higher level anyway compared to other areas.

**CHAIR**—Can I relate it back to this issue of outcomes. Clearly, this is driven by a pretty strong economy. I think the message that we would like to reasonably put is that these are potentially strong outcomes for the economy.

**Mr Gummery**—There is no question that outcomes could be better. We would get a lot better outcomes if we had more people on the ground dealing with the issues we have to deal with.

**CHAIR**—We have to drive it.

**Mr Addis**—To give you a business sense: the product price that we get paid by the government to get someone into a job has stayed here, notwithstanding that our cost to do it has probably—

**CHAIR**—That has happened as your job market has strengthened, which is the irony of the thing that is driving the deal. That is what I am trying to get the picture of.

**Mr Addis**—They need to be more flexible.

**Mr Coates**—I guess the other side of it, too, is that I think the ratios that we are prepared to fund or put in place are directly related to the quality of the outcome you want.

**CHAIR**—I think I am just about there. This was probably one of the key Canberra changes. Is there anything else that central government could be aware of? I will go around and each of you might have a rap. You might just think about that. The last thing is that I want to acknowledge the ILC and how impressed we were—well, I am not sure about the other members. There are nine or 10 of us and there were other parts of the team in Adelaide when we spoke to ILC. That seemed to be coming along really well. I want to finish by talking about the relationship with corporate Australia, of which you clearly have an outstanding example here. Could we talk about the relationship and how important it is? Put it in any terms you want to.

**Mr Addis**—We have limited access to cash. For us to do the things we want to do on our social agenda, we need resources. It is typically extremely costly and it ties you to get it through

government, so we took the view that we did not want to be dependent on government. There is a lot of demand out there from the corporate sector to get involved in good quality Indigenous projects. We embarked on that strategy 18 months ago and the results have been very encouraging. But the challenge remains for us to actually deliver the goods and get some good results.

**CHAIR**—Can I invite my colleagues to make any final remarks?

**Mrs VALE**—No, thank you, chair.

**Mr SLIPPER**—No, chair.

**CHAIR**—I will invite the four of you to sum up. We are guilty of being the fly-in, fly-out variety, but we defend ourselves by saying that we are a national parliament. Your evidence today has been outstanding. Over to you, gentlemen, to sum up how you would like to.

**Mr Trust**—I have always thought that there has been not enough of a longer-term vision or strategy for where Aboriginal people are going to be over the next 10 or 20 years. With the work we do on remote communities and around here, and with all the issues that we saw this morning of people's lives being linked to welfare, we find that we need to have a longer term vision and a longer term strategy for where we are going. Getting governments to fit into that sort of thinking is an issue. Where do the Kalumburu Aboriginal Corporation or the Aboriginal people in Kununurra want to be in five or 10 years? How do we work together collaboratively to try and make that happen? Those have been the challenges here. People go out and implement specific programs, but we need to look at the rules that are part of building the pyramid. We are concentrating on honing one block. We do not see that looking at the bigger picture is what we are actually trained to do.

The people do not have that either. I think the question about leadership is this. Something we are finding really challenging is that there is no consolidated leadership or vision for five or 10 years in a lot in the towns or communities. In a lot of cases they do not have that for their own family group. We need to be trying to instil that sort of thinking. The problems are fairly large, but they are not insurmountable. I have seen instances where governments have given new houses to people. It is amazing to see the pride et cetera that people have in getting a new house. They go out and buy new furniture. If you could maintain that sort of momentum and get it to reflect in sending their kids to school more often, it would be great. If we had programs to try to achieve that, I think we would be further down the track than we are.

**Mr Addis**—From our point of view, I think the pragmatic and honest approach from the minister at the moment is refreshing. It indicates that the government is wanting to make significant change and inroads into some of these issues rather than necessarily getting caught up in dancing around the issues. We certainly think there is a fantastic opportunity for government to partner with regions and organisations to take out some of the volatility that can come through government being totally driven by government. To try to build that 15- to 20-year consistent direction that we here probably all understand is the only thing that will achieve real lasting results. It will be an exciting three or four years in the East Kimberley.

**Mr Gummery**—Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. It is the first time we have been able to sit down and talk across the table with some valuable input and get some feedback. From the point of view of Kimberley Group Training there is an enormous opportunity. With the direction in the partnership we have with Wunan and now with Job Pathways, I honestly believe that both organisations are making huge inroads in our objectives, and that is employment and training. I think if we received more support on the ground we could get better outcomes and a lot more outcomes. As long as we all have that desire and passion to drive that, we will succeed, and I think that has been demonstrated already.

**Mr Coates**—I think there is no doubting that it is an extremely complex area to work in. Having said that, change is possible and change is happening. I support Ralph in terms of the pragmatic approach of the current minister. One of the things required to get that flywheel going to start to get change winched up is some engagement with central government around what is and isn't making a difference, and being able to take some of those risks at a local level and engaging regularly with what has happened. I think there are ways of doing that. We obviously do not have time to discuss that, but I think there are steps that we can also take around those issues.

**CHAIR**—Gentlemen, thank you.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 11.03 am**