



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES  
STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

**Reference: Capacity building in Indigenous communities**

THURSDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2002

DARWIN

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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

**Thursday, 28 November 2002**

**Members:** Mr Wakelin (*Chair*), Mr Danby, Mrs Draper, Mr Haase, Ms Hoare, Mrs Hull, Dr Lawrence, Mr Lloyd, Mr Snowdon and Mr Tollner.

**Members in attendance:** Mr Danby, Mrs Draper, Mr Haase, Ms Hoare, Mrs Hull, Dr Lawrence, Mr Lloyd, Mr Snowdon, Mr Tollner and Mr Wakelin

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

Strategies to assist Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders better manage the delivery of services within their communities. In particular, the committee will consider building the capacities of:

- (a) community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities;
- (b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and
- (c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous people.

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**Committee met at 9.31 a.m.**

**BABAN, Ms Pauline, Aged Care Worker, Larrakia Aged Care, Larrakia Nation**

**BRUNTON, Mrs Lorna, Aged Care Coordinator, Larrakia Aged Care, Larrakia Nation**

**CONSTANTINE, Mr Gregory John, Executive Director, Larrakia Development Corporation**

**HOLTZE, Mr Colin, Carer, Larrakia Aged Care, Larrakia Nation**

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**LOY, Mr Les, Board Member, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation**

**MORRIS, Mr Leon Barry, Acting Coordinator, Itinerants Project, Darwin and Palmerston**

**MUSK, Ms Roxy Irene, Research Officer, Larrakia Referral Centre, Larrakia Nation**

**PARFITT, Ms Rosemary, Community Member, Larrakia Nation**

**RAYMOND, Mr Joe, Supervisor, Land Care Community Development Program**

**WILLIAMS, Ms Gail Edwina, Member, Larrakia Nation**

**WILLIAMS, Ms Tanya, Carer, Aged Care Service, Larrakia Nation**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this morning's proceedings. We are here this morning for the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs of the federal parliament. We give a particular thank you to the Larrakia Nation for the effort that you have gone to this morning in helping us and working with us. I look forward to hearing from you. We do not regret the rain, I must say, but we regret that we did not get out to Palmerston to have a look at the subdivision. But I am sure you will tell us about it. Cecil, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

**Mr Lewis**—We are from the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation. We were established in May 1998 as the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, a focal point for Larrakia people in relation to native title and land rights information. We have 30 participants on a Community Development Employment Program project as part of the Darwin Regional CDEP. Some of the activities involved with CDEP are office administration, land care, nursery and landscaping contractual work with Darwin International Airport, the Larrakia Aged Care Service and the itinerant program.

Larrakia Aged Care Services was officially opened by the federal Minister for Ageing, the Hon. Kevin Andrews, in July 2002. Aged Care Services comprises community aged care packages funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. Aged Care Services will be able to provide a range of services to identified Indigenous people who require

low to medium levels of personal care. Aged Care Services employs a part-time coordinator—which is Lorna—and eight Larrakia people as aged care workers. Some of the services they provide are: personal care, culturally appropriate activities and transport, for example.

We have been providing education through cultural and historical information about the Larrakia to a wide range of agencies. These include schools, universities, conferences, forums, big business and industries. The Larrakia Nation have previously worked with the Nungalinga College, which is an Indigenous Christian college, to provide cross-cultural courses to the John Fairfax Group, Methanex and Woodside.

Great opportunities exist with relocating to the park down here. It will assist in the increased level of cultural exchanges between the Larrakia and agencies and organisations that are interested in Larrakia culture. The park is close to Rabbit Creek. We have given it a Larrakia name, which has been changed a couple of times. It is now known as Burrawong or 'freshwater'. The importance of the creek is a major reason for the Larrakia moving down to the site.

With regard to training and employment, the Larrakia Nation have been jointly delivering a range of short courses with Batchelor Institute. Some of those courses include certificate 2 in aged care, conflict management, administration, computers, screen-printing, batik and art and craft. Larrakia Nation and Batchelor Institute will be delivering community maintenance courses. We also have jointly developed a Work for the Dole program with Mission Australia. I am happy to say I will be starting that next week. As of Monday I will be supervising 10 to 15 participants that will be coming on and joining the Larrakia Nation and doing some cultural work down here with us. It is going to be good.

At the park facility Larrakia Nation will be a focal point for Indigenous art and craft development and supply. Larrakia Nation will be establishing an art and craft shop at the park and Indigenous people will be encouraged to undertake art and craft activities as well as any training on site, and to sell art and craft through the proposed art and craft shop. The association that Leon has with the itinerants project offers the opportunity for Indigenous people who travel to Larrakia country, Darwin, to be involved in appropriate cultural activities. That will minimise the level of antisocial behaviour whilst improving their own social and economic position. The Larrakia Nation are hoping to be able to provide Indigenous markets with the approval of Darwin international airport during the period of the forthcoming Arafura Games in May 2003.

The Larrakia Nation will also be encouraging tour operators to include the park in their tour operations so that tourists have opportunities to observe and participate in Indigenous cultural activities, such as basket weaving, spear making and throwing, didgeridoo making, bush tucker and medicines identification and sampling, traditional painting, body painting, traditional dancing and story telling and informative walks through Gurriwa. I hope I have pronounced that correctly; we are still trying to get used to the names being changed.

The new site we have moved to was identified as being ideal for a variety of uses to meet the Larrakia's growing requirements. These include aged care; ecotourism at Rabbit Creek; ease of access for Larrakia locals and tourists; promotion of Larrakia activities; Larrakia cultural activities; employment of Larrakia through Mission Australia, Darwin Regional CDEP and Landcare; the itinerants program in conjunction with Darwin City Council and Clare Martin's Northern Territory government; a landscaping program through the Northern Territory University; and a nursery program in conjunction with the Royal Darwin Hospital and Greening

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Australia. We have a bush tucker and bush medicine garden up at the Royal Darwin Hospital. We also work with the Batchelor Institute.

The site will enable us to build loyalty to the Larrakia Nation within the Larrakia, achieve budget forecasts for both income and expenditure items, maintain a detailed employment database of all Larrakia to maximise the use of computer support both internally and in conjunction with the NLC, to continue to critically evaluate the delivery of all services to Larrakia to ensure that they are effective and beneficial, make regular evaluations of third party providers to ensure that the best service outcomes are achieved for Larrakia, build a reputation as innovators and achievers within the Indigenous community of the Northern Territory whilst at the same time applying standards to its relationship with other key Indigenous stakeholders, including the NLC, ATSIC and the Northern Territory government and other Indigenous groups.

The park is located within the grounds of Darwin International Airport. You may have a diagram of the grounds. The site is currently in a poor state of repair. That is being fixed at the moment. Work is going quite well. The site consists of an office block, including kitchen and toilets, an established but badly in need of repair plant nursery, ample room for cultural activities and demountables to service the educational—through Batchelor Institute—and aged care needs of Larrakia, and to supervise the itinerants program. The site will be developed by Larrakia by utilising the skills of its people, in particular through landscaping and nursery teams. The site will be developed and will become a showpiece in the skills and achievement of Indigenous people, in particular the Larrakia.

The rent will be funded from the services being offered by the Larrakia Nation, with the major funding source coming from the landscaping and nursery operations, which it is anticipated will be fully operational and creating sufficient profits to meet operating expenses without impacting on the current funding needs of Larrakia Nation to meet the cost of its cultural and social programs.

I thank all of you for coming today to visit the Larrakia in their new headquarters. I hope you can visit us again when we are more established.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Mr TOLLNER**—I congratulate the Larrakia on what they are doing here. Tourism is obviously a big focus of yours. It is a big focus of a lot of people in the Territory. We need to do something to encourage more tourists here. International tourists coming to Australia all want some sort of Aboriginal experience, and providing the cultural centre and some of the other things that you are doing here is absolutely marvellous and it will work very well with commercial tour operators. You should be working hand in glove there. I congratulate you on your efforts there. I am interested in your relationship with the Darwin City Council. You have an ambassador program or something there. Can you explain more about that? Can you also tell us about the itinerants program? The itinerants in Darwin are a major issue, as they are in other areas, and the Larrakia Nation, I understand, are tackling it head on.

**Mr Morris**—I refer you to the background brief that I provided so that we do not take too much time. There may be specific issues that you want to ask about, because it is a very large and complex project, and it is also extraordinarily unique in its character in the Darwin area. There is no other project of its kind that has a project management committee that combines the

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peak Aboriginal organisations—Larrakia Nation, ATSIC, the Northern Land Council, the North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the Aboriginal Medical Service Alliance of the Northern Territory—together with the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth government and the Darwin City Council. Just the structure of the management committee starts to give you some idea of what a substantial project it is and what a serious commitment it is from the whole of the community.

Further, out of that year-long research project came a structure that comprises not only this project management committee but also four working parties under that, with which over 50 community organisations and agencies are involved. It is a new approach that brings together all the partners and stakeholders in order to deal with an issue about which there are general community concerns. We are just starting to implement a whole range of strategies that have come out of the project. In brief, we had a year-long research project for which we got substantial funding from the Northern Territory government in July this year. We are at implementation stage, with the first two programs that we planned to roll out opening next week. The first is a community day patrol. We are adding a totally new patrolling system. It is not a reactive policing model; it is an outreach information sharing model. We have targeted language speakers and people with cultural skills. We will be bringing in senior people from communities to talk with the itinerants and long-grassers in town to find out what their issues are and to try to resolve those issues before they become problematic for the community.

The approach is not about making Aboriginal people disappear. That approach has been rejected by the project management committee. It is about dealing with concerns about the health and wellbeing of the itinerant group and it is about dealing with legitimate concerns of the public about antisocial behaviour. The key to the Larrakia Nation's involvement has been that from the beginning the project accepted that Aboriginal law would play a key part in the whole project. To paraphrase that simply would be to say that under Aboriginal law visitors to any other person's country are required to act according to the protocols of the country they are visiting. The Larrakia have developed a protocol for their country. It is different from other protocols that have been developed. It is not prescriptive—it does not say, 'Don't spit.' It does not specify what is right and wrong behaviour but it specifies that people are expected to behave in a culturally appropriate way and to understand that there are responsibilities to country.

The importance there is that the Larrakia Nation's law, its responsibilities and its custodianship and ownership of the land are recognised as a means of influencing the behaviour of people visiting town. That has been a key part of the project, and that is why the Larrakia Nation has been absolutely crucial in the project. My position has been outposted to the Larrakia Nation because it was recognised that the itinerants project needed to be run in this way for it to be effective. So we have the day patrol going out and the Larrakia Nation setting up an information referrals office. That information office will be run in the mornings at Casuarina Centrelink. The fact that Casuarina Centrelink have provided the premises is another indication of the partnerships that we are establishing in the community. That office will provide a proof of identification service, which will relieve a lot of pressure on a number of organisations and institutions in town, and it will provide referrals and information to the group. The coordinator of that office will also coordinate all the outreach work and service delivery among the network of service providers within the community.

All the accommodation service providers, alcohol and rehabilitation service providers, various substance abuse programs and health programs will be linked to our project so that

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when we can identify what people's needs are our outreach office can facilitate the coordination of the delivery of the service. For example, our alcohol working group is very keen that one of the possible results from the project with the coordination of service delivery is that duplication can be avoided and that gaps that are identified can be filled. If there is a gap that cannot be filled within the network, the project will be in a position to explain that gap to the appropriate funding sources, whether they be government or Commonwealth, so that the gap can be filled. It is a way of making much better use of existing resources. We are not about saying that everything needs to be a blank cheque; we are about looking at what is out there, finding out how it operates, making it work better and identifying how it can work better. It is a very interesting model. The real strength and positive value of the project are the level of support it has in the community. It is one of the only projects which I know of in town or with which I have been involved in for many years where there are regular meetings—we re going to meetings almost daily—with all the working parties and subcommittees and where people turn up and ask us for more meetings. The general view in the Darwin and Palmerston community is that they are very pleased that something is finally being done.

People are not unrealistic in their expectations. It is not going to be an overnight fix; it is going to take a while to sort these issues out. But people are incredibly positive throughout the community. Within the Aboriginal community, people are also very pleased that the Larrakia Nation is stepping up to take a lead role in this issue. We think it is a very valuable model for addressing the issues. Once we learn lessons from this project, it will have extension to other urban centres. It is a valuable model for improved service delivery. We have found that effective communications networking coordination has already made a big difference to the way some of those service organisations are working together. That is enough of a rave.

**Mr TOLLNER**—Leon, we were out at Wadeye a couple of days ago. People there said that one of their problems is that there is a lot of money leaving the community. It is ending up in Darwin—blokes turn up here, get on the grog and so on. Can you give us an example of how you would deal with a person from Wadeye whom you found wandering around the mall drunk one day? What would the process be?

**Mr Morris**—The first stage of our intervention is the community day patrol. You mentioned the Darwin ambassadors project before. That project is related to our project. We cannot take credit for it, but we have brought it within the umbrella of our project. It was proposed by Darwin City Promotions, and their idea was to train 10 Larrakia people to act as hosts and ambassadors for people in town. Part of that role—not the exclusive role, by any means—would be to exercise their cultural authority to limit inappropriate behaviour in town. There has been some delay in implementing that project. We need to further our discussions with Darwin City Promotions and Darwin City Council to find out how we can expedite the introduction of that project, because it is a very exciting one. The same model is being considered for the northern suburbs—for Casuarina and, by extension, Larrakia Ranges in the Casuarina coastal reserve.

To go back to your specific example: if we had the Darwin City Promotions program up and running, the ambassadors would come into contact with that person, talk to that person and find out what their issues were. If those issues could be dealt with by referral to an appropriate service organisation, that would be done. The community day patrol might perform that same function in another part of Darwin and link back to our outreach office and referral system so that person could find appropriate referrals. If the person's behaviour were at a certain level, police would be called in. All our services operate voluntarily, so if the behaviour is particularly

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objectionable and starts to border on criminal then it is a police matter. There is a stepping stone manner for dealing with it, and the first stage is to try to find out in a sensitive, quiet, culturally appropriate manner what the person's issues are and to deal with them. You mentioned Wadeye. We are establishing strong relationships with the Wadeye community so that we can identify senior elders from Wadeye who are in town or, if necessary, bring people from Wadeye into town to talk to people at that level.

**Mr TOLLNER**—Obviously not all itinerants are Aboriginal people.

**Mr Morris**—That is right.

**Mr TOLLNER**—Do you have any responsibility for itinerants generally?

**Mr Morris**—The project was initially set up as an Indigenous itinerants project but it has become much broader in its remit because the reality is that a number of non-Indigenous itinerants live with, associate with and—some people would say—on occasion exploit Aboriginal itinerants. Part of our intervention and part of our data collection process will be identifying just who is in town, who is Indigenous, who is non-Indigenous, where they are from and what their issues are. To date our strategies have been aimed primarily at Indigenous people, but as the project develops we expect to develop strategies that impact on non-Indigenous people as well. For example, some of our accommodation strategies are just as applicable to non-Indigenous people as they are to Indigenous people.

**CHAIR**—You mentioned the interpreter service. I think that is part of the itinerants project.

**Mr Morris**—I did not mention that, but they do play a role.

**CHAIR**—I am not trying to put words into your mouth, but I would like to ask about it.

**Mr Morris**—We have worked out through our project—and it is not a particularly surprising lesson—that the way to deal with the itinerant group is through people who have an established relationship with that group. That can range from their own countrymen through to service organisations. On a lot of occasions language skills are critical. So we have found that, in our surveys, the use of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service has been very valuable. But at the same time we are also using Aboriginal people and Aboriginal countrymen who can speak in either a creole or their original language, and that is a very efficient way of working as well.

**CHAIR**—My question goes to something more specific. How stretched are you in terms of the various languages? Do you very often meet the situation where you cannot handle a language group? It is early days, but how is that going?

**Mr Morris**—There are a number of key language groups. There is also a creole English, which is pretty effective. So the difficulty might be where we need language skills immediately for a particular person or group; that can be problematic. But, by and large, that has not come up. Roxy Musk is with us; she is a Larrakia woman and she will be operating the information office. She runs a similar service at the Northern Land Council at the moment. We have had a couple of language issues, but we have been able to deal with them effectively most of the time, haven't we, Roxy?

**Ms Musk**—Yes, it has been brilliant for us in Larrakia country to be able to have a say on this since this came in. When the Northern Land Council and NALAS stood aside, my grandmother was the queen of the Larrakia, and the Larrakia took hold of everything. They met on Bagot. Their meetings went for about three months, and then they had to move back to the community. But today the problems have subsided deeply, and I feel very privileged to be part of this team. The Larrakia has now reared its head and taken control of a lot of the problems, whereas in the past a lot of governments turned to other places than the Larrakia. But today the Larrakia has taken a hold, and I have seen a big difference. You probably want to cross-reference this with John Burdo—who will be here today; he is just around the corner and he will be coming over—to look at what the Northern Land Council thinks of the Larrakia taking it on. I think we are doing a big service for all people. It has been brilliant.

**CHAIR**—That is great. Thank you for that; it is an interest of mine. Are there any comments you would like to make on the capacity in which you appear, Ms Musk?

**Ms Musk**—I have been appointed as the referral officer for this referral centre, which is going to open near Centrelink on 9 December. I put my hand up mainly because of the Larrakia movement. I suppose I was the voice of the Larrakia when it came to the radio side. I was the acting manager for Radio Larrakia and I am still involved in that today. So I more or less stand first for the Larrakia people, for the media second, and for the referral centre third.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Ms HOARE**—There is a map in here, but because I am not local to the area I am uncertain what the geographical expanse is for the Larrakia Nation. Where is this line?

**Mr Lewis**—It is a very old map. The boundary extends from the Cox Peninsula—

**Ms HOARE**—Which is where?

**Mr Lewis**—It is on the other side of the harbour. The boundary extends across to the other side, to Gunn Point, and maybe 50 kilometres inland.

**Ms HOARE**—How did the Larrakia Nation become involved in delivering aged care services to Indigenous people? I am really interested to hear about the process for that.

**Ms Baban**—This came about because in the past there were quite a few Larrakia people who used to sit around and talk about setting up something for our elderly people, because nothing was focused on our elderly people in terms of having a service for them and getting them fully involved. It was more about looking after the middle aged and younger generation with training and things like that, so you have CDEP, which is a good thing and which is happening. We took that a step further to look at what we could do for our elderly Larrakia people. Our coordinator, Kelvin Costello, put in for a grant. I will ask Lorna to briefly talk about the grant. Lorna Brunton is our coordinator.

**Mrs Brunton**—The grant that Pauline is referring to is six aged care packages from the federal government through the community aged care packages.

**Ms Baban**—At the moment we are situated at Nungalinya College, but when we move over to the new area just adjacent to where we are now we will be looking at setting up two demountables for aged care where our clients can come and visit us and sit down and do activities. So it is more or less about getting them involved instead of them just sitting at home and looking at four walls, apart from doing other things at home. It is about getting them actively involved.

We set up this aged care program mainly to do something for them so that families do not have to come to the conclusion that they need to go straight into a nursing home full time straight away. We can set up things like short-term respite care. The main thing is to get them involved and still keep them at home. We are set up over at Nungalinya. We are just starting afresh and we have actually started servicing the clients. Elderly people are very important to us because they hold the key to a lot of knowledge. The setting up of this establishment for aged care will really get them involved as well as enable us to take them around the country, where they can still do activities to do with culture like storytelling and basket weaving. So that will coincide with what is set up over here.

**Mrs Brunton**—I would like to mention that six aged care packages will not be enough for very long. We have already spoken with at least 16 people—not that they will all qualify. But the generation that we are talking about have often spent some time in an institution. So they feel very strongly about staying at home. It can be very heavy for families, because some of these folk are really almost at a nursing care level. Their aversion to institutions will mean that they will stay at home and they are going to need someone to relieve those families, who work very hard 24-hours a day supervising them.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Cecil, could you explain to us the joint venture arrangement for the Darla subdivision?

**Mr Lewis**—I would like to hand over to one of the guys from the LDC board. Greg Constantine is the Chief Executive Officer of the LDC board. He can explain it in much more detail than I can.

**Mr Constantine**—The subdivision at Darla is a 390-lot subdivision which is being developed by the Larrakia Development Corporation.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Could you explain how the land became available?

**Mr Constantine**—The land was actually part of the native title. It was granted under the previous government—the CLP government. Since then, it has been endorsed and fully supported by the current government. Minister Vatskalis and the Chief Minister have been very supportive. The idea of this is not only to look after the commercial development of Larrakia assets but also in the process to create jobs and employment. As I touched on earlier, with the landscaping and nursery operations, we are trying to grow all our own plants for the subdivision through the nursery. The nursery will become a commercial activity. The landscaping will also be done by the Larrakia, who at the moment are going through courses with the NTU. That will be a self-perpetuating organisation. Within 12 months, we hope to have over 15 full-time employees in those two businesses and, within five years, over 30. The idea is that we will get them off the CDEP and start creating jobs all the way through. They will be full-time jobs. From that, we will create even more business opportunities for Larrakia.

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We have a couple of other opportunities as well, with land at East Arnhem and a cultural centre that we are negotiating at the moment with land at Bullocky Point near Darwin High School. Again, that will create more jobs and more opportunities for Larrakia. There is also land out at Wadell, which is also in the process of being looked at as far as what we can do in terms of development and creating more jobs for Larrakia.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Are you in this project with a joint venturer?

**Mr Constantine**—No.

**Mr SNOWDON**—So it is solely Larrakia?

**Mr Constantine**—Yes. The civil works are being done by Wolpers and Flowers, supervised by Sinclair Knight Merz. It is all being done commercially. The funding was all negotiated through Westpac. We have had to go and find all our own funding. It has all been done on a commercial basis. Stage 1 is tight, but we are going to get there. The presales have been excellent. L.J. Hooker are our agents. At the moment, we have over 26 of the 57 blocks already sold. That says a lot not only for the product but also for the acceptance by Darwin, and Palmerston in particular, of Larrakia as a developer. There was none of the stigma of 'it's going to be a ghetto' or some of the other things that were mentioned. So we have been able to dispel all those myths.

At the moment, we have eight employed on site with Wolpers and Flowers. There are other side effects on the employment side. We have had a lot of ladies apply as well. We cannot put them to work with pick and shovel, so it has created another opportunity. We are going out to our other suppliers and saying, 'Are there opportunities here for office workers in clerical positions?' We are hitting a bit of success there as well. So we are not taking on an employment position, but again it is opening up opportunities for Larrakia that were not there before we started.

**Mr SNOWDON**—What would you gauge as the overall impact of this development upon the Larrakia Nation?

**Mr Loy**—Eventually, it will help the Larrakia Nation. But, as you realised, there are 390 allotments being put in there. We gradually have to build up our funding. Out of the first section, which is 57 lots, we will not make too much money, because a lot of the services have been put in for the second, third, fourth and fifth sections. I think it is in our constitution that the Larrakia cannot get distribution of the money for three years. After that, if the board see fit, they can then distribute the money to needs like some of the jobs we are going to do. But, at the moment, we are stretched so tight—

**Mr SNOWDON**—No, I was not actually referring to the financial stuff. I was trying to get you to talk about the way this has been a catalyst to bring people together to provide opportunities which otherwise were not there.

**Mr Constantine**—I will give you an example. We had a Larrakia team doing a nursery and landscaping course with the NTU and one of the benefits was that they would get up to certificate 1 or 2, but there was no guarantee of a job afterwards so they would just sit there. The idea of this is that we now have a vehicle whereby, with the landscaping business and the

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nursery, those skills can go on to the next stage. They will start building from that and we will get the business skills, the marketing skills and everything else. So it is a real benefit, not a 'nice to have' thing—it is real.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Cecil or Leon, do you want to add anything?

**Mr Morris**—It is hugely symbolically important to all of the Larrakia because it gives them a place in Darwin and Palmerston that they have not had for so many years and it makes them a major player and stakeholder in the land that is their traditional country. I see a few people around the table nodding—they would agree that it is of huge symbolic importance as well as being of cultural and financial significance. It gives them both a place and a potential income.

**CHAIR**—And developing the skills that go with it.

**Mr Morris**—Yes. All the things you have been talking about today link together. There is a whole series of services, initiatives and programs that are happening and they are all linked together. Darla is absolutely critical in that whole mix because of its symbolic importance and because of its economic significance.

**CHAIR**—I can understand why Greg and others were keen for us to see it today because it is that important in the overall picture.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Historically, from my observations, it has changed the relationships in the town dramatically. When I used to live in Darwin many years ago, the Larrakia were part of the community but they were not seen as 'the' community.

**CHAIR**—As players in the community.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Yes. They were living at Bagot or Kulaluk or in their community but they were not acknowledged as the traditional owners; they were not seen as having any rights, apart from those discrete reserve lands. Now they are in a position where they are a dynamic influence in the community but, most importantly, the cultural imperatives of the Larrakia are being recognised in the relationship with government, which they were not before.

**Mr LLOYD**—Isn't that a fact all over Australia?

**Mr SNOWDON**—I wish it were.

**Mr LLOYD**—No, isn't it a fact that they do not work together like the Larrakia and the government up here are now working together?

**Mr SNOWDON**—That is right, but historically it was not the case.

**Mr LLOYD**—Isn't it the case all over Australia? Tell me where it is working elsewhere.

**Mr SNOWDON**—It is not working in many places, truthfully. The chairman has experience of South Australia. Things are changing in some areas. But in urban areas like this, if you look at the Northern Territory experience, the last five years have seen a dramatic change in the

relationships because native title has provided people with the capacity to be at the table. Prior to native title, government had no reason to give that, apart from the land rights act, and that does not affect the urban areas particularly.

**Mr Morris**—I can give a small example, and then Roxy might want to talk about the cultural awareness project. In terms of symbolic importance in town, the Larrakia ran a Larrakia cultural awareness project at the museum this dry season as a pilot—one of many—and it was hugely popular. It allowed visitors and people in town to meet Larrakia and see and learn about their culture and cultural skills. One of the projects that came out of that is a canoe making project, and we are continuing that through the itinerants project as one of our pilots.

One of the examples of the shift in town that Warren was talking about is that the *Northern Territory News* devoted an editorial to the importance of this canoe making project, arguing that this is the kind of project that should replace the Beer Can Regatta. So in terms of the symbolism of where Darwin's cultural face and its presentation to the world are sitting, Larrakia are now being recognised and people are beginning to recognise that Larrakia are a cultural asset for the whole community. That is why the Larrakia Cultural Centre is so important as well. So it is a big shift. Every day people are coming forward talking to the Larrakia. The major problem is the capacity of the Larrakia to pick up quickly and carry all these new initiatives.

**CHAIR**—That picks up Mr Tollner's point about people looking for the overseas experience—connecting across is very important.

**Ms Williams**—I believe that one of the major reasons for the Larrakia people's success is the model we chose to develop, which was already with us. In our decision making processes, we always consulted with each family group when we made decisions. We developed the idea of having two people per family group sit around a table—we had never had a table between us before—and then looked at the decision making processes. We had to learn from scratch how to run our meetings. Each family group would have a chairperson and minute takers, and we learnt from scratch how to do that. From there, people became really enthusiastic and decided to participate, because we felt that this was ours. The Northern Land Council have been helping us develop as a group, but most importantly it has come from the people themselves.

People have been excited about education. They have taken on board the desire and the opportunity to be educated. Some of our people have never had tertiary education, so once we got going with vocational education and training we actually looking at, perhaps in days to come, those certificates transferring into degrees through the Northern Territory University and the Batchelor Institute. The Batchelor Institute came on board to help train our aged care workers.

I work as a lecturer at Batchelor Institute. I was born and raised in Darwin and trained at Bagot as an Aboriginal health worker and went on to nursing. So most of my formal education has been here in the Northern Territory and I am still completing my nursing degree. I have worked with the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses, which is a national group. Next year we are looking at hopefully having an Aboriginal nurse or maybe two part-time people who will recruit into nursing Aboriginal people from the high schools and support them in the Northern Territory University. The Batchelor Institute are looking at running a degree program for nurses in the future. So we will see. In the early days, it was definitely about

setting up a model that worked for us where we were able to make our own decisions, and it still happens.

**CHAIR**—Over what time span did that happen for you? You talked about learning to do meetings and minutes from scratch—how long ago was that?

**Ms Williams**—We have always met together and made decisions, but we have never had any authority or power to have final outcomes. We got together in 1995 during the Kenbi land claim and that helped to formulate our thinking even more. We were working together on the land claim and thinking about land—what we could do with it, how we could use it—when the nation was set up, from the very beginning. We had our people get together and then we looked at this decision making process. Hopefully, to that model we are adding a model for our older people, giving them some authority, power and say in matters and advising some of our younger ones and teaching them about cultural things. They have never had any say in these things before, so we want to give them back that authority if possible.

**CHAIR**—I can only add my congratulations, really. It is quite inspiring and very positive to come here this morning and hear about it right from the beginning.

**Ms HOARE**—Where was the authority before that?

**Ms Williams**—The authority before was more with the land council. We were working for years on the Kenbi land claim. With native title, under a new law, we set up the nation to get people together to make decisions for native title. That is the way I see it. But we have not just moved for native title. The priorities are education for our young people, looking after our old people and getting those things moving. Then Kelvin came on board and he moved everything. He got people motivated, and at the moment it is moving in so many different directions that it is hard to know how we are going to control things. At the end of the day, as long as our control is not taken away from us we will be happy.

**CHAIR**—That is excellent. Some people have not spoken this morning. Tanya, do you want to add anything?

**Ms Williams**—Not really.

**CHAIR**—That is fine. I do not want anyone to think they are not free to say a few words.

**Ms Parfitt**—We did a deal with the railway money to buy the land at Bullocky Point and set up our own cultural centre. Hopefully, it will all come together. A few of us did the tourism course at NTU. I was in the first group, and Pauline was in the second group. We all passed and got our certificates. Hopefully, we will get a job with the Ambassador's course.

**Mr Lewis**—They are the sorts of things we look at for the Ambassador's and cultural projects.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Is it self-selecting for these things?

**Ms Parfitt**—You choose which area you go into.

**Ms Musk**—Please forgive me for not mentioning this earlier, but the significance of what they call the ID system is identification for Aboriginal people. People are not aware that I am dealing not only with Aboriginal people in Darwin but with people nationally, right across Australia. They come to the Northern Land Council and want an ID done. That is what I took on after no-one else did. That will be going national. By the time you have dealt with all those people and the word has got around, all eyes will be focused on the Larrakia in the Territory. On Christmas Day—and I am letting the cat out of the bag—I will be doing a program on Radio Larrakia—

**CHAIR**—This is a scoop!

**Ms Musk**—Radio Larrakia is going national right around Australia. I will be on the Gold Coast doing that. Someone has put the funding up for an Aboriginal station to go national. That will be the first time Radio Larrakia will go national right across Australia. A lot of these things will be mentioned on Christmas Day.

**CHAIR**—Congratulations.

**Mr SNOWDON**—It is a pity we did not have time to go down and look at Radio Larrakia.

**Ms Musk**—Radio Larrakia was built around land title, as it was going right back to the day when my Uncle Bobby was marching. I pulled him out from under the car, and he said, ‘They have taken my land.’ I said, ‘No, not now, Uncle Bobby.’ He said, ‘You the voice.’ I did not know what ‘You the voice’ was. So for years to come I had to fight in the supreme courts for our title to be recognised, and that is how Radio Larrakia got its licence.

**Mr SNOWDON**—I was going to ask you, Joe, about the art and cultural side you are involved with.

**Mr Raymond**—The main thing I am really interested in is getting these younger people—school leavers and all that from all over, it does not matter—and teaching them how to mix, paint, make brushes out of billabong reed, stretch canvas, carve, make concrete moulds and all that. I have a contract with Darwin Airport on the air site for when tourists jump off. There are going to be black concrete slabs, but with artwork—with colour and everything—all in them. I am going to get some of the Larrakia CDEP boys, who do not know anything about concrete and reinforcement and all that, and teach them mouldings and how to lay them down so that they have a bit more experience in other fields.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Who was involved in making the canoe?

**Mr Raymond**—That was Robby Mills and Kenny Reid. They have done two out at Batchelor and one for the museum, and I think they have about 12 more to do for the Arafura games.

**Mr Lewis**—Credit must go to Kenny; he put in the hard work and slogged it out. He is a qualified carpenter by trade, so he did it all himself—apart from some of the CDEP workers helping him to cut the tree down and bring it in. Kenny Reid was the main driver.

**Mr SNOWDON**—What about the Larrakia language work? Who is involved in that?

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**Mr Raymond**—Lorraine Williams.

**Ms Parfitt**—We set up a children's Larrakia language class at Nungalinya College last year, which fell through. Then Lorraine Williams came on board and started teaching the adult people the language. We are trying to bring back the language, culture and knowledge of the senior elder people through Lorraine.

**Mr SNOWDON**—Have there been any discussions with any of the primary schools in town about teaching Larrakia?

**Ms Parfitt**—No, we have to teach our own people first. We have so many children ourselves.

**Mr Lewis**—There has been a school started. It is over in the old Greek school. They have started an Indigenous language class. I think it is a Tiwi Island school. They have started their own language class. We have given them support. In the future we will look at that, as well.

**Mr TOLLNER**—I am immensely proud, being a local who lives on your land, that you have put on such a good show for my parliamentary colleagues. On their behalf, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. We look forward to seeing some of your cultural stuff soon, and catching up for a tea and coffee.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. The committee accepts the following documents as evidence: 'Saltwater People', Larrakia Nation briefing papers, and Larrakia Development Corporation by Greg Constantine.

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

That, pursuant to the power conferred by paragraph (o) of sessional order 28B, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 10.33 a.m.**