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SENATE

EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Current and future skills needs – Issues for Indigenous communities

Roundtable

WEDNESDAY, 2 APRIL 2003

CAIRNS

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SENATE
EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 April 2003

Members: Senator George Campbell (*Chair*), Senator Tierney (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Barnett, Carr, Crossin and Stott Despoja

Substitute members: Senator Allison for Senator Stott Despoja

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Boswell, Buckland, Chapman, Cherry, Jacinta Collins, Coonan, Denman, Eggleston, Chris Evans, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Forshaw, Harradine, Harris, Hutchins, Johnston, Knowles, Lees, Lightfoot, Ludwig, Mason, McGauran, McLucas, Murphy, Nettle, Payne, Santoro, Sherry, Stephens, Watson and Webber.

Senators in attendance: Senators Allison, George Campbell and McLucas

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- a) areas of skills shortage and labour demand in different areas and locations, with particular emphasis on projecting future skills requirements;
- b) the effectiveness of current Commonwealth, state and territory education, training and employment policies, and programs and mechanisms for meeting current and future skills needs, and any recommended improvements;
- c) the effectiveness of industry strategies to meet current and emerging skill needs;
- d) the performance and capacity of Job Network to match skills availability with labour-market needs on a regional basis and the need for improvements;
- e) strategies to anticipate the vocational education and training needs flowing from industry restructuring and redundancies, and any recommended improvements; and
- f) consultation arrangements with industry, unions and the community on labour-market trends and skills demand in particular, and any recommended appropriate changes.

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Subcommittee met at 4.03 p.m.

CHAIR—In order to assess current and future skills needs, the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee is conducting a series of roundtable meetings with people involved in various ways with identifying or responding to the skills needs of industries, communities and individuals. The committee is also holding more formal public hearings with those who have made submissions to the inquiry. We have focused this roundtable discussion on current and future skill needs in Indigenous and remote communities. I understand that there may be some specific concerns about current policies and programs in the region that some witnesses may wish to raise with the committee. We would be happy to hear these. I should point out, however, that a Senate committee such as this does not have the authority to take up issues or concerns directly with the government, either Commonwealth or state. It can only report to the Senate on its findings and recommendations, which may include recommendations for actions by government.

With such broad terms of reference, we will inevitably need to focus our report on issues of general principle or policy rather than matters which may be specific to one region. Having said that, however, the committee recognises that investment in skills is the key to a prosperous future for communities as well as for individuals and the nation as a whole. It has a strong interest in learning about the skills needs of Indigenous and remote communities and what governments can do to better assist those communities in meeting those needs. I understand that witnesses have all received some general information on the inquiry, including the terms of reference and the general procedures under which the roundtables will operate.

[4.04 p.m.]

Participants

BENHAM, Mr Brian, Chief Executive Officer, Far North Queensland Training

BRADLEY, Mr Chris, Regional Adviser Far North Queensland, Ariginisle Ltd

HALES, Ms Cindy, Project Officer, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit, Education Queensland Alliance of Cape York Schools

LACEY, Councillor Alfred, Deputy Chairman, Aboriginal Coordinating Council

LUDWIG, Ms Wendy, Acting Director, Indigenous Education and Training, Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE

MILLER, Mr Darren Theodore, Executive Member, Aboriginal Coordinating Council

OPIO-OTIM, Mr Peter, Executive Director, Aboriginal Coordinating Council

PEARSON, Mr Gerhardt, Executive Director, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation Pty Ltd

PETRICH, Mr Cosmo James, Chief Executive Officer, Cape York Peninsula Development Association; Chair, Cairns Regional Economic Development Corporation; Chair, Cape York Regional Advisory Group; and Director, FNQ Area Consultative Committee

CHAIR—Welcome. Although these roundtable discussions are meant to be informal, we are bound to observe one important rule of the Senate in regard to privilege. This discussion is privileged and you are protected from legal proceedings with regard to what you may say. Hansard will produce a verbatim transcript of evidence, which will be provided to participants and available also on the committee's Internet site as official documentation of the committee's proceedings. This recording is not intended to inhibit informal discussion. We can go in camera if you want to put something to the committee in confidence. I point out, however, that such evidence is often difficult to report in an inquiry of this nature and, in any event, the Senate may order the release of such evidence.

Many of you have provided the committee with some brief written information about yourselves or the organisation or interest that you represent and your key issues in current and future skills needs, for which we thank you. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Petrich—I understand that, as of Monday, I will also be a director of the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture.

Ms Hales—The Alliance of Cape York Schools has 15 schools, including the communities of Yarrabah and all of the Cape York schools up to Old Mapoon and the Western Cape College.

Mr Pearson—I am also an elected representative of the Peninsula Regional Council for the Cooktown ward.

Councillor Lacey—I am also Deputy Mayor of the Palm Island Council.

Mr Miller—I am also Deputy Chairman of the Yarrabah Aboriginal Council.

Mr Benham—I am also the Manager, North Queensland Afforestation Association.

Mr Bradley—Ariginisle is a DEST-funded organisation that provides information and advice to anybody involved in Indigenous training.

CHAIR—I apologise for Senator Tierney, who had to leave because of another commitment.

Senator McLUCAS—I have a letter from the Cook Shire Council. Councillor Bob Sullivan would have liked to have been here but has offered a small submission.

CHAIR—We might accept that submission as being tabled to the committee. We have a couple of starting issues. First, I would ask all of you in general terms to give us your views about how you see or understand the current national training agenda and whether or not that agenda is able to provide opportunities in Indigenous and remote communities for young people to get into apprenticeships, training or traineeships.

The second issue is something that arose out of a visit I had to Western Australia a few weeks ago. I talked to a company that is a major engineering contractor and does major projects in remote areas. It has a memorandum of understanding with ATSIC for the employment of Indigenous workers, when it is on remote locations, and for the provision of training to Indigenous workers as part of the contract for getting out into these communities. Is that a common feature of some of the work that ATSIC does or is that unique to that particular company or is that a strategy that ATSIC is following—to get these types of agreements with major companies that are operating in Indigenous communities or areas? Perhaps those two general questions will be enough to open the discussion up. Feel free to put whatever views you want to on the table. Who would like to start the bidding?

Mr Petrich—I will start with the first of the two points you raised. As an outsider, a training deliverer, a person sitting in the bleachers, I think there is capacity and ability, both state-wide and federally currently to deliver the necessary programs. I believe the funds are there. I do not think that there is great coordination and I think the funds are closeted in many areas. There is not a teamwork approach to delivering the end result that is necessary for training, and more especially, I think, with Indigenous people. There is still a desire to maintain empire and ego in particular areas, instead of looking at a team approach to achieve some common goals. The second point you raised was regarding a mining company—

CHAIR—It is a major engineering contractor in Western Australia. They produced for us, and we have a copy of it, an MOU that they have with ATSIC to provide, when they are operating in remote communities or in areas where there are strong Indigenous populations, training and employment opportunities for the local Indigenous community. I wondered whether that was isolated to that company or whether this was a strategy that ATSIC was following with

a range of companies that are operating in those areas, to increase the opportunity for training and employment. Is it a strategy that ought to be followed?

Mr Petrich—It certainly is. It should be followed. Of late, there is a greater willingness of mining companies and companies outside of mining to readily get involved in Indigenous employment in their organisations, especially considering that the pool is there and available, and some of the costs of fly-in fly-out that currently exist. Trying to dovetail their needs and the training requirements so that they meet at the appropriate time is perhaps something that brings me back to answering the first question you put forward. It needs a willingness. It needs some political directness to make sure it happens and a willingness by those being directed to make it happen.

Mr Pearson—On the first point, there has been no shortage of training regimes, strategies and programs in Cape York. Over the years, we have seen many of them in different forms—some of them revived and brought back to life and delivered again. When you look at that investment in Cape York, it is a significant investment that has come through. On the other side of the ledger, you look at the outcomes in training and skills development, capacity building, and people moving up through the ranks into office jobs, into the work force or on to university—the results are staggering. We are just not getting anywhere near the results that we ought to be getting for that investment.

Our experience has shown us that a lot of the training that has been packaged and delivered has been developed behind computers in either Brisbane or Canberra or the range of RTOs available in the regions, and the state has no relevance to what the community requires. For example, you could have up to 25 or 30 people at any one time attending a course that is delivered by an outside provider to drive a bulldozer. We have probably got only four or five bulldozers in the cape at any one time. We have 50 participants learning how to use a chainsaw, so they can get a ticket to use a chainsaw out in the bush. Yet many of those participants aspire to bigger and greater things.

So you get these packages that are developed by training providers which are force-fed to the communities. The incentive for the community and the individual is: 'This is something interesting. It is something different to what we're doing—working for the dole, pushing wheelbarrows or raking leaves—we accept that training so we maybe go out to a great location or just do something different.' At the end of the day, we see no outcomes in terms of movement in the work force and advancement of the people. To give you a sketch of Cape York, we did a study last year and there are an estimated 3,000 full-time jobs in Cape York right now. Only 30 per cent of those jobs are occupied by Indigenous people, yet Indigenous people account for 75 per cent of the population of Cape York. Of those 3,000-odd jobs, most of them are CDEP—that is, work for the dole. We are finding that the investment in training needs to be attached to—and this comes to the second part of your question—economic outcomes; that is, if the state or the Commonwealth is doing major infrastructure development like building main roads in the communities, constructing housing or talking to mining companies and so on about training opportunities for Aboriginal people, it quite clearly makes sense to invest dollars in those areas, because there is a higher potential for individuals who get training jobs on, for example, Main Roads projects to go further.

We have found that, in relation to ATSIIC's investment in the Cape York Land Council, our organisation and other organisations, in our dealing with project proponents, including mining

companies—Comalco and Cape Flattery, in particular—we try to achieve an agreement that has within it an employment benchmark, so there are in fact targets that companies must reach and within their processes they must be able to deliver training. We do that because those offer the most potential for long-term jobs for our people, whether they be jobs in the work force or in management; they offer the best arrangement for our people.

Because of the range of government processes involved in training, both state and Commonwealth, it is very difficult to get a concentrated effort when you win an agreement, say, with Main Roads or Comalco. When you say, 'We've got this deal and it has a target of 30 people, so we now need to start working with communities to identify these individuals and get them work ready, with specific training and skills targeted for those individuals,' it takes quite a while to actually stitch these bucks up. For example, in 1991 I was involved in negotiations for the Cape Flattery silicone mines. That is an agreement between the community and the company and it has some training and employment outcomes. But it is only in the last six years that we really got attention and investment into the training components from the agencies in those agreements. It is too long.

The other thing is that there are other jobs in the community that can potentially be taken up by local Aboriginal people, such as in local community administration as work supervisors, engineers, matrons, teachers and so on. It appears to me that there is an attachment to having products developed for Aboriginal use only. For example, a health worker training package will be for Aboriginal use only—you would not use it for whitefellas—and it is not good enough to get you a job in the Cooktown Hospital or in the Coen State School. These packages are designed for Aboriginal use only. What happens is that that actually stunts people's growth and development and places us in a bracket. I think that the investment would be better used if we started working with individuals and communities and had a range of programs. You could have mentoring for individuals, for leadership and between communities—between a community, say, at Hope Vale and the Cairns City Council—so that they worked together to help both communities grow. You could start targeting these individuals and attaching programs and investment training to communities to see them grow.

We think that more can be done to get specific outcomes for employment and training on major Commonwealth and state infrastructure projects. Two years ago, the state government announced a program where 20 per cent of the work force on an infrastructure project in areas like housing or main roads would be 20 per cent Indigenous. We have tested the reality of that in the last six months. We put together a work force—a building team—and we tendered for a job, a Commonwealth-state program, at Laura. Our tender did not miss out by much, but there was no weighting given to the Indigenous component of that tender. The job was given to an outside contractor, which was not going to employ blackfellas, based on the lowest price—it was going to come in, make the profits and go. So policies are already there, some form of commitment is there and there is certainly rhetoric there, but the actual follow-through in terms of making this work and delivering is yet to be realised. So we have a long way to go with both the Commonwealth and the state. I agree with what Jim said about getting a better coordinated approach to how the training investments are targeting Indigenous communities.

Mr Bradley—I will be very brief. The national training arrangements system, with training packages, traineeships and apprenticeships, is excellent. It has enormous potential but it is very dependent upon its implementation. Implementation in this state, particularly in the remote, rural and regional areas, is a shambles. It creates enormous problems, because people have a

great deal of difficulty getting a quality of service which will enable them to fulfil the potential offered by training packages, traineeships and apprenticeships. I very much acknowledge what Gerhardt said there, in that there is a tendency to think, 'We will make up a package.' That is not the concept which is in the AQTF. The AQTF talks about being client oriented, but that is not the way it is delivered here. It certainly has not been delivered that way in the past and it does not look as though it is going to be delivered that way in the future.

In answer to the second question you pose, there is a state government policy there. It is true that it is highly desirable, but it will only be achievable if the first question is resolved—that is, if the training issues are resolved and high-quality training is delivered. Then the second question would answer itself. Unless that first implementation issue is resolved, we could be here in 10, 15 or 20 years asking the same questions.

CHAIR—Mr Pearson, who is modifying the training packages to make them suit the Indigenous communities? I find what you are saying disturbing—that is, that you are getting a lower level of training package than is available to the community generally. If we have a training package for a nurse in Brisbane then it ought to be the same training package for a nurse in Cooktown or wherever. How and why are these packages getting modified to suit the Indigenous communities? Can you answer that?

Mr Pearson—My understanding is that this is devised through the various RTOs—I think they are regional training organisations, although I am not sure if that is the right term.

Senator McLUCAS—Registered training organisations.

Mr Pearson—There is a range of mechanisms they use. They form committees that may represent various sectors. These ideas may be formed by bureaucrats sitting behind a table. They may, in some cases, be formed in response to a community, but not in all cases. For example, I run into the training providers in the cape on my visits and I am surprised to hear that these guys are out bush teaching old ringers how to handle horses and cattle. They are teaching this to my people, who have actually lived with cattle and horses! They are getting big bucks to teach old ringers how to handle horses and cattle. Who has designed this and who has asked for this? It would be better for these people to have training in bookkeeping and how to handle the various regulations in relation to handling stock, not how to quiet down a wild horse. It is variously designed, and more often than not does not involve or respond directly to the community.

CHAIR—When you enter into arrangements with mining companies or other companies to take on a percentage of Indigenous employees, do you try and target jobs within those areas that are sustainable in the longer term by the communities? In other words, do you target jobs using skills that are currently missing in the communities that you are trying to fill for the longer term—for example, in administration—rather than jobs at the lower end of the employment spectrum, if I can use that term?

Mr Pearson—Certainly, and it is encouraging that the companies themselves look at the broad spectrum of jobs and make them available. For example, at the mines at Cape Flattery, you are getting people who have now moved up from junior labouring positions right through to office management. It is encouraged by the mines and that is the expectation of the community. In terms of Comalco, the opportunity is there to build on the Cape Flattery experience. The

problem we are finding is that our people, who have been working for the dole since 1975, working on CDEP, have not got a work ethic, so there is a real need to get people job ready. There are quite clearly experiences where jobs have been offered to our people and, because they are not job ready, they last for a few weeks and then chuck it in. There needs to be some investment at that level, because we are actually dealing with a mindset here. Certainly, that is the strong aspiration of individuals in the communities and we are getting some really good leadership from industry to support that.

Mr Benham—I would like to add to something that was said before and back up a comment that Mr Pearson made. You asked a question about how these packages were coming about that were specifically designed and downgraded—for lack of a better way of describing it—for Indigenous communities. We have a training system in Australia that is called a competency based training system. As an RTO, we have to deliver to a set standard. If we alter those standards at all, it will be caught the next time we get audited and we will have to show cause. Some of these training packages have been specifically developed for Indigenous communities. I do not understand why either. They have been developed at a higher level, not at a delivery or RTO level. Some of the comments that were brought up before were more specifically about targeting. You can do something as silly as what Mr Pearson said, where you go out and teach ringers how to be ringers. That is more to do with targeting than it is to do with having the wrong training package.

One of the biggest problems for government to understand, and one of the reasons why some of this stuff is going wrong, is that the training that happens in a city and the training that happens in a remote community are vastly different. You can go and train 25 tyre fitters in Brisbane and they can go out and get jobs as tyre fitters. You cannot train 25 tyre fitters in Aurukun, because there is only one job. Unfortunately, the way funding is targeted, a lot of RTOs cannot go to a community and train one person. It is the way the system has always worked.

One of the other reasons why some of this is going on—Mr Pearson brought this up before and you mentioned it earlier as well—is that traineeships have been promoted very heavily by this government. It is an excellent system, but a traineeship is a job. A traineeship means we take someone from the community and give them a job for 12 months. It is not hands on; you do not have a mentor standing next to you unless you are working in a workshop with somebody who has the skills to teach you. In most cases in a community, the job that we are trying to create does not already exist, so there is not a mentor there. These programs work better when there is a mentor there, because, as Mr Pearson said, you have to start at the beginning here, and traineeships are targeted too high. Traineeships are for people who are self-motivated, who in a lot of cases have a very good sense of self-worth and all the rest of it. A lot of the time in communities that is not evident. More work has to be done. You cannot expect these people to all of a sudden just change. There have been generations who have worked for the dole and stuff like that and you cannot expect people to automatically jump to a new level.

Let me get back to competency based training. The Army invented competency based training. The concept was: this man does not leave this point until he can do this skill; once you can achieve this skill then you move on to the next skill. We do not have competency based training in this country, unfortunately, because it comes down to money. As a training deliverer you have X amount of money and therefore X amount of time to achieve a skill. If you do not

achieve that skill in that amount of time, unfortunately that is the end of the road. Therein lie some of the issues with remote area training.

Senator McLUCAS—I want to follow up on the issue of targeting. How do we end up teaching ringers how to be ringers? Who makes that decision? How do we end up running a training program that is teaching ringers how to be ringers or teaching people how to drive bulldozers when we do not have any?

Mr Benham—The easiest way to make a mistake of that magnitude is to not involve the people you are training. That is the only way you can do that. If you are going to go to a community to do some training but you are not going to talk to the community before you go there and they are not going to have any say in what you do then that is what you end up with. If you go and talk to the people about what it is that they want and need, they will tell you they need job outcomes. They will not tell you to come and teach them how to be a ringer—not if they are already a ringer. That is the only way that can happen: if you do not have any input from the community's people themselves.

Senator McLUCAS—I am asking the practical question about how it occurs. How is money being spent—obviously inappropriately, because there were a lot of nods—delivering training that either is not required or does not lead to the sort of outcomes that we were talking about?

Mr Bradley—Very easily. Money is made available for delivery and so it is delivered. It is as simple as that. The difficulty is that that is the way it always was done. It was supposed to be demand driven—that is, the people are supposed to indicate what they want—but it is very much a case that when people ask for what they want they are basically told, 'This is what you're going to get.' If the money is available the training can go ahead. It is as simple as that.

Ms Ludwig—I have some comments to make in relation to the first question you raised about national training packages and whether or not they are appropriate, relevant and all those things. I am going to come from a different point of view, because I have been involved over the past 20 years or so in helping to develop Indigenous-specific courses. Despite comments that have been made recently about downgrading courses and what have you, the philosophical driver behind the development of Indigenous-specific courses has always been about looking from an educational point of view at how to incorporate and balance Indigenous knowledge alongside Western knowledge. It has been about putting up front in a formal learning environment the rights of Indigenous peoples, as first nation peoples, to an education that is culturally appropriate and relevant alongside the opportunity in a formal learning environment to acquire the Western skills and knowledge that people need to have to participate in the work force and undertake jobs. I take exception to the view that Indigenous-specific programs are a downgrading or watering down of a 'real course'. I think it is more about the perception of people in the general public about Indigenous-specific courses being mickey mouse courses, not good enough and all the rest of it. I think that Indigenous people that go through Indigenous-specific courses are probably studying at a much deeper level and with a lot more rigour than they would have in a course that has no ability to take into account the kinds of strengths and knowledge that Indigenous learners bring to the learning environment.

This leads on to the point that I want to make in relation to national training packages. There have been a number of occasions, because a decision has been made here in Queensland, in relation to national packages that exist or have been introduced where all curriculum based

product has disappeared and been replaced with the national training package and the strand that is appropriate and relevant. There have been a number of occasions where curriculum based product that has been developed in Queensland, which sat on the national register of courses, has been replaced by a national training package to the detriment of the fundamental issue that I raised about the rights of first nation people to have the opportunity to reproduce Indigenous knowledge in a formal learning environment.

A classic example is in the area of caring for country. It is a well known fact that Indigenous people have knowledge about caring for country that goes back to the beginning of time and about land practices, and they have a whole range of scientific knowledge that is specifically Indigenous. As an educator I have a problem with seeing Indigenous people go into a learning environment where there is no recognition of the knowledges that they bring to that learning activity, because at the end of the day there is the opportunity to be accused of participating in cultural imperialism in a learning environment. The development of Indigenous-specific courses has always been underpinned by the idea of balancing both knowledges or creating an environment for those two knowledges to exist. There has been plenty of work and comment made over years about two-way learning. That is where the Indigenous-specific programs have come from, in the absence of the ability to modify or put in an Indigenous flavour to a mainstream course; so I have a different experience.

I know that there is the perception in the community or generally about Indigenous-specific activities being a watered-down version. I take real exception to that. There is an issue, in relation to the creation or the establishment of national training packages, about the disappearance of that opportunity. On a general kind of level—for example, in the engineering area—I understand from my colleagues within the institute that work in the faculty of technology that, when they are looking at implementing a certificate III in light engineering, the comment back from employers generally—not specifically those dealing with Indigenous people—is that the training package is constructed in such a way that it is too rigid to allow for local or regional customisation. If that is the view from local industry groups on the ground of a national training package, it would follow that issues centred around the needs and interests of Indigenous people in communities are also going to have to be taken into account with the development of the national training packages.

I know that in the review process of a number of the national training packages, especially in the trades area, because they were the first cabs off the rank in terms of national training packages, there have been lots of issues identified in hindsight. I understand that a lot of those changes are going to happen where there might be common core competencies across a range of different qualifications within the training package that will allow people to move in and out of activities and will customise competencies for a particular industry area that happens to be at Mareeba or somewhere.

So I think that, in the review process for the training packages, that flexibility will be built in this time around for a number of them. In a couple of the national training packages, the issue that I raised before was: where do Indigenous knowledges sit in the formal learning context? I know that there are a couple of national training packages that have been developed. I think one that was developed by the national tourism ITAB will have a whole strand of competencies for Indigenous people who may want to establish an ecotourism industry in their community. It allows the opportunity for the reproduction of Indigenous knowledge about the environment and all of those kinds of things. So I am coming from a different point of view on the

development of curricula and training products and in some of my observations about the national training package.

In response to the issue that you raised about traineeships and apprenticeships and whether they are workable on the ground in communities, I have to agree with people about the length of traineeships or apprenticeships. For example, construction apprenticeships take four years. Gerhardt talked about different capital works programs that are happening, either from a federal or a state point of view, and the 20 per cent employment requirement. Even under that 20 per cent employment requirement in this state, 30 per cent of that work force has to be apprentices or trainees. One of the difficulties has been that those capital works projects in communities are not going to last for four years. So there are some issues about the technical aspects of apprenticeships. To allow people to move in and out of the apprenticeship, it might be that, although you are not indentured for the full four years, you can pick up X number of competencies while that project is happening in your community and then be indentured to another employer in another community to go on to your next lot of competencies. So at a state level there are some issues about the construction of apprenticeships and the term of indenture that need to be addressed within the context of this particular activity, because the work activity is not sustainable for the full length of the apprenticeship.

CHAIR—On that issue, given that we have a competency based system and a modular training structure, within the context of that it should be adaptable to the circumstance that you have just described. You should be able to pick up elements of the competencies and elements of the modules related to those competencies and put them together over a period of time, without it being based on three, four or five years or whatever. But, at the end of the day, it has to be structured in such a way that you actually do get the 40 modules and the range of competencies that allow you to say that you are a trained carpenter or bricklayer or whatever. I think the important part of it is that people are not left hanging with two-thirds of the competencies or two-thirds of the modules and are then not able to progress beyond that point.

Coming back to the first point you made, I think I understand the issue that you are raising, but I want to try to come to grips with what it actually means in terms of the point that Gerhardt made as well. Is the question of Indigenous knowledge in the context of general knowledge or of intellectual knowledge as opposed to technical skills at issue here? It seems to me that the technical skills should not be at question. If for best practice nursing you need certain skills and equipment then that ought to be available in a hospital in Cooktown just as it is available in a hospital in Brisbane or Cairns. In terms of the approach to nursing, I can understand that there may be a different approach to how you actually carry out nursing within a community—for example, I grew up in a community in Belfast that had a totally different approach to how you look after kids.

Ms Ludwig—That is right.

CHAIR—It was a closed community within a Western type environment and certain things were done which people in other areas would regard as being unusual. So I can understand that from a conceptual point of view. But if that is the distinction you are making then that ought to be adaptable and able to be accommodated. I would be more concerned if the technical side of the equation were being downgraded and you were getting fewer technical skills needed to perform a function. But I can understand the point you are making in terms of the intellectual or general knowledge that resides in a community and the different approach a community might

have to dealing with certain issues. Is that essentially what we are talking about here? Is that the point you are making?

Ms Ludwig—I am certainly not suggesting that the technical skills that somebody would need to be a nurse should be any different. But I would argue that there are probably a whole range of other skills that an Indigenous nurse would have and would bring to the learning and working environment which would be very different to a non-Indigenous person. Those skills could, for example, include an understanding of people's socialisation or how people are treated in particular kinds of ways, or there may be an understanding and an insight into why people are presenting with particular ailments that may very well be different and treated differently. Again, the point that I was making right at the beginning is that it is about creating a formal learning environment for the learner to be able to explore, expand and strengthen that knowledge.

Mr Pearson—Since the mid-eighties, the most notable Aboriginal training products delivered in Cape York have been to do with Aboriginal land management—the Landcare program. Since then, we have probably churned out more than 30 people through the training organisation here in Cairns. In Cape York and around Queensland we have about that many people who have done the full course. Last year, we managed to negotiate with the Queensland government an employment package for the provision of 10 rangers for national parks in Queensland, with six of those rangers being in Cape York. We literally had to sit down with at least three of the applicants for the six jobs in Cape York and help them fill out the application form. At the end of the day, only one Aboriginal person was able to meet those standards. That is just in one program, and that training program has been running for well over 15 years. The Aboriginal health training program has the same sorts of statistics. I think we are seeing some improvement in the Aboriginal community teaching area, where we are getting some progress through with teachers. There is something going right there and it has produced at least one principal.

In terms of the traineeships and apprenticeships, between my community of Hope Vale and Darren's community at Yarrabah we probably have more tradesmen across the trades than most of the Aboriginal communities in Queensland. We have carpenters, builders, block layers and tilers. Getting them to the trade qualification, to the first step where you have got the blue card, is great. There is something really happening right there. We have been working with some of these individuals to take them to the next step—either contractor phase or business phase. They are finding it very difficult to meet those qualifications. The training has not assisted them in properly reading and comprehending or in articulating their ideas to enter into business. In my community, there are 25 tradesmen. There are four electricians in my community. There is only one job for each of those positions. They will never be able to get a job unless they get their blue card and contractors permit outside of Hope Vale.

There are successes in some parts of the program, but there are quite clearly deficiencies. The training must not be compromised. It has to be as good as it is anywhere else in Australia. There is a case to take into account culturally important issues and have that input, but at the end of the day these people have to be able to compete. To be able to have a happy life, enjoy their job and maximise the business, they are going to have to work out there in the marketplace. The only way you do that is to have full accreditation and full qualifications that can be recognised. I reiterate that, to date, for the level of investment in those programs there has quite clearly been a failure. There are some notable successes, but in terms of the specific investments, Aboriginal

products are leaving us for dead. Those six positions in Cape York should have been six Aboriginal positions—fully qualified, recognised by the Queensland government, recognised by QPWS and exercising the full authority and delegation of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to look after the country. We have only got one position.

Mr Benham—I will keep this brief. I would like to give an example, if I may, of another organisation that has had this exact same problem. I am a serving member of the 51st Battalion in Cairns, the Far North Queensland Regiment, which is a regional force surveillance unit. Of this unit, 80 per cent of the ground soldiers are Indigenous. I have been a combat medic for some eight years and I have been involved in training of combat medics within the military system. You cannot have a situation where you have an Indigenous combat medic who has been trained differently to a white combat medic. The system does not allow for it. The standard is set. You have to be able to do these things. There is no compromising. And yet the military was having massive problems because there was a set period of time whereby this person was either qualified or not. The military had a lot of difficulty with this.

At the end of the day, what happened in that situation was that there was a change in the way training was delivered and assessed. There was no change in the content. The content is exactly the same as it was five years ago and it is exactly the same for a white person and an Indigenous person. There is no need to alter the content of a competency from a training package. Training packages are reasonably flexible when it comes to the way things can be assessed. You can bring lots of different things to the assessment table when it is your turn to be ticked off on whether or not you are competent in this area. There are lots of ways to do that.

The military had a situation where their back was up against the wall. They could not create two armies. We have situations all the time where a patrol goes out with five white members and the leader of that patrol is an Indigenous sergeant. If that Indigenous sergeant is not to the same standard as our white sergeant, then it is all going to go to hell in a basket. It could not happen. They developed different ways of delivery that allowed for cultural aspects, some problems with literacy and numeracy, and the time aspect. They also developed different ways of assessment. The standard of the content and the content itself was never changed. It could not be. I think that example shows that this can work.

CHAIR—Is that a reverse situation to the types of circumstances that Mr Pearson described with the six rangers?

Mr Benham—No, but it does back up what Mr Pearson just said. At the end of the day, an Indigenous combat medic in the Army and a white combat medic in the Army have to be equally qualified because they are going for the same job. In a lot of cases what is happening is that an Indigenous person is qualified—but for an Indigenous job, not for a white job. It should not be any different. We cannot carry on and create two societies. We have enough issues with that already. It has to be across the board, and there is no reason to wash it down.

CHAIR—Maybe I am misunderstanding, but I would have thought the type of circumstance that was described in terms of those six rangers would not have been much different to the type of circumstance you are describing in terms of the medics—and that was people's capacity, for different reasons, to express themselves, to explain or to advocate on their own behalf. It seems to me that that was part of the problem with the rangers. At the end of the day, the skills reside

in the individual to do the job, but one gets it as opposed to the other because they have a better capacity to put it down on paper or to express themselves.

Mr Benham—If we are talking about the six people who were trained to get to that level, then obviously more effort should have been put into that skill to bring those people up to that same standard. It is possible. It has been done. It is done every day. But too much of what happens is—and this was brought up earlier—that we go out and teach ringers how to be ringers but we do not teach the ringer out how to fill out the logbook for the Toyota or how to fill out the sales book for the cattle that he takes into market. He can knock down cattle quicker than we can think about it, but nobody sits down with him and teaches him how to do a standard ledger so that he knows how many cattle have gone, how many have come back and how much money is in the bank.

Senator ALLISON—Why not?

Mr Benham—It is not targeted.

Senator ALLISON—What is not targeted?

Mr Benham—Those particular skills are just not being targeted, because nobody sits down with the individual and says, ‘What are the skills you need?’ It does not happen.

Senator ALLISON—Who should do that?

Mr Benham—The RTOs should be able to do that.

CHAIR—That is the point you were making, I think, about the builders, the electricians—their capacity to go out and do their own quotes and so forth for jobs outside of the community. It is those skills that you are talking about.

Mr Miller—I have an example that aligns with what Wendy was talking about. The ACC got an amount of money from the state in 1998 to look at a project, or to develop a concept, around preventative maintenance regarding infrastructure—water and sewerage. Part of that project was to look at developing a training package. As I understand it, the ACC approached the Indigenous Studies Product Development Unit at TNQIT Cairns to develop a certificate II level traineeship or training course for essential services officers for ATSI communities. Over the course of the project and the development of a product, they did have some difficulties, as I understand it. These were not difficulties in what TAFE could do, but looking at the other side of the coin, looking at targeting jobs and concepts that provide jobs for our mob on the ground. We have a problem where we identified gaps in terms of finding material to put into a training package that would give an outcome for our mob in terms of the skills leading to employment. As a result, 38 trainees enrolled. They got support from DEWR as well, in terms of a top-up to CDEP for an 18- or 12-month traineeship. DET came to the party also to assist with providing the funding to develop the product. We are now in stage 2. We ended up with 22 qualified trainees in essential services out of the 38 that originally enrolled.

Part of the project was also about talking with councils in terms of assisting not only with delivery but with setting up the whole project. One element of that was getting them to build it into their normal cycle of governance. When you talk about the DEWR grant process, it is now

based on outcomes. One of the outcomes is that at the end of it they have to have employment. We have had to sit with councils as well in terms of negotiating that into their normal budget cycle, so that when the training is complete we have them set up in a shed with a vehicle and a computerised system, and they have been trained to develop procedure manuals to look after the water and sewerage at the end of the project.

I will finish off with some comments that Gerhardt made as well. We are now in stage 2 of the project. We have done six already. There are 15 DOGITs that the ACC represents, or supports and advises, under the state act. We have done six pilots, including Yarrabah, Wujal Wujal, Hope Vale, Woorabinda, Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama. We are now doing seven—three are the NPAs—including Cherbourg, Napranum, Lockhart and Mapoon.

One of the things that I have experienced, which relates to what Brian was talking about in terms of the delivery, is that we are finding it very difficult to get someone to come on board to deliver essential services officer training. I do not know why. As I understand it, the industry also plays a part in terms of assisting with the development of packages. In terms of what Gerhardt was talking about, with a lot of our people in the communities—and I come from Yarrabah where, like you said, we have a lot of tradespeople—taking them to the next step has proven to be a bit difficult. One point I want to make from that is that, at the moment, the grant processes up here, and the requirements they have to link with the path of where we want to take tradespeople after, seem to be unequal. That is a matter of getting people together in a coordinated manner.

CHAIR—It also means a shift in the type of mentoring that is required. You require mentoring in terms of the skills side at one level, and it requires mentoring in terms of the financial aspects and operations of businesses at another level.

Mr Miller—Yes—at the individual level, and probably at the package or organisational level for people who administer the grant.

CHAIR—It may well be a matter of putting some of those individual skills together in a package, where they can bid as a company rather than as an individual.

Mr Opio-Otim—If you look back to the information that is contained in the ABS census report, the figures are quite revealing in terms of the disparity of employment at higher levels between the mainstream and Indigenous communities. In fact, Indigenous people are very heavily represented at the lower level of the scale under plant and machinery operators and general labourers. That is the only category where their employment rate far exceeds that of the mainstream. If you look at the managerial jobs, the professional jobs and the rest of it, they are well below par. This should raise some fundamental questions about the training packages that exist in Australia. How come, for quite a long time, Indigenous people have been pegged to the lower-skilled level of employment, and the others are being taken from the other people?

If you look at some of the main employers, again referring back to the figures of the 2001-02 census report, you will find that for many Indigenous communities the biggest single employer is the government, through grants or through the council. The private sector has not played a very significant role, yet if you look at the mainstream of government councils the private sector is playing an increasingly bigger role, generating more employment and a lot of it. We now

need to look beyond the figures that we are seeing from the ABS and ask some fundamental questions, such as: what is causing all this?

If you look at perhaps one important indicator for employment, which is qualification, the figures from the ABS attest to the fact that there is a great difference between the level of technical qualification in the mainstream and in Indigenous communities. That tells us that there is something fundamentally wrong with encouraging people to go up the ladder until they get to the top of the level. These are either questions of policies or questions of practices. If you look at many of the target community councils, they are in remote, isolated areas where it is very difficult for some of the basic infrastructure, like good schools, to be built. Because of that poor start, the downstream consequences become quite colossal. People get denied what is taken for granted on the other side of the street.

If you look at training itself, not a lot has been done to really carry out an evaluation of how effective training has been to the Indigenous communities. On balance, it would seem to me that a lot of the training has benefited the trainers more than the trainees. We need to go a step further and find out what has caused all this. There are other things to look at in the industrial breakdown. Where are most Indigenous people employed? The figures are quite shocking. We are moving in a world where technology is playing an important role in lifting up the profile of people, but it is in this same area where the future lies that the Indigenous communities are utterly lacking. The digital gap is getting wider and wider. Look at the training packages that were operating in the 1980s, in the 1990s and since 2000. The time has come for us to take stock of why all these figures, which are very telling, have not been reversed for the better.

How conscious is the government of its policies in terms of uplifting the profile of people? Over so many years these policies have not been able to give us those kinds of results. What changes now need to be made to bring about support before, during and after training to make us reverse these kinds of trends? If we cannot come up with effective training policies before, during and after training, regrettably this scenario will continue.

Ms Hales—To give a context from Education Queensland, we know that what we have been doing in the past has not significantly improved outcomes for Indigenous students and Indigenous employees of Education Queensland. We have been working very closely, as Mr Pearson referred to before, with Cape York Indigenous organisations and Torres Strait Indigenous organisations to try and address the kinds of programs that we have been offering.

It is really hard when you are in a remote Indigenous community that has a school that goes from primary to year 7 and the students are leaving because they have to access senior secondary education or often even to get some concept of vocational education and training packages which are really only accessible to students over 15 years old. So we are really looking at different ways of delivering vocational education and training to students before they actually vote with their feet and leave either the community or the schools system we were working with.

One of the other challenges, which I recognise, is that the way we have been teaching literacy and numeracy is not as successful as it could be. Skilling teachers—and we have a wealth of talent in our Indigenous staff in our schools teaching English as a second language and all the pedagogy that goes with that—has been a strong focus for us and we are working very closely

with communities, and in many cases with councils, to provide literacy and numeracy opportunities to tailor in with the packages.

We know that one size does not fit all, and the delivery and the support before, during and after and beyond that in the whole concept of work and the opportunities available for young people in this world is vastly different from the experience of parents of the education system. So we are working closely with families to try to address some of those understandings about the kind of support they need to give to their young people. The challenges are really complex and they vary vastly between the cape, the Torres Strait and the gulf. It is getting individualised understanding of what those contexts are to be able to work with the resources that we have available in a really effective manner. That is the challenge.

Senator ALLISON—Does this mean bilingual education?

Ms Hales—It is something we are working on. Just last weekend we had a workshop that was brokered by the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance, which is a responsive arm of Education Queensland based here in Cairns that has state-wide responsibilities. One of the things that has grown out of the program is looking at bilingual education and recognising that sending a teacher into a community like Aurukun, for example, to teach P-7 with no experience of Wik is not a valuable learning experience.

Senator ALLISON—This debate has been going on for two decades, if not more.

Ms Hales—The strength is in having 60 or 70 Indigenous teachers coming to Cairns and working through ESL pedagogy and using the strength of their own languages and their knowledge of their students and families to teach English as a second language, and that is where we are working at the moment.

Mr Pearson—The current training crisis we are faced with is symptomatic of the broader issues and problems that Aboriginal communities are faced with. Training is but one component. One of the things we and many other communities in the region have been concentrating on—but particularly in Cape York—is our living conditions. So at the household level, if you have family units that are so distraught and stuffed up because of the grog—they are smashing windows and they are belting each other—you cannot expect those family units to contribute to themselves, to look after their kids and make sure they go to school and learn and you cannot expect those units to work together as a community and grow. Alcohol is a major problem in Cape York. So local community conditions are a big issue for us. In parts of Cape York, communities are still waiting to enjoy the basic services that mainstream towns and cities enjoy. The housing situation in Cape York is horrendous. The level of occupancy per house should not be tolerated in this day and age.

When my father and mother and grandparents went to school in the old days, they knew a lot more and learnt a lot more than we do and could write a lot better than we can these days. So education and training and getting that right is a priority. The introduction of CDEP for 15- and 16-year-olds has been a disaster for our young people. They have opted to leave going into year 10 in favour of signing up for the weekly dole cheque. So education and training is another component that needs to be sorted out.

There are issues of justice, of family and of sports and recreation. We aspire to having good sports and recreation facilities in our communities, yet we are still waiting for basic sports and recreation facilities. The right to practise and enjoy our culture and our language and pass those on from the old people to the young people is part of this component that our communities aspire to: a good community environment and providing for our people to get experience out there in the work force—in government, in politics, wherever—so that they come back as role models and pass on their experience, their learning and their knowledge to the community.

Economic development provides labour demand—the prosecution of sound economic strategies and access to capital investment so we can start businesses and starting to grab hold of the massive Commonwealth and state public service investment that is going into our communities. There is more money being spent in administering Aboriginal affairs, the social portfolio, than there is in economic development and investment in Cape York. The challenge is in turning that around, getting rid of a few social bureaucrats that are stuffing us up and using those dollars that are saved to invest in business, using those dollars to target better training to help the family reunite and regain culture and to provide opportunities. You do not necessarily need too much of an injection of dollars to do these things.

We have been pushing for better partnerships with government. What we are asking for is for the states—particularly the Aboriginal affairs departments—to have a real look at things. It has been that department in this state that has controlled our lives. It actually transferred responsibility back in the eighties, only to take it away from us. We are saying that we do not want social bureaucrats—bureaucrats who come in and think they know what is best for us. We want social entrepreneurs—people who can come in and know how to look at the problem and find solutions to them. The Lockhart Art Gang resulted from a couple of very bright people who knew the industry, the market, identified the talent and turned that little CDEP-Work for the Dole program into a great operation where individual artists are commanding prizes of \$25,000 per item of art. You would never find that from bureaucrats within ATSIIC or from bureaucrats within Aboriginal affairs. The problem is that, with our situation, we need bureaucrats who are thinkers. We need social entrepreneurs working with us. We do not need a truck load of white-socks bureaucrats coming in and working with us and telling us what is good for us.

Just the other week the current Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Judy Spence, announced a green paper—an inquiry into the governance arrangements for Cape York communities. Let me tell you that that inquiry they are conducting into the governance arrangements is the wrong thing to be looking at at this point in time. In 1986 when Bjelke-Petersen's Aboriginal affairs department transferred responsibilities from the old missions to Aboriginal councils, they transferred the responsibility but they did not transfer the dollars. Many of the jobs—and they were primarily enterprise focused jobs—were retained by the Aboriginal affairs bureaucracy. There are five stores in Cape York that are still run by the Aboriginal affairs department. Those five stores are the sole enterprises in those committees, so communities have had to turn to pubs and canteens. Why is it that Judy Spence's department is inquiring into the governance arrangements of Aboriginal councils? Why is it that they are doing that when they are not providing the full funding required for Aboriginal councils to go about their normal day-to-day duties?

The biggest investment that the Commonwealth provides for Aboriginal affairs is CDEP, the Community Development Employment Program. That program has been heavily latched onto by the council and by everyone else to do everything. State and federal government departments

have used the investment of CDEP to pull away their responsibility for funding proper services. Why isn't the Aboriginal affairs department looking into the appropriate funding of Aboriginal councils? The fact is that it is their administration of these councils that has assisted in the downfall of many of our communities and contributed to the problems that we are faced with. Here is the challenge for you people: you have to challenge the state as to why it is that the green paper into governance arrangements for mainland Aboriginal councils in this state will change things for us. The question must be asked again: why aren't they inquiring into island councils? They are not extending this inquiry to the island councils. I will put this on the record: the reason for this is that there has been great opposition from mainland Aboriginal councils, including the Aboriginal coordinating councils, to some of the policies of the Queensland government, and particularly policies of the Aboriginal affairs department.

We have been critical ourselves of the social mindset and approach in dealing with Aboriginal affairs. We need a more proactive and engaging approach that can work with communities and develop the arts centre. We do not need a socialistic approach. This green paper will not deliver solutions for us; it will compound the current problem. At the end of the day, we have a CDEP investment by the Commonwealth that could be used to invest in training, could be used to pay young people to come to university, could be used to place people in jobs in the tourism sector here in Cairns and could be used to place people in traineeships with the Cairns City Council. Instead, it is being tied up because the state and Commonwealth Aboriginal affairs departments are not fully funding Aboriginal councils. Therefore, Aboriginal councils are dependent on CDEP and cannot use what money is left for capacity building in their own community.

Unless we see this component of training as a bigger component of this situation where government investment can support economic development and therefore provide opportunity—and we should look at working with families to start assisting families to get their lives together, to get on top of the grog issue, the justice issues, get access to country, have the ability to practise their culture and all of these things—we are going to be back here in five or six years time with the same problems. We are being held back because there is a mindset that what is good for Aboriginal people is what Aboriginal affairs determine for us.

I have to say that the best thing that could happen for us would be if Aboriginal affairs departments and portfolios were abolished. We need exciting agencies that can deal with us and look through the problems. Then we would not have stupid distractions like the green paper, which is designed to cause more grief for Aboriginal councils and which distracts us from the bigger picture—helping young kids get an education, helping mums and dads get on top of their grog problems, helping the family unit and helping leaders to develop their capacity and to contribute as leaders in those communities so that they prosper. You will not get that if we look at this whole thing in isolation and do not take account of the fact that there is waste going on, ladies and gentlemen. There is a huge waste of public money. It is being wasted because the bureaucracy holds too many of the dollars, controls too many of the programs and policies and is not accountable to the Indigenous communities.

Senator ALLISON—Can you say a bit more about what you think ought to happen to the CDEP? Are you suggesting that that work is not done—that the equivalent amount of money goes into training and that those jobs just do not happen anymore? It seems to me that those jobs still need doing; it is just that there needs to be a proper wage for doing them. That suggests that much more money needs to go into both CDEP or whatever you call it and the training that you make a plea for.

Mr Pearson—Yes. There are 15 community councils in Queensland and all of them have CDEP. In 1986 I was the town clerk and we did not have CDEP—we had state government funding. We had 70 full-time positions funded by the state. In 1987 we started CDEP and the state started the transfer of functions—that is, all of their functions and funding were transferred across. In the financial year starting 1988, the 70-odd positions were lost. Hope Vale now has a state government work force of less than 20 full-time positions and they are the core essential staff—the accountant, the clerk, the works overseer, the builder, the garbage truck driver and so on. So there are limited numbers. If we did not have CDEP—

Senator ALLISON—How many are on CDEP?

Mr Pearson—On CDEP there are 400 people working for the dole and they have their supervisors.

Senator ALLISON—All for the council?

Mr Pearson—Yes. If you did not have CDEP, what would have happened is that the reduction of state investment would have been highlighted and the state—Bjelke-Petersen at the time and now Bob Katter—would not have been able to get away with this. But the fact that CDEP replaced that investment means that it has been lost to everyone.

Councillor Lacey—Yes, that is right.

Mr Pearson—Nothing has changed to actually correct that record. To this day, every three years we, the ACC and other organisations have put it to the state that they really need to address the issue of local government services and the functions and funding that come with that. A normal CPI increase is provided and, at the end of the day, there is a huge pressure on CDEP to fill the gap. So CDEP pays for burying the dead, for policing—

Senator ALLISON—For policing?

Mr Pearson—Yes—for policing, picking up garbage and running the administration. CDEP has replaced a lot of these functions. As I said, a majority of enterprises in the cape, such as the store, are still being run by the state. God knows where that money goes to. It is the Aboriginal affairs department that is responsible for this.

Senator ALLISON—You described a different kind of attitude from people who are on CDEP. I can understand that, because it is an extremely low wage—it is not even poverty line, I don't think. What does that do to people's day? Do they work less than a full day or do they have a different relationship with whomever is engaging them to do the work? What does it do to a person's sense of themselves and their worth?

Mr Pearson—Most of them work two days.

Senator ALLISON—Two days a week?

Mr Pearson—It varies—it is so many hours—but primarily it is two days on the standard CDEP investment. Some councils have tough policies of 'no work, no pay'. So if you do not turn up to a work program that the council sets, your pay can get docked. That is the only source

of income and that is a huge impact. In Aurukun, with the Comalco offer of jobs—the benchmark of Comalco, the mining company there—we have found that getting people from CDEP to be job ready is a huge task. We are finding that it is going to take us at least eight to 12 months of mentoring and working with these individuals to get them job ready so that when they get that job they are able to stick there.

Senator ALLISON—Is that because they are accustomed to working only two days a week?

Mr Pearson—Yes, or not working at all. Most of our people have not worked. They have been collecting the CDEP for no work for a long time. That is a common practice. You cannot blame the council. The investment of CDEP is not that big. There have been reductions in CDEP by government, so the council can only provide so many real jobs or jobs that are interesting. You find that a lot of people just come and sign the time sheets and go home.

CHAIR—We have rapidly run out of time. I know this is an interesting issue and I know some people here have to leave. Mr Lacey wanted to put something on the record, so I will give him the opportunity, but if people have to leave they should feel free to do so. On behalf of the committee, I express our appreciation for your coming along this afternoon and making a contribution that has been invaluable. You have raised a range of issues that we had not even considered, but we will try and address them in the report. We obviously cannot address all of the issues that have been raised—some of them are way beyond our terms of reference—but a lot of what has been raised we can address. Mr Lacey, did you want to put some issues?

Councillor Lacey—In regard to what some of the other speakers said, there also has been a big generation loss, I suppose, particularly in Indigenous communities, in regard to the—whatever we want to call it—atrocities. People like those that Gerhardt refers to as social bureaucrats are destroying communities, because that is what they have done for the last 50 or 60 years or so in regard to administering Aboriginal affairs in this state. My major concern, which I am saying to this committee for the record—and I take note that there is someone from Education Queensland here—is that education has to be a key aspect in regard to all of this for getting good products at the end of the day.

Some of our schools in communities, even in my own community, are that far behind that it is not funny. A lot of kids who are going out to high school—because there are no high schools on communities—are either three or four years behind. If we are talking about fairness, or having the same quality education that your children would enjoy, wherever you live, any of you senators here, then there is no comparison at all. It is important that we can talk about the long-term training aspects and what training providers do, or whoever else does. At the end of the day, education has to be a key element. All we are seeing on communities is people walking away with big fat pay cheques, whether they are training organisations or individuals, whether they are contractors are not. They are walking out of the community with an investment that should stay in the community to keep jobs for the local people in communities.

CDEP in comparison with CJP, Community Jobs Plan, was another Commonwealth government initiative. I do not know what is so different between the two programs, but the CJP offers far better outcomes than CDEP ever does in communities. I have seen the one for the beautification of the main business centre of Hope Vale and the pride and esteem that was developed in putting together that area near the council chambers, the store and the administrative block. I sat down with one of the old blokes who was a mentor for that program

and he spoke to me about what CJP, particularly, allows him to do with the young people who participated. I had a look at it. Fortunately, we have 20 places for my community, so I am very interested in looking at the CJP in regard to the outcomes and the esteem in the community in regard to developing goods.

The issue—and this is probably not your issue—in regard to the green paper is diverting from the truth. Like a lot of things that happened in the state over the last couple of years, they have diverted away from the truth in regard to the delivery of appropriate service. Gerhardt is right when he says that in 1985 when the Bjelke-Petersen government walked out they walked out with all of the industries. They did not leave one. They left the pubs and said, ‘This is your economic base for your community.’ To keep brother and sister in a job, we all have to go down to the pub and drink as many cans as we can so they get a good pay so we can drink again next fortnight. That has been the cycle, and it has been a sad cycle.

I think the issue is about economic enhancement and putting the economic opportunities in the community. I think it is about moving beyond and also repairing this generation. A lot of stakeholders come to our communities and clinch to us and use us as an industry to benefit from, because when I go to Townsville I see some of these bureaucrats riding around in Bentley cars. They are not too hard to spot when you go onto the mainland or into the nearest regional centre and you look at some of the suburbs they live in and so on. That aspect needs to be brought into it too, comparing it to how people live in the communities. What if we turned that cycle around and said, ‘We want Murris to also be driving around in Bentley cars, having airconditioned homes, having their kids getting up bright and early in the morning and so on’? So it is about employment and attracting employment in the community.

Seriously, education and economic development have to be key in regard to it. Education Queensland has to do better in delivering education in Aboriginal communities and not developing, like Gerhardt said, a specified Aboriginal program. That specified Aboriginal program is oppressing us at the moment. We are getting too oppressed. We are tired. I do not want to see my children being oppressed because a system is oppressing us. The people who are developing programs in a so-called Aboriginal—or ‘identified’, as it has always been called—way are making sure we have to do it this way. Yes, we sometimes have to do it the Aboriginal way, but in the real world if you want to get the job, as this gentleman up the end said, as the sergeant of the army then you have to act like the sergeant of the army; otherwise, you will not be the sergeant of the army.

Those are some of the points I want to make. Education is a big part of it. I want to talk about education across the board, whether it is secondary or primary education or even education at the community level and then passing on the education to the non-educated people in the community delivered through a system of relying on the beer canteen to provide an income for the rest of the family and the community.

CHAIR—Thank you, everyone, for your contributions. As I said, they have been invaluable to the work of the committee. We obviously cannot address all of the issues you have put on the table, but we will try to address the ones that we are capable of addressing and do it in a constructive manner. Thank you.

Subcommittee adjourned at 5.44 p.m.

