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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Capacity building in Indigenous communities

FRIDAY, 8 AUGUST 2003

BROOME

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Friday, 8 August 2003

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

Members in attendance: Mr Cobb, Mr Haase, Mr Lloyd 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.

WITNESSES

DODSON, Mr Patrick, Chair, Lingiari Foundation 1099

HUNTER, Mr Victor Everard, (Private capacity) 1096

LANE, Mr Paul, Executive Director, Lingiari Foundation 1099

MANADO, Mr Mark, Aboriginal Development Officer, Kimberley College of TAFE 1111

POWELL, Mr Greg, Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Broome 1089

TREVENA, Mr Richard, Regional Manager, ATSIS 1075

WHITELAW, Mr Rory, Lecturer, Kimberley College of TAFE 1111

Committee met at 9.07 a.m.

TREVENA, Mr Richard, Regional Manager, ATSIS

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the committee’s inquiry into capacity building in indigenous communities. We are in Broome today, and we are pleased to be here, having spent a day to the north of us here yesterday. Thank you to ATSIC for its support for and facilitation of our visit. I only have one pleasant duty, and that is to welcome Richard Trevena, who of course I know very well. He is ATSIC manager in my home electorate, based at Port Augusta, and has had many postings and long experience in matters Aboriginal.

Mr Trevena—I am the acting manager of the Broome network regional office for ATSIS. I came up here from the CDEP national program area in Adelaide. In terms of the Broome region, I think it is no different from a lot of regions in remote Australia. There are issues of infrastructure, housing, health. There are employment spin-offs from the obvious tourism and enterprise development that is in the region, and we have to make sure that Aboriginal people derive some benefit from that.

In the short time I have been here, I think that there is obvious potential for regional governance in terms of the Kimberley—a regional authority possibly—rather than just the Broome area. I certainly have been taken by the fact that, while the people here live in a remote area, they are not insular in the way they see things; they are very outward looking. Other than that, I think I will just wait to be asked questions.

CHAIR—Thanks, Richard. Yesterday we were at Lombadina, which was pretty impressive in terms of that small community. Djarindjin and Ardyaloon had other issues. I thought I might start by talking about CDEP—and it will not surprise you that I am interested in CDEP. There were various issues coming through, and I will address the local issues and then I want to come back to the general issues, and perhaps I will just signal a few things. They include the regionalisation and the way that that is being done and the empowerment or otherwise of the community in that balance—it is always desirable, but also the accountability and efficiency argument comes in as well. So there were issues of regionalisation there very much yesterday.

I would, by the way, like to welcome the ATSIS deputy manager who is here listening today. Thank you for your assistance yesterday.

But also the Spicer inquiry was referred to in terms of some of the issues, and I know, Richard, from some of our conversations that the issues of Treasury and its requirement about CDEP and how it is paid are part of the issue. So maybe we could just talk a little bit about CDEP specific to the regions and this balance between empowerment, incentive and efficiency, which is what I heard yesterday, as well as going back to the Spicer review, if indeed Spicer has anything to do with it—I am not sure that it does, but it was mentioned—and of course the requirements of Treasury regarding what they are able to pay and how they are able to pay it. Let’s perhaps begin with the local stuff, in terms of the regionalisation and the changes that are coming in. For example, the way we heard it yesterday the field officers were becoming much more part of the scene, and the suggestion was made that ATSIC was not ready and that it was not working and the contact was raised. Can we talk a little bit about the local program on CDEP?

Mr Trevena—Yes. Prior to 1 July there were eight CDEPs in this region and they had between them roughly 1,500 participants. Going back at least five years, there has been talk in the region of maximising the benefits of CDEP by collectivisation, if you like—having one CDEP with a centralised administration, with a view to reducing the amount of money that went into the actual salaries of the administrators and freeing up more money to undertake activities in the community. That discussion seems to predate Spicer, to some extent, but it probably got a bit of a shot in the arm from the Spicer report, one of whose recommendations was, I think, that there be some thought given to making CDEPs larger and more efficient, where that could be undertaken.

There has been consultation going on since at least 1998 in this region—so that is five years. Perhaps I should go back: CDEPs regularly met in the region, in what they called their own regional CDEP forum, to discuss issues of common concern, so to some extent this amalgamation or regionalisation has been driven by the CDEPs themselves. They met in, I think, May 2002 and endorsed the idea of a regional CDEP, put it to the regional council, who agreed at their budget meeting in June 2002 that the idea of regionalisation should go ahead and empowered the regional manager to write to each of the CDEPs, saying that they would not be funded as separate entities from the start of the 2003-2004 financial year. That happened.

There were a number of the kinds of glitches that always heave to on the horizon in any of these sorts of thing. One was the separation of powers and the creation of the executive agency ATSIS out of ATSIC. Changed ways in which we dealt with funding from one financial year to another meant that there were different requirements on us. Also the establishment of the incorporated body and its capacity to employ staff to make sure the transition went smoothly had a bit of a lapse, so when everything sprang to attention on 1 July, some of the systems that should have been in place were not in place and some of those systems that were in place did not function as well.

We had to write a special program to transfer the 1,500-odd participants from individual CDEPs to the one CDEP. Under normal processes, they would have had to physically go off their old CDEP and go on the new one, using forms at Centrelink. You can imagine the nightmare that processing nearly 1,600 forms would have meant for both ATSIC and Centrelink, so we wrote a special computer program to do that. As is always the way, some of those names dropped off. It has got better since it started. That is not to minimise or trivialise the pain that some people went through when they did not get paid for two weeks. That has now been addressed and we are gradually creeping up to full participation again in the region. There has been extensive consultation about this and ATSIC was involved all the way and now ATSIS has just picked up the mantle.

CHAIR—The 1,500 are now under one group, compared to the previous eight—is that right?

Mr Trevena—That is right.

CHAIR—What sort of savings would be in there?

Mr Trevena—I think the administration costs have been reduced by about 30-odd per cent, so that means that there is 30-odd per cent of 1,500-odd participants times $3,000 available for activities to be undertaken in homelands, outstations and communities.

CHAIR—Significant money.

Mr Trevena—I think so, yes.

CHAIR—Of course, it does mean, inevitably, some change in those eight circumstances. Some people do not then have as much money, or some people do not have positions where they had positions before—there is that type of shake out.

Mr Trevena—Certainly anybody who was employed full-time in the community, or even possibly part-time on top up, may not have those positions now. All of the full-time positions are in Broome here. I know communities were expecting that the relevant field officers for each of the four wards that make up the CDEP were going to be based in the wards, but the 'crikey' as they call it in the CDEP—that is, the KRCI committee—decided that those people would be town based. I think there is some disappointment about that decision out in the communities and wards, but that is an issue that, as they approach the end of the first year and elect a new committee, they can address then.

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Haase. We have just begun, and Richard has made a brief introduction. Richard was a manager in my electorate, at Ceduna and Port Augusta over many years—that would be about 25 years, I think, Richard, or probably nearer 30 years in Aboriginal Affairs?

Mr Trevena—Yes, nearly 30 years.

CHAIR—We have really talked about CDEP and the reasons that the changes have occurred in the regionalisation: there is something like a 30 per cent saving in costs. There have been glitches in terms of ATSIC and ATSIS and those sorts of things, and we have just been talking about those. I am getting ready to go to you, so I just wanted to give you the theme, which is the CDEP.

I will just make the point—and you and I have spoken about this, so you know where I am coming from—about the balance between incentive, otherwise sometimes known as top up, and the whole philosophy of CDEP. You would be well aware of the national debate about welfare dependency, and we were gratified to hear from some people yesterday that there is an aspiration among many Aboriginal people to move on from that—and that varies of course. Clearly, from a national perspective, there is great interest in moving people on from the sit-down money concept. I invite you to make a couple of points about the regulatory environment in which CDEP operates that prohibits that—and that is why I suggested what Treasury demand of the government and of ATSIS—in terms of why we cannot be more innovative and more incentive driven to create something beyond welfare. Why can we not, if you like, progress from welfare to wellbeing? It is difficult, but it has got to be a national task, and it will increasingly become a national issue. So can we just talk about that—that regulatory environment in which CDEP operates, and then, secondly, a couple of signals you might have for us in terms of moving beyond the welfare dependent sit-down money concept.

Mr Trevena—The incentive system, if you like, that changed a few years ago now is where the Department of Finance was concerned about the fact that CDEP participants were being paid on the basis of predictive schedules. In other words, based on schedules there would be a release

of money and if people did not work or only worked part of the time over that predictive three months then the balances were retained by the CDEP. That is the simplest way I can put it. So there were wage savings and those wage savings were used to pay supervisors and to pay top up. Back before the regime became even more self-restrictive, the Ngaanyatjarra people in Western Australia were able to accumulate surpluses that got them into enterprise. It was passive enterprise to some extent. They bought a Toyota dealership and I think they operated an airline and they had a Mobil service station at Uluru.

Since the tightening up, there has been less money available for CDEPs to use in those sorts of circumstances. It has necessarily restricted their capacity to generate income either through enterprise or even, in some cases, just cottage type industry. It has also created a situation where, while OH&S requirements are not being ignored, the risk is greater of something happening because supervisors are not always available because there is no money to pay top up.

If I can use an example, the situation formerly might have provided top up to pay for, say, one supervisor for five to eight people and that might now have moved to one supervisor for eight to 12 people. Quite often in cases in remote communities where sometimes machinery is not always looked after well, a situation where things are dangerous is created. It also lessens the capacity to meet the needs of training, unless you are able to get on to a DEWR or TAFE program. Training used to be a part of the CDEP scheme but we lost, as part of 1996 budget restrictions, the capacity to fund training programs, so that was then funded out of wage savings. With the loss of wage savings, training now becomes a little more problematic.

Often, training organisations—particularly state based TAFEs—do not present training at a venue that is convenient and often they cancel courses where they cannot get enough participants. I am not making a judgment about whether or not they should do that. They are driven by economics as well. But it is difficult for people to acquire skills if courses are cancelled at short notice or, in some spectacular cases, part way through courses.

CHAIR—It adds to the degree of difficulty in the whole exercise.

Mr HAASE—Yes. What was the second part of the question, please?

CHAIR—I do not know. I will come back to it. Basically it was about how it can become more incentive driven. We have described why it has become less incentive driven.

Mr Trevena—You wanted to know about what we are doing about making the transition from welfare to wellbeing.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Trevena—The CDEP program area, which is now called the Employment and Training Branch, in ATSIS, is actually undertaking an active review and reform of the program. That is being done with a view to changing the program into a more transitional type program in areas where there are labour markets and turning it back into a proper community development program where labour markets are not as strong—that would be remote communities. I do not think, though, that we are seeing the two as being mutually exclusive. In areas of strong labour markets—like Newcastle, for example, and even Port Augusta, where the CDEP has done an

excellent job—there will always be people who, for whatever reason—and sometimes it is generational—will not be able to move into a mainstream labour market. There will also be areas in remote communities where there will be room for people with a degree of entrepreneurship to move into full-time employment.

Mr HAASE—Richard, yesterday we heard a lot about the centralisation or regionalisation of the CDEP—and generally strong criticism of the changes. You can imagine that was the case.

Mr Trevena—Yes.

Mr HAASE—I am interested to know whether or not there is any perception that, in changing to a less centralised form of CDEP management, further changes might be made that clearly reward initiative, entrepreneurial skills, honesty and the whole range of positive attributes that contribute genuinely to community development through CDEP. I believe I understand the reasons for you centralising, and you mentioned some just now. You talked about supervision, affordability, cost savings, good administration and all of those things. Where those fine attributes can be replicated at a local level and clearly demonstrated on an ongoing basis, can you talk about the possibility of some devolution in the future that would reward those efforts? It strikes me that we are talking about capacity building at all levels but in my mind where the building of capacity does the most good and affects the greatest degree of positive change is at a community level.

Yesterday we saw the very best, I believe, of community leadership and yet we have rewarded that long-term demonstration of ability by taking away control—disempowerment. We have almost bitten the hand that was doing the right thing for all agencies. I would like some indication from you about what you think is the likely scenario in the future—whether we could give back responsibility and, if we could not, why we could not.

Mr Trevena—First of all, can I say that I do see that there is potential for the breaking up, if you like, of the one CDEP here, if that is what people want. In the same way that there were advantages and disadvantages with the regionalisation, there would be advantages and disadvantages with breaking up the big CDEP. I do not see the potential to go back to eight CDEPs, simply because some of those CDEPs they would be too small. There has been no marked real increase in the amount of money that is available for on-costs for a number of years now, despite a number of representations by ATSIC, as it was then, to the Department of Finance.

Mr HAASE—May I interrupt. You mentioned no increase in on-costs. We have had explained to us that, with the changes, there has been a reduction, certainly at a local level, of the available on-costs figure. Can you confirm or deny that?

Mr Trevena—I do not think that the information that you have been given on that has been judged in the same way; they have not been comparing apples with apples. Individual communities used to get $3,000 per participant for on-costs, because this is a remote area. The CDEP is getting a little bit more than that—about $3,100 per participant for on-costs. What has happened is that instead of the amount of money being taken out for administration in individual communities when they get it, it is being taken out here. So the amount of money that is available—I think it is about $400 per participant out of that $3,000—is being taken out at

KRCI, so there is $2,600 going to individual communities per participant or per activity. But regarding the $3,000 that went to the individual CDEP, they were actually extracting more than that—it was costing them about 30 per cent more—so they were only benefiting to the tune, say, of about $2,300. But, because they were doing it themselves, they saw they were getting $3,000 and now they see they are getting $2,600, but it is because the money to administer the CDEP has got to be taken out here.

Mr HAASE—Yes, it was staying in the community though, to a degree.

Mr Trevena—Most definitely, yes: the wage earners were being paid in the community.

Mr HAASE—And now it is not?

Mr Trevena—Yes, there would have been at least probably one full-time position and possibly one part-time position with top up in the communities.

Mr HAASE—I really have not allowed you to elaborate on the question I asked you in the first instance. I apologise for intervening, but we are talking about jobs in communities where real jobs are an absolute scarcity, and it just struck me that to take these very real jobs away from the local situation and centralise them elsewhere was a retrograde step—in my opinion. Can we keep on going down that line.

Mr Trevena—I agree that taking the field officer positions that were supposed to be community based and bringing them back to Broome is a retrograde step, because I think CDEP organisations and communities themselves need grass roots contact with their organisations. But I think that is really just replicating a situation that is happening all around Australia in mainstream society where local jobs are being lost by organisations which centralise to large regional centres. That is a bigger issue and it is one that affects Aboriginal people as well—the gradual emptying, if you like, of regional Australia.

Mr HAASE—It is a real problem, isn’t it?

Mr Trevena—I think it is.

Mr HAASE—We should remain united on that.

Mr Trevena—I think we ought to. I was brought up in the pastoral industry, and I have seen that industry almost destroyed by regionalisation. To get back to your original question: yes, I think that if communities at the end of the first 12 months, say, feel that the regional CDEP is not meeting their wishes, the CDEP national program area—of which I am an employee at the moment; I am only acting here—would not stand in the way of some sort of devolution of responsibility to smaller regional CDEPs, if you like. Once again, it would have to be community driven and it would need the endorsement of the regional office, because we would need to set up the systems in the program area, but I do not see that that is an impossibility. In fact, most of the regional CDEPs that have been created around Australia have not been as large as this one.

As a person who has got a vested interest in this system, I think 1,565 participants, which is what the ceiling is here, is too large. It has created a nightmare in terms of administration, for all sorts of reasons. That is not to say that it would not have been a nightmare anyway. But I think it is just too big and impersonal, and I think particularly for Aboriginal people, who are very community and family oriented, possibly 1,500 is too large. If I was able to have any input on policy when I went back to the program area, it would be to not create CDEPs larger than about a thousand participants—or amalgamating no more than five communities. That is just a personal view. It is certainly not ATSIS policy. But I will be making that view known when I get back.

Mr HAASE—Richard, the chair is not going to give me another crack at this, so I am going to take the liberty of broaching another matter. If we are talking about empowerment and capacity building in communities, there is a local problem here, and that is the cost of access from here to Cape Leveque. It is very costly for individuals, because it destroys motor cars, and access to stores and building materials is difficult and the cost of building on the peninsula is high because of the destructive nature of the road et cetera. I know that ATSIS, long term, is cooperating with both the state and local government in funding a road there. I put it to you that this idea of a bitumen road from Broome to Cape Leveque is not popular with the communities along the way. They are all very concerned about the destruction of their culture that this influx of unfettered grey nomads and others will cause to their very delicate beaches. I have had it proposed to me that the creation of a railway line and rail car service there, with fixed destinations included in ticketing et cetera, would be a solution to a very long-term problem. Just off the top of your head, could you give me a reaction to that comment?

Mr Trevena—I cannot give you a policy position but, speaking as someone who has travelled up that road a number of times in the last few weeks—to both out-stations and all the way to Ardyaloon—I think some sort of light rail would be great, for all sorts of reasons. The real problem I see with it is that it would not negate the need to upgrade the road. I have been recently to meetings with the shire and state government authorities where we have been talking about the road, and three years ago Aboriginal communities who have been funded at different times for airstrip maintenance and the like undertook that they would pool all their resources with a view to having an all weather strip, which is up the road there some way. The trade-off was that there would be all weather access to that airstrip, but that has still not happened. I appreciate that state and local governments are cash strapped, as is the Commonwealth, but it has been three years now. My view is that the people in the communities up there are citizens of both the state and the shire—not just the Commonwealth; it is not really a Commonwealth responsibility, although we always make a contribution and we have undertaken to make a contribution to connect all the out-stations and main communities to the main road—and that spine ought to be upgraded.

I am not sure that a bitumen road is necessarily the answer and, because I am an ecologist by qualification, I appreciate that people like touring around and they like the wilderness experience and bitumen roads have a tendency to destroy that experience. Tourism here is a big thing and, if people want to drive their vehicles over that road, so be it, but I would not be taking my caravan over it. I think communities probably do not want a sealed road, but they do want all weather access at least to the airstrip there, as was promised them, and some form of light rail that would enable particularly cargo to be carried. If you could get trucks off that road, I think a lot of that damage would be minimised. I think it would be a wonderful nation building project.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Mr Trevena—I have dropped you right in it, have I?

CHAIR—No. The member has impressed upon us the importance of that, and his advocacy has been profound. We are listening with great interest. Thank you.

Mr LLOYD—Thank you, Mr Chairman. Yes, we are listening with great interest to Mr Haase's innovative ideas. Having driven over part of that road yesterday, we can appreciate the difficulties of access to that airstrip.

Mr Trevena—It is known locally as Corrugation Road.

Mr LLOYD—Yes and, whilst it is the dry season now, I can visualise how quickly that turns to mud and becomes totally unsuitable for access to the airstrip which is so important. I have just a couple of questions, Richard. I was very impressed with what I saw at Lombadina—their leadership and what they are doing with their CDEP program. It was interesting that their model seemed to work. They did not have sit-down money—and no work, no pay—and it did work for their community, but in Djarindjin and in other communities we spoke to, there did not seem to be that control. They expressed concerns in their submissions that, if people did not want to work, they just stepped off the program, went next door to Centrelink and went on the dole, and they did not seem to have that control. Is there any way you can take the model that appears to work and transfer it to other communities? Is there any idea of doing that, or is that just on the basis of leadership or whatever?

Mr Trevena—You will appreciate that I have been here for a very short time.

Mr LLOYD—A lot longer than I have.

Mr Trevena—I am basing my answer on my experience from all over Australia—wherever I have worked with ATSIC and before that DAA and ADC and also the Northern Land Council in the Northern Territory. One of the reasons I think Lombadina works is that it is family based. People are able to impose values not only based on what is right but on family obligation—cultural obligation, if you like. There have been attempts in the Pitjantjatjara lands, as Mr Wakelin knows, where there have been family based out-stations, some of which have worked and some of which have not. But the reason that the out-station movement started originally was because people were sick of the social problems that were incumbent on communities. The communities are an artificial creation. They started ages ago when Aboriginal people were either forced out of the desert or voluntarily came out of the desert and were kept together in one spot for whatever reasons—some of them honourable reasons, some of them possibly not so honourable.

The family based structure, I think, is a good one. We need to find a way of creating a form of governance for Aboriginal groups—I will not call them communities—which takes into account not only our need for accountable governance, particularly where it is managing public money, but also the value systems that are inherent, where families are still strong, either looking to reinvigorate or to reinforce those sorts of values and possibly even to reintroduce them where they have been lost in large part. We need to make sure that we do not confuse cultural

obligations, which happen all the time in family groups, with corruption and fraud. I think that people are too willing to automatically see it as fraud when a nephew of a council chairman gets a job, whereas it is the cultural obligation that forces the chairman to give the nephew the job. That does not weaken the community; it actually makes it stronger, because it is reinforcing the cultural values that are important to those people. I think we need to find a system that looks at that cultural obligation and marries it with the sorts of things that liberal western democracies hold dear in terms of governance.

Until we do that, I think we are bound to be laboured with a cyclical nature of good governance, bad governance, deteriorating circumstances in communities. We need to find a way of creating little Lombadinas that are family based and that reinforce and sometimes reintroduce values that are really important to people. As far as I am aware, there has never been a problem with the financial management at Lombadina. I might stand corrected on that, because I would need to ask my field staff, but those sorts of small communities or out-stations—call them what you will—are important, I think.

But there is a cost with that. If you are going to have family based organisations that have good governance and traditional values that do not conflict with our needs then you need to find a way of providing the infrastructure. If, for economic rational ideas, you are going to put people in large groups, you are bound to have the sorts of conflicts that beset all sorts of communities. Local government is often a brutal business. Good governance is great. Bad governance is not confined to Aboriginal organisations. It is not confined to the not-for-profit sector, and there have been spectacular instances of that, so we need to find a way of marrying those.

Mr LLOYD—It was mentioned yesterday that either three or four of those field officers under the CDEP scheme are now based in Broome, and the community said, ‘We have never heard from them and we have never seen them.’ The way they were speaking, I thought they had been in place for some time, and they said, ‘No, from 1 July’. Given the size of the area, it is probably not unreasonable to think that in five weeks they have not visited many of the communities in the region. Could you just give us an outline of what they are doing? My suggestion would be that, if they have not been able to visit these communities, at least that they should get in touch with them, to let them know, because there seemed to be a communication problem there.

Mr Trevena—I was referring to my own field staff, but the field officers you are talking about are employed by KRCI. They were supposed to be employed between May and June so that they would be on deck on 1 July. That did not go as smoothly as people wanted. I think at least three of the four have been employed. There is one for each ward, and there are four wards. At the next general meeting, each ward will elect five people to be on the committee, so that each ward is represented by five people. I have been to a couple of CDEP meetings in communities where those field officers have been attending, but I can bring it to the attention of field staff, to make sure they reinforce to the CDEP organisation, which is in the upstairs area of our office here, the importance of making sure that there is a more regular pattern put in place. But they have only been on deck a short time—in fact, I think the last one has only been on deck for about a week or so. One of the reasons was that there was no money to pay them because we could not establish the new organisation until 1 July. The changeover from ATSIC to ATSIS meant that we could not make an advance and be able to recover it, because the money could not come back to the old ATSIC. In the end we did make an advance, and we have found a way of doing it, but it took

three weeks to wade through the Financial Management and Accountability Act to find a way in which we could do it.

CHAIR—As you say, you will check it, but the presumption is that there have been no real financial problems or issues there. Of course, at Lombadina we were reminded very solidly that it is Aboriginal management as well, which was pretty impressive.

Mr Trevena—Yes, some organisations—I think Ardyaloon is one—have a couple of non-Aboriginal staff. There are some communities that are comfortable with that; there are some communities of course that have the skills that are required. We are looking in CDEP, for example, to going to Net based information transfer. That technology is outstripping some communities' capacity to deal with information management. Some communities are just not able to deal with that sort of stuff, and our requirements in terms of that are going to be horrendous.

CHAIR—What impressed me, Richard, about the Lombadina people, the Sibosado family, was that there was an acute awareness of dollars and value. They were very proud of getting seven houses for the money for four. Their awareness of value for money was way ahead of the awareness I have seen in other communities.

Mr Trevena—Better than mine.

CHAIR—They were right on the ball and it was impressive. It reinforces your point about this family connection and the way we need to find something like that. I want to come back to it if we get an opportunity, but I need to offer John Cobb an opportunity to have a couple of words.

Mr JOHN COBB—Richard, back on that question, at least one or possibly two he communities yesterday felt that, quite apart from the financial change to what had happened with CDEP—the regionalisation of it—the changes meant they could no longer run their own very strict code. In other words, management et cetera going regional meant they could not strictly enforce the no work, no pay regime—if somebody is off for the day then they do not get paid; they could not rotate it around their population in an effective way. Would you say that was correct or that whatever code they worked up to make it work properly can still be done under the new arrangements at the local level?

Mr Trevena—There is no impediment to their having their own local rules in their own individual community.

Mr JOHN COBB—What about their ability to enforce it?

Mr Trevena—If you are talking about no work, no pay, supervisors in the individual communities only need to make sure that they fill out the timesheets correctly. I do not think I have answered your question, from the look of it.

Mr JOHN COBB—You have if you are telling me they still have the ability to run their own set of standards which, from what I saw and as the chairman said, are as good as anything I have heard about. By and large I do not think this thing works very well at all, but it seems to me they

do, at least in one if not two cases, have it working well and they seem fearful that they will no longer be able to run it under their own set of rules.

Mr Trevena—I would be surprised if they were not able to. I can check on that. I must admit I would have to—

Mr JOHN COBB—I think it is a very important point in this particular case. The other issue, which I think Mr Haase brought up, is that it seems to be penalising rather than rewarding those who have run a good show. I think probably on a financial basis it is, if, as you say, it is not going to affect their ability to run it. Is it possible to make exceptions for those that do run things properly?

Mr Trevena—You mean to have them stand outside the regional CDEP?

Mr JOHN COBB—Yes.

Mr Trevena—As I have said, I do not think that it is impossible. We certainly would not stand in the way of an organisation wanting to divorce itself from the regional CDEP, if you like. The office will be undertaking a review partway through the first part of the next calendar year to look at how well this regional CDEP has gone. If, at the end of that, there is general dissatisfaction or even local dissatisfaction, I do not think it is impossible to hive off individual CDEPs. As I said to Mr Haase, I do not see us going back to an inefficient system of eight individual CDEPs. If communities like Lombadina, for example, wanted to split off and it had the endorsement of the regional office, I do not see that there would be any impediment.

Mr JOHN COBB—You mentioned ‘consultation’, a word with which I am very familiar. Mostly, in my experience, consultation means you intend to do something but you tell people along the way and afterwards you say you have consulted with them. I am not talking about you specifically but, having dealt with my state government a lot, that is what mostly happens. So they never had any choice; it was just a matter of to what extent they were told it was going to happen and allowed to have input into it.

Mr Trevena—If you are talking about the regionalisation of the CDEPs, as I explained at the start, this has been an ongoing process for at least five years. The CDEP forums have discussed the idea of regionalisation, going back as far as 1996 and possibly before that. They agreed at the CDEP forum in 2002 that they would do that, and put the issue to—

Mr JOHN COBB—You mean all these groups?

Mr Trevena—All eight CDEPs. They put the proposal to the regional council, which still had control of the program prior to ATSIS being established, and the regional council agreed. The regional council, having made that decision based on the CDEPs asking them to have one CDEP, put it to us in the program area and we facilitated it.

Mr JOHN COBB—I am not being critical of it, because sometimes you do have to rationalise things for one reason or another. But you are telling us they have changed their mind on their original decision.

Mr Trevena—If people are now saying that they did not want a regional CDEP and it was foisted on them, then possibly they were not involved in CDEP at the time, but there has been a long and exhaustive process which has been community driven to have this CDEP. This is not something that the regional council—

Mr JOHN COBB—We were not made aware of that yesterday, to the best of my knowledge.

Mr Trevena—In fact, the regional office, because it was a regional council program, could not do it. As the person who is responsible for establishing regional CDEPs in the CDEP program area in Adelaide, where we are based, I would have needed both regional council and regional office endorsement to establish the system that would have put it in place.

Mr JOHN COBB—Of which they were all a part?

Mr Trevena—Of which they were all a part, yes. I think that people are dissatisfied more than anything because the transition has not gone smoothly. Had we been able to get the systems in place from May, with the staff based in the communities rather than in Broome, the paperwork all put into the system and the transition ready to up and pay everyone on 7 July—

Mr JOHN COBB—My very sincere suggestion would be that you must get it across that they are still going to be able to look after the practical application of it at the local level.

Mr Trevena—Yes, I have made a note to follow up on that with my field staff.

CHAIR—Just to sum up, Richard, I think you have answered the question about the key to capacity building at a government level. You have given us the model to capture the cultural significance of family connection and that which works, so I do not need to restate that. My suggestion will be, because you do not know how long you are going to be at Broome—

Mr Trevena—Three months.

CHAIR—Another three months?

Mr Trevena—I hope it will be another three months but I suspect, unfortunately, that it will only be another couple.

CHAIR—We will be going through Adelaide and we may invite you back to talk a little more. I think we need to explore this because we are really onto something that is critical for the future.

I just want to raise one point quickly and it is the same issue which bedevils us all, I think. It is not particular to Aboriginal communities although it is an issue in a particular way in Aboriginal communities: the development of family cohesion and the resolution of conflict. There are probably a lot of things we can do better, but are there one or two points, in terms of this resolution of conflict—which are clearly coherent with these artificial communities coming together and the historical basis and all of it—that are available to us now and will be available in the future that stand out so that we can avoid doing something or we can add value by doing something slightly differently—this conflict resolution stuff? It is on the same theme, Richard.

Mr Trevena—To be honest, I do not know. That is probably a question that ought to be put to people like the regional council chair—people who have a vested interest in living in communities. I think one of the things we could do is possibly go to communities with a program that would be interventionist. I think that is only a short-term solution; I certainly do not think it is long term. I think it is only treating the symptoms, but until we can start treating the cause—and that is a longer term thing—we need to treat the symptoms.

I know CDEP had an extra thousand places allocated to it in the last budget as a new policy proposal simply to be used in remote communities for substance misuse and family violence programs. Unfortunately, I have been up here, so I do not know how well those positions are being utilised. I think that is one of the things we can do. Until we can treat the real causes of the problems—for example, poverty—I do not think we can divorce anything from the fact that people feel disempowered, they are poor, or they wake up in the morning wondering if their kids are going to be alive or they are going to be ill. For most CDEP participants, 60 per cent of them live in remote areas where services are problematic. I think there are a whole raft of things that need to be addressed. I do not think that anything other than a holistic approach is going to work.

CHAIR—You touched on the remote job market. As you said, they are not mutually exclusive in terms of the urban versus the remote, if I can use those two extremes of the CDEP adaptation to whatever. I think you have covered that. I think we need to invite the Department of Finance to talk about this reality of no job market in the remote areas.

Mr Trevena—I have nearly finished that paper, by the way.

CHAIR—Good; how long will it be?

Mr Trevena—Next time I am in Adelaide I will have it ready for you.

CHAIR—Mr Haase, is there anything that you would like to add?

Mr HAASE—Thank you, Chair. Given the opportunity, I must speak. I observed in Ardyaloon yesterday a classic example of bureaucracy gone mad, and it was of course the creation of the rammed-earth houses up there. They were costly, inappropriate, sourced from outside, built with labour from outside and therefore the wages went away from the area. The suitability was way out of line. They were most unloved houses. I wonder how, in your words, we might best avoid such foolhardiness in the future.

Mr Trevena—Ask people what they want and marry that with appropriate technology. It has been done in the Pitjantjatjara lands with the UPK style of housing. I do not see that it is impossible to come up with an alternative to what has happened in the past where inappropriate designs have been used. I remember that when I was the station manager on the Pit land before it was handed over we asked people what they wanted and all they wanted was a shed with a roller door and another door because they lived mostly outside. Of course, in that climate you can because it rains very little. The state government at the time said, ‘No, we cannot give them sheds, it is just completely inappropriate.’ So they put in traditional three-bedroom bungalow homes, and of course people were unskilled, particularly in those days, in living in that style of accommodation and the houses became white elephants. People lived outside them and they went to waste. It is not impossible to design a home for the climate here; people do it all the

time. I think if you asked people what they wanted in the way of housing style and had someone with appropriate architectural skills, they could design something.

Mr HAASE—How do you get away from the problem of somebody loudly declaring human rights and non-discrimination and saying, ‘If we are building houses for Aboriginal people in communities, they have exactly the same entitlements as Mr and Mrs Smith with one and a half children living in suburbia, therefore they should have the same sort of housing if they choose to have it’? There is always somebody in the community that says, ‘I want a flash house on the hill with three bedrooms and a bathroom.’

CHAIR—That is a nice easy question to conclude, Mr Trevena.

Mr Trevena—All of those communities are in the Shire of Broome. Local governments impose planning restrictions on individuals in terms of what they can and cannot do, even on their own land. The communities might decide, which is what happened on the AP lands, that certain styles of housing will only apply on that community which is held from the state government. I see this as possibly a bit of a precursor to Commonwealth-state negotiation and cooperation. There is nothing wrong with working collaboratively with local government as well to come up with a style of housing that would be appropriate. You might need to use that style only for a generation, as people become more and more used to using housing in an appropriate way—if indeed they are using it inappropriately—and move on from there. Everything is in a transitional phase and I do not think that you necessarily need to worry about that, as long as everyone agrees and it is a collaborative thing.

CHAIR—Richard Trevena, thank you very much. We trust we can have you back at some other venue, probably. How long you will be here—

Mr Trevena—You never know, do you?

CHAIR—No, you do not.

Mr Trevena—With a bit of luck, it will be until Christmas.

CHAIR—Thank you, Richard.

[10.07 a.m.]

POWELL, Mr Greg, Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Broome

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Powell—Historically, the Shire of Broome has not interacted with its Aboriginal communities. Looking back through our old records we can see that, when the larger communities were under the control of the Catholic Church, they were fairly well self-contained, so our interaction was fairly minimal. I think, too, that local government has not had the power to engage in relationships with Aboriginal communities on cultural, financial or legal grounds because, historically, local government has no power, particularly from a land use perspective, over what goes on in these places.

Over time, perhaps, with the creation of ATSIC there was the potential to build two structures. We saw ATSIC, with its Commonwealth funding, doing its thing, sometimes at arm's length from what was happening in the communities. To some degree that led to some dissatisfaction in the communities as to what was happening. That then led to us, some four or five years ago, entering into service delivery agreements with state agencies and the major communities to assist the communities and other agencies in health, building and planning matters. There is now a proposal on the table to develop a pilot project for the Dampier Peninsula and Bidyadanga, to see what we can do about local government delivering its municipal services, yet to be defined, into those communities as we do anywhere else. That project is yet to get under way, but it should be interesting.

CHAIR—Thank you. I take your point about the history and the total divergence, if you like; that was the era. There seems to be a coming back together, and you acknowledged the last four or five years. The thing that has fascinated me a little bit, coming to the west in the last three or four days, is listening to some of the ATSIC regional councils talking about how they see the value of the local government structure for their own structure. I do not know if you are aware of that sort of discussion, but it is interesting. Of course, the separation of powers was indicating that, so there is nothing new in history. With those few comments, I think it is emerging, as it appropriately should. Perhaps you could paint a picture of the geography and of the Shire of Broome and then I will go to Mr Haase, because he is more familiar with the shire.

Mr Powell—The Shire of Broome is 56,000 square kilometres in area. It extends from north to south probably about 580 kilometres. It includes 800 kilometres of coastline. Its width is approximately 200 kilometres at its southern end and about a hundred at its northern end. The closest town to the south is Port Hedland, which some 600 kilometres away, and our closest town overall is Derby, which is some 220 kilometres away. As for the shire, the prime population centre is Broome, with a population of—it depends on which day of the week it is—

CHAIR—What about race week?

Mr Powell—During race week it is 25,000 and during the rest of the year it is about 14,000, with about 2,500 Indigenous people in remote localities through the rest of the shire.

Mr HAASE—It is good to see you with us, Greg. It is a great opportunity for us to get a few things on the record. At the chair's request, I will endeavour to be as brief as I ought. There are four issues—Rubibi, roads, jobs in communities and the shire's inability to rate those communities—that ought to be addressed but I start with the question of local jobs. I have already mentioned this morning that the precious commodity in communities or on outstations is real jobs—jobs that are paid a proper wage for a real day's work and have real outcomes. Some of the municipal services that might be provided in those communities could be viewed as taking away real jobs within those communities. And all that is entailed in taking away a job means taking the money out of the community, taking the esteem out of the individual et cetera. I would like you to comment on that for starters.

Mr Powell—Frankly, if the Shire of Broome were to deliver municipal services into Aboriginal communities, it would probably create jobs. A lot of these traditional municipal services are low skills; they do not require academic qualifications. Depending on what the particular service was and how we structured the service delivery, it could well create jobs. Given the distances, the remoteness and the lack of roads, certainly it makes some sense to establish work forces in each community which would be overseen by a supervisor who may well be based in Broome. Up in Beagle Bay, for example, there might be a work force of four or five who would be responsible for rubbish removal, general parks and gardens work or general jobs as required around the area.

Mr HAASE—That is encouraging, because the discussions I have had quite recently paint a very different picture from within the community where everything is removed. What you mention is great to have on the record. Would you like to comment on the fact that communities are unable to be rated by the Shire of Broome, what effect that has and whether or not you see any process of changing that? I figure it goes hand-in-hand with the creation of municipal services within communities.

Mr Powell—To answer your last question, I do not think it does, but let us come back to the rateability issue. Local government does not rate Aboriginal communities. There are a couple of issues there, one being the Bindi Bindi court case, which saw Aboriginal communities being established for 'charitable purposes'—I think that was the definition—and therefore, under the Local Government Act, became exempt. Whether you describe rates as a service charge or a tax I will leave to the lawyers to answer, but that seems to be the case at the moment.

The other issue is that the tenure of the land removes it from local government rating provisions, because it is either crown land, a reserve or it is held by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. Being state government instrumentalities, because of the hierarchy of government, they are exempt. In the longer term, through the ALT restructuring whether in fact that will mean that once the ALT is broken down the tenure for local government that emerges from that is fairly critical and it may well not provide rateability for local government.

Having said that, what level of rates apply, the ability of the landowner to pay those rates and what happens should they not be paid in accordance with the Local Government Act, which can provide for a local government to sell that land should the rates not be paid for three years, are all practical issues that would need to be looked at. I think, too, given the remoteness of the communities in relation to the major population centre, even with the financial assistance grant, rates would go nowhere near meeting the cost of delivery of those services.

CHAIR—On the approach of the Commonwealth Grants Commission and the state grants commission and the ability to attract funds by not rating those properties, is there a financial impact in that way?

Mr Powell—There is a disability factor inside the state government formula that recognises crown lands, so I do not think it does particularly because it will then come back to a per capita basis of how they allocate the grant.

CHAIR—That is the FAGs?

Mr Powell—Yes. But then again I think there is some criticism of FAGs in any case—for example, that it is not a big enough bucket of money and that it is factored back by 50 per cent in the state.

CHAIR—You can see the ken of the question: is there a lesser amount of Commonwealth and state money coming in because of this structure to do the servicing?

Mr Powell—Perhaps there is, because it does come up in various discussions around the place that local government's obligations should be greater than they are because of the FAGs.

CHAIR—Where would we look for an answer to that—within our own Commonwealth structure or the state structure?

Mr Powell—Probably within the state structure. I think the detail is in the state structure.

Mr HAASE—I know that you know of my fanciful theory of creating a railway line from Broome to Cape Leveque. I would like you to put on the record, from the local government perspective, whether or not you have an opinion on that idea, how practical it might be, and your impression of the likelihood of that being something that local government might be involved in from an infrastructure perspective.

Mr Powell—Let's start with the present. We have a road some 220 kilometres in length, which we could perhaps call an adventurous drive on the best of days.

CHAIR—Yes, we found that.

Mr Powell—It is a local government road. We get insufficient funding to maintain it, let alone upgrade it. Recently, there was an allocation through the state government of some $10 million over four years to upgrade that road but it is still a gravel standard road. We are finding that $10 million is not the right number and there will be a significant shortfall, probably in the order of $2 million to $3 million, to complete that work. Where that is going to come from is the sixty-four dollar question at this stage. Again, we still continue to throw money at maintaining an unsealed road forever. There need to be other ways to do it. I think there were options looked at—

CHAIR—Before you go on, just to clarify that, I thought I heard the ATSIS acting manager suggest that there was some money available from ATSIS for some of that road. Did I hear that this morning, do you know?

Mr Powell—I was not here when that was mentioned.

CHAIR—No, but are you aware of any negotiations in that area?

Mr Powell—No.

CHAIR—Okay.

Mr Powell—There have been some meetings within the last week, to which I have not been, to look at the issue of that road, so there may well be other offers or strategies forthcoming or being put together.

The road will be problematic. I think there are other ways to look at servicing the peninsula; a barging arrangement could well be an option that could be looked at. Certainly, a railway would overcome the problems associated with sea transport. Regardless of that road, there will be times during the year when you will not be able to get into those communities. There are times now when those communities are isolated for up to three months because they are either washed away or under water.

There might need to be some fairly good engineering to make sure we do not have the same thing with the rail. Certainly it would overcome those road issues and allow some development to occur up there that would not be dependent on road. For instance, there is the proposal to establish the tropical tree plantation at Beagle Bay. If they were trying to bring out trees, they might arrive in Broome as woodchips at the moment. That is an issue that faces that particular industry. There is potential for horticulture, intensive agriculture and aquaculture. All those will need adequate and reliable road transport or transport of some description.

Mr HAASE—Well said. Thank you, Greg. We are speaking about capacity building and how things might be done better and more appropriately. I wonder if you could explain to the committee the local experience with the Rubibi group and, in just a few words, the high expectation of Indigenous people as a result of native title legislation.

Mr Powell—I think it becomes a clash of cultures. Certainly Aboriginal decision making processes do not coincide with those of the Westminster system and vice versa. However, we are going to have to get these two structures together somehow. We have tried a number of different models here to engage but unsuccessfully on the whole. There needs to be some structure in place otherwise I do not think any progress is going to be made. This local government pilot program might provide some models to build capacity at that service delivery level in the context of ‘what do you want? can we do it? here it is and here are your blokes to do it’. At least there would be a start and finish to a process.

As for native title expectations in Broome, you might be aware that there are a number of different claims currently before the court. One of them has resulted in a partial consent determination. It is known as the Karrajarri claim, which is centred on Bidyadanga. There is still a bit to go with that one, particularly in relation to pastoral leases and the outcomes of the Ward decision et cetera.

CHAIR—They have been not at the High Court level but at that tribunal—where are we at?

Mr Powell—The Federal Court consent determination. The practical issues there have become a little interesting recently in that the people who live in Bidyadanga are not necessarily the native title holders. We were just faced recently with an issue where we had some money to spend on the access road to the Bidyadanga community and ran into difficulties getting gravel off the native title land on which to build the road. There were all sorts of issues about royalties for gravel and a whole range of things that we had to negotiate through—another process.

There are a number of claims to the north on the peninsular—the Bardi, Goolara Booloo and Djabir Djabir claims. I think they are just about to be reheard because of issues in the judiciary. I think Justice French has just been appointed to that but unfortunately that process starts up again. That deals to some degree with the issues that we are discussing here, particularly tenure, who is going to get control of those things and how the structures are going to be put in place to manage it. If the prescribed body corporate is put together, who is on that prescribed body corporate? Who is funding it? Are any other people up there disadvantaged because they are not members of that PBC?

There is a claim over the Broome town site which has been split into two sections by the court. One deals with connection, which unfortunately was deferred in May until November, when it will be picked up again with the issue of extinguishment. There are a range of expectations in the community about what native title is to deliver. I do not think that at the end of the day those expectations are going to be satisfied. The ongoing management of those unresolved expectations is going to be interesting.

CHAIR—You have touched on the barriers to service delivery and what can be, quite frankly, quite frustrating to what has been normal practice in some of these things. In terms of service delivery and, as you described it, the ‘what do you want, can we do it’ approach, have you one example of where that is happening? Has anything actually occurred?

Mr Powell—I suppose it has inside the service delivery agreements we have currently got in place which, I suppose, provide an indication of what is possible, But to some degree that is tempered by our own capacity to deliver those services. If we were confronted with, for instance, doing rubbish removal in all Aboriginal communities, certainly we do not have the staffing or the plant and equipment to deal with that, so that would be one issue. Even if you contracted it, that would be fraught because the road network would probably beat your equipment to a pulp in fairly short order. So I think that is one issue—their own capacity to deliver. And the other part of your question was?

CHAIR—I think it is just the barriers; are there any other barriers? I am setting it up really to talk about bottom-up funding and Wilson Tuckey and that type of—

Mr Powell—Where we were was the service delivery agreements, I think, and the ones we have in place. We have health, planning and building. The health one has allowed the state government to provide funding for us to employ a full-time—

CHAIR—Yes, I see that.

Mr Powell——Aboriginal environmental health officer. He is not Aboriginal, it is the term of the position. I would say a good 80 per cent of his work is spent up the peninsula in the

communities doing sampling, checking things, just making sure things are happening. It tends to become a sounding board as well, I think; it is doing a good job. It links through to the building people where if some of the—

CHAIR—Are dogs an issue?

Mr Powell—Dogs are an issue, yes, rubbish tips and sewerage ponds are also an issue. For instance, there is a good example of a problem with a sewerage pond. They put a new sewerage pond into Beagle Bay and it was designed according to the size of the community only to have it overflow in very short order. Questions were asked about the adequacy of the design but the problem really turned out to be that leaking taps in the houses were putting too much water into the system. So it then goes back to a building—

CHAIR—That reminds me about the issue of water generally. It is a pretty precious commodity in most places of Australia—not all parts of Australia—but the water situation itself creates its own challenges, I guess.

Mr Powell—We are fortunate in Broome where there are more than adequate ground water resources at the moment which are fairly accessible, so we are not under the same constraints as some southern parts of the continent.

CHAIR—Can I come to Wilson Tuckey and the bottom-up funding which has created a bit of interest in recent weeks? The minister was suggesting, not that it is government policy, that a lot of the past models were not that successful. I think we have pointed this morning indirectly to what have been varying degrees of failure or certainly not the ultimate outcomes or the aspiration of most Australians. Here we could deal particularly with local government involvement and that is why I was discussing the capacity of local government and where it sees it is at.

I was one of the MPs that supported Wilson because I know it has been a long-held belief of his and certainly of mine. And we can let the future decide what the specifics will be. Clearly, in my own electorate, there are some local governments that can do the sorts of thing you are talking about. They can also offer financial accountability or financial discipline in a way which many Aboriginal communities struggle with. That is why I raised at the beginning the issue of the regional councillor, who is also in local government, I think at Port Hedland—Mr Haase will correct me if I am wrong—and this re-creation of history somehow that in terms of the ATSIC model, you could learn a lot from local government structures in terms of financial accountability.

So therefore I am endeavouring to ask for a comment about Minister Tuckey's view about bottom-up funding and local government involvement and the capacity there for a local government to offer some financial services to Aboriginal communities. Would you see that as having some practical outcome and, of course, would there be the financial incentive or payment for local government to take it on, or would it just be one huge headache you did not need?

Mr Powell—I think we can do it.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Powell—Because of the issue of rateability and our own capacity the principle we have adopted so far is to say, 'Well, look, we are quite happy to look at delivering defined services into the communities on a full cost recovery contractual arrangement.' Then that provides us with some certainty that we are going to have the financial capacity to deal with it. It also provides some comfort to the other ratepayers that they are not subsidising a service to which they have no access. I think, as an interim step, that is the way that we are going to promote our involvement. I think what initially needs to be defined is exactly what is this service; to what standard will it be provided and how do you deliver it—whether you can deliver it at the local level, whether you going to have to deal with it contractually or whether you are going to have to deal with it remotely. The financial aspect of it I do not see as a problem because we just incorporate that accountability inside our existing financial structures and it just becomes another cost centre or another bunch of accounts.

CHAIR—We have just about finished our questions. Would you like to make a final comment? I appreciate your comment about the capacity of government to deliver at whatever level. That is part of our terms of reference. Where is the government? Does it have the capacity and how does it need to improve its capacity at the Commonwealth, state or local government level? I appreciated that. You were assessing it and thinking about it, et cetera, in terms of where you fit into the equation.

Mr Powell—I think we can do it. We can deliver the services at a cheaper rate too. There have been instances where delivering services from interstate in remote areas surely must have a high cost penalty.

CHAIR—It is Australia wide. I can think of an incredible example at Coober Pedy where the consultant was delivering the service to the Aboriginal community in the same town just a kilometre out on the edge, sort of stuff, to do something, whatever it was. It then went to the local government, got most of the information from local government at no cost, and charged hundreds of thousands of dollars for it. That is the sort of nonsense that is happening.

Mr Powell—I think, too, what happens is there is a plethora of consultants and contractors running around which only puts the pressure on the local communities because they have this passing parade to deal with. If there was one focal point, be it local government or one agency to deal with, it would allow them more time to do what they want to do and probably provide a more streamlined approach.

CHAIR—I believe in those relationships that have been there for over 10, 20, 100 years. There is a relationship there already. It is there, it is an organic thing happening.

Mr Powell—And if some effort is put into the elected member side of the issue, a relationship can develop between the communities and the council at the elected level which would then start to bring together the service delivery arrangements.

CHAIR—Greg, I deeply appreciate your time. If you have nothing else to add, we will finish there.

[10.40 a.m.]

HUNTER, Mr Victor Everard, (Private capacity)

CHAIR—As you know, we had hoped to have Mr Dodson with us but he has not arrived. We are unclear as to whether he intends to be with us. We will have a leisurely chat while we are waiting and we may have only 10 minutes or so until our next witness turns up. Welcome, Mr Hunter.

Mr Hunter—I am currently not doing anything in the work area. I used to be on the regional council. I was the chairperson in the Derby region from late 1996 to 1999. In terms of a lot of the issues with program dollars that we are talking about with Aboriginal people, the thing that one has to remember is that Aboriginal people are the receivers of goods and services. They are not givers because the service providers will not let them. We create more jobs around the country. In one part, before the cattle industry got back up, we were ahead of them. You get something like $40 million going into the Derby-Fitzroy area and 7,500 people live in the Derby-Fitzroy area. You have 250,000 people passing through and yet all government policy is geared towards job outcomes. With training programs it is a must that you have a job outcome. You can have places like Fitzroy where 1,000 Aboriginals live in the Fitzroy Valley and only 40 Aboriginals were in jobs that were not protected and were not geared for it with Aboriginal dollars in the private sector, and yet the training is for job outcomes. Nine out of 10 Aboriginals live in a house in a town and they are on unemployment benefits or CDEP yet they cannot get training. They have got to pay for tradespeople to go in and yet there should be training for those people.

With projects like NAHS, the dollar goes to the community, even though it may be held by the program managers or project managers. It creates racism because the white people who work on that NAHS project for 12 months or two years, when that project is finished, they can move to the next NAHS project. The Aboriginal people in that community cannot because they would not let Aboriginal people come into their community when the project was on. Now that it is finished, they cannot follow the dollars.

CHAIR—Vic, can I alert you to the fact that the next witness has turned up? I do not want to cut you off but we probably should spend only a few more minutes. Could you come to the core of your comments? I think I have got the picture and the way that the whole thing is targeted. It is totally lopsided. What I am going to do is give just Mr Haase an opportunity. He may know the issue; he may not. Will you, in a couple of minutes, sum up and give an outcome—what you would see as a solution here and a couple of suggestions—and then I will give Mr Haase an opportunity, just 30 seconds, to sum up if he wants to add something? Perhaps you could then just give a quick response. We need to wrap it up in about five minutes.

Mr Hunter—Yes. The program dollars are based in the technical areas. We are building houses, roads and all other service utilities, but there are no social dollars to teach people how to get the best benefit out of those technical dollars that are spent. In the community I was at about a fortnight ago in the East Kimberley there would have been something like 50 or 60 people in that community. It was an outstation community but including the dollars spent on the powerhouse where there was solar, inverters, generators then all the reticulations into the

community, I would estimate that, along with the housing and the sewerage, there would have been upwards of $20 million. Those people do not realise the value or the cost of what is spent in their community. When I was there they were away at funerals, rodeos, and the amount of travel. Funerals cost in the vicinity of $20,000 to the wider community. You could have given those family groups a million dollars each and they would have been happy. That is the sort of waste that governments are doing; they are not looking at it from an Aboriginal perspective. When I say 'an Aboriginal perspective' I mean that, as a client group, we have moved from poor whites servicing us to poor blacks servicing us. When we look at any program that we want to introduce, it is always from a white perspective. When we talk about jobs, it is all white concept jobs. We do not look at those Aboriginal people and how we can support them.

CHAIR—And how they might be involved in the actual economic reality.

Mr Hunter—Exactly. What you see with CDEP is that with this no work, no pay program, there are people who get no pay for up to a month. You have to ask: how come they are still alive after a month?

CHAIR—And you make that point in your paper here, which I presume we will accept as an exhibit.

Mr Hunter—What happens is that they bludge because they know those people in the community who get top-up.

CHAIR—Yes. It is the only way they can live, I presume.

Mr Hunter—Yes, we teach them a lesson that there is no incentive if you work because you have got to buy cigarettes and everything for the next bloke.

CHAIR—They learn the hard way.

Mr Hunter—Because it is so insular. Finally, I will finish off with children. You can have a baby born in a hospital. When the baby is taken home in a vehicle, in that vehicle with that baby and the mother going home we have seen a ghetto blaster, tapes, hire tapes from the video place and a couple of cartons of beer.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Hunter—When my brother said to the mother, 'When the government gives you that money for that baby, it is not to buy this lot of things, it is to buy a pram, napkins.' The lady looked at her baby and she said, 'Well, he don't know.' If you ever want to go anywhere, and Derby is a good example, if you wanted the Aboriginal people in that region to accept any program, you get the man from Retravision because they all know that he is the man of last resort. He will change their cheques, he will give them credit, and even the banks tell people to take their cheques to him if they have not got anything.

CHAIR—The baby might not even get the food?

Mr Hunter—No. The adults and their children are the most vulnerable in the community.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr Hunter—Pornographic videos are rife in the community.

CHAIR—Just hold it there. Mr Haase?

Mr HAASE—Thanks, Chair. Just a quick sum up; it has been ages since I have seen you, Victor. What you are talking about is something that has been in the front of my mind for a long time. We hear so much in society today about cultural training and understanding of mainstream employees and employers in interaction with Aboriginal cultural groups. For a long time I have espoused the necessity for this to be in reverse order, that where there is interaction there needs to be some effort put in to make Aboriginal groups more aware in a formal sense of mainstream culture. An appreciation of finance is one of those things. If you had two words to comment specifically about that personally held belief, the Chair might allow you to do that.

Mr Hunter—I just see it is a wider community responsibility. The fact is that these people are indigenous to this country. They cannot get on a plane and go back to a country to see culture in its raw state. It is disappearing, and if language and culture are so important for any group to survive, why do we have our programs making them white?

Mr HAASE—Well said.

CHAIR—Victor, thank you very much.

[10.50 a.m.]

DODSON, Mr Patrick, Chair, Lingiari Foundation

LANE, Mr Paul, Executive Director, Lingiari Foundation

CHAIR—Good morning and welcome. We are glad you could be with us today. You will appreciate, of course, that these are proceedings of the national parliament and need to be treated accordingly. Would like to make a short opening statement? We would then like to have an informal chat.

Mr Dodson—I would like to open up a couple of areas that might be productive for the committee's consideration. The first point that I make is that there is a strength in the Aboriginal society. Too often we simply see that there is all this negativity and people cannot achieve, but there is strength in the Aboriginal society. Specifically, I argue that if you look at the kinship structure of Aboriginal societies, which have been the essence of the societies and the basis for the relationships and the responsibilities for the social order and the cultural responsibilities, there is some genius within that structure. A proper understanding, acknowledgement, cooperation and adoption of the social organisation incorporating the kinship structures, rules, protocols and practices are needed. It is necessary if capacity building under the broader banner which is acceptable to Aboriginal people and sustainable government and governance is to be realistically and practically achieved. These are a series of points, Mr Chairman, and these are notes that I have made; it is not a full-blown written submission.

CHAIR—We appreciate that.

Mr Dodson—So often we hear that mutual responsibility and caring for each other is not happening in Aboriginal society. I challenge that. There is evidence that it does not happen but that does not mean that the society as such is not a society that cares and is concerned for its members. It is responsive to the needs of others and those responses are often beyond the family, and indeed the extended family. People are quite adept at looking after other people, often to their own detriment. That is a hallmark of the Aboriginal society that is not immediately reflected in the non-Indigenous society beyond those who are immediately related.

On the spirituality of Aboriginal people, again the essence of Aboriginal spirituality has within it foundational values and principles for the ethical and moral behaviour of Aboriginal people, including personal and community growth and development. The foundations for behaviour are often imparted in that same process of learning the spirituality of your country and of your roles and functions within an Aboriginal society.

There is a certain strength that Aboriginal people have after 200 or so years of interaction with mainstream Australian society. Despite the policies that have destabilised Aboriginal society and been at the centre of assimilation of the Aboriginal people, we have managed to survive. It is a question of some interest as to how and by what genius that has happened, given all the odds that prevail against us. Some concentration on those matters would be of some use, I think.

Survival and perseverance, despite these odds, is often done in the lack of services that are available to the tiniest mainstream community. Aboriginal people have managed to survive, albeit at a lower level than the rest of Australia, in those conditions. No doubt there is a need to focus on how the agencies are coordinated that are charged with the responsibilities of delivering services or have roles and functions in that regard. There is some effort to look at that seriously across governments, which is a welcome move after so many years.

The need for resources obviously continually arises together with the need for the support of professional and competent people, training programs and those sorts of issues. If people are to be active participants in their own solutions, they start from a much lower base. The questions of civics, governance, training, education and those sorts of issues are still lacking despite the policies of various governments. So we are back to a position where participation in the governance of people's own affairs is appallingly marked by a lower starting base.

Governments and their agencies need to recognise that Aboriginal people have citizenship entitlements, that they are citizens of this country, and that they have responsibilities along with every other Australian. The problems that prevail in our society are akin to many of the problems in the broader society. There are specific and unique problems within Indigenous societies but alcoholism, drugs and violence are not unique to Aboriginal society and we should not be singled out as such.

Acknowledgement of these problems for me is really the beginning of an acknowledgement that there is a disconnectedness in government and its agencies. Often that is where demarcations occur, how ever governments organise their affairs. But where one department is not au fait with what another department is doing it acts in a counterproductive way to the good intentions both of the government and of the Indigenous people at times. That is particularly the case in native title instances.

We also have to understand that poverty is all-pervasive in many of these Aboriginal communities. There is a need for us to deal with not only the symptoms of poverty, which can be all the appalling health stats that we see as well as the quality of life that people have, but also the causes of it. That has always been a challenge, and most governments in the past have grappled with that but they have been found wanting in the same way that the community has been found wanting in dealing with this matters.

Disconnectedness is really a situation where on the one hand—it arises very much in native title situations—a government attacks the identity of who the Aboriginal people are. It seeks that you prove that. It challenges whatever rights that people say they have in relation to the country or their interest in the land and it then attacks the personal integrity of individuals as to how many husbands a particular woman may have had or what relationships she may have had et cetera. So on the one hand you have a thrust into the domain of responding to native title applications—a whole different psyche, as it were, emanating from government—and on the other hand you have an interest in domestic violence: 'How can we help your kids? How can we help your families?' So there is a disconnectedness in the way governments deal with these matters and with Indigenous people. You are dealing with the same groups of people; you are not dealing with different sets of people.

No other sector of Australian society has to deal with the issues that the Aboriginal people have to deal with. People are continuously called on for meetings to deal with what most of us do not need to worry about: who is doing the roads, garbage, water supply and electricity. All those issues are foundational to a quality of life in this country. Responsibility for the provision and the delivery of essential and municipal community services is a major preoccupation, and the essentials of that are where the shortfalls often occur. In most non-Indigenous societies, as I have said, these things are taken for granted and are expected of governments, whether they are federal, state or local, where they have a responsibility. The other interesting domain is the domain of communication—

CHAIR—Patrick, could I suggest that you wind up now? You have given us a fair bit of stuff to chat about for the next 30 minutes.

Mr Dodson—Sure.

CHAIR—It is going to be lovely to have a bit of a dialogue on that because you have raised a lot of very good issues, but just give us a chance to explore them with you.

Mr Dodson—My five minutes have expired, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—We are getting close but just if you could break it up.

Mr Dodson—We will never solve the problems of these things in five minutes. I only have two more points, if I could just make those.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Dodson—I certainly appreciate what you have said. The communication matter I think we can deal with in a discussion, if you wish, but it is how you get to know what people really want, and that is having skills and language, using interpreters and those sorts of people.

The two last points are of interest to you. The acknowledgement and adoption are basically about the search for a cultural match. I listened to what Mr Haase said previously to someone else who was here. But there is a real need for acknowledgement, adoption and support for the underlying cultural values of Aboriginal societies and the adoption of some of those protocols and ways in order to sustain the Aboriginal society. Rather than trying to change them, as has been the policies of the past, how do you sustain them? Greater cooperation will emerge if that happens. The impetus at the moment is to continually demand conformity and compliance with what the mainstream imperatives are, whether you are incorporated under a particular act or whatever the regulations are for funding et cetera. So there are all these compliance matters which are seen as the way to get transparency in the accountability systems.

There has never been a case where individualism has not been encouraged but the ultimate effectiveness of individualism will be the determination of the strength of the community in which that individual lives and operates—for example, artists. We might talk about artists and how they fit into the Aboriginal communities.

My last point is that a fair and just approach to Aboriginal peoples would be to identify the problems that we have in common with the mainstream—that is, those sets of things that we all know are a bugbear to any community living in this country—and to adjust the mainstream approaches so that the values, protocols and the ways of the Aboriginal peoples might formally be acknowledged and adopted across the whole domain of governance and community government. That is my opening statement.

CHAIR—Patrick, thank you for that. You are a well-known Australian and we appreciate your contribution. Victor Hunter made the comment that the Retravision store was almost the financial centre; that the young mother with the infant was finding it hard to distinguish between those wants, those things of the modern era—I struggle to understand the terminology of the video or the modern age —and perhaps had not thought about the welfare of the young child. Then the question becomes: 'Well, that child did not know; it did not know that that money was meant for the child but was spent on other things.' In a very fundamental way he describes the dilemma for many Australians, particularly many Aboriginal Australians. Linking back to the comment you made, how do we relate that and how do we explain to somebody the responsibility for that child?

Mr Dodson—It is the effect of poverty. Anyone who lives in poverty and who lives in a highly commercial society like Australia is absolutely inundated by all the attractive things that the society offers. The levels of enjoyment or respectability that people associate with the acquisition of electrical or other goods are part of the drive in our society. So Aboriginal people are not going to stand outside that; they are impacted by all that. The response is not an Aboriginal response; it is the response of a person in poverty. You will find a woman in Sydney, Melbourne or any other place who has a young child and the child sees on TV certain goods that they like—Hungry Jack's or some other commercialised thing that is put before them—and they all want to go there, have that and be part of it. We have to look to the broader issue: how do people care for their children? By the same token, I am sure that if that child were sick the mother would not be rushing off to the Retravision store, she would be off trying to find out where the health service was or where the doctors were.

CHAIR—The point is that the whole theory for most Australians, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, is to get to the point where prevention minimises the need to get to the health service, isn't it?

Mr Dodson—It is a question of how people budget moneys or see what the priorities are. It is not always easy, I would imagine, as a parent, when there is peer pressure. It depends on what sort of child you are talking about. I do not presume that you would buy a ghetto blaster for a baby but, if it is someone aged 10, 12 or 13, who can be most demanding, there are some real challenges for all things. It is also about keeping those kids in school and getting them interested in what education can offer. If there is poverty in the household, overcrowding or a sense of dysfunctionalism across the board, they all impact. Part of the survival mechanisms of most human beings is to find some release to that—find some way of escaping from it.

CHAIR—Thank you. Mr Haase, would you like to lead off and pick up some of the issues? We have about 25 minutes and then we need to wrap it up.

Mr HAASE—Patrick, you have given us a great deal of information and I was surprised at how Canberra-like that information was. I had hoped that you would give this committee, because of your knowledge of all Australia and Indigenous problems generally, some solutions rather than a philosophical outline of problems. For instance, you have just said that we need to keep children at school. This committee has wrestled with that very practical problem. I wonder if you could give us some of your thoughts on what might help us in a practical way to demonstrate how children could be kept at school for a longer time and therefore get an educational grounding that would lead them to secondary school, possibly tertiary education, and be better able to cope with expanding opportunities within communities?

Mr Dodson—I am sorry if you felt uncomfortable about Canberra dimensions of the submission. In the sixties there was a philosophy of educating Aboriginal kids. The image was that they would be the bridges between the societies. There were a whole lot of people educated under that process. Where they have all disappeared to now, I do not know, but they would be in their 50s or late 40s, I would imagine. So they should be bouncing onto the scene with a whole range of skills and contributions.

We are now going back to saying, ‘How do we get the kids of today into an education learning system?’ There are different ways of doing that and some good examples are happening in the Pilbara with the involvement of the Polly Farmer Foundation, the corporates in that part of the world and the Aboriginal schools, where grandmothers accommodate kids. You have to start at the pre-primary age group, basically, and create a sense of what the learning environment is about.

At Fitzroy Crossing there is the little school they call the Murra Murra School, which is about utilising the senior men and women in the community in that situation to work with the kids to create a topic, a learning experience or to develop a story to get the sense of what learning is about and what the school is there to represent or can offer. Gradually you build on the desire to learn. I think that is an important ingredient. If you do not get a sense that education is about a pursuit for knowledge, if it is simply about discipline and compliance to the disciplinary structures, then you are never going to go anywhere in the school system.

Somehow the environment—the teachers and the adaptation of school structures—creates a sense of welcome for many of these people, and that is what they do when they allow the older people to come in at that early phase. They often provide other things. If people are impoverished and they come in out of a camp, they provide showers and a bit of breakfast so the kid is not sitting there hungry all day, and they enable the presence of their loved ones to be in the classroom as they learn.

You have to get people past, I think, the year 9 and 10 age group; that seems to be the critical stage. That is often when many other things about adolescence and development are happening. So it is not just about what school can offer, it is about what the society is doing as well and how it can encourage kids to learn and be part of the society and be appreciated by the society. It is a challenge to all of us. I think there are a lot of non-Aboriginal kids that are in the same situation.

Fundamentally, it is not setting education as some ‘fluffy’ experience, if I can use that word. It is not just about feeling good there, it is also about the actual challenge to the intellect, to develop your mind, to be able to acquire skills that will enable you to analyse things and to put

things back together. They are very important skills because most of it is about functionalism, it seems to me—can you operate a computer and search the Web to get information? Very little of it is really training people to use their intellect in a more innovative way. So the schooling structure is about looking after the kids in a sort of day care kind of situation, it is not about training intellects at all.

Mr HAASE—Patrick, can I just intervene? I know the Chair is going to have a crack at me for taking too long but I wonder if you would make a brief comment, please, about something that we have heard a lot of, and that is the problem of getting teachers into remote areas. I am primarily concerned with remote areas; there are certainly problems in urban communities as well. The criticism that we have heard of the quality of teachers who arrive in remote areas is something that I would like you to comment on. Also, do you agree with the point of view of many people that we set the bar too low simply because of the Aboriginality of students? Would you comment on that, please?

Mr Dodson—I think getting them to the region is a real challenge but once they are in the region I think it is also a challenge. I do not think enough is actually done to involve the community in what the community expects teachers to deliver or provide. I think if you get a 23-year-old or a first year graduate out of teacher school who comes to the remote regions, it is a life experience for many of them.

The bar in the sense that you do not do much about the education, that is, the formal requirements for getting achievements in schooling, can easily be a problem for teachers, I think. It is far easier to go on a nature walk or waste time rather than broadening the horizons of what the learning fields can be about for children. But you need to have an agreement, I think, at the community level. This probably applies to all the community, the non-Aboriginal community as well; they suffer from the same poor standards. I would not want to be too critical about the teachers because I think they have no real guidance once they hit the deck. All the people in the remoter communities have to play their role, that is, the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, in how best to assist those people with what it is we require.

We have to have either an agreement with them or part of the employment contract that teachers have has to involve the community people. Then the measure of their outcomes can be gauged a bit better, rather than it becoming these are the families of these kids and they do not like Miss so and so or Mr so and so and then there is a blue on between them and the principal. It has to be put out in some more formal manner where the parents have a legitimate way in which to interact with the school and the teacher has some protection against what the mutual obligations might be here. I think a bit more focusing in on those sorts of things will help and create a better teaching environment as well as a growth path for teachers as well as for kids.

Mr HAASE—Thanks, Patrick.

CHAIR—That is a pretty valuable contribution, I think. I think that touches on things that I had not thought a lot about. Mr Lloyd?

Mr LLOYD—Thanks, Mr Chair; thanks, Patrick. Just for my own information, in terms of your view of education, do you see that there is a role for traditional and cultural education—I am from an urban electorate so I am asking you to elaborate on this—as well as a need for the

English language and basic mathematics? Is there a role so that they can be linked together or are you talking about having a separate education type role in isolated communities?

Mr Dodson—No, I think the challenge has been to either have bicultural education or bilingual education in some places in Australia, in the Territory. I think that there are certain positives and negatives that will probably come out of that, I am not quite across all of the outcomes on that. It is a marrying of the two as part of the challenge. You obviously need to have skills in IT today, but how you use the IT to encourage the acquisition of those skills can be by using stories about the culture or identification of the kinship structure or by other things. Traditional education can be brought into the public domain to a certain level and then there are other aspects of traditional education that are in the domain outside of the school, which are in more ceremonial type settings.

It does not mean that that cannot be wedded into the structure. Why couldn't you have, instead of the detention arrangements we have now, a far more effective arrangement of having some young people, young men especially, who are not as interested in the school be seen as part of the cultural learning process, where the senior men in the community have those roles and functions and perform what it is that is needed? That is not just all punitive, that is instructive and educational as well.

At the end of the day you are talking about Aboriginal people and their identity and who they are fundamentally, not what it is they can acquire by way of a profession. If you can acquire a profession, fine, well and good, but at the end of the day you have to have security in knowing who you are, where you are from and what your people represent and you belong in a communal structure. If the education thrust is to create individualism, that is, to make people disconnected from their communities, then that is a recipe for disaster in my view. The only way you keep that nexus is by allowing the cultural content to influence and be running parallel or in tandem with the requirements of English, maths, IT and all those other things.

CHAIR—Thanks.

Mr LLOYD—I have a quick question, but I am not sure if the answer will be quick because it is complex. We have been to a lot of communities where we have seen family leadership. You go into one community and you have excellent leadership there and the community is functioning well, or you go to an organisation where you have great leadership and it is working well. But often you will find that there is no backup or follow-up. If that person or the head of that organisation or family dies, moves on, changes, there is no-one coming through to keep that community or organisation strong. That is not just in Aboriginal communities; I have noticed it in quite a number of communities. There is no quick answer to this, but is there a way that we could help train people through?

Mr Dodson—I think there is. I think that we have the benefit of some studies that have been done through Harvard University on governance and government and on this notion of cultural matching; that is, articulating what those values are within the Indigenous or Aboriginal society that are important for people's touchstone to their integrity and reality, and what are the requirements in the mainstream society that are also important for the co-existence of these things.

It is the search to try to articulate that in a community and with the assistance of competent people as well to help bring that to the fore, and then they look at how they can be matched. Otherwise it does become very much a personal authority or imposition out of response to needs or whatever else is happening. If you remove the person, then you do not have the structure underneath them. The structure you leave there is the one that has required the compliance and conformity. Partly why you have the one individual in the first place is because no-one wants to be part of that type of structure. So you have to grapple with what the structure is doing.

Mr JOHN COBB—We visited a community the other day and they said something we have been hearing frequently. They said, 'We can't keep our kids, they go to town, et cetera,' and obviously that is true but it is true of all communities. I am from the bush myself and we could not keep our kids at home either. We all lose them. Do you think that there should probably be more acceptance of the fact that you are not going to keep all your kids out in the bush in various communities simply because the attractions are too strong? Quite frankly, we lose our kids. By and large I guess most of our families would be in better situations than the Aboriginal ones we see out there and yet we lose them. Do you think that it would be better to accept that they are going to go to cities and what have you and simply try to deal with it rather than sit and bemoan the fact that they are going? It just seems to me that to sit there and say they should not be going, for whatever reason, is to deny the inevitability of what is happening everywhere.

Mr Dodson—And creating problems at another end, I am sure.

Mr JOHN COBB—That too.

Mr Dodson—I do not know whether I would be so defeatist, I must say. I think we have to look at what really are the opportunities for IT. I have seen some individual farmers and graziers and people who are maximising IT far more effectively now than they would have previously, before the pedal wireless delivered an education system for their kids. But we just do not have it in the bush; we do not have this great access to IT. So you cannot do a lot of the things that are available in the city. I am not placing IT as the only source of sustaining regional interest.

I think you have to be able to educate your kids in a way that they can move backwards and forwards wherever they want to go, and they are going to make their choice, they are going to vote with their feet one way or another. If there is an attraction and a sense of identity, Aboriginal people will have a connection because of the extended relationship they have, the same as people who come from the country who have a sense of the country in them and they will want to come back there. The attractiveness of that is very important but I think we have to look at other ways you can support and sustain those communities in providing them with the best opportunities.

Sometimes that is a question of economics, the cost, et cetera, but other times it may not be. I think that it is not about retaining people in some preserved state, it is about looking at what are the interactions. We know that the cities are not the answer for many other things—it is a bit like a glow-worm going to a light. They are a short-term response for the nature of the issue. If you hollow out the whole of Australia, if everyone lives on the coast, we will have an empty country. Indigenous people have an affinity with that country and a lot of people who have gone into pastoralism and farming have an affinity with that country so we have to try to sustain our populations, I think, in some of the regions, rather than simply allow them to drift away.

With kids, like any people, they are going to be adventurous, but they need to be able to know that the gap between what is in the bush and what is in the so-called city is also achievable in the bush. You can read about these things, you can look at the Web, you can do all sorts of things if you have the access, but you also need to go there to see things. They don't have an opera house at Balgo, for instance, but they have a great art centre there.

CHAIR—Can I talk about the Lingiari Foundation. We were in Shepparton in February and I have particular memories of the Rumbalara Football Club. I am not sure if you know the Rumbalara Football Club but it was quite a remarkable experience for me in terms of understanding how that portrayed and became part of that community and the way it was moving the community forward. In terms of the connection with the common fate program, can you please talk about that involvement, say, in a place like Shepparton or other involvements, and particularly in terms of leadership and the role that you are accepting and developing there?

Mr Dodson—The Lingiari Foundation evolved or emerged as a consequence of a real need for a level of independence within Indigenous society itself, and also to look at how to deal with what is called, I suppose, the intergenerational leadership crisis that we have been talking about here a little bit. How do you sustain cultural social values as people become more and more steeped in the acquisition of western education so that there is some strength and some ways of supporting these young leaders, new people? It is also about the advocacy of positions because it is a non-government funded body; we do not rely on the government or anyone to fund us and we seek to do work independent of that. If we are successful in the tender, we are successful, if we are not, we are not.

But it has linkages with common fate; common fate is a totally different thing. It was, I think, a bit of a response to the need to sustain some of the reconciliation thrust. We are continually in this clouded region of, well, what does reconciliation really mean? What does it not mean, et cetera? Common fate is a concept that we all live in the one place and we really have to get our act together or we will all go down as well. It is a question of the intertwining of our destinies and an ability for us to complement, I suppose, the abilities that we do have and how best to get people at a regional or local level working in cooperation with each other. That is the fundamentals of the Shepparton experience. There has been some good response from the local government, from business people. The Rumbalara Football-Netball Club is the vehicle through which that all has happened. But it is simply continuing a lot of the good things that were done in the reconciliation period of getting that local cooperation. It put a focus on youth: how do we get employment figures up? There is a lack of real employment of Indigenous people in that part of the world. It was about getting employers to understand the social problems that the kids have in that part of the world and then looking at how other people can assist with training and education.

CHAIR—If I could just intervene briefly, what I learned through that Rumbalara experience—and it had never been explained to me so well in these terms—was that sometimes it was the only opportunity that these young people got to interact and develop fundamental skills about employment or socialisation in certain areas. It was quite a stark revelation to me.

Mr Dodson—And a point of social interaction with the broader community.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Dodson—Part of the reconciliation process was about creating those opportunities for interaction. People would walk down one side of the street and on the other side and never say g'day to each other; it was as fundamental as that. This is getting people to look at their common issue, their common concern and to work collectively to find answers to it. The Commonwealth Heads of Government people came along with the practical reconciliation agenda to identify 10 or so regions around Australia, which is adopting a similar type of philosophy. It has varying challenges, subject to whether you have corporates in remote regions or whether you do not, if you are going to get corporations involved or how big the local government area is. That is a similar philosophy but it involves enabling people who live in those parts of the country to assume their responsibilities and provide the leadership and hopefully get the governments, whether state, Commonwealth or local, where they have a role, to see the benefits of that sort of collective approach in order to get better outcomes. And then to look into specific domains like the court; they have also got a Koori Court operating in the area.

CHAIR—Yes, we saw that; we spent some time there.

Mr Dodson—It is about innovation. I do not think there is one size that fits what they do in Shepparton. It is a good program. We are trying to get some of those leaders from the Shepparton region to come into the Kimberley to talk to some of our people who are involved here who are also using sport as a pathway to quality of life skills. It is just another way of trying to contribute to what we know are the problems.

CHAIR—Thank you. You have touched on rural-urban and remote-urban. I will pick out a couple of different models—the challenges in an urban situation versus the challenges of a remote. Mr Haase and I have more remote electorates. Mr Lloyd has an urban electorate. Mr Cobb has a more remote electorate. In fact, we spread across the continent. I have worked out that there are only a couple of hundred kilometres separating it. Just a couple of pointers on urban issues: service delivery, leadership, versus rural and remote. You touched on it and you have been there but I just wonder if we might try to drill a little deeper, as the expression goes, to understand how you see that urban-remote, particularly with the Aboriginal future capacity or whatever?

Mr Dodson—I suppose in the remoter areas it is always a question of seeking where the services are, whereas in the urban regions it is pretty much either in your suburb or the next suburb.

CHAIR—It picks up that point, as you said, that you spend a lot of time in remote areas chasing power and water.

Mr Dodson—Yes, absolutely. I think that the leadership thrust in urban areas—and again, these are all general concepts—is very much the focus within the framework of the democratic system of the country. ATSIC has been one avenue; the other avenue is either local government or seeking seats in parliament through one or other party. Ultimately, I think that is where the leadership stuff goes.

In the remoter regions, it is really about the communities or the region and seeking to deal with these practical, day-to-day pump issues, as it were, and the broader sense of isolation or dysfunction because of the lack of nexus between the agencies—not being able to get a response.

If you are sitting there with 30 petrol-sniffers in the bush, what department has agents to send out there to help you? No-one. You have got these 30 kids who are at risk and the resources of your local community adviser, the town clerk or the chairman has to respond to it. If you are in an urban situation, you have probably got a hospital not far away, or at least you have got some people with medical skills on tap to help you, or even a police force that might help you.

It is a question of the readily available resources. In urban settings it is more of an interface with the non-Indigenous society. Are people getting a fair go from real estate agents? Can they rent a place? Are they getting a decent crack at the employment opportunities in the place? They exist there somewhere. Are they being treated fairly by agencies at the interface counter? How are they relating to the local constabulary and being treated by that system? In a remote area, a lot of those things are what you have got to try to do as a leader, or try to recruit people that can assist you with the professionalism to do that. That is not an easy matter, as we have seen with teachers, but also with other kinds of professionals. It does suffer.

The other aspect is that in both situations, Indigenous people are seen as problematic and I think that is the wrong way to look at this. These are challenges that we have as Australians. We have to find a way to bring out the best that the people can offer, rather than say, ‘They are all a problem and a drain on the public purse so put them over there and leave them to the courts and the coppers.’ That is a fundamentally flawed attitude.

CHAIR—It is pretty defeatist.

Mr Dodson—Yes.

CHAIR—Yes, thank you. Mr Haase, I will allow you to make a final quick point if you have one, and then I will invite Patrick to sum up. Perhaps he could give us a couple of pointers where he would like to see us finish up. Perhaps we have not touched on the real weakness of the agencies and of government. Where does government most struggle, in your view? Clearly, there has got to be a cooperative, collaborative effort. There is a litany of—’failure’ is not a word I like to use—far from fulfilled opportunities here. Just give us a feel for where you think government might most appropriately direct its attention. Firstly, I will go to Mr Haase.

Mr HAASE—Chair, that was exactly my question. You have put it well.

CHAIR—You have a couple of minutes to sum up.

Mr Dodson—I think basically these are complex and cross-cultural issues. Understanding that they are cross-cultural issues has often been a failure, because we have sought to push people one way or another. I think the partnerships have to be underpinned by respect for the mutual differences that we do have, but with a commonality that we also share. I think that remote governments have often seen that the best that you are going to get in the bush is going to be second-best; you are never going to get top quality. There are all sorts of reasons for that.

Mr HAASE—Are you saying that we should do something very significantly to confront that attitude that second-best is the best you are going to get in the bush?

Mr Dodson—Yes, absolutely. If I could just digress one moment from that, we have a large section of the Aboriginal population in custody and they are particularly young men. They are an essential equation—

CHAIR—Two per cent, 25 per cent that you know –

Mr Dodson—Four per cent here; it is a huge percentage. But we have systems not dealing with the educational and training needs of those guys. When you have got them in a situation when they are most likely to be alert and attentive, we are not doing enough to restore and repatriate them in a way that they are going to be useful citizens when they come out. That is a crucial issue.

I know there are many thorny aspects to this but the Indigenous society is in a crisis situation. You have got to maximise all the resource points that we can possibly do if we are going to get qualitative outcomes that will sustain the Indigenous people and obviously bring about better responses for government as well as for the communities. I just see this whole sector of the Aboriginal society that we are not impacting on. We really have to seriously look at it. If you are going to deal with violence or any of these other matters, it has got to be the family—father, mother, kids, whoever in the extended family—who is going to deal with that. If the men are over here, outside of the equation, we are not addressing this in a holistic and profitable manner, in my view. We will waste a lot of money and we will have the problems that we are trying to deal with simply reflecting back in our faces five years down the road.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. We have much appreciated your contribution, Patrick and Paul.

Mr Dodson—Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity.

[11.41 a.m.]

MANADO, Mr Mark, Aboriginal Development Officer, Kimberley College of TAFE

WHITELAW, Mr Rory, Lecturer, Kimberley College of TAFE

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to elaborate on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Manado—I work at the Broome campus of the college.

Mr Whitelaw—I work on a casual basis for the Kimberley TAFE in community governance and a couple of other projects.

CHAIR—Does anyone want to make a short opening statement?

Mr Manado—I will make a brief opening statement. First, thanks for the opportunity to sit in front of a committee to talk about capacity building, governance and Indigenous communities. I will give a bit of my personal background so that people are aware of me. I am a local Indigenous man of Broome, born and raised here in Broome. I have been involved with education and training for about 18 years, working with the college. I am also a tradesman and a father of two.

From my involvement with education and training, one of the areas of focus we have concentrated on for a large part of the time I have been there is economic opportunities, presenting those cases to Indigenous communities, and utilising our training facilities and training programs to better improve the economic status of communities. One of the personal outcomes that I have consistently passed on is that a large part of our community, in terms of its participation and growth, has been around the social structure of the community without spending enough time on economic entities. True capacity building will become prominent in communities. If you are talking about self-management, self-control, obviously you do not become dependent on continued government subsidised programs for your existence, either as a small community or a big community. At a personal level, working with these communities, I have always been around the process of improving economic opportunities in communities and sharing those views with the communities that we work in.

Today we want to talk about some of those projects and express ideas that we have been working on and share them with you and, in the closing statement, talk about some of the parameters that I believe that government should be working on with communities and the region in terms of long-term sustainable outcomes.

CHAIR—Sure. Did you want to say anything, Rory?

Mr Whitelaw—No, thanks.

CHAIR—I just picked up that comment about part-time and community governance that you are doing some work with. Did I get that right?

Mr Whitelaw—That is right. Probably one thing I should say is that I am employed on a casual basis at TAFE. I prepared the brief paper for Kimberly TAFE management late last year because the TAFE is offering community or corporate governance training this year for the first time, so it wanted to get a bit of background on the ins and outs of it, what had happened so far with the state government and so on. Mark has been a long-term and permanent employee at Kimberley TAFE. As I mentioned to my manager there at TAFE, I would probably speak more from a personal perspective rather than representing TAFE as such, but that is just a minor matter, really.

CHAIR—We took the liberty of inviting at short notice three small business operators yesterday up north a little way and I was particularly impressed with and interested in what they were talking about. Two of them had done TAFE courses and therefore something was hitting the mark somewhere. You could understand they were probably the first individual small businesses of the region, but you come with some recommendations already, as far as I am concerned.

Mark, you have already got a view about the structure related to our terms of reference. You talked about case studies and then you talked about where government could improve its performance and add to the value of what is happening. Do you want to add to that? I will then go to Mr Haase, who would have some local knowledge, and get him to apply his forensic skills to that.

Mr Manado—When I was first asked to give evidence, I jumped at the opportunity. Obviously it is a chance to share my view and then hopefully develop a process in which government can then process methods and means on how services are delivered, particularly in remote and isolated communities.

It was interesting to hear some of the comments Pat made. Some ongoing hard work has to be done in the communities. For example, how do we keep young people in our communities? If we look at the make-up of communities—their infrastructure, management and operations—they are very much dependent on ATSIC and other government sources to sustain their existence. Embedded in that is a real social fabric of thinking in terms of the dependency on government and public servants to provide a service that will assist them to sustain that social need in the community.

That is not happening enough. There are initiatives taken in terms of economic ventures and building the capacity of that to develop and sustain effort in communities. If you want to keep your young people in communities, you have to create jobs. The only way you create jobs is by having industry sources as part of your community. I am not suggesting that is the total answer but at least that is a fair whack of what is needed in the community. If the community does not have a sustainable industry, if young people are doing apprenticeships and traineeships and getting skills, it will not have the financial infrastructure to pay tradesmen and those sorts of high capacity people who are trained to be employed in the community. Their only employment capacity is CDEP and Work for the Dole, basically, and that is the capacity the community has to employ these people. I have started talking a little bit about community awareness with some agencies and organisations and universities.

CHAIR—Just briefly in terms of the CDEP concept, how much do you believe that it is ingrained into the community that that is the only opportunity—

Mr Manado—History tells us that to have a future you have to have history, and part of history is going through that and taking the first steps towards, obviously, a better future. The unfortunate fact is that in communities the ingrained concept and people's perception of CDEP is that it is around the social fabric again and that there is no creativity from CDEP.

CHAIR—People accept that is it?

Mr Manado—People accept that is it. Having said that, a lot of us have progressed from that process. We are actively promoting CDEP as a basis on which businesses can be established. I think if you are to get any situation where you or anyone in this room wants to start a business, in order for you to have money in your pocket you work your business hard, create the finance, and you may only get 50 bucks in your pocket at the end of the day. But what CDEP represents is already a wage capacity that exists in the business and all you have got to do now is build on that. We are talking about 200 bucks a week as part of a sustained income that is part of a business. How that is progressed is really part of the challenge for all of us to make that progress.

Interestingly, part of the cultural awareness thing I started talking about is the legislative acts that have come about as a process involving Indigenous people from day dot. When I look at the last two areas of legislative process, things like self-management and self-determination are two of the end points. We are now going into corporate governance and capacity building. The question that we have got to ask ourselves is: have we learnt anything in the process of self-management and self-determination to build the capabilities of presenting capacity and governance in communities?

Having worked as a professional public servant for 18 years, I work within the boundaries of policies and guidelines related to the service we deliver. Outside that, I am an Indigenous man; I have a passion for Indigenous people to move on. One of the interesting things for me to be involved in over the last few years is being involved with political agencies that are involved with progressing regions and regional development.

One of the frightening things is that we are public servants sitting on very lucrative weight and support. When you look at the determination of their work and effort, a lot of them really lack initiative in pursuing true outcomes for Indigenous people. If there is going to be a fundamental change, I think government really needs to look at the process where—and I have had quite a few politicians tell me this—the biggest pen-pushers are senior public servants. If those senior public servants do not see the issue as of importance to them, there is a frightening situation where they can put pen to paper to say yes or no, your project goes ahead or it doesn't.

I will give you an example of that. Luckily for us this project got the nod and it is now being built. It is a prime facility for Indigenous people to be involved with the aquaculture industry in the region. The new Mumbana Aquaculture Centre is a hatchery built purposefully for Indigenous people to participate, hopefully, in a new industry in aquaculture in the Kimberley. I have been involved with that project for 12 years and it has taken six years to get to where it is now. Through that six-year period there has been a frightening process where a couple of senior

public servants could have said, ‘No, this project is not worth pursuing.’ Fortunately, they put pen to paper and approved the project and it has happened. So there are those situations where, to me, if people are given specific tasks to do something at a senior level then we really need to have a level of commitment towards that.

CHAIR—On the costing of services from TAFE in terms of policy guidelines, how difficult is that for you in terms of the service at Ardyaloon?

Mr Manado—I have got problematic issues in dealing and providing education, particularly TAFE training or any university training in the community, in the cost of fees and the cost of people undertaking those studies. Fortunately, people like me who are part of the community are able to really network very closely with people at the grassroots level. Generally, the order of business in communities means that education and training really are at the bottom end of the scale of business. They are more in tune with the structure of funding that provides their existence in terms of housing and infrastructure and their existence out there. So generally those topics will be at the head of business.

When it comes to education and training, one of the issues that we continue to discuss with communities is that through a process of budgeting they should allow some aspects of money to be set aside to support training. Training delivered in the communities by the university and TAFE sector is also subsidised through a process of Abstudy where people are doing accredited courses. In most cases, the majority of those communities will qualify for Abstudy.

DEWR also provides training but through a process where it is set up more where it is a wage structure support program. If a course is being, say, done in construction, and we are delivering construction, too, and there has been a negotiated contract between the community and the department, the process of payment will be in the form of a wage that DEWR would fund to support that training. The other associated costs related to that training would have to come from the community in terms of worker’s compensation, any sort of top-up in terms of course fees. If they are doing a course through TAFE, for example, in construction, that might cost them about 400 bucks

CHAIR—That is the TAFE costs?

Mr Manado—Yes, so they would have to pay the TAFE sector 400 bucks to do that course. Then any other small—

CHAIR—Does the state have the capacity to offer support there, too, along with the Commonwealth?

Mr Manado—Very minimal. The majority of that type of cost would come from the Commonwealth.

CHAIR—If you had one thing that you would encourage government to do that is within the capacity of government to do, what would it be? Where is the inhibiting? Where is the main blockage?

Mr Manado—As I said in the earlier part of the opening statement, I think we have to learn from history. Part of the steering committee is looking at what exists and what has been in the past so that obviously we improve the type of service that is given in the future.

For me, we have got to take quite a few steps backwards in terms of the way things have been done. One of the biggest challenges is how we work together to change the perceptions of people in the community for their true self-management and true decision making in terms of their next step. It is being able to share information in the best form we can find in terms of getting people to recognise that, in order to take the next step on from the environment that you are in now, there is a whole series of processes that need to be put in place where your participation is going to be important in making that change.

CHAIR—What would be the basic literacy, numeracy standard currently? Would that be a fundamental plank?

Mr Manado—Yes, that is a fundamental issue and it is not only an issue for Indigenous communities, it is right across the board. That is a major issue.

CHAIR—Yes, it is.

Mr Manado—But what I was getting to is that if capacity building is to be a big part of the community, given the changes that are happening at a national level where agencies are now requiring Indigenous incorporations to have good governance to manage their resources, how we go about filtering that process to communities is part of the challenge that people have in rural areas. If I can give you an example, in the last three months leading up to delivering governance in the communities, at the local TAFE campus we sat down and negotiated with three of the major council groups in the Dampier Peninsula and one down south at Bidyadanga. We have now committed ourselves to run governance as a program in communities between now and December. Rory is one of those employees we have taken on board. We went to the community council, met with them and then presented the process of governance and the delivery process, which is fairly flexible. The response to that by each one of those councils has been zero because, as I said, other business takes priority. So our next step now is that, from the major communities, there are pockets of outstations that are incorporated bodies that have a requirement to manage their corporation and we will be following up those communities and presenting them now with an opportunity to do the governance course.

Let me say this, though: as a training provider, one of the challenges for the training institutions is that people accepting the value of training to improve themselves is a process that has to be supported by agencies that are contributing the finances for the infrastructure of the community. Our major contributors are ATSIC or ATSIA, as it is called now; the ILC, which has bought large pockets of property and has now built a process of management and management tools to manage the process where governance has to be a major part of receiving that fund; and the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the principal state Indigenous body, which is putting in place processes where governance now has to be a part of that, and one of the areas is a housing management committee to manage the housing resource and rental.

In my view, those agencies really have to be the leaders in sitting with the community at a community level and presenting the process in terms of saying, ‘Where you had a process where

community housing had no management, we are now informing you that you have to have management tools in place to better manage resources that we are providing to you'.

CHAIR—You made a very interesting point just then and I had not picked up on it very much before. You were saying, if I heard you correctly, that the Commonwealth, and probably the state, is requiring proof of proper governance before they will fully commit to or partially commit to funding.

Mr Manado—Yes.

CHAIR—That gives you a lever—maybe that is not the word—but certainly a capacity yourselves to point out to communities, 'This is important to your future viability in terms of access to these opportunities.' You also made the point that there was zero response and so there is still that challenge in front of you.

Mr Manado—Yes.

CHAIR—I do not expect a response. I now need to go to Mr Haase, but you make the very point that government itself is demanding governance and that people are going to have to come to grips with that.

Mr Manado—That is right, yes.

CHAIR—It is important they do. It is driven from that grant application system or from access to funding, and it is driven by that which gives others the opportunity.

Mr HAASE—Thanks, Mark and Rory, for being here. It is great to see you again. Mark, I know something of your involvement here on the peninsula and your personal achievements as well as your employment achievements with TAFE. If there was one subject I would like you to expand on it would be this question of family exclusive outstation settlements. How much of a workable solution is that to the alternative of communal habitation? Rationalise that, if you would, with the enormous cost from a service delivery point of view, and I am talking about essential services of water, power and sewerage and of course roads, all of those things. On one hand, I perceive that we have a model that may solve a lot of problems and, on the other hand, we recognise the enormous cost of such a situation. Knowing what you have done at Barramundi Moon, you are perhaps in a good position to explain it to us.

Mr Manado—If I can step back a little bit again, the position of major communities has been one where Indigenous people that have been living in the area have been directed towards those communities. In order to gain assistance from a government source, you must be part of a big community where resources and money spent on those resources is limited to a location. The problematic issue related to that really is now, if you take Beagle Bay or any of the communities up there, one of the issues that people have not really addressed is the silent population growth of young Indigenous people in that community.

Today, we can romance about the size of our community and the things that we used to do there 20 or 30 years ago when there were 150 people. Today, we have a population of about 300 that includes young people. What is our capacity to build infrastructure and support structures,

social and economic, for that growth if we are talking about employment and work opportunities? The challenge for those big communities is basically to be supported through a process where economic ventures have to be a process of real, serious development, that need to be accepted by the community, government and people that are part of delivering a service.

In answering the question about outstations, the outstation movement happened quite some time ago. People saw an opportunity where they were able to get back into their true homelands, if you like, where grandparents or great-grandparents had been born and been part of an area, and they went and established that. The history and problem with that is that people have gone generally to those communities with the same level of capacity that has been given to them in terms of social support. So they have gone out to their community with a mindset that, ‘Subsidised programs will continue my existence in the outstations,’ and we see that in a lot of the outstations.

But some of us, and I use my community and family as an example—and Barry has raised the issue of Barramundi Moon—five years ago we went into that community more with a focused view of setting up a community that has an economic long-term sustainable outcome. We set our sights on three areas that potentially have the capacity to sustain the community in the long term: fishing, tourism and aquaculture.

In five years we have achieved an aquaculture licence through the fisheries to develop aquaculture products on our doorstep. We have been through a process of training delivered through TAFE, where family members have done tourism training to a point where we are now operating and running a small-scale tourism venture. We have applied for two years to get our funding through AusIndustries and we were successful getting $80,000 to build an outdoor conference type facility that has been utilised twice already, by a local group in Broome and by one of the universities.

At present I am putting together information that I will be taking down to Perth to talk to a consortium of people that would be in the business of attracting overseas visitors to their location in Perth and then looking for bush convention areas to have meetings. So in that process we have been able to build a relationship with a number of business people in town. In order for visitors to come to our place, there is a booking agency that we have developed a relationship with called ‘Best of the Kimberley,’ which sells holidays not only in Australia but overseas and visitors have access to that website and our information is on that. We have now secured a pilot licence for commercial mudcrabbing to occur, in which we are in the final stages of purchasing all the tools, if you like, which are the boats and commercial parts of fishing, which are the nets and pots and all that sort of stuff, so that will start in the next few weeks. In five years it has given that community the capacity to further advance its vision of opportunity, which we will pursue. But I must say that that community existed on CDEP funding and the average wage or average budget operation that community had for the five or six years had been something like $25,000 a year which was separated into two areas, recurrent costs and capital costs. We are quite proud of the fact that in five years, with no additional support from government, we have been able to build this community the way we have. To us, we have reached the stage where, if you want to talk about capacity building, they are the sort of things that we really need to get to.

Mr HAASE—In a two-word answer, would you comment on the cost of infrastructure provision? I suspect that in your situation you said, ‘This is all the money we have. We are going

to have to afford the water, waste disposal and the energy source ourselves.' Can you make a very brief comment on the affordability of taxpayers paying for those services on some universal basis to every outstation community that was created?

Mr Manado—If you took the scenario where people continue to have the perception of existing in the community with the continued support of government, obviously that cost will escalate. I think we are at a period now where some serious planning has to be set up. With the Dampier Peninsula area, one of the things that have not been done is a comprehensive land use and land management plan that is set down on paper as a planned process. We can examine what are the potential areas that are in existence for economic opportunity. Through TAFE, we have built a process in which the core structure that we have built now is aquaculture.

We have employed about three people to delivery a training regime as part of that process with all the technical expertise. Investment in the campus facility is up around the $3 million mark in terms of its hatchery research teaching facility, and that service has now been delivered in communities where we have built a level of capacity in communities to take on aquaculture as a development aspect. Did you have a look around One Arm Point?

Mr HAASE—Yes, we did.

Mr Manado—Did you see the hatchery up there?

Mr HAASE—Yes.

Mr Manado—It has been part and parcel of the process of working in the communities. A number of those people have done the certificate course in aquaculture and a traineeship. Right now we are in the middle of working with an outstation that has built a series of ponds through their own efforts and through CDEP. It is just off the peninsula. There will be a trial grow-out period of three to six months, growing black tiger prawns, which the hatchery is producing, and we will set a good trial process for that community then to pursue prawning as an industry for them. But as a big picture issue, the region needs to plan for prawning to be a part of that sustainable industry area.

Back to Barry's question, in terms of those costs, unless we set aside a networking process that is clear in terms of its working ability together, to create industries in those communities, yes, you are going to have enormous ongoing costs for running outstations that are going to require the normal infrastructure that people need, like housing, power, water and so on.

Mr LLOYD—Both you and Mr Haase have covered all the questions that I really wanted to ask, and Mark has been very thorough in his answers so I do not have any further questions at the moment.

CHAIR—I have one supplementary question and then Mr Haase might like to have a final question. How many students are enrolled at Kimberley College of TAFE and what percentage is Indigenous?

Mr Manado—You had to ask me that question!

CHAIR—You can take it on notice.

Mr Manado—That is normally a detail for the HR staff. What I can say to you, without having some really accurate figures, is that the participation rate of Indigenous students using TAFE has really gathered momentum and that is pleasing to us. When I first started, both Kununurra and Broome were the major centres in the Kimberley. There were four of us working initially, me and the manager here, and a counterpart and his manager in Kununurra.

In 1996-97, the Kimberley College became an entity. In those years up to now, the college has been working hard to establish facilities at Fitzroy Crossing, which it has, a good establishment now in Derby, Halls Creek, Wyndham and Kununurra. So we have seen the participation rate of Indigenous people growing. As I said, without giving any inaccurate numbers, we would be happy with the participation rate of Indigenous people now getting involved in those programs. On the Broome campus, we probably would have had, if you are talking about Indigenous students, about 700 students being enrolled this year. So that is a round figure.

CHAIR—You might take it on notice and you might be able to show the development of interest and participation. Clearly, you are quite confident in the growth that is occurring and will be content when it is at the commensurate ratio with the balance in the community.

Mr Manado—Yes. Can I add one more comment, if you will take one more?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Manado—One of the issues the Commonwealth and state governments have taken up in the last few years is privatisation. Some of the dangers of privatisation for this region have been people who suggest they have the skills and background to deliver but unfortunately do fall down and do not reach the capacity that the entity presented in the first place.

CHAIR—Are you talking about privatisation of the training providers?

Mr Manado—Yes, the training provider. The process of scrutiny in the service is an issue that needs to be addressed, in my opinion.

CHAIR—That is quite an interesting comment. We will just develop that a little further. Are we talking about standards, costings, sustainability or the impact on, say, a long-term provider like TAFE? There are a whole lot of issues in there. Are they some of the issues that are of concern to you?

Mr Manado—Yes, they are. Again, as a professional person, as a public servant working with TAFE, you obviously work in the parameters of the college.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Manado—But as an Indigenous person you are passionate about the results that come out of those things, and you become passionate about what other people are doing. You tend to become someone that scrutinises the performance of other agencies and people. In order for Indigenous people to get the best results out of their education and training, the people who are

delivering services must also share the same passion and compassion for people to get those skills. In a lot of cases private companies enrol a lot of people on the first day purely to obtain the training bucks that come with it, end of story. So they are the sorts of things—

CHAIR—That bear deeper analysis?

Mr Manado—Yes.

CHAIR—That is a good point, Mark. Thank you. Rory, how long have you been with TAFE? How many years?

Mr Whitelaw—I have only been doing work for TAFE since about last September.

CHAIR—So that is when you initially started this sort of work.

Mr Whitelaw—Not really. I suppose TAFE employs me to do some work for them because I have had about probably 10 years involvement in the north-west, in jobs that relate to economic and social development processes in Port Hedland and in the Pilbara, and then in the last five years around the Kimberley. As a matter of course you work with a lot of people like Mark, people in remote areas and Aboriginal people. They relate to state and federal government processes, so I suppose that relates to governments and regional development. I guess I have had a fair bit of involvement, but specifically to do with governance training, capacity building at a training level, and that is how I came to be on the mailing list for this—

CHAIR—Are you aware of Council of Australian Government's pilot projects in terms of Aboriginal—

Mr Whitelaw—Djurabalan is the one that comes to mind.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Whitelaw—I was the executive officer of the Kimberley area consultative committee. You are probably familiar with the area consultative committees.

CHAIR—Yes, I am.

Mr Whitelaw—It was for about 2½ years until September last year, and that process was just starting up because DOTARS is the designated agency for those communities there so I know a little bit about it.

CHAIR—So it is not something that comes across your radar screen very often. We had some discussion earlier about where that is at, so I do not intend to press you about it, but you are aware of it and it is part of the overall governance issue.

Mr Whitelaw—Yes.

CHAIR—Mark, were you aware of the COAG—

Mr Manado—Yes. I have been following that issue for some time, and I am also a passionate person in relation to those agencies which say, 'You've got to do this training in order to get better governance.' When it comes to those directions, one of the things that I would like this committee to take on is the issue that people create policies, but how are those policies interpreted when it comes down to a regional level? Those interpretations could be different from where people have set up the stuff. So when they come to hear what is, one, the interpretation of that information, and then, secondly, what are the genuine initiatives that have been taken to work with that policy, you have to be flexible about the way you deliver things.

CHAIR—I think there are very true points.

Mr Whitelaw—Yes.

CHAIR—I need to close off there and thank you both very much.

Mr Manado—Can I just quickly run through something? This corporate governance is a short course we did and I would like to leave this information with you.

CHAIR—Could you just table it and we will accept it.

Mr Manado—And then just quickly, this one is a new—

CHAIR—Yes, quite happy to accept that as well.

Mr Manado—initiative which is the Young Indigenous Enterprise package, and then there is this TAFE stuff if you want it.

CHAIR—Thank you. We would be pleased to accept that at our next meeting in Canberra next Wednesday under a formal resolution.

Mr Manado—Okay.

CHAIR—All I need to do is thank you very much and wish you well.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 12.25 p.m.