COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

(Subcommittee)

Reference: Indigenous employment

THURSDAY, 28 JULY 2005

CAIRNS

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard**

To search the parliamentary database, go to:
http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Thursday, 28 July 2005

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

Members in attendance: Ms Annette Ellis, Mr Slipper, Mr Snowdon and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

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

WITNESSES

Subcommittee met at 9.09 am

LOW, Mr Patrick, Chief Executive Officer, Cairns Regional Community Development and Employment Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation

MORGAN, Ms Libby, Indigenous Employment Centre Manager, Cairns Regional Community Development and Employment Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation

CHAIR (Mr Wakelin)—Welcome. I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. I remind witnesses that these are regarded as proceedings of the parliament and ask that they be treated accordingly. I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Low—I would like to thank the committee for providing me with this opportunity to appear. I have just been joined by another member of staff from our organisation, Libby Morgan. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Cairns Regional CDEP, which is the shortened version of our name. The Cairns Regional CDEP is a relatively new organisation. We have been in existence since 2002. We currently have 430 of the 1,600-odd CDEP participants that are in this region. The Cairns region and the Broome region are the two largest CDEP regions in Australia. In a relatively short time we have gone from having about 100 places to having 430 places. We have CDEP participants spread from Mossman down to Clump Mountain near Mission Beach and out as far as Croydon, which is the best part of a day's drive from here. So they are spread over a wide area. Probably half of our participants live up in Kuranda, though, and the rest are spread over that area.

We operate perhaps a little differently to many other CDEP organisations. We operate through what we call host organisations, which are Indigenous controlled organisations that provide a variety of services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the area. For instance, in Innisfail we have a men's group and a justice group. In Cairns, we have Bumma Bippera Media, which runs the local radio station, a women's shelter and sport and recreation groups in a whole variety of areas.

There are other organisations that are productive. We have 25 participants down at Paronella Park with Baddagun Aboriginal Corporation. They have performers there and they are also doing a land rehabilitation project. That venue has about 200,000 tourists go through it per year, so it is a very popular tourist place. We also have other participants. Last week I was up at Malanda. There is a family group there producing about 100 didgeridoos a week. We have a group of 15 participants near Ravenshoe who are planting 2,000 tomato plants a week on a farm that we lease there. And, up at Kuranda, we have groups doing art, running a small farm, sewing and making furniture, involving a whole variety of people.

We have participants in a whole variety of areas but we run primarily through what we call host organisations, where we provide the participants to the organisations. Unlike many other CDEP organisations that operate their own businesses, other than the farm up at Ravenshoe we do not operate any businesses. The various groups that we work with either provide a service or operate a business of some sort.

CHAIR—Let me develop that, because it is different from my understanding. These are individual entities that you have a relationship with and that you provide the people to under individual agreements, if you like.

Mr Low—That is correct. So they are all legal entities in their own right. We have actually got a couple of individuals that we have a relationship with. We sign a memorandum of understanding and a service agreement with each of those organisations. It is a fairly standard document, but we can amend that to suit the circumstances of each relationship. We provide the number of CDEP participants that they need to achieve whatever the outcomes or objectives of their work plan are. In addition, from the funds that we receive from DEWR they are allocated a per capita amount per annum to help them achieve those things. They manage that budget, and obviously the budget is related to the work plan that they provide us with.

Mr SNOWDON—What proportion of the 430 get a top-up?

Mr Low—Other than the supervisors—we have a small supervisors' allowance—

Mr SNOWDON—The reason I ask is that you say you are effectively operating as a group employer for a whole lot of other organisations and businesses. Of the organisations, how many of them are businesses?

Mr Low—I would say probably about 10 of them are what I would call proper businesses.

Mr SNOWDON—Who owns those businesses?

Mr Low—Generally they are owned by family corporations.

Mr SNOWDON—What I am trying to get to is that it appears to me that you are the host employer. Do you pay all the employees and do all the books?

Mr Low—We do, yes.

Mr SNOWDON—So you act as a group employer. You look after their workers compensation insurance and all their insurance?

Mr Low—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—So you are providing, effectively, free labour to a whole lot of organisations around the place.

Mr Low—That is correct.

Mr SNOWDON—And some of them are operating as businesses that make a profit?

Mr Low—We do not have access to their books, so I cannot comment on whether or not they make a profit.

Mr SNOWDON—I am just interested because, in effect, what we are doing here in some instances, it appears, is providing extensive wage subsidies for people who are operating a business which may be making a profit.

Mr Low—That is quite possible.

Mr SNOWDON—I am then asking: what hours do the people in these businesses that make a profit work and do they get a top-up from those businesses that make a profit? If not, why not?

Mr Low—There are two parts to that. On the service side, what we are doing there is, in a sense, subsidising particularly state government programs where they are being underfunded. A good example of that is the Innisfail Community Justice Group. They receive funding from DATSIP to provide a community justice program, but, without the support that CDEP provides, that program would be nonexistent simply because the state government does not provide sufficient funds for the level of program or service that is required by that community. There are a number of those types of instances.

Mr SNOWDON—I appreciate that. I understand. That happens elsewhere in Australia, with CDEPs carrying out the work that government agencies are already paying for—which is clearly the case here. I am more interested in looking at the organisations out there that might be making a profit and how they return a proportion of whatever they earn back to the work force.

Mr Low—A number of them do. For instance, with the group down at Baddagun, the owners of Paronella Park pay Baddagun an amount of money each week for the services they provide. They do five performances a day, seven days a week. Some of the money that is paid to Baddagun Aboriginal Corporation is then paid to the performers for the additional hours that they work, because our participants work 30 hours a fortnight, and there are different combinations of that 30 hours, so basically that is two days a week. These people are performing up to seven days a week, so Baddagun are paying them some money from the money that they make. As a proportion, I would say probably 10 per cent of our participants get some form of top-up from these other sources of funds.

Mr SNOWDON—Thank you.

CHAIR—That was in much the same vein as I was interested in, trying to understand something which is uniquely different. Ms Morgan, I think you wanted to say something earlier.

Ms Morgan—On the enterprise side of things, I think a lot of the people whom we are assisting through the CDEP are just getting into that area. We are showing them a bit of support that maybe should come from another agency, but CDEP is there to help them along the way.

CHAIR—How long has it been operating?

Mr Low—We have only been operating since about the middle of 2002, so we are about three years on.

CHAIR—You made a fundamental decision to move away from operating it yourselves. Could you give us a picture of how that evolved?

Mr Low—It is mainly because of the geographic distribution of our participants. There is no way that we can manage a large group of people who are spread from Croydon to Mission Beach.

CHAIR—It sounds as though you were trying to before that and it just evolved?

Mr Low—I came from Western Australia, where I set up the Kullarri Regional CDEP, which is Australia's largest CDEP. We had 120 host organisations there and the same model that was used there has been used here. To me, one of the strengths of this model is that it gives family corporations the opportunity to develop and be nurtured by CDEP and eventually peel off as self-sufficient businesses.

CHAIR—That was my next question, to try to develop what the experience and the opportunity is for that. There is a strong view across Australia that it is not common in many places for participants on the CDEP to move on to self-sufficiency. You would be well aware of that and of the criticism or the comment. Can you add to that and to what you have just said?

Mr Low—I think that there are many opportunities, particularly across Northern Australia, for family corporations to run successful businesses that are in some way tourism related or related to the manufacture of artefacts or art. That work can be seasonal or, if someone is away for a reason, then if you have members of the family who can step in it is accepted, whereas in a non-family arrangement that will not necessarily work. Probably the most difficult thing for many of those groups is the financial management part of it and some of the legal aspects—some of those governance type issues. I think they are the areas in which those groups need the greatest assistance.

CHAIR—Where things can come unstuck and they can get into the greatest difficulty?

Mr Low—Yes.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I think you partially answered this question a second ago but it goes on a bit from what Barry was just talking about. Have you seen or when do you predict that you will see some people—and I imagine this would apply particularly to those people in the more for-profit businesses—cease CDEP and float into the employment place that they have now got through CDEP with those enterprises?

Mr Low—If we look at the way most small businesses operate, it takes them some years before you can say whether or not they are successful. For many in ATSI controlled corporations, as I said, there is a lot of learning to do regarding the financial and governance side of things. I believe it would take most of those organisations at least three years to get to the point where they are ready to go off and be self-sufficient.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—They are all small businesses?

Mr Low—They are all small organisations. Baddagun is probably the largest. We have 25 participants there, but most of them are probably groups of between, say, three and seven people.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—The 25 employees at Baddagun—that is 25 out of how many employees there? Is that the total? I am trying to get a feel for how it fits.

Mr Low—The owners of Paronella Park employ other people there, to run the restaurant and do maintenance work and things like that. I have got to say that they have also employed some of the people from Baddagun as full-time employees, as tour guides and things like that.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—So do you have a feel for what the total employment base is there, that the 25 fit into?

Mr Low—There are probably about another 40 people there all up. I have got to say that some of those people are also involved in a land rehabilitation project next door and they do not really interact with the public, so they are on a bit of a separate project.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—One of the principles underpinning the new Indigenous affairs arrangements is a regional need approach. In terms of increasing Indigenous participation in employment, what would you see as the greatest needs in this region, if you were looking at it from that aspect?

Mr Low—Firstly, I think we need some facts; we need a database, a place from which we can say we are working. We need some demographic information about the numbers of people in this region. We need to know where they are, how old they are and what education levels they have. I am trying to extract this kind of information from DEWR at the moment. I am trying to get them to justify the target they have set us. The target is to get 104 people into employment in this 12-month period—that is, two people a week—but I do not know how they have set that figure.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Is it proving difficult to get that information? Or is it time-consuming or delaying?

Mr Low—Time-consuming. To be honest—and I appreciate that DEWR did not have a long lead-in time—I would have thought that, in setting targets, if you are going to be measuring success, then you have to be measuring against something that is a factually based starting point, and that has not been the case.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—So what you are really saying is that they have set you a target but they are in no position to tell you how they reached that target?

Mr Low—Exactly. I believe it is a plucked out of the air figure.

Mr SNOWDON—When you negotiated your agreement with them, what figure did you suggest you could achieve? I am aware, for example, that this has happened in the Northern Territory and that there is a particular CDEP who thought they had negotiated with their local DEWR office to have a target of getting three or four people into full-time jobs in employment positions away from the CDEP. DEWR came back to them, after they thought they had agreed on three or four, with a figure of 30. So what did you originally believe you were going to have to achieve?

Mr Low—We actually believed that we were going to be set a target of 114.

Mr SNOWDON—At the beginning?

Mr Low—Yes. Then they came back with 104, which was a lower figure.

Mr SNOWDON—I am interested in this negotiation process because I have argued strongly, as a result of representations made to me in the Northern Territory, that these figures have been arbitrarily set without any comprehension or understanding of the local labour market or of the local client group. So I am interested to know your observations about how they set the figure. What did the negotiations you had with DEWR entail?

Mr Low—Basically, a date was set and we were told it was the negotiation day but we were not quite sure what that meant because there was no agenda set or information provided for the day. We came to the meeting and the staff from DEWR came to the meeting, and they had a list—a document—prepared, they had all the boxes filled out, and any so-called negotiation was at the edges. I wrote to the state manager of DEWR and I said, 'I do not believe that that process was negotiation.' I understand why they had to go through that process, because they had a very tight time frame and they did not have the information available to their own staff.

Mr SNOWDON—What are the implications if you do not meet the target?

Mr Low—What concerns me, now that I have had an opportunity to read our contract and digest just what all this means, is that potentially we have been set up to fail. If we do not achieve this target of 104, then will that mean that at 30 June 2006 we will be identified as a non-performing Indigenous controlled organisation? Even though we might have got 80 people, for argument's sake, into employment, would we be identified as a non-performing Indigenous controlled organisation? To me that is just totally unfair.

The other thing that concerns me is that we have been asked to reorient our organisation. Prior to 1 July this year, our organisation was not primarily about getting people into employment; it was about operating a CDEP program. In the past, getting people into employment has not been the goal of CDEP—even though some people might claim otherwise. Some CDEPs have had that goal, but the majority of them have operated a program; they have not been about getting people into employment. We have been asked to go from being an organisation that operated a program to being an organisation that gets people into employment. We are one of a small number of CDEP organisations that has an IEC, so, to an extent, we did have an employment focus. But, generally, most of our participants were involved in doing CDEP; they were not about getting into employment.

What concerns me is that none of the KPIs that DEWR has set for us relate to community development or enterprise development; they only relate to employment. To me, that sends a very strong message about what the new program is all about. It is not about community development or business development; it is just about getting people into jobs. As an organisation, we have to be able to respond to that. My first response was to ask: do I sack my field officers so that I can start employing some employment officers—people like Libby, who are going to get people into jobs?' As an organisation, we have to think differently and do things differently. Like a lot of government funded organisations, Aboriginal organisations, in many

senses, respond slowly. They move slowly. They have to change direction slowly; it does not happen overnight.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—You just said that you have had time to read the contract. You also talked about the lead time that was given to this whole process. I assume that the lead time was such that you could not really examine the whole detail of this, in its intricacy, until it was over.

Mr Low—Basically, yes.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Was that time frame out of your hands?

Mr Low—Yes, it was. I have no criticism of the local DEWR staff.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I know; that is not what we are talking about.

Mr Low—They acted extremely professionally, but I believe they were constrained by the transfer of CDEP from ATSIS to DEWR. The process of putting in the e-subs, the electronic submissions, for our 12-month funding was late. The time frame got shorter and shorter at the end of the financial year, to a point where DEWR had worked out what they were going to give each of the organisations. All we could do was, as I said, negotiate at the edges.

CHAIR—We will talk to DEWR in a week or so, so we will go through that with them.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—As a member of parliament, I hear a lot of comment about the different forms of contracts, forms, papers and so on. People quite often say they have improved them or that they have not improved them. In your case, was the contract a simple and easy to read document, or was it more complicated?

Mr Low—I would put in the category of 'medium'. It is not a hugely legalese, though it is a fairly thick document. I am fortunate. I can imagine that, for some CDEP organisations, particularly those in remote places, it would have been very difficult. I have worked in remote communities and I know that some of those places would have great difficulty in even beginning to understand what was in that document.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Have you been approached by the Indigenous Coordination Centre? Has there been any consultation between you and the ICC?

Mr Low—Minimal. We have certainly had visits from the staff from the ICC. I have some concerns. I do not see much coordination happening, to be quite honest, and I think that is partly because the ICCs are understaffed. I just do not think they have the resources to do the job they have been set. But one of my concerns is where ICC staff will approach organisations that we are working with—and Baddagun is an example. There is an SRA in place with Baddagun that was negotiated between—

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—What is an SRA?

Mr Low—A shared responsibility agreement. That is being negotiated between Baddagun and the ICC. The outcomes are to do with employment. We were not involved in that process at all. We found out about it retrospectively.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Even though it is your CDEP people that are there?

Mr Low—They are our participants, the outcomes are to do with our participants, and we knew nothing about it until after the event. I would have thought that it would have been a good idea to come and talk to us to find out the level of funding that we had provided to that group. Because it was a start-up group last financial year, at the beginning of the last financial year it did not exist on our books. By the end of the financial year we had spent over a quarter of a million dollars in wages and another nearly $100,000 in other forms of support for that group. So we put a large sum of money into that group, but there was no information requested from us about the level of support being provided.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—What is your view on the whole-of-government approach in terms of Indigenous employment? There has been a move to make a whole-of-government approach to the issue. How do you see that going so far?

Mr Low—So far, we do not see any difference, but we are very keen—we have just had some discussions last week with the senior DEWR staff in the local office, and I have written to Alison Stanley, the state manager, about this—to see DEWR act as a broker for us, particularly between DEST and DET, the state government Department of Employment and Training, particularly with training funds. The process of us getting training funds is convoluted, difficult and very time consuming, and we are not necessarily always aware of all the potential sources of funds, so we would like to have DEWR act as the broker between those two agencies and just make life a bit simpler for us. But I think that might be early days.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Yes. I do not wish to verbal you, but what you are actually saying is not just simpler for you but would also enhance the outcomes for the people that we are actually sitting here having this discussion about in the first place. That is really the emphasis, isn't it?

Mr Low—It is, yes.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—It just means that the outcome is the ultimate outcome or the closest we can get to it, rather than something that you scrabble through a myriad of different doorways hoping to find resourced. Is that fair comment?

Mr Low—That is fair comment, yes.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I think you were just going to say something.

Mr Low—I do not know how much time I have, but I am pretty keen to see Libby say something.

CHAIR—I was about to say that I needed to do that, and that was my next question. But before I do that, I just want to sum up where we have come from: for many CDEPs it was not about getting people into employment. I think that was your statement. Therefore we have this

fundamental, almost ideological contest, if you like, between the narrow focus on employment—and remember, the focus of our inquiry is about positive employment; it is deliberately designed to try and understand where Indigenous people fit into the national job market to lead to those long-term outcomes. So, in that philosophical debate about development and community involvement and all of that, in your view, coming from a long history in CDEP, what is the appropriate balance? Is it getting that defined employment approach—and you acknowledge that CDEP in many cases is not about that? What is the appropriate balance?

Mr Low—Our goal has to be to get people into employment. That needs to be our priority; I do not have a problem with that. We need to recognise that, for many of our participants, there are some significant barriers that prevent them from moving from CDEP into employment. We have identified those barriers as things like numeracy and literacy, a knowledge and understanding of the work ethic, having a work history, and transport.

CHAIR—We understand that. I do not think Comalco would mind me saying this: we spent a fair bit of yesterday at Weipa, where there is a very sophisticated development. You understand better than me about how they are working it and trying to understand all of that. That is all I wanted to tease out of that discussion, which was quite useful. It is quite useful to see how the bureaucracy is going or not going.

Libby, as we said earlier, thank you very much for being with us. You are quoted as saying that you help IEC participants to 'face their own problems, bring about changes in their self-perception and life attitudes'. You have obviously done wonderfully well at that, along with your challenges of running your own life. Can we talk about that? How is it going? There will be a couple of questions that come out of that. How long is a piece of string!

Ms Morgan—We do have targets that we need to set for Indigenous employment, which is sometimes unfair because we can only be as good as our participants. Some of the barriers that they face are of a personal nature and we cannot really enforce that. The way we try and get around it is to use CDEP as a stepping stone into vocational placements so they get on-the-job training. We create partnerships with, for example, an RTO so that they gain the skills and some experience by us having set up a training program. That will lead them into employment. We try to work in partnerships. We are in talks now with Comalco, QBuild and CRGT to get some of their people in the Moorabool renewal project. There are going to be three people who come out of that, including an apprentice carpenter and painter. They are going to be people who have really bad barriers to get into this kind of environment—

CHAIR—Can you define a couple of those?

Ms Morgan—Literacy and numeracy are big ones. I think the motivation is there, but we will have to provide them with a lot of support to help them.

CHAIR—There are those that say to me that there is a real failure in our state education systems—

Ms Morgan—There is.

CHAIR—and in how they address this. I am not here, as someone from the federal parliament, to attack the state parliaments. It is a huge challenge and we understand some of the reasons for that. There are those who say that the state could do a lot more in the education system. Perhaps we could tidy that up a little bit without being too adversarial. What does need to happen, do you think?

Ms Morgan—I know that some people get a certain amount of money for literacy and numeracy programs. I think a portion should also come to Cairns Region because the majority of people on our books have a really bad literacy and numeracy problem, so much so that the motivation and the confidence all come into play. It is all related. They do not have a drivers licence; without a drivers licence they cannot get into employment. As a CDEP, we need to encourage them to get their learners licence so that is one step taken. You have to do it in little steps—step by step. We are putting in a lot of effort and a lot of work to groom the people to get up to the stage of employment. There is no way you can put a time frame on that.

Mr SNOWDON—What is the demographic profile of that group of 430 participants? What age profile is there? Are people leaving school and going on to CDEP? If so, why? Presumably the state system ought to be providing access for those people to training and other job opportunities. What does this group look like and how do we help particularly these younger people who are moving from school to CDEP as opposed to from school to a training program or work?

Ms Morgan—A couple of people that are on my books are probably in their early 20s to 25. They left school at year 9. The majority of them are leaving school at year 9.

Mr Low—About 60 of our participants are under the age of 21. Two-thirds of our participants are male. The majority of those would be under the age of 40.

Mr SNOWDON—Before you started, what were these people doing? Were they all unemployed or were they—

Ms Morgan—Yes, they were just at home doing nothing. They were socialising within their own household or with their families.

Mr SNOWDON—I want to go back to a bit of history here, because it is important that we all understand that CDEP is a place where people choose to work for the dole. That is how it started and that is how it is. It may not be seen as that, but that is effectively what it is because you choose to do it. You can opt to do something else, so I think we need to make that very clear, so that people do not misunderstand what CDEP was about in the first instance. It was a conscious choice of people—and this goes back to 1973-74 when it first started—to give up sit-down money, as people in the bush used to call it, to go and do some work to get the money they were being paid. You are paying people for 30 hours a fortnight to do what is effectively part-time work.

I am interested to know whether you provide any business incubation services, whether you have the capacity to do that and what other services you can provide. I want to go to the point of what training moneys you get and how you access them, because if you are being blamed for the fact that you cannot people in jobs then there is an issue there—and you made this point—about

your access to training. If you want to get people to start businesses, someone has to provide them with the services to get them up to the level where they can operate on their own freely. Do you have those services?

Ms Morgan—I think the majority of people on the IEC books are not the type of people who might want to go into business at the moment. They are at the step of gaining training to build themselves up to get into employment. We are trying to encourage them. They could have a lawn mowing service if they wanted to, but they do not have a licence so they cannot go down that path. It is all intermingled.

CHAIR—Can you talk a little bit about Tools for Life?

Ms Morgan—The Tools for Life program was put together by Cairns Regional CDEP because we used to put people into employment and we found that they were not lasting there, for some reason. We wanted to find out why they were not lasting in employment. We found out that it is their home environment. It is whatever happens at home with their families. Some people just did not know how to handle the money when they got a big amount of money because they were so used to just getting a small amount of money. It is about building up their self-confidence and self-esteem so they are able to talk to a coworker on site, as in that environment a lot of workers would be non-Indigenous.

We try to get them used to the fact that this is a new environment and tell them, 'We are there to support you but you need to tell us what your problems or issues are so that we can help you to deal with them.' That was when we found out that it was really hard to put them into employment without them first sorting out their own personal issues so that they could stay in employment for a long period of time instead of just going in, staying for a short while and then falling back. That reflected on us, and the businesses that we put them in were not keen to help us put another person in. That is why we created the Tools for Life program. Our mentor, who is a very good mentor, does this program with them and helps them to talk about themselves.

CHAIR—It creates that expectation, I presume, and it affects your credibility with the employer who you are trying to place these people with, and it builds a relationship that develops the integrity of the program, and that type of thing.

Ms Morgan—Yes, I think it is a very important first stage for our participants to do something like the Tools for Life program. Not all of them, but there are certain ones that would probably need to go there first before they come over to the IEC, to help them to see that pathway; that they could get here if they solve this little issue back here. It could be a small issue that would mean a telephone call to another agency but because nobody has actually told them about this other agency they do not know where to get help. It is just like when we let them know where they can get help and how to actually go about approaching people to get that assistance.

CHAIR—How long have you been doing it, Libby?

Ms Morgan—This is my second year in the IEC. I started off as a cleaner.

Mr Low—Libby was one of the recipients at the presentations from Kevin Andrews in Alice Springs.

CHAIR—We noticed that in our information. We congratulate you for that. We need to start winding up, but in terms of your 430 could you make a rough guess about how it is progressing—not just employment; employment is one measure as we have discussed—or stepping forward or in terms of Tools for Life. Can you define, for that 430, where we are headed and give a general description? It is variable and tough to answer, I know, but just give us any kind of feeling you have about it.

Mr Low—I believe we are pointed in the right direction. If we could get DEST or DET or one of those people to just give us a chunk of money to deliver the Tools for Life program as the first step, and for DEWR to think in a different time frame—to stop thinking in little 12-month chunks and to recognise that these are issues that need to be resolved over time—we will achieve these outcomes. There is no doubt in my mind that we can do it now that we have changed our orientation. We believe that if we can deal with some of these personal barriers for people we will get them into employment.

CHAIR—The issue is quite often that there are other agencies responsible. I singled out one earlier: the education system, which is predominantly state. I also asked, in that previous question, whether we should be much stronger in these partnerships and in getting others to accept responsibility as we go with it. Do you agree with that? It seems to me that while we have stayed with the positives and we want to celebrate the successes we cannot overlook the reality of these partnerships with other agencies, particularly education agencies, regarding literacy and numeracy. Could you comment on that? It seems to me we are not even close to getting that sort of relationship stronger.

Mr Low—They are really not there, are they?

Ms Morgan—I reckon you have to go back to the school system and get that all fixed up. I was surprised that a young fellow who had completed year 12 could not really write—he could not understand it—and yet he had completed year 12. It really surprised me to see that he was led to believe that he was at that level, to achieve a grade 12 certificate, yet he could not spell basic words. How could that have happened? I think it needs to change and be brought up.

CHAIR—We are all frustrated by this.

Ms Morgan—But by the time they come to us on CDEP we cannot just ignore that if we want to get our mob out there; we have to deal with those issues first.

CHAIR—And they are, as they confront you. But of course without—as my colleague said—verballing you, it seems to me it is unreasonable to expect you to have to, in many ways, be fully responsible because there are others in that partnership way back that need to do more.

Ms Morgan—And they need to be made accountable for their actions because you are making us accountable on our side for how we operate. Let us go back a couple of steps and see what has actually happened.

CHAIR—I have got that off my chest and have shared that with you, thank you.

Mr SNOWDON—I just want to go back to the KPIs. All of what we have discussed here frustrates your ability to be able to achieve those KPIs—is that correct?

Mr Low—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—So if you have got a client group who have got these barriers to employment and you are not getting the resources to address them—like in your program, Libby—then you cannot be expected to eventually achieve those outcomes because you need that additional support. Would you say that that is correct?

Mr Low—That is correct.

Mr SNOWDON—Have DEWR had any discussions with you about what additional support might be required to meet those outcomes?

Mr Low—No. As I said, I have written to the state manager. I have had a response to that and it was not a response that I could see acknowledged the issues that I was trying to raise. So, at this point, no, but we will be. We have just advertised for a training coordinator. One of the things that that person will do is develop training plans for all of our projects. We will consolidate that information and present it to DEWR, put it on the table in front of them and say, 'If you want us to achieve our KPIs, these are some of the things we have to be dealing with in terms of training.' We will be doing that in an objective way over the next six months.

Ms Morgan—Also, DEWR has just made some changes to how we, as an IEC, can use the jobs that support that account. We have only been in existence for two years. I do not think it is fair that we have been put into the same category as the Job Network. Job Network has been going for many years so I cannot see why they have bundled us into the same scenario of how we can and cannot use the JSS account with the barriers we have to confront on our side. We do not just go and do whatever or spend the money on something; it is because there is a real need to spend the money on our client to help them to stay in employment. DEWR is saying that we cannot buy mobile phones. That is going to be a barrier for our participants because they will not be able to be contacted by an employer if they have got an interview lined up or if they are working in hospitality.

Mr SNOWDON—What is your relationship with Job Network?

Ms Morgan—We had a building and construction course. We invited them out to have a look at it and to talk to our participants. They came out and had a look but we get the feeling that it is just lip service that they are giving us.

Mr SNOWDON—So they do not use you as an employment broker? They do not ring you and say, 'Have you got X, Y and Z skill base in your organisation?'

Ms Morgan—No. We do mainly everything on our own but DEWR is making us work with the Job Network. I am saying to them that it is fine that we can work with Job Network but the

issue is not with us; it is with our participants and how the participants actually relate to Job Network.

CHAIR—That is a very good question and a good answer. I would love to go on but we need to move on. Annette, did you have a question?

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Are you aware of the WELL program that we heard about yesterday?

Mr Low—Yes. We have WELL funding and we currently have a teacher up in Kuranda who is about to get 40 people through their learners permits.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Forgive my ignorance; is that through—

Mr Low—Through DEST.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Are you confident of the continuation of that, from your point of view?

Mr Low—We are because ours has been very successful. We are happy with that.

CHAIR—Good comment and good question, thank you. Patrick, would you like to wind up?

Mr Low—I know that we are here to talk about positive things and positive employment. I know that Libby has been wanting to mention this one. We recently ran a certificate II in building construction in conjunction with CSTC, one of the local RTOs. We did not pay for it; they actually had their own funding for it so we are very fortunate to have that relationship with them. We started off with 16 people and we had 15 complete a 13-week full-time course. We have now got five or six of those people into employment and one of them into an apprenticeship. They are the types of things that work.

CHAIR—That is a great outcome.

Ms Morgan—It was. We all worked together to make sure everybody got through.

CHAIR—You can see the achievement.

Mr SNOWDON—One of the issues we discussed yesterday, and you will see this if you wander around the town, is that there are not many Aboriginal people in the retail industry. Has there been any relationship between the CDEP and the retail industry about training for retail?

Ms Morgan—Not exactly. We do not have too many of our people wanting to go into retail and hospitality. One woman who wanted to go into retail could not get a job.

Mr Low—We have over 200 participants in CDEP in Kuranda If you can find one Aboriginal person behind a counter you will be lucky.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—What is the reason for them not wanting to go into retail?

Mr SNOWDON—The reason is probably that they cannot get employed, I suspect.

CHAIR—There would be a fair bit of both.

Mr Low—Racism exists in these areas, particularly up on the tablelands. We have real problems getting our participants into employment up there. That is part of the reason. There are other issues as well. There are a number of reasons that is the case.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[10.03 am]

KELLY, Ms Bernice, Chairperson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Corporation, Queensland

WII, Ms Joy, Community Planning and Development Officer, Cairns City Council

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

Ms Wii—We do not have a lot to do with the running of CDEP but we do have a lot to do with the participants of CDEP. Two or three years ago we started an employment strategy in west Cairns to address some of the high unemployment issues. That data was gathered from the community renewal evaluation report. It was one of those big issues—there was high crime and high unemployment. We went in as a team. There were two volunteers and I was the paid coordinator. Bernice and another lady were the volunteers for this. We did a pilot initiative first and it was very successful. We had 120 people registered. In nine weeks we got 34 people into jobs and training. I can only say that without this lady it would not have happened. It is that personal support and motivation that she gave through the whole thing that got them into that.

For the second one, we applied for a grant because we thought, 'This works; we'll do this again.' We applied through DET and got a grant of $51,000 for nine months. I think 80-odd applied and we got 38 into some form of employment and/or training. I only coordinated and supported Bernice. She did the one-on-one interviews. She was the one who rang them up and drove them around. It was amazing. We had another lady who did admin support, so to speak, for the resumes and all of that sort of thing.

The barriers were enormous for these people. We all know about the tyranny of distance, but there were many other life skills barriers. Literacy and numeracy were actually the smallest on our list of barriers. We could get them through in other areas. But some did not have a washing machine to wash uniforms. There were so many little life problems that they had to cope with before they were even ready to get to the stage where they could be sent for an interview.

As for running small businesses, there is no seed funding for them to start. There is no training and mentoring, one-on-one and together, to bring them along. There was none of that. A whole-of-government approach would be wonderful—super—but who is going to coordinate that? I do not know. We have government agencies that work in silos. We have to go to one place to get one little section of what we need and then to another to get something else. All of that takes time.

Generally, I think that for employment we need to start early, with the schools—at grade 7, not at grade 8 or grade 9; they are gone by then. We are just talking about normal kids. I have not even cut into the area of kids with a disability. They are invisible. You do not see them at all on the streets or anywhere. They sit at home in a wheelchair or in a bed all day. If we could start earlier than we are starting now, back in grade 7, by the time they get ready to go into CDEP, where there is not a lot of pressure for them to go into further work and that, I think you will find that the success rate would go a lot higher.

Also, the personal support needs a lot more funding behind it. A person may be stuck in one place and needs to get to a job in another place. A person may need to come out to help them get ready, check what they look like, talk to them about the seven most asked questions and really give them a bit of a motivational rev, which is what Bernice does. By the time they are ready to go, we have had to look at so many issues to get them there. That is about it right now.

CHAIR—Thank you. I will invite Bernice to say a couple of words. But, before I do, I just wanted to pick something up before I forget it. What do you mean by year 7?

Ms Wii—The end of primary school.

CHAIR—Yes, but how do you connect in and be in there?

Ms Wii—I am talking about vocational things and work experience. It might be by saying, 'Let's go and have a look at what you do when you're working in a shop.' I will go out with one or two of them and introduce them to the shopkeeper. Most of the people today say that in school you have to learn this, this and this. The key thing they have to learn is research—to be able to research on the internet and find the career they want. All of the rest of the information that gets fed into them becomes a boring situation for them.

CHAIR—I have a question and I think I know the answer, but I need to tease out whose responsibility this is. If it is not happening at home and it is not happening in the school then it just continues into nothingness. We are always saying that our schools are asked to do too much. I have had a bit of a crack at where maybe we are really struggling. That is not a criticism; it is an observation more than a criticism. But really, in a way, are we asking our schools to do some more in there somewhere?

Ms Wii—No, there could be support. But I will let Bernice answer that one.

Ms Kelly—I believe that education is one of the keys to the answer to this. A lot of Indigenous kids drop out at about grade 9. I think that happens because of the language, which is a big problem. English is their second language. If you have a group of people with generations of unemployment, it is very hard to instil, say, the ethics of work or even talk about careers. A lot of the parents are not aware of the career options that are out there for their children. When you have no hope, why strive?

I am one of those people who hate CDEP. I think it has been the dropping ground. People think, 'We failed you at school and we'll put the responsibility on someone else.' I think CDEP has been around for 30 years now, but where are the outcomes? I find that people who get into CDEP feel that they really do not have to go out and get a job, so they do not really have to work hard. That takes away the drive from those people.

The CDEP in my program stands for the 'can do employment program'. I try to instil in people that they should look at what they are good at. A lot of people have had bad experiences at school. The schools are too focused on getting the kids to know what they want to do when they leave school. I think that is ridiculous, because you have anything from five and seven career changes in your life. The schools should be focusing on educating the kids and getting them out at the end of that line with a decent education so that they can then make choices. I

think a lot of our kids end up in CDEP because the public schools focus too much on school uniforms and not on what is going on in the school. There is a lot of pressure on kids: 'If you don't succeed in this, you are a failure.' From a male point of view, if teachers tell boys continually that they are going to be dropouts and failures and if the teachers speak down to them then these boys—these young men—will walk.

CHAIR—They say, 'I'm out of here.'

Ms Kelly—Yes: 'I'm out of here.' Then I get to meet them and I see the tears of frustration because they feel as if they have missed out and they know that their education is a key to this. We have just done away with tutors in the classrooms. That is a big mistake because those kids need the tutors in the classroom. Having Indigenous people and peoples of the Pacific as tutors in the classrooms is a bonus for those kids because the language is the problem. Just because you can speak English does not mean to say that you can read it and write it. That is what I found out over in these communities.

The Pacific Islander people have only been here for about 10 years, so I do not think they are entrenched in that social security state of mind as yet. I have found that they are very eager to find jobs, but the biggest barrier they have is the language problem. We identified people in the community who could become literacy and numeracy trainers but there is no funding for that type of thing. The community centres were fantastic places as little learning hubs. Joy started off the playgroups, which brought the mums in. When you talk to the mums, you find out that they have kids and husbands. Working with the families starts from that. Trust is a huge issue for these Indigenous communities.

Ms Wii—And building relationships.

Ms Kelly—Yes. They feel that people do not understand. I have heard of men who could not read or write English being forced into computer courses, when they wanted to get a truck drivers licence. They were put into computer courses; it is ridiculous.

Ms Wii—We have had 120 people through our drivers licence courses; 120 have succeeded. A whole bus full of Deeragun College kids came up to do our drivers licence course—which we do for free in partnership with the police and Transport. We put the courses on out at the community centres. A whole bus full of grade 12 students just got their learners permits. They are so excited. They have opportunities now.

Ms Kelly—If you do a drivers licence course and you have a tutor there who can speak the language, they can walk you through it. It is so simple that it is ridiculous; it is pathetic.

CHAIR—I am a great believer and I am sure that Mr Snowdon and Ms Ellis are. We are acutely aware of this, and people across the country are not aware enough of it.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Thank you both for being here with us this morning. Can I just ask about the jobs you referred to at the beginning that people were placed in. Can you give us a bit of an idea of what sort of employment it is?

Ms Kelly—The last four guys got jobs with Cairns City Council, and they are very happy.

Ms Wii—We have jobs like apprentice chefs, apprentice bakers, full-time administrative positions with TAFE, security jobs—

Ms Kelly—Lots of security jobs.

Ms Wii—Lots of security jobs for the Cook Island people—

Ms Kelly—The Pacific islander guys.

Ms Wii—They are big boys! We have had police liaison officers, bus drivers, traffic controllers. We had retail at Woolworths—

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I am interested in the retail specifically.

Ms Wii—Tourism up here is a—

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Can I just give you the picture that I have from travelling around a bit. That is, when we talk about Indigenous employment there is a lot of emphasis on the opportunities that tourism in particular offers, and that is true. Tjapukai here is a very good example of that sort of enterprise offering that sort of employment. But I am fascinated—and we heard evidence earlier—about the ancillaries to tourism. For example, if tourists come to Cairns, Darwin, Alice Springs or Uluru, we do not see Aboriginal faces in the ancillaries around the direct tourism attraction. If they are employed in Kakadu, that is fine, but where are they behind the shop counters in Darwin?

Ms Wii—They are mainly management positions.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Exactly. So the real question for me—and I think I know the answer—is: what are the reasons for the reluctance of these Indigenous people to break into that area of employment? Because I think there is reluctance.

Ms Kelly—It is the employer. I am one of those people who go around and ask for jobs for Indigenous people. Interestingly enough, even in some of these tourism jobs, they would rather put an African guy on than put an Aboriginal person on—or any Indigenous person.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Why?

Ms Kelly—Because they say that an Aboriginal person is unreliable and will go walkabout. Now, that is ridiculous, but that is the sort of stereotyping we still have out there.

Mr SNOWDON—Yet they will sell Aboriginal artefacts out of the same shop?

Ms Kelly—They will sell them; they do not care. But Australians are notorious for saying, 'I'm not a racist, but ...' I think you have such a visual of a lot of homeless people in Cairns and I think they take out that anger and frustration on local people.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—What is the retail job that you mentioned, Joy, in Woolworths?

Ms Wii—It is just an ordinary sales check-out type deal. Actually, there were 10 full-time and part-time retail positions, and Woolworths included the training that came out of that project.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I do not wish to make it sound simple, because it is not a simple nut to crack, but sometimes the successful example is where things can happen because of cultural requirements. We have spoken to employers, and they have not been retail, I have to admit. I acknowledge very happily that there are cultural requirements. If there is a death in the family and there is sorry time then there is a reaction that has to be acknowledged, but that should not entirely bar an opportunity. So it is a case of finding employers who are willing to take this on, understanding that they can work with it, not against it. Is that too naive? I guess it is a bit.

Ms Wii—There is a lot more to it than that.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I understand that.

Ms Kelly—The other thing is that a lot of Indigenous people do not feel really comfortable selling things to people and, honestly, to use Tjapukai as an example—I have been around Tjapukai for a long time as well and the Tjapukai you see now is not the Tjapukai you saw 10 years ago. Don and Judy will tell you this: they have worked long and hard. I was surprised myself when I walked out there and I saw all the staff walking up and greeting you and saying hello. It has taken a long process to do that.

CHAIR—Yesterday morning, yes.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—While it has taken a long time, the point is that they have achieved it.

Ms Wii—I think it goes back to schooling, I really do, because it is based on self-esteem. My daughter works in retail; she works at Woolworths. I think it has a lot to do with your education, your self-esteem and how you feel about yourself. A lot of Indigenous people feel very uncomfortable selling things. That is why when I work with people I try to find out what it is that they want to do—'Not your mother, your sister, your brother, your uncle or your cousin; what do you want to do? Where do you feel comfortable?' And people will tell you: 'I don't like being up the front.' That takes time.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Please do not think I am advocating that retail is the answer.

Ms Kelly—No, no; we know. It is the one area that people notice in Cairns.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—It is very noticeable.

Mr SNOWDON—It employs large numbers of people.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—And it offers flexibility in many cases.

Ms Kelly—In tourism, especially here in Cairns, they are screaming out for Indigenous people. That is an area that we are trying to work on, and it really does take time. I find that you have to work on making Indigenous people feel good about themselves. I try to let them see that

they are living in a tourism town and international tourists are interested in them and their culture. When someone is asking something about you, it makes you feel good.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—The Alice Springs Desert Park, which we have also been to, have now got to the point where they have trained the local people to be tour guides through the park. That has taken time. Warren knows more about this than I do—it is right in his backyard. When we went there, it was gratifying to see the pride that these people had not only in the job but in the fact that the job was to talk about their culture and their land. It is pretty impressive stuff, but it was not done overnight.

Ms Wii—And they probably were not just sent to a course and told, 'Learn that. Go.' Somebody would have walked them through it.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—There was nurturing and mentoring.

Ms Wii—I think that personal support needs funding to back it up—even if you have that personal support for a year to get you through.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—If someone cares, that helps others to achieve. Is that what you are saying?

Ms Kelly—Yes, 'care' is the magic word. I am from the old days of social security and CES, and I think now that they have become businesses it is the bottom line, it is the dollar, and you are just another number now—

Ms Wii—The care factor.

Ms Kelly—whereas we do this personal support and people know that you do care about what is going on in their lives. I dealt with some people 10 years ago, and when I bump into them they still tell me about what is happening in their lives. I think it is about building relationships with people. I do not think Cairns is so big that we cannot do that.

Ms Wii—The Job Networks themselves, though, are very difficult for Indigenous people to access if they live out at West Cairns. To get a bus in once a week to have your chat with them is really difficult, and it would not hurt the Job Networks to come out to the suburbs. We have 14 community centres, and they are freely available to any service that wants to come out there and sit down and talk to the people. I will stream the people in front of them, but I cannot get them out of their offices.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—That is an interesting point.

Ms Kelly—That is why we went out to the community centres—you know what they say: if Mohammed won't go to the mountain ... We put up a sign outside the front of community centre—

Ms Wii—On a piece of butcher's paper.

Ms Kelly—on a piece of butcher's paper. We went at eight o'clock on a Saturday morning, and I said to Joy, 'Let me do it this way because you will find out who wants to work.' We put a piece of butcher's paper out the front saying: 'Sick of being broke? Want a job? Drop in.'

Ms Wii—We did not have an advertising budget, obviously.

Ms Kelly—That sign stayed up on that fence until it rained and fell off.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—How many turned up?

Ms Kelly—I had eight guys waiting for me when I turned up there at 8.30 in the morning, and they all got jobs.

CHAIR—Fantastic.

Ms Kelly—That is what it is all about. Truly, it is a myth to say that people do not want to find a job.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I agree with that.

Ms Kelly—It is ridiculous. People do want to find a job, but they want to find a job that they are going to love going to work and doing.

Ms Wii—We had a research study done on us, and they put it up as a best practice model for the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme on this whole project that was all about jobs. They said the same thing: it was the fact that we went out there into the community and built relationships.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—You did it on their terms.

CHAIR—'Are you bored sick of being broke and want a job? Drop in.'

Ms Kelly—Maybe they dropped in out of curiosity, but the word spread and we could not keep up with it. I think that is where it starts: you have to go back into the community and start talking to people. When you start finding out what their needs are, it falls into place.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—And don't set it up to fail by other means.

Ms Kelly—No.

Ms Wii—And that can be difficult when you get a grant and government agencies bump up the line a bit. You start off thinking you have nine months to get 25 people jobs, and then all of a sudden a contract from wherever says that you have to get 40 jobs.

Ms Kelly—If someone gets a job, you have to fill that space.

Ms Wii—Once it is successful, what we need is for the bar to stay the same. Then we can put more work into the 25 participants for this Community Employment Assistance Program—we get a chance to be able to build that relationship and keep them in the job.

CHAIR—There is a chance the next time that it might be a fraction tougher.

Ms Kelly—Then we use the people who find jobs to talk to other people.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—That is where you get the true effect.

Ms Wii—We once had 10 who were relatives.

Ms Kelly—You identify who the leaders are in the community. We found out that the people who are interested in the children are the ones that you talk to. You get them on side.

CHAIR—How much does this come down to the elected members and to the council?

Ms Kelly—Warren's great. He has been very supportive.

CHAIR—Could you give us a picture of your own city council?

Ms Wii—I sent a report up as usual and that is where it goes.

Ms Kelly—There is something about the support of council that seemed to swing this. I do not know whether it is because we are working at a local level and people know you. I am not sure. But it really did work. We do not know why it worked.

CHAIR—I just wanted to get a bit of a snapshot of where the local things fit in. I want to ask about the government agencies, the Indigenous coordination centre, I think we call it. Are you aware or have you heard of it?

Ms Kelly—I have heard of them and I am aware of them, but—

Ms Wii—I have never seen them.

CHAIR—They haven't been jumping out of the shrubbery?

Ms Kelly—You were talking before about Indigenous people getting into their own businesses. I am working with a group of people who are trying to do that. We have been slugging our insides out. It is five years since I went to the conference in Sydney to say that Indigenous tourism is going to be one of the tools that is going to help Indigenous people find jobs but, somewhere down that way, they do not seem to believe that. Every other state seems to identify that there are opportunities for Indigenous people with tourism, but in Queensland, especially up this end of the line, it is a case of go slow. Yet Cairns is the second most visited city in Australia. We have the highest population of Indigenous people, plus the peoples of the Pacific and New Guinea and so forth. We have unlimited opportunities up here to present that culture but everybody seems to be dragging their heels on that one.

CHAIR—We have been inundated and pleasantly surprised. When you do a national inquiry, you go to where you think the interest is but in just the last 24 hours we have been inundated. I think it would be fair to say that we have been very touched by the interest we have found in your region. People want to talk to us and explain to us. It has surprised me and we are grateful for that.

I want to run this past you, and you can pick me up if I get it wrong: there is a belief from the national analysis that 80 per cent of our international visitors want an Indigenous experience and that about 10 per cent of them actually have one. I do not know if that is right or not, but that is what someone said.

Ms Kelly—Those are the figures that I have heard and 37 per cent of people who leave Cairns leave with about $4,000 unspent money. The Tjapukai get about 11 per cent of the visitors, so there is still a huge opportunity waiting. I have just been nominated on behalf of our organisation to sit on the Great Green Way tourism strategy group, which goes from Townsville to Cairns.

CHAIR—We were wondering whether international visitors out there in the retail market around the world come to Cairns to see the Great Barrier Reef; they ask where the Indigenous people are and conclude that they might be at Uluru. The marketing might be different. I do not know anything about it. We are just finding out at the moment and we want to ask Tourism Australia how they see it as well. I wanted to put those sorts of things before you because it seems to me that this region seems to have the enthusiasm that you have shown us this morning. This region seems to have a lot of potential.

Ms Wii—It is huge.

Ms Kelly—We are sitting on a goldmine.

CHAIR—We have all known that, but it is still happening.

Ms Wii—I think that has a lot to do with people in government agencies—FNQACC, DET, DEWR. All of these lovely agencies need to get their act together and start moving it forward.

Ms Kelly—Three years is a long time to be making a decision on something.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—That is a very good statement.

Mr SNOWDON—Following on from what you were just saying, what we learnt, as we went around Australia, is that leadership from corporate leaders is a key aspect of this. We have seen a dramatic cultural shift in the mining industry to the point where 17 per cent of Comalco's employees at Weipa are Indigenous and they have a target of 35 per cent. A decade ago you could have fired a shotgun down the middle of their work force and you would not have hit a blackfella. That is not the situation anymore. Why is it then that the tourism industry does not adopt a similar approach? I do not know what the turnover is of this hotel, for example, but I would be very surprised if it is not very high. I know for example that Voyages—who we will be seeing in Sydney—have started to set targets for the employment of Indigenous people. If tourism industry leadership adopted a similar approach and said, 'Forget whatever else might be

going on in our heads; in the Cairns region we're now going to set targets whereby 10 or 15 per cent of all people employed in the tourism industry will be Indigenous,' the world would change.

Ms Kelly—It probably would.

Ms Wii—Dramatically.

Mr SNOWDON—Who do we see?

Ms Wii—No-one up here.

Ms Kelly—Maybe the Hotels Association.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—This is a really important question, because the point Warren is making was so impressed upon me yesterday. That was my first exposure to the mining industry and the shift is huge.

Ms Kelly—I worked in tourism myself long before I joined the Public Service. I think it is truly an attitude problem. I think it is disappointing that the tourism industry does not want to share with the Indigenous people of this country. They have so much to offer and yet they are reluctant to share. Shame on them.

Mr SNOWDON—We will talk to them—severely.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I am looking forward to that.

Ms Kelly—I think that the people who are on the tourism board of the Great Green Way are the most forward-thinking people I have ever met and it will be a pleasure to work with them. They are the people who are helping the people of Paronella Park. They are so progressive down there. They could teach the people here in Cairns a few lessons.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—It is quite ironic, because when you look at the promotional stuff that appears on TV and film advertising Australia overseas, there is always a black fellow with a didgeridoo or a boomerang appropriately decked out in their cultural paint and costume, and that is tourism promotion for this country. They always have a role in that, but you do not see them in the industry per se.

Ms Kelly—We were down in Innisfail a couple of weeks ago and they actually have working partnerships with Indigenous communities down there, and I think that is a step in the right direction. So maybe you should be talking to those people and finding out.

Mr SNOWDON—I have one further question. You made some very strong comments about the CDEP. I asked this question of the previous witnesses: what were the 430 people who are now on the CDEP doing before the CDEP scheme started?

Ms Kelly—They were probably on unemployment benefits getting treated the same way they are treated on the CDEP.

Ms Wii—I went straight from school to the CDEP.

Mr SNOWDON—From what we hear, only a small proportion of people went straight from school to the CDEP. We need to get our heads around why people choose to go on the CDEP when they can get on the unemployment benefit. It is not compulsory.

Ms Kelly—The responsibility is not there, is it? The CDEP should have top-ups for training. They could have but they didn't.

Mr SNOWDON—CDEP is not compulsory. If I am on a benefit, I can choose whether or not to go on the CDEP and, once I go on the CDEP, I have passed the work test: you are employed. It does not matter what people think; you are employed. I do not accept your criticism. I have a very different point of view about it.

Ms Kelly—I have lived up here all of my life and CDEPs only have less than one per cent outcomes in employment.

Mr SNOWDON—I understand all that, but that is not my point. My point is that you cannot blame people for being on CDEP if their other option was unemployment. The pathway to work has to involve a whole lot of things. If CDEP is not resourced to provide the training they require to get a job, do not blame the CDEP; blame the people providing the training.

Ms Kelly—I blame the people who set up the CDEP programs.

Mr SNOWDON—You might, and we could have this argument for a week. My point is that the 450 who are currently on the CDEP would have been on UB or its equivalent. They would have been sitting there and not turned up for two days a week or not turned up at all.

Ms Kelly—Unfortunately, that is what it is like with CDEP too. I find it soul-destroying that everyone turns up to work on the same days—two days a week they are supposed to work. You would think that someone would work out a roster system. You could have so many people turn up over the week that you could get things done, but they do not. Everyone would turn up for the first two days, stand around looking at four walls doing nothing and then the rest of the day they are off. On the third day, you pick up your pay, are down in the pub and drink that, and then you are back to work the next week. That is not work. That is how CDEP programs were set up.

Mr SNOWDON—No, it is not. I happen to know quite a deal about this subject—

Ms Kelly—Up here, in Queensland?

Mr SNOWDON—In Queensland and across the top of Australia—all over Australia. It is something that I have some expertise in.

Ms Kelly—Okay.

Mr SNOWDON—I do not disagree with the fact that there are different management techniques in CDEP, but it is patently absurd to say that because people are on CDEP they are

not doing work. They are working; the definition is work. They are no longer classed as unemployed. No matter what you might think, that is what happens.

Ms Kelly—It is a cop-out.

Mr SNOWDON—Not by the CDEP.

CHAIR—This is an ongoing discussion. We will ring the bell and come out in the next round.

Ms Wii—If you do talk to people about tourism up here, could you please talk to people like Advance Cairns and FNQACC who deal with the high end of the tourism market.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—What is the FNQACC?

Ms Wii—It is the Far North Queensland Area Consultative Committee. They are the people who look after the super yachts and the big money. We are looking at the next level down, the ordinary person in the street. Those two agencies—and there are probably more—look after all this big money. Who looks after developing the lower end of the scale?

CHAIR—I will explain that we respond to submissions. We advertise nationally and anyone who has an interest in Indigenous employment—we went to the positive end of the issue—can put in a submission. It is a bit confined, but we are open to everyone. We would welcome submissions because we have decided—we have not talked to the rest of the committee, but that is bad luck for them; they are not here and we will make a decision—that we are coming back.

Mr SNOWDON—We want to finish this discussion.

Ms Kelly—Right!

CHAIR—This is a wonderful democracy of ours. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 10.38 am to 10.56 am

[10.56 am]

WINER, Mr Michael Paul, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to give a short opening statement?

Mr Winer—I am not aware of how much you know about our organisation. I know that you, Chair, have had a presentation. Would it be useful for me to talk about that?

CHAIR—Does everyone know Michael and Michael's organisation? It seems that two of us do and two of us do not, so a brief summary would be great.

Mr Winer—I will give a brief summary and maybe an update for those who are aware of where we are heading at the moment. My organisation is a coalition of corporate and philanthropic groups. We have been delivering support in our pilot trial site at Cape York for four years now. We provide a range of support, mainly through providing people into Aboriginal organisations and programs. We are a very small organisation. There is me, my PA and a trainee. We have had young Aboriginal leader Tammy Williams seconded to us from the DPP over the last 18 months to help us with the development of our roll-out program. We have a very strong and active board of corporate and philanthropic CEOs. They include people like Colin Carter, one of the founding partners of the Boston Consulting Group; Christopher Bartlett, who heads up the program for global leadership at Harvard in the US; Steve Rothfield, who is a retired businessman who used to own Bryant and May and a number of other businesses; Ann Sherry, who is the CEO of Westpac New Zealand; Rupert Myer; Noel Pearson; Tammy Williams, a young Indigenous leader; and Mark Rose, who is a doctor from RMIT Business school, which has recently moved across to the Victorian government.

We have a very strong board that bring a range of networks and expertise into the Indigenous field which have not been so freely and solidly available in the past. Our corporate partners such as Westpac bank, Boston Consulting Group, the Body Shop, Gilbert and Tobin lawyers, Wright Management, Dusseldorp WorldSkills Leaders Forum, Myer Foundation, Colonial Foundation and Cisco Systems all work in a very coordinated approach to provide a platter of expertise, which has been seconded to help work on over 140 different projects over the four years. They have provided about 400 people, ranging from a month to 12 months, through secondment, fellowship and volunteer programs. They are mostly at middle or senior management level—it is a fairly high calibre. Most of our corporate partners pretty much pick up the bill for the costs of their engagement up here. There are a few of them that provide people and time through various grants. We support some of the accommodation and those sorts of costs.

The idea of IEP is, first and foremost, to build the capacity of the Indigenous organisations and institutions to provide services to Indigenous people. So in Cape York we work with Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation on business and economic development issues and land management issues, which is their area. We are doing a little bit of work with Apunipima Cape York Health Council. We work a lot with the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, which is an Indigenous leaders think tank.

Probably the key thing that we have developed is a platform of engagement that we think works very well. We have tested it very solidly now, to the point where we are going to be moving into several other sites around the country this year and next year. That platform is basically one of putting high-level expertise behind Indigenous ideas and programs, whether that be in employment, economic development or business development, and quite often into the social programs as well, because we find that one cannot operate without the other. You need a strong health program, a strong youth and child program, a strong leadership program and strong family programs if you are to get strong employment and economic development outcomes. So although our original intention was just to work on micro business development and business development generally, we have expanded way beyond our original brief. That is because the more we work in these regions, the more complex and entrenched the problems appear to be. I think that is probably a snapshot of who we are. Would you like to now take it to questions?

CHAIR—Yes. I would like you to go through some of the general issues as well. I will ask you a question just to satisfy, perhaps, my own curiosity in terms of the connection with Harvard. We know that Harvard have a particular interest in Indigenous issues, and probably some would argue internationally that they are as far advanced as anyone in the world in talking about these issues, particularly issues of dependency and those sorts of things. Is there a connection with the Harvard Business School?

Mr Winer—We probably could be utilising Harvard a lot more. The big Harvard study into Indigenous issues I think is one of the greatest pieces of work that has ever been done, and we take significant guidance from that. In relation to Christopher and his role, I guess he is one of the philosophers on the board and brings his own intellect. But we find that people with an MBA background bring really high value to the current Indigenous situation. In fact, we have an MBA from Harvard over here at the moment doing a major piece of work on CDEP reform. We find that the Boston Consulting Group is a great recruiter from Harvard. You really get some of the top young guns in the world coming through their programs.

We see the issues of Indigenous affairs as being so entrenched, and so many people have got it wrong over the last 30 years, that we need the best thinkers and the best people working alongside the Indigenous leaders if it is to be cracked. My chairman, Colin Carter, gave a great example of the situation of some of the companies we have working putting in this huge effort to develop a new product line. If we could even transform part of that effort into helping Indigenous people crack their problems, which are so much deeper and broader than how you knock up your bottom line a few degrees or how you fill a bit of a black hole in your budget—

CHAIR—I think that is quite right. We had the experience yesterday with Comalco of privilege and we have agreed to have that within house. Sometimes you are able to have informal discussions like that rather than be in the glare of the public, as we tend to be at times. I would make the point, and I am sure many of my colleagues would agree with me, about the sheer strength of the intellectual capacity of the corporate sector and what I experienced yesterday, for a whole range of reasons as to why it has happened, was something that gives me confidence about the opportunities for the future, without underestimating the difficulties. I welcome our interchange this morning. For my little part of this morning I would like to go back to where you mentioned micro business. What I remember of your micro business would be a couple of years—two or three years—old. How is that going? Then I will ask Mr Snowdon, Mr

Slipper and Ms Annette Ellis to ask a couple of questions and then we will have a general discussion.

Mr Winer—I think it is going quite well at the moment. It is a real tough one. Developing an enterprise within a city, let alone within a remote community—let alone an Indigenous one in either of those scenarios—is a really tough call. We pursue that for a number of reasons. One is that employment options are obviously limited in a remote area. Secondly, we support aspirations, and the aspiration for business development is pretty strong and broad. But it is also that what business ethics and thinking brings to a broader community context is really interesting and it is showing some interesting results at the moment. I do not actually have the numbers with me, but we could probably help you crunch them.

There is a really good cluster of businesses starting to develop. What is also really interesting at the moment is that in places like Aurukun and Weipa and Napranum, through the Weipa multipurpose facility, there is the utilisation of social enterprise, in the sense of setting up a business around skills and attitudinal development and of building an entrepreneurial spirit. But the thing we have to recognise is that the area in which we have probably had the most success is tourism. There are probably seven or eight tourism enterprises going now and there are some really big anchor businesses under way in areas at the tip of Cape York. In the south-east corner there are also some fairly large tourism enterprises that are under development at the moment. They provide a good example of where we are getting people wanting to set up a tourism business, but those people (a) have never been a tourist and (b) have never worked in tourism. In many cases they have never worked nine to five on any regular basis, yet they want to set up a tourism enterprise. So our model has taken a whole lot of steps back but it seems to be working where we are facilitating a chain of events. It does not start at the business plan; it actually starts at taking people to a similar sort of enterprise to get some work experience. It is doing all those sorts of things before you get to the business planning stage.

What we are seeing is that, while the first half-a-dozen or dozen businesses to be established were really tough, they are having a snowball effect in that people are starting to look at the families involved in them. When the families started these businesses they were told: 'You're never going to do it. It's going to fail. People have tried this before.' At the Cape they call it the crabs in the bucket pulling the others back in. That is the sort of attitude to business development. We are seeing some of the families that have got businesses going and that had to import mentors and expertise starting to mentor other community members about business development. That is starting to build the very early stages of some sort of business knowledge and capacity in communities that have had about zero of it.

The businesses that were constructed in the communities were generally council run. They were generally managed by non-Indigenous people and they generally operated on a communist social model of enterprise, so you have to deconstruct that. That is really tough. You have to back the solo little individuals in the community who then become the catalysts for further business development. We are seeing in some of these early communities a few businesses that have been going for two or three years. A range of other family members are saying, 'We want to talk about business; we want to look at business.'

The other thing that we have done a lot of work on is salvaging dodgy, poorly performing businesses that communities had established without good expertise or advice. I think there are

still some big issues that have to be crunched around the governance of those businesses—I think people are now in a position where they want to do that—and around the role of non-Indigenous board members and expertise that can be brought in and sat on a chair. So it is about separating to some extent—these are the larger businesses versus the micro businesses—the money making from the spending of the profit and looking at shareholder structures of how that money leaks back into the traditional owner groups and back to the community. I think that is where some of this Harvard stuff is really relevant. Some of the US examples are stunning—such as how you structure a communal business into an economic model.

Mr SNOWDON—Can you give me some view of the range of businesses we are talking about? You mentioned tourism. What other sorts of business are there?

Mr Winer—It is across the board.

Mr SLIPPER—Is it possible to give the committee a list, even if you have to take it on notice?

Mr Winer—We would need to do that through Balkanu. They are Balkanu's clients. That is why it is hard for me sometimes to give examples. I can give a broad example but I think Balkanu should be able to present you with that sort of information in a format. It is funny: a lot of people with the Indigenous businesses think they can just get the information—that there is a lot less privacy around it. But I am sure we can get you a list of the businesses. They range right across the board.

For instance, there is one area where a bus shuttle has been developed between two communities where the local taxi companies were charging what I must say were very exorbitant fees to get people from one community to another. There are businesses for earthmoving, brick making, timber harvesting, native bee honey collecting, a houseboat, close on a dozen different tourism enterprises around the place now in some form of development and a bakery. There is probably a larger range through proper and independent advice, as opposed to people who needed to tick their box to say that they had done a business plan and been given advice and there is a business up and running. We have also advised against probably as many businesses again. That been a really crucial part of it—to say, 'No, that is not a viable business.' That is something that had not happened much in the past. Most people seemed to be able to justify that a business was viable. So there is a broad range and I would be happy to connect you to the appropriate people for exact listings.

I think the other aspect is a number of key anchor businesses. The Weipa multipurpose facility is a fantastic initiative of Cape York Partnerships and the Cape York institute that we have put significant power into through the Boston Consulting Group and others. I do not know if you have had a chance to see that operation but that was a bit of a venture between Comalco and the landholder groups up in that region, where there is an accommodation facility, a training facility and I think one of the most exciting job readiness programs I have ever seen.

Mr SNOWDON—Would you describe yourselves as providing business incubation services?

Mr Winer—No, Balkanu, our partner, provides that. We simply put high calibre people into the Indigenous initiatives and organisations. So Balkanu runs a business incubation program

through its business hubs and its business unit here in Cairns. A Westpac person has been put in there as the business hub's manager. We have got a business planner coming online who works there for some of the higher level stuff and to check that the business plan is being done by other staff and things like that. We put the capacity into that business incubation model and it seems to be working well where there is stability in those business incubators. We have found the funding very erratic. We need those platforms to be able to do anything because it takes us away from dealing with the politics and makes sure we talk with all the different players.

One of the great success factors in Cape York is that we are building strong Indigenous institutions. They face north into their people and that turns a situation of having hundreds of field officers running around and endless meetings and things into a situation where it is the Indigenous organisations that take the responsibility for sorting out the political, cultural and law issues. That is where everyone, particularly government, gets tangled up. In the Pacific since the early explorers people have not understood Indigenous culture and law and that has frozen them from action or caused distrust and an inability to get action in a range of programs. The platform that we have helped establish puts that responsibility back. It is the Aboriginal people who know whether a particular tourism site is on a person's land or someone else's land and what permission processes are needed. It is about putting our confidence and support behind the leadership. Wherever we operate we need strong leadership and we have found that in Cape York and a number of other sites around Australia where we are moving to.

That platform of building strong Indigenous institutions has been crucial and it works with health, education, business development or employment. Look at the American models: American Indigenous people who are going through the roof have strong institutions that take control of that politic and law. The ones that are failing are the ones that have not got those strong institutions.

Mr SNOWDON—Going back to the business incubation, do Balkanu get access to funding support for the incubation service?

Mr Winer—Yes. They get a mixture of state and federal funding for the business incubation service. The initial funding came through the philanthropies. That is a good source for trialling high risk things. You would need to talk to them about the issues, but it has been really inconsistent and it has been difficult for them to plan long term because one group was giving them one-year funding, another three-year funding and ATSIC were about to fund and they closed down. Now it has all started from scratch with the ICCs. That is coming on but I think the baton was handed on. So there is a real lack of consistency. That limits things like corporate and private engagement because they need that sound platform to operate off.

Mr SNOWDON—Do any of the people who eventually form businesses and may be part of the incubation services undertake the NEIS training? Are they funded for NEIS?

Mr Winer—Balkanu is probably the one to talk to about that. Our job is to bring resources in. They know the nitty-gritty of those things. I know they have had some sort of NEIS program but my understanding is that it was not that successful. Balkanu would be able to give you the detail on that.

Mr SLIPPER—I believe that an organisation is only as good as the people behind it and I am very impressed with the board you have outlined to us, and I have seen the material. How does that board meet, given that they seem to be all over the world? Is there a phone hook-up?

Mr Winer—They meet face to face about four times a year. They also individually come up here. Colin Carter, my chair, also sits on the board of the Cape York institute. He is over at their meeting today. They come up on a regular basis. They are very committed. They are involved to different degrees. For example, Steve Rothfield retired very early. He was very successful in business. He works for us full time. He has been doing our scoping study down in Shepparton in Victoria, where we are going to set up an office. He has worked pretty much full time this week. Obviously Colin, as chair, is very active. Some of the other board members just lever their networks, because their time is obviously tight.

Mr SLIPPER—You told me a little bit about your family background, but what have you done in the area of business prior to your current occupation?

Mr Winer—I do not come from a business background. I am—what would you call it?—a mobiliser.

Mr SLIPPER—So what have you done before?

Mr Winer—I worked in the environment movement for many years. When I moved up here, I set up the Wilderness Society branch here and did a lot of land acquisition up on Cape York. Through that I saw a lot of the issues around poverty. As people were getting their land back, there was a need for some sort of income when they went back onto country. So I moved into establishing Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships. I have always been a people mobiliser. I did that previously in the environment movement and now I do it in the corporate sector. It is a very similar job.

Mr SLIPPER—I notice you refer to Aboriginal people and not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, yet I notice that Horn Island is included in the Cape York region, according to your calculations, but Thursday Island, 10 minutes away, is not. Does your organisation only work with Aboriginal people on Cape York and Horn Island, or do you see yourself as having some responsibility for Torres Strait Islanders as well?

Mr Winer—No, we do not work with the Torres Strait Island group at the moment, although through Balkanu and others we have had a number of Torres Strait Island clients. The background for us is that, when we were first establishing ourselves, we were going to be an international organisation, an Indigenous business institute for the Asia-Pacific.

Mr SLIPPER—For Indigenous people in all of those countries?

Mr Winer—Yes. The more we looked at it, the more we thought, 'This is an impossible task.' We decided to pull right back and focus on one geographical location and one group of people. We set a few criteria to pick that place. Also, in Cape York, the Pearsons were very involved in our establishment in the first case. We decided that it was just too hard to try and do everything, so we said: 'Let's really work intensively in one region and try and get it right. Let's not invent something new that is going to fail across the country again and just be another failed effort.

Let's pool all our resources into one region and see if we can get it right, and then let's look at what capacity we have to work within some other regions.'

For instance, Westpac provide us with 50 one-month secondees and about eight one-year fellowships a year. If we spread them across Australia, I think we would be wasting our time. You start putting them into five or 10 communities and suddenly you are getting a critical mass of activity and consistency, where you build the trust with that community as well that you are not just a 'one-offer'—you are not another case of fly through, fly out, and drop a program in there that is not really relevant to the need. I am sure you have all heard lots about all those sorts of things.

So we have done what we call our Cape York pilot. We recognise that it is at least a 20-year program. Our board has made a 20-year commitment to the region. Most of our corporates have now been in for the five or so years. We did about three years of think-tanking before we started doing anything. But the complexity and entrenched nature of the problem needs a huge intensive effort. We feel that that critical mass is starting to occur in Cape York.

With respect to the benefit that the corporate sector can bring, we are comfortable enough that it is helping that we are going to start a rural site. We want to do a rural site because there are different dynamics. We are looking at the Goulburn Valley-Shepparton region. We are looking for an urban site, where we want to pilot a city based IEP model. That is bringing a similar sized coalition for intensive effort. The review that we did a couple of years ago recommended this as a model, and we feel that it was a correct model.

We would probably like to look at another remote site so that we can start looking at how you transfer learnings between one site and another. And because we do not want to become another big infrastructure and organisation, we want to implement a learning network that is going to travel across all those sites and then to other Indigenous groups with strong leadership, leadership that is determined to confront alcohol and welfare dependency. Those are our criteria. Through that learning network we will assist other regions in building coalitions—

Mr SLIPPER—I am a bit confused. You said you wanted to be an organisation that was assisting all Indigenous peoples in the Asia-Pacific. Then you realised the magnitude of the job and you decided to focus on a particular region; namely, Cape York. In your last answer you mentioned lots of other areas. Maybe you have explained it in another way but, if you are focusing on Cape York, what you doing in Shepparton?

Mr Winer—We are building a similar coalition of corporates. We have just completed the first stage of our scoping, and that is to look at what Indigenous organisations we should work with in the Shepparton region. Here we have got—

Mr SLIPPER—But I think you said that you have decided to just focus on Cape York—

Mr Winer—We have for the last four years.

Mr SLIPPER—And now you are moving beyond that.

Mr Winer—Yes. We feel confident now and we have also got excess corporate interest.

Mr SLIPPER—I have admired a lot of what Noel Pearson has said over the years and I think that it is great you have got him involved. The Treasurer had an outstandingly successful recent visit to Cape York. To what extent was your organisation involved in the Treasurer's visit and helping to facilitate what was a pretty important visit? It is important that people at a higher level of the government, particularly those who have not had responsibility for Indigenous affairs, see the good news stories and the bad news stories and work out what has not worked and what will work in the future.

Mr Winer—We were involved to an extent. I have talked about our corporate partners but equally we sit alongside our Indigenous partner organisations, one of which is the Cape York institute that organised that tour. We did a briefing for the Treasurer and his team and Colin Carter, my chairman, travelled with that group and had a meeting as IEP chairman with the Treasurer. So we were quite involved.

I will just clarify this expansion model. We always thought of ourselves as a national organisation but piloting and trialling intensively on one site. That was to get the learnings right and the program right and the platform right for how we operate. We feel confident enough now that we have got that component as right as we can at the moment. What we have been doing has built a lot of interest in the corporate sector. They really like what is going on. They, like many other people, are very attracted to Noel Pearson's philosophies. Our organisation's aims are based on Noel's book *Our Right to Take Responsibility* and that philosophy of breaking welfare dependency underpins the philosophy of Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships.

Mr SLIPPER—I can understand that Cape York will be an excellent pilot, but one would think the nature of Indigenous people on Cape York and their lifestyles would be quite different from the lifestyles of urban Indigenous people in places like Shepparton and Mildura. How can you use what you have learnt in Cape York in Shepparton? Aren't you in effect doing a new pilot down there?

Mr Winer—Absolutely. There is a large amount of commonality for Indigenous people, whether they are living in La Perouse or Redfern in Sydney or in Newcastle, or whether they are living in Shepparton or Wagga Wagga. There are a lot of common issues based around low life expectancy, welfare dependency and drug and alcohol problems. There is a lot of commonality too around what causes those problems.

But then there are differences, and they are not just between remote and urban communities; one urban community can be very different in their aspirations to another urban community. Our philosophy is that you have got to work intensively at a local level, with the local leadership and the local organisations. They are the ones who are going to find a solution for their own mob. It is definitely not one size fits all, not at all. There are geographical differences and there are infrastructure differences. In Shepparton the main game is employment; in Cape York it is an important issue but there are not really any real employment opportunities—that is a different kettle of fish. In an urban area, suddenly you have got all sorts of other issues such as drugs and other things that come into an urban environment.

So our idea is to intensively pilot. Cape York is our remote pilot. We do a rural pilot because we are aware there are all sorts of different opportunities and different problems from an urban site. We trial another one on how you transfer knowledge between two remote sites. But I think

there will be a lot of interest in learning, too, between the urban, the remote and the city sites. There will be some really interesting cultural exchanges and things.

I will give you a really good example, and that is the Boys from the Bush program, which we were very involved in in the early days. It produced eucalypt oils and things then, but there is a new phase. They were finding that with getting kids from the cape to Cairns it was too easy for them to zip back home—'Oh, are you going back up to Aurukun or Coen or something?' They will jump in the car and suddenly they are not in the job anymore. So the latest phase of the Boys from the Bush program, which has been hugely successful, was to take the boys down to Shepparton for fruit picking. There is a huge shortage of fruit pickers there and we have a huge excess of unemployed people.

What it did was take the kids right away. One of the biggest problems with the kids going to university or coming down to Cairns or Sydney to go and work is getting calls from mum and dad and uncle saying, 'You've got to come home; we're missing you,' and this sort of thing. By getting the kids all the way to Shepparton, it was much harder, especially with a one-way ticket. They had to earn the money. And they did: a number of those kids drove home in cars they had bought with the money they had earned fruit picking for nine months. It is phenomenal stuff. Most of these kids had never worked a single day in their life, and I reckon it would have been so hard to get them to do it in the cape or in Cairns. But once you get them out of that environment and that dysfunctional community, away from where they can be pulled back into what Noel describes as these orbits, and get them built up, then they can either throw the rope to other youth in their community or go back and work as solid leaders in their community. They get rid of those bad habits and build a work principle and ethic and understanding—a habit. It is habit building, a lot of work stuff.

CHAIR—We even had it described as becoming addicted to work, to the salary and to the work ethic, yesterday.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Thanks, Michael. This is my first introduction to your organisation, so I am listening and learning as we speak. Have you considered putting in a written submission to the committee with a lot of this experience and where you have come from? We have a web site thing here, but I am wondering whether you are in a position to consider giving us some more detail that we can work with.

Mr Winer—I will take on doing that.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I am not asking you to do it; I am just wondering whether you had considered it.

Mr Winer—I had considered it. Because we are rolling out into Shepparton at the moment, we have been a bit flat strap to look at other things, but I think we could pull something together. We certainly have a lot of background tracking of how we are going and stuff that you can look at.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Exactly. I suggest that the committee would find it incredibly useful to have some of that information—for example, on the Boys from the Bush program you have just made reference to and on other aspects of your work. I do not understand how it works

entirely and that is why I think a submission would be good; but I fully understand most if not all of what you have said, and we have heard similar evidence wherever we go about the barriers, the difficulties, the cultural realities and all those sorts of things. We are hearing that consistently. What I need you to explain for argument's sake is: what is the interface, if any, between your organisation and the education system? I understand that you say you are working for Balkanu, but you are now stepping out of that and working for other communities by going down to Shepparton. That will not be Balkanu; that will be another organisation or set of organisations, won't it?

Mr Winer—Yes, it will be another community. The reason Shepparton was appealing to us was that there were some strong Aboriginal organisations there with strong leadership.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—So that is setting up new partnerships between your organisation and future—

Mr Winer—What we need to do is find another major bank and another major consulting firm. We feel that mix makes a good IT firm. It is about getting them a platform, but it will be different to the one we have here because we need a large corporate focus on one area where they can have a big impact. We do not want to split that effort.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—What interface, if any, is there between your organisation and the education system?

Mr Winer—Education is not our primary area of expertise. However, we take the cue from the Aboriginal leadership. We are giving some assistance at the moment through the Cape York Institute. They have two really interesting programs that we are supporting at the moment. I was at the Aurukun school yesterday. When people ask me about this I always say, 'Literacy, literacy, literacy.' It is a crucial component of any success anywhere. There are two ways we are engaging in education. One is through the Aboriginal initiatives to achieve higher expectations by getting kids to top boarding schools. It is about creating the leadership, the cream—the future leaders of the cape. We have helped access philanthropic money to cover the gap between what you would pay at a normal boarding school and what you would pay at a top-level boarding school. We have done a few things like that.

The other program we are supporting is the youth talent development program. That is another program that is looking at kids who are really getting into their education at years 8, 9 and 10, and helping pull them right through. Again, we have good networks that we can link people to and hopefully something will develop there. I had up here the other day a literacy expert who came through one of our corporate networks. My job was to introduce him to a few people and hopefully somebody will grab his offer of two years of volunteer work.

IEP does not set the agenda. If education is a high priority for the Aboriginal local leadership and they convince us that we can add some value to that, we will. Personally, and at my board level, we all understand the huge importance of education. Again, under the leadership of Noel, we see the interrelationship of all of those things. It is great to have a good education program but how is that going to help if none of the parents really believe that their children will go anywhere with that education? They believe that their children are not going to get a good job and therefore they are not sending them to school. So there is a parenting program, a health

program and a nutrition program, and then there has to be some economic activity over here. So it is all interlinked; we totally understand that. I do not know of any Indigenous group that does not have education as a priority. It is a long story, but yes we do assist education projects.

The other place we could add much more value—and I think Shepparton will be a different kettle of fish—is in school to work programs. A lot of our partners in the corporate sector have been setting employment targets. Very few of the ones that I know of—you might have heard of better cases—have got anywhere near those targets. Most of those who have reached the target have scraped off the local icing. Particularly the mining sector, and some of the other organisations, have scraped the icing and employed people who would have got jobs within government and NGOs or who could have got jobs anyway. Those companies make up their employment numbers that way. We say to the corporates: 'That's fine. You're going to get to one, two, three or, if you are really lucky, seven per cent.' A few are reaching 10 per cent of their targets. 'What you really need to do is start working with the Indigenous organisations and leaders around work readiness.'

We have got to get occupational therapists in there working on anger management. We have got to start getting to the root of why people are not lasting long. In a lot of the employment programs that I see around people are still only lasting six or maybe 12 months. Tjapukai—I gather you met with Don and Judy Freeman—is an absolute exception, where they are getting people in jobs for five years. But even in a lot of the top programs that I have seen, at this stage anyway, very few people are lasting more than 12 months. In Shepparton, Gambina is a fantastic organisation and they also recognise that, with the 200 kids and young adults that they have put into jobs in the Shepparton region, they have hit the wall now because they have scaped the icing as well and the next 200 are going to be 10 times harder than that first 200.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—That is why I asked about the interface with education, because—and please do not misunderstand what I am about to say here—it is fine and proper and acceptable for there to be an alertness to the need to get to those bright kids into those elite schools and give them that opportunity, but then there is this other layer, which is just imperative in my view.

Mr Winer—It is the majority.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—The businesses that you have referred to that are already attempting to get up or are getting up: where they being financed from? Just briefly, where are they getting the kick-start money from? One of the issues for us is entrepreneurship in the Indigenous employment and business area. It is being told to us very simply and clearly that 'it ain't always that easy' for people to present themselves with an idea and get money.

Mr Winer—I do not know of many that have actually managed to get kick-start money.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—So how are they getting up and running?

Mr Winer—The best of them start with nothing; the best of them start really small and build up, like a business should. I think a lot of them get muddled by: 'Oh, we're going to get all this capital,' and it starts the whole business off on a wonky start anyway. Balkanu have a partnership

with Opportunity International, with microcredit. I think that is dynamite because you repay it—it is a loan. They are getting huge repayment rates and stuff like that.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—So when you say 'dynamite' you think it is a bad thing?

Mr Winer—No, it is great.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I did not know whether you meant it was going to explode in their face!

Mr Winer—No, I think it is fantastic. With microcredit you start with a $2,000 loan and once you repay that you go to $5,000.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I am aware of the international approach.

Mr Winer—Then you get $10,000, then $20,000. They have set up a system here that I think is going to be really good. The other area where a number of the businesses are getting money is through the mining royalties out of Weipa, with the WCCCA Trust and those sorts of things. I think that is fantastic because it is about the Indigenous community reinvesting its royalties into the community as opposed to them becoming another welfare payment which fuels problems, as some of the mining royalties have done in the past.

CHAIR—Yesterday I heard the phrase 'facilitator not benefactor'. There seems to me a responsibility on the corporate—if not a responsibility then leadership is needed—to challenge that, because that royalty payment can head in the benefactor way rather than the facilitator way.

Mr Winer—It can absolutely, and that is where I am really impressed with some of the American Indian groups with their casino flows. And I went and saw a shopping mall in Rotorua where the shareholder was the community and basically you could cash in shares for university scholarships; they had 280 people in university. But, on the question of capital, that is a really big issue and it has been one of the hardest things for us to crunch and get right. We are still working on that. Westpac and the others have been doing a lot of work with us to really crunch it. Ultimately what you want is for people to have such a good business case that they can go through the normal channels. But we have also been tackling the issue of some the larger tourism developments, which means $5 million or $10 million, where you have got to look for joint ventures and stuff.

There have been two really good projects. One was the sale of a cattle station. The community decided they did not actually want to run cattle, but they were given a cattle station. They sold the cattle rights and kept the access rights for cultural and fishing purposes and all that sort of stuff. That money has been helping, I think through loans back to the community. The first business is up and running, and that is a bus. They bought a bus out of the money from the sale. It is sort of independent, so it is not just a grant—it is actually money that is theirs. They are reinvesting and looking at how to invest it and stuff like that.

The other project was Cape York Fishing Company. That is another long story, so I will not get into it. People wanted to buy trawlers and stuff, but that was not going to be economically viable. So they have gone for a niche part of the fishing industry. They lease that out and, from

the money that comes back from that, people can get grants and loans to start up fishing industry businesses. So I think you have to get really creative about it. The big issues you would know about. Indigenous people generally lack capital, so they have nothing to loan against. I do not think we have properly crunched that one yet. If you do not have access to one of those royalty flows, which the majority do not—

CHAIR—There is the IBA too, but that is another thing.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I understand the difficulties in the larger projects, but I really do have an enormous amount of faith in the efficacy of the microcredit.

Mr SNOWDON—Can I just make one observation. You talk about the United States. We need to understand that, in the United States, the banking system is required by law to provide loans of a particular type to indigenous people, which does not happen in Australia.

Mr Winer—That is a good example. I just think there is great cross-learning that can go on between the US, New Zealand and here. One of the things that struck me at Rotorua was some of the stuff New Zealand had done on actually crunching the numbers. No-one has yet crunched the numbers properly on the impact of employment for Indigenous people. You should see some of the figures—and I would be happy to pass them on to your crew—from this conference I went to. The Maori have now crunched the figures on what it means in indigenous unemployment. Through education and people working their way up the ladder in the corporate sector, you increase their wage by $6,000. We are talking millions of dollars a year for a similar sized indigenous population. No-one here yet that I am aware of has crunched those numbers. It is really impressive stuff.

Mr SNOWDON—Neither have they crunched the numbers on the other side of the ledger—what the savings are.

Mr Winer—Yes.

CHAIR—Are you familiar with Denis Foley's academic work on entrepreneurship?

Mr Winer—A bit, but probably not enough to speak on.

CHAIR—One thing that we have not touched on is language literacy. The Trudgeon discussion, I suppose, is at the forefront of some of this. How do you feel about language literacy?

Mr Winer—Indigenous language?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Winer—Personally I support Noel's theories on that. My organisation does not have a policy on it, but from my perspective I think that, for the survival of Indigenous language, people have to be highly literate in English. They have to be highly educated. To hold two, three or four languages you need high-level education. You need university. You need to be highly literate in English because there are not many Indigenous languages left where there are enough

people speaking it for its long-term sustainability. So people have to look at really clever programs.

CHAIR—My problem is that people are in what I would perhaps call a no-man's land in terms of not having English as their first language now or not being strong in English. Therefore, they have the traditional language or a part of it and a bit of a mixture of both. Creole is another example of that. So there is a real interchange in terms of that.

Mr Winer—There is, but I think language is in crisis. Cape York is losing a number of languages probably every year. It is an absolute tragedy. I think that one of the solutions is high-level literacy in English.

Mr SNOWDON—I have to dispute that position most strongly. There is enough education and psychological material to explain the importance of bilingualism and the need to learn your mother language first. There is enough work which has been done to show that competency in your first language in the first instance will lead you to better competencies in English in the second instance.

CHAIR—That discussion could take us another hour or two.

Mr Winer—I want to stress that language is not an area of my expertise. I am a huge supporter of Indigenous language. The theory that Noel espouses, anyway, is: strong in English. That is talking about Cape York, where there are only a few nations, like the Wik nation now, that have a lot of traditional language speakers. There is probably a very different scenario in some of the Central Desert and Northern Territory regions that I cannot speak on.

CHAIR—There is a view that somehow those responsible for delivering education in a large degree have absconded or not delivered. It is a big subject, but is there one point—that is all we have time for—about value adding and the issue of tutors or whatever within the state system for education which leads to literacy?

Mr Winer—You have got to work with the parents. The parents have to want their kids at school, and the parents have to get their kids fed and dressed for school. The parents are the key.

Mr SLIPPER—Can you take on notice and let us know what elite schools you are sending the kids to. Do not answer that now—we do not have time. You mentioned that life expectancy was substantially less than for the non-Indigenous population, but you said in the material that I have that, on average, Indigenous people only live for five years less than the more general population. When I was Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs I got a reference into Indigenous health, and at that stage Indigenous men were living 20 years less. If it is only five now, that is a dramatic improvement in Cape York.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—It is not five. That is wrong.

Mr SLIPPER—That is what it said. In Cape York.

Mr SNOWDON—No, mate; it's wrong.

Mr SLIPPER—It is on a web site.

Mr Winer—Whose web site is that?

Mr SLIPPER—Balkanu's.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—It is Balkanu's web site.

Mr Winer—No, it is a 20-year deficit. The average life expectancy in Cape York has dropped below 50.

Mr SLIPPER—It says five.

Mr Winer—I think it must be a typo.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I think so too. If only it was not.

Mr Winer—Thank you for pointing that out. I will let Balkanu know. The life expectancy is horrendous.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—That is a big mistake.

CHAIR—We have resolved that. If I can have a slight indulgence with Shepparton, I am thinking of Rumbalara. But I guess those are some of your choices.

Mr Winer—Rumbalara is a fantastic organisation.

CHAIR—The document that you will assist us with—those conferences. That would be great with that number crunching—

Mr Winer—It is really exciting stuff.

CHAIR—if you could take that on notice.

Mr Winer—Yes.

CHAIR—We will undertake to accept that. Thank you once again, Michael. That was brilliant. We really appreciate your time.

Mr Winer—Good on you guys for looking into a crucial issue.

[11.54 am]

DEEMAL-HALL, Ms Eileen, Private capacity

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Deemal-Hall—My mother's country is Hopevale; my father is Irish. I am quite well versed in bilateral, bilingual and bipartisan relationships. I was asked to come today—actually I was dobbed in. I want to talk to the committee about some of the work I am doing and give some examples. I cannot yarn for anybody else because that would be disrespectful. I would like us to focus on three areas coming from the Cape York justice study done in 2001: the pandemic issues within Indigenous communities around community resourcing, representation and responsibility.

When we are talking about employment and education in an Indigenous area the illiterate person of the 21st century will not be someone who cannot read or write; it will be someone who is unable to learn, unlearn and relearn. When we look at a lot of the strategies that are currently in Indigenous communities we see that the government really struggles with those concepts. We talk about linguistics and whether the mother tongue should be the first and foremost. I support that idea. It is important to be fluent in your own culture and own sense of who you are within that framework first before you embark on anything else, but that is my viewpoint. In our own mechanics of government there are some issues that we need to look at. I will go through those. But first, are there any questions burning in your heads that you want to ask.

CHAIR—If you have said what you need to say then we will ask questions all day. As long as you feel you have said what you need to say.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Can you tell us your background? What brings you here today? You said you were dobbed in, but for the *Hansard* record can you tell us who you are, what you do and where you come from.

Ms Deemal-Hall—I am currently employed by the Queensland government as an interchange officer from the Department of Communities. The community I am assigned to is Hopevale, which is lucky for me because it is my mother's home town. I help coordinate and facilitate what we call negotiation tables. If you are the council and you say, 'Eileen, we want to have a negotiation table around education and training,' I make sure all the state and Commonwealth representatives are at that table.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Thank you.

Mr SLIPPER—Hopevale was a Lutheran mission, wasn't it, originally?

Ms Deemal-Hall—It was the jewel in the crown for the old fellow who has now passed away.

Mr SLIPPER—How do you find the current situation in Hopevale compared with other Indigenous communities in the area?

Ms Deemal-Hall—In what respect?

Mr SLIPPER—In relation to health, drugs, alcohol and employment.

Ms Deemal-Hall—I used to work for Queensland Health as a remote area health worker. We currently have a high number of people who are diabetics. The scary thing that we need to look at is the health impact on our children. A full health screen was done of Hopevale children in 2001-02 and they identified three main areas: children are totally anaemic or obese, there is no middle ground. There are skin conditions that lead on to secondary infections which can impact on kidney disease. Dental caries also have an impact. We also have to acknowledge that there is a housing problem within Hopevale. That is nothing new; a lot of other communities have housing problems. We have houses from the missionary stage and a problem with piping. Hopevale was an Aboriginal mission before it was a Lutheran mission so we have different types of piping throughout Hopevale.

Mr SLIPPER—Piping?

Ms Deemal-Hall—For water. We used to have people from Brisbane come up—they were part of the church—to lay down the pipes. Because there is no town planning, it is really hard to plan out. The other thing is the issue of tenure. We yarn about being enterprising but unless you sort out tenure you cannot have a mortgageable asset that you can approach the banks with. That is a fundamental issue.

Mr SLIPPER—Is that a DOGIT community?

Ms Deemal-Hall—Hopevale is in the midst, like a lot of the other communities up this way, of becoming a shire council.

Mr SLIPPER—So it has been a DOGIT community, a deed of grant in trust community, in the past?

Ms Deemal-Hall—Yes. In 1986 we were granted DOGIT status.

Mr SLIPPER—And that was considered to be a plus then, wasn't it?

Ms Deemal-Hall—It was a 99-year lease, yes.

Mr SLIPPER—How would you like to see tenure changed? Would you like to see individual blocks being freeholded so that people can build homes on their own blocks, or would you like to see some other form of community tenure for leasehold? It seems to me that people take a pride in their own block of land and their own house. If it is theirs they would take a lot more care of it than if it were simply rented. It is the same in the general community as well.

Ms Deemal-Hall—If I am a two-day CDEP worker I want to be able to have the same access as mainstream has. I cannot own my own home, especially if I am a historical person—that has even more implications.

Mr SLIPPER—Historical?

Ms Deemal-Hall—You have traditional owners who are from that country and, because people were brought around there, you also have what we call historical people who might have been born there but that is not their country; their country might be somewhere else. You know how we get people from Victoria moving to Queensland—I am just throwing that in!

CHAIR—There are implications about being able to own land, aren't there?

Ms Deemal-Hall—I am a block holder myself on my mother's side. I should be able to approach a bank and say that I want to build a $150,000 house, but I cannot because I cannot own the land.

Mr SLIPPER—You probably cannot give them the security that they need.

Ms Deemal-Hall—No, and that is the issue. If we are talking about enterprises and if we are talking about being fair dinkum, then we really need to resolve that.

Mr SLIPPER—Can you suggest how? Could you give some thought to it and maybe on notice let us have something? This is something that I am quite interested in and passionate about. I just think that the current system of land tenure for Indigenous people is not perfect and if we could get a better system that would be a big step forward. I think the Prime Minister has actually expressed some interest in this area as well.

Mr SNOWDON—I cannot believe what I just heard, but we will have a discussion about this privately. I have got a very different view about land tenure—

CHAIR—We have different views on this committee.

Mr SNOWDON—and I can understand why it might apply in some places, but it will not apply where I come from, I can guarantee you.

Ms Deemal-Hall—As I said, I can only answer for—

Mr SNOWDON—That is right. That is not the generalised statement which was just made at the other end of the table here. I would also make the observation that Canberra exists on 99-year leases and has done since 1913.

Mr SLIPPER—It is deemed to be freehold. You can mortgage—

Mr SNOWDON—And Norfolk Island has substantially shorter leases. Can you take us through the action learning solutions? That would be really good.

Ms Deemal-Hall—This is something that I was just toying with. Once I found out that I was coming here I thought about some of the things that we need to look at internally as a department. When we are talking about shared responsibility agreements and those sorts of things—which seem to be the big push the moment—and when we are looking at a community's ability to engage in negotiations we need to do a currency audit, especially in terms of the expertise that we have or do not have as a department. We also need to look at the previous

dealings that the department or those officers may have had with that particular community. If you have got communities where they have had a hit and miss with—

Mr SNOWDON—The agency?

Ms Deemal-Hall—Yes—especially around employment, or anything else, we need to flag that as an important thing and be honest about it. And we need to audit the skills within their own community to engage in that process.

Mr SNOWDON—Can we just stop there for a moment. I do not know whether you are aware of Richard Trudgeon—if you are not, it does not matter—but the chair raised an issue with a previous witness effectively about communication. One of the issues that strikes me is that you get people who come up here—and not to be unfair about it; I do not want to be unkind—from Brisbane, Darwin or Canberra to work in Cairns to look after communities in the cape with absolutely no idea about the people they are working with. So, when they go to communicate with these people, they do not understand their culture and they probably have not heard the first language, the creole language, which is probably being used around the community so they will not be able to understand it. And the people they are communicating with do not know them and presumably will not understand their language either, in many instances. Is that an issue which you would address in this sort of diagram?

Ms Deemal-Hall—Currency covers that as well. When we are talking about an audit, it is a desktop audit on everything, including what communication tool was used previously. Each department has their own way of doing business, but, then again, so does each community, so it is also about working in with the community. Some communities prefer that you go directly through the council, other communities prefer that you have a whole engagement with the community, so it is about working out what shoe fits best for what person.

Mr SNOWDON—How do you get that information? Assume that I am a new manager of DEWR or some other agency. How do I get to understand what this all means? I appreciate what you are saying; I am not disagreeing with you. I am thinking about someone coming from outside who would say: 'What does this mean? Do I have communication skills? Yes, I can communicate; I sit in meetings all day.'

Ms Deemal-Hall—It is about being honest and actually going to the community, your clientele or whoever you are working with, and just saying: 'I'm a cleanskin, I don't know anything about what's going on up here. I need to work out the best way of working with you mob.' Some people might prefer you to come up here, and they might not talk to you at all for the first couple of visits, then after the third or fourth visit—

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—This is a good discussion to have.

Ms Deemal-Hall—The negotiation tables provide an opportunity for local people to participate as well. We always talk about community capacity building, and I have not seen a good definition or a good working model that explains that. And if we are talking about being strategic, what are we talking about? It is about looking at what circles or what avenues we can explore that will help us work better together. It is particularly important to look at previous relationships or previous ways of doing business. There are departments within our organisation

that we do not engage with—for example, the police and Customs. We do not access them as potential engagers or educators within the community. A lot of us in the community only see them as enforcement officers. Some of them, especially Customs, are registered training organisations. Queensland Police Service is a registered training organisation. As a community, we should be able to access the expertise and skills that they have. That is what I am referring to when I talk about learning and unlearning. Some departments will still only train within their own departments. We should be looking at how we can engage them more to step outside their circle.

That then leads on to the third stage, which is culture of engagement. For some departments, we really suck at engagement. I am being honest. Some of my learned colleagues here can agree with that. It is the whole thing about engagement. For some of you who have a legal background, we talk about fiduciary obligations around partnerships, but unfortunately you have one partner who has more power. Therefore, it is not really a partnership and when we engage we are not really engaging. The same could be said about education and employment. We have people who are part of the work first program but are only passively working or passively getting educated. It is really about nutting out what the culture is that we are going to use in terms of engagement, what we will not use and how we are going to action that.

The fourth stage is actually mentoring change and accountability and how we are defining that. Getting back to the resourcing side that I was talking about before and looking at the work of John Taylor with the Northern Territory Aboriginal communities, he identified in last year's report that in the next 10 years Aboriginal communities will not be Aboriginal communities; they will actually be small towns. With regard to service delivery, especially in employment areas and especially if looking at it as a whole community, we have not matched the dollars to look at that. At the moment the skills shortages, not only within Queensland but across Australia, and infrastructure are big issues. Are we actually matching community resourcing to the demographics of that particular community? The latest data on Australian social trends that have just come out, especially around the Indigenous quarter, identify areas of concern that we need to be looking at.

Mr SNOWDON—Is there an equivalent sort of work to Taylor's work that you can go to for the Cape?

Ms Deemal-Hall—Ben Lees was doing some work around the Coen area, but Taylor actually worked with the Aboriginal communities, especially those communities that were transitioning to shire councils. Especially for our communities in the Cape that are part of that transition at the moment, it was more relevant.

CHAIR—It seems to me that stage 4 mentoring is a critical part in so many areas across the whole nation for a whole lot of reasons. It allows that closeness and perhaps care and commitment to make the change. What are a couple of the main things that you think need to change? It is a tough question and it probably varies from individual community to individual community.

Ms Deemal-Hall—Mentoring has to be customised more. For Hopevale there is huge scope for mentoring to occur in the public service area in terms of the technical expertise that each department has, but we have not really looked much more at the private sector. We have had

some philanthropic organisations come in—and the previous witness, Michael Winer, alluded to that—but it is about accessing that.

There are some sections of the community that readily access mentoring or have opportunities to be part of the higher learning scope but then there are the backstreet gang, which I am familiar with. They are my age group now—those who were not too good at school, who fell thorough the cracks. They are 33 or 34 now. They know that they need to start getting a job because of changes to Centrelink benefits and all the rest of it. They have done 1,001 work readiness type short courses. They say: 'Now you expect me to work full-time, five days a week? Who is going to mentor me through that, especially if I am having troubles with domestic violence, especially if I am just coming off the grog and especially if I have a drug habit?' That is the sort of stuff I would like to look at. Access is one and choice is a second one. The third one is sustainability.

CHAIR—At the moment it is barely there.

Ms Deemal-Hall—It is there in dribs and drabs. You get some sections of the community or some families that manage to access that, and that is great because they do thrive. But if I have a dream in my heart and I want to become the next Donald Trump, how do I do that?

Mr SNOWDON—Don't bother!

Ms Deemal-Hall—But do you know what I mean? That is what I would be really keen to look at: how can we get them fellas up there?

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—We know that there are programs around there. There are government programs out of this department or that department and half the time, sadly—I know government is trying to fix it—one does not know what the other is doing. But it seems to me from what you are saying that with the programs there it is up to these people to find out about it, fit into it or miss out, when there really should be a coming-in to the community and an understanding of what the community needs, with things modelled to fit that way instead. I think that is what you are really saying, isn't it?

Ms Deemal-Hall—And I guess as departments, state and Commonwealth, we need to be working better together.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Yes, it takes two sides.

Ms Deemal-Hall—We need to get our stories straight and also know what each of us can do, what our strengths and weaknesses are. I do not think we have really done a blueprint of what we bring to the table. You get some communities that already know exactly where they want to go, but government is a bit slow on the uptake.

Mr SNOWDON—Is it about benchmarking performance? For example, I am sure you will have observed that some agencies are really slack in providing a service but in other agencies you could say, 'There is someone who is really working hard at doing the right thing.' There is no uniformity, no appreciation of what the standards should be. Is that what you are trying to say to us?

Ms Deemal-Hall—The only trouble I have with benchmarking is sometimes we get too complacent with benchmarking. We think: 'Well, I've reached that level; I don't need to progress any further.' I would like a continuous improvement sort of model.

Mr SNOWDON—I appreciate that, but one which is continuously audited and so the benchmark, whatever it is, is something that changes.

Ms Deemal-Hall—We do not share our successes. We do not share what our strengths are: 'I know you work for some area, but I do not know what your strengths are.' So when I am working with this community over here, how can I give them the best information or the best program when I do not even know what those are? We talk about communities, especially around governance, to identify what their strengths and weaknesses et cetera are, but we as departments do not share that information or do it collaboratively.

Mr SNOWDON—And you are not audited on that basis. The Audit Office, when it does a performance audit, does not audit you on your ability to communicate.

Ms Deemal-Hall—Unless we got funding from another department, then yes! But, no, you are right. I guess I would like to see, especially when we are talking about strategic collaboration, people saying: 'My department really struggles with engagement. However, we've got a fantastic mentoring program or a leadership program that can help,' and that sort of thing.

Mr SNOWDON—Thank you.

CHAIR—Is there something you would like to say to conclude?

Ms Deemal-Hall—Especially around employment I think we need to be conscious that there are some organisations that are trying to set up monopolies. I am really concerned about regionalisation of employment programs, because then you sometimes miss out on the individual aspirations.

Mr SNOWDON—What do you mean? Can you give us a better idea?

Ms Deemal-Hall—If we have all the funding going to one particular organisation around employment then you are setting up something that limits your choice, and choice is fundamental. I do not care where you are from; I should be able to choose anyone. If I want to do training, if I want to learn, I should be able to learn, same as anyone else. The third thing I wanted to cover is that, when we are talking about responsibility and governance, we have not asked those hard questions, 'Who are we responsible to and why?' And government has to be under the microscope as well as communities.

CHAIR—That is a great place to conclude. Thank you, Eileen—much appreciated.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Thank you very much. It was terrific.

[12.19 pm]

BYRNE, Mr Barry Donald, Managing Director, HomeFab Steel Truss and Frame

CHAIR—Welcome. Please tell us the purpose for which you appear before the committee today.

Mr Byrne—I am the managing director of a company based in Mareeba, HomeFab Steel Truss and Frame. The company's core business is the provision of steel house-framing products into the housing industry, namely kit homes. The target market of our business is the self-build industry in the housing sector. We also supply product to the general industry—to building contractors and owner builders as well as remote and rural councils. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to give a five-minute talk. That is the area I want to touch on a little bit.

The inquiries that our company had, especially in the last 12 months but going back quite a period before that, were from remote and rural Aboriginal councils wanting to do self-building and their own housing. After seeing the ad in the paper yesterday—there was a write-up in the paper—I thought it would be a good opportunity to attend and gather a greater understanding of what some of the issues are. It has been extremely good for me this morning to gain some insights into the issues that no doubt you have to put up with.

I cannot talk about the issues that are occurring in every location because each location has different issues. But we have sent product into nearly all communities in the Cape York area. Some of the more present issues I can touch on. The shortage of tradespeople up there has caused a higher price for labour hire. There is a shortage caused through the boom in the housing industry in Australia. Other issues relating to that could be that the alcohol bans in those communities restrict the number of tradespeople working there.

The main thrust of my appearance here is to promote the idea of self-building in remote and rural communities to generate employment for the people living within the communities. Employment no doubt means that a higher percentage of the money for the construction costs stays within the community, which at the end of the day will assist the economic viability of these regional communities as well.

I will touch on a few general issues that we have had come back to us, such as funding for training of apprentices and for traineeships. No doubt there are higher levels of funding issues in relation to project management and construction management. The cost of providing that training in Bamaga or Aurukun or a far northern location, no doubt, is different from the value of providing training to one person in Cairns. That is mainly the area that I am here to be educated on, no doubt, and to listen to. I come from a private enterprise background. My role as managing director is to grow the business and look for a pathway that we can take our business on. At the same time, we have social responsibilities. These locations are no doubt what our business is based on. We provide kits because up in those locations there is not a hardware store. There may be no glazing shops or timber shops.

I feel it is based on past performance of jobs in these locations and on what I would call the self-confidence of the people who worked on these projects. The skill levels gained from working on them has been enormous. That is all. It is very gratifying to be part of it.

CHAIR—As you probably realise, we hope to return and spend more time.

Mr SNOWDON—There are two issues. One is the contractual arrangements, not between you and the client but between the client and the funding body. Presumably, in the past at least, the tender processes have been very tightly controlled and all that sort of business so that is an outstanding issue. The other thing is: where you have been able to supply products into communities, have you been working with the same groups of people? My point is that in other parts of Australia we have heard of the benefits of mobile work teams. There might be two houses to be built in one community and three houses in another. There might be a common apprenticeship scheme which is run by someone to go and do the work on those houses and then go on and maintain them. Is that something which is done?

Mr Byrne—My firm mainly does not become involved in on-site management services. But I do understand that. For example, in Bamaga, with the skill levels that the trainees and apprentices have acquired, they have progressed to a higher level and the mentoring is producing great benefits for other young people in that community. The inquiries we have for costings and examples of houses and stuff like that must come through the CEOs of these communities talking to one another and one CEO saying: 'Yes, we're going well here. This is something that we should be doing in another location.'

CHAIR—I have a supplementary question. It seems to me—and this is related to the fact that the continuity of the work is quite difficult in smaller communities but the maintenance issue is important—that there is a real requirement for continuous maintenance. I cannot measure each community and know exactly what the demand would be. What is your experience of not just building but maintenance?

Mr Byrne—I do not have exact figures and I do not profess to have any great knowledge in relation to it, but I can take a step back and give you my personal feeling. In certain locations, yes, maintenance can be a problem where there is very limited employment or no employment and no real outcome for anybody within the community. But in other locations—and those are the communities we are possibly targeting as a firm—because there is no employment, the self-build idea gives some scope to the community and some economic wealth. From a business point of view it would be hard for me to say that I will target another location where there is a mine close by and there is general employment. The self-build method may not be as important to a community, say, close to Weipa, because there are jobs in that location. If I could put it this way, it comes down to lack of opportunity and boredom. I think we have heard most of it this morning. By the same token, there is a mix and a match between the two.

CHAIR—To keep that opportunity of continuity. Thank you very much.

Mr Byrne—Thank you for allowing me to address you.

CHAIR—Our pleasure.

[12.30 pm]

LINK, Mr Johnathan Roy, Community Liaison and Development Officer, Mental Health Program, Royal Flying Doctor Service

CHAIR—Welcome.

Mr Link—I would like to thank the traditional owners for the opportunity to speak today and the committee members for giving me this time to voice my opinion.

CHAIR—We are glad to have you here. We have a few minutes. Over to you.

Mr Link—On what Warren said earlier about people coming from Brisbane, I am from Brisbane. I am a descendant of the Kukyalanji tribe from up near Hopevale in the Woojil Woojil area, so I do have a connection there even though I was born in Brisbane. I am also a descendant of the Napui tribe from Auckland, New Zealand.

Mr SNOWDON—So you can do the haka later on!

Mr Link—I have done it plenty of times. It is pretty hard, because you cannot have Anzac without the NZ.

CHAIR—Spot on.

Mr Link—I work in the mental health area. I was given an opportunity this morning from the clipping from our psychologist. Our program has been flying up to the Cape York communities since 1995, and the mental health program has been running for about 3½ years. My role as a community development officer is to engage with communities—that is, stakeholders within those communities, representatives and the people of those communities. It is about listening to their genuine concerns. I hear a lot of things about housing, unemployment, education—all those social determinants of health. My role is also to raise awareness about issues like men accessing health. If you do not have mental or general health, how are you going to stay employed?

Just to go a bit off the Flying Doctor concept, back in the eighties I was seconded by the Commonwealth department DEET, as they called it. I was an employee of Coles-Myer, and I was the highest level Indigenous person in retail. So the government came to me and asked, 'How could we raise the numbers of Indigenous people in employment in Coles-Myer?' I said: 'The highest concentration of numbers is where there is a CES. Where the Coles-Myer businesses are in that city, you find high numbers. So raise awareness. Ask who would like to get into retail. If you don't talk to people, how you can you expect them to chase that vocation?'

I was responsible for the whole of Queensland. I had a two per cent target to reach, and I actually achieved five per cent. That is why you see multiculturalism in retail stores today. I caught up with a gentleman who has been with Coles-Myer for the last 20 years. I interviewed him to get into stores. Now he is the co-manager, working one step under the store manager. So,

for people to have that desire to achieve, you have to give them that opportunity early in their teenage and adolescent years.

Talking about the Flying Doctors, I would like to share with the committee some of the projects that I have facilitated and collaborated on with community members. I do not know if you have heard about the latest project, the travelling hair care circuit. You and I can just go to a local barber in town and get a haircut, but for people in remote areas that service is not available. I connected with a college in Gordonvale about providing a service that would make people feel good about themselves. It is a travelling hair care circuit. It has gone to 10 communities and there are 17 up in the Cape. It has come about just by listening to what makes people feel good. I am in the mental health area and, when people come down from Cairns, I know exactly where they are from. I know they are from the Cape because they all have the same hairstyles!

Some of the communities that I go to are Aurukun, Coen, Lockhart River and Kowanyama. In a lot of these communities people have never had a haircut. One lady in Coen who is over 60 had never seen a hairdresser in her life. She came up to me and said, 'Boy, you know what?' and I did not even recognise her. She had had long hair and when I saw her she had short, coloured hair and her husband had the biggest smile. Their relationship was back together and it was good to see smiles on their faces. The best part about it is that they are now recruiting young people—the next leaders of our communities—to be certified, to take that skill back into the community and hopefully to approach council to seek some funding to set up an entrepreneurial enterprise.

Children and young people do not get opportunities because there is a big gap. I have been dealing with elders, children and schools. Every time I go there they keep telling me, 'There is nothing for us to do.' There is no sport and rec person or youth officer there for young people to engage with. How can they go forward if there are no mechanisms in place for them to do that? Part of my role, as I keep saying, is to engage with and talk to the people. That hairdressing circuit is now a success. The next one I want to take on board is setting up a speedway in each community. You can get Queensland Transport and Queensland police to teach people how to be legal drivers and to show them responsible driving. You can get TAFE involved to provide technical, mechanical and electrical courses so that these people can work. There is not even a garage out in the communities. As soon as you say the word 'garage', people think about children and petrol sniffing. That is the wrong concept. It is because there is a lack of them out there.

BRACS, the Broadcasting to Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme, is a white elephant sitting out in the community that needs to be reignited. They used to have a thing called 'youth speak' and young people do not get that voice anymore.

I deal with men's business every time I go to communities. Part of my role is setting up men's groups. We are successfully doing that in Lockhart River, we are at an interim stage at Kowanyama and I am trying my hardest in Aurukun. Firstly, you have to involve clan groups. You cannot just go there, talk to one person and expect that they will all come to the table and make it happen. Secondly, you need to have someone to drive it. I like going to communities and being a passenger, not the driver all the time. How do you upskill people? You have to sit around and talk to them and make sure you are transparent.

I am in the area of counselling, and every time I go there women ask me to do counselling with them. That is culturally inappropriate; I need to have a female with me. These women now trust me to come in and do things with them and their children, but there is a strong protocol in my culture, in me, in my ancestors and in my descendants. We do not break that. You will never get business done.

I go out there and hook up with the stakeholders through the director of nursing to help improve the mental health and general health of individuals suffering these dilemmas and give them coping strategies. Indigenous people are seen as reactive, not proactive. Young people are committing suicide because of a lack of parenting skills. 'There is a lack of'—you name it, we have heard it. Statistically, I should be able to retire very shortly, and that is the paper that I am going to do one day.

CHAIR—We will need to wind up.

Mr Link—For employment I think you have to have different workshops with young people. Their agenda is different from what you and I see. Things have changed since you and I were young. You had more support, especially if you were in an urban society, but in the remote context there is no-one to whom any person that is having a situation can go like you and I can ring up Lifeline or whatever or go to see someone else. It does not work that way out there. People tend to hide the way they feel and try to terminate their life without even having the proper strategies in place.

Mr SNOWDON—Is youth suicide much of an issue on the Cape?

Mr Link—Yes, it is. You name it. I am actually involved next week with the mental health inquiry. The Senate committee is coming up next week.

CHAIR—How long have you been in your position? You may have mentioned it at the beginning.

Mr Link—I have been with the Flying Doctor for two years. I have a degree in mental health and a diploma in general health.

CHAIR—Could you remind us of the size of the zone?

Mr Link—We look after an area the size of Japan. There is only me and the psychologist in the mental health program within the Flying Doctor Service. Other services are Weipa mental health and in Cooktown. If you are not going to make people feel and think about who they are and where they are going to go, all these other programs are going to mean nothing to them. I have Warlpiri Media wanting to be involved in the *Bush Mechanics* series. They want to document this thing from the beginning right through, so it is in the pipeline. I want to see this happen.

CHAIR—You made a point about employment being very important to this whole issue.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Are you having difficulty in getting the mechanics program up?

Mr Link—Just say you are a council CEO. I come and tell you about this particular concept. Are you going to take it on board? You have to negotiate with other people. This will create technical, electrical—

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—It is a fantastic idea. Does it need funding?

Mr Link—It certainly does.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Where are you getting funding from?

Mr Link—The people in the councils and communities can grade the land. The shared concept is to remove the cars from the yard—there is your salvage yard. You can build a car from the chassis up, but you have to show people how to do that through TAFE. I have shared this with mayors and CEOs in the Cape. They love it; let's get it running. Our young people want to do things. Don't let them steal cars and kill themselves; let them learn how to drive and say, 'Let's have a Cape York communities speedway comp.' There is BMX; you name it.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I am not suggesting you do this but there is a program in the ACT—I am from Canberra—and I know it exists in Victoria and also in Sydney, I think. They have called it Handbrake Turn. At first I did not know what it meant, although Warren might know about this. You can do a special revvy turn in a car with a handbrake, so they have called the program Handbrake Turn. It is basically the same sort of thing, only an urban concept. If the cops are worried about racing on suburban roads and all that misbehaviour that is dangerous, then they draw the kids in through the police and the authorities—they help to run it—and offer them an attitude and an ability to understand what they are doing. They take them to a safe place to scream around in their cars. It is a terrific program.

Mr Link—I was going to try to approach Peter Brock and Dick Johnson, people that people watch and identify as mentors, to go in and teach them.

CHAIR—I need to draw this to a close. You might care to put in a one-page submission. Sum up your lead-in, remembering our terms of reference, about these positive things around employment and your great statement at the beginning when you said that mental health is very much part of this whole deal. Thank you very much. It was great to have you with us.

Mr SNOWDON—Thanks for making us aware of it. I think you are right. Mental health is something which we need to be aware of.

Mr Link—We overlook that, don't we?

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—I loved that hairdressing story.

Proceedings suspended from 12.44 pm to 1.35 pm

DEEMAL, Mr Ivan, Senior Coordinator, Community Relations, Cairns Region Group Training

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make a few general comments or an opening statement before we have a discussion?

Mr Deemal—I work with the communities of Cape York and the Torres Strait island region. I coordinate a couple of programs for Cairns Region Group Training. That is mostly to do with the employment of people throughout the cape in various apprenticeships and traineeships. I also administer a couple of employment contracts with Comalco mines, Alcan mines and Cape Flattery mines, which are all based in Cape York. I also liaise with most of the community councils within that region in trying to place apprentices and trainees.

Mr SLIPPER—Mr Deemal, a lady appeared before us this morning who had a similar name. Is Ms Deemal-Hall a relation of yours?

Mr Deemal—Yes.

CHAIR—Group training is well known around Australia—and you are part of that program. Is Cairns region training the full name of your organisation?

Mr Deemal—The name is Cairns Region Group Training.

CHAIR—How many apprentices do you have under your group training program?

Mr Deemal—Currently we have something like 976. It fluctuates. That is what it is today but it fluctuates between 1,000 and 1,200.

CHAIR—You mentioned Comalco, Alcan and others. Would you care to describe the relationship you have with those companies and how it is going?

Mr Deemal—We have relationships with Comalco, Alcan and Cape Flattery. Basically, our role with Comalco and Alcan is to assist with the recruitment of apprentices. We advertise, do the recruitment and monitor and manage the apprentices. We actually employ them as a group training company and they get host employed by Comalco. Alcan do not mine. They have a lease in literally the same area in the western cape as Comalco but they do exploration work. Their main mine is in Nhulunbuy, which is in the Gove Peninsula. They intend to start mining with a sublease to Comalco in about 2007.

CHAIR—How are you finding the recruiting process at the moment in terms of the alleged skills shortage and the demand on your people? My understanding of group training is that you employ the apprentices and you place them with the employer, and that offers some flexibility in their training experience; and that is fundamentally it. They are your full-time employees, aren't they?

Mr Deemal—Yes.

CHAIR—Could you describe the current job market regarding the skills issue?

Mr Deemal—We do indicate that at the moment we are quite competitive but we would like to do more work within the cape. Currently the numbers in the cape are, say, 400 apprentices and trainees. We employ 150 of those, so there is still a lot of work that we could do in that area in selling our product. Here in Cairns we do quite well, and we have just set up an office in Weipa to do the remote areas.

CHAIR—How long has that been there?

Mr Deemal—Previously we had a couple of offices, one in Weipa and one up in Bamaga—up in the Far North on the tip. I suppose there were a few problems with training. Do you know about the Cape York training strategy?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Deemal—Basically we had lost some of the training with apprentices. We had a trainer-field officer in Bamaga but because of the reduction in training we could not afford to have the officer, and so we now just operate in Weipa.

CHAIR—The percentage of Indigenous employees would be of great interest to the committee; the approximate percentage of your total employees, the percentage of your remote employees and of your Weipa employees et cetera.

Mr Deemal—Yes, we would like to build it up across the board. There is probably only about 12 per cent at the current time.

Mr SLIPPER—That presumably is 12 per cent of the total number of 400 odd. Presumably in the more remote areas there would be a higher percentage than 12 per cent?

Mr Deemal—Yes, it depends on each town and each area.

Mr SLIPPER—I think this concept of group training is excellent because we have all heard tragic stories of people who were apprenticed to a builder who goes broke and then cannot assign the indentures and so on, so I think it is a great concept. What trades in particular, though, are you training Indigenous people for? Given the skill demands of Comalco and other employers in the cape presumably you are angling towards the trades that are available?

Mr Deemal—Yes, the ones that we do our major intake of is carpenters and mainly the boilermaking trades, and mechanical and diesel fitting.

Mr SLIPPER—Do you find that there are, amongst your Indigenous apprentices, what I suppose you could call cultural absences? That is, absences for traditional purposes: for funerals and maybe for family events. And how do you, as a group training employer, ensure continuity of service while understanding the cultural differences of Indigenous apprentices?

Mr Deemal—There is a certain amount of time that they can have, up to 10 days for bereavement leave in some cases. It all depends on which community it is. There is a changing

culture in a lot of cases, where they can see the benefit to the community of trying to have two cultures. One is that a lot of the people who do take on the apprenticeships see an opportunity to develop a career that can actually allow them to move.

So we have had a situation—and I do not know whether it is good or bad—where a lot of the community guys who do apprenticeships complete them and then they seek jobs outside the community, and then most of them have moved. We have had situations also where maybe a job has been offered or is on offer in Cairns, and most of them have applied for that. Some of them have won. We intended in some cases that they would return to the community, but they take up the jobs and they stay out of the communities.

CHAIR—I can see the benefits of having trained people go back to the communities, but I suppose in a democracy we have freedom of movement, so what can you do?

Mr Deemal—Yes, and that is what is happening, I think. And the adjustment when they do come down is that the cultural issues sometimes are not as strong when they take up jobs in the urban areas.

Mr SLIPPER—I can understand why people would sometimes need to leave for cultural reasons—bereavement and so on—but that, at times, would test the tolerance of maybe a non-Indigenous employer who has the choice of choosing Indigenous or non-Indigenous employees. Do you find that people give notice before they go? Do they say, 'Look, I've got to go away for X number of days,' or do you find that they just do not turn up?

Mr Deemal—It is a bit of both actually. There are some who do give you notice. It depends on the person. I think it is a difference of personality. Some people find it easier to talk about things like that and some people just have to go. It depends.

Mr SLIPPER—I imagine that you would be endeavouring to encourage people to at least notify you.

Mr Deemal—Yes.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—Following on from that: when an apprentice is placed, to what degree do you place importance on the relationship that is built between the apprentice and the employer where they are doing the training, particularly in relation to the cultural issues? Is it fair to say that a little bit of work needs to be done in creating that relationship in the first place?

Mr Deemal—That is difficult. I have worked for Cairns Region Group Training for something like 15 years. Over the years I have seen that slowly changing. I know that a lot of people say, 'Yes, we need to be culturally appropriate in the things that we do in all the communities,' and the communities are saying,' No, we don't, really. We can learn our culture ourselves. We don't need a teacher.' But they also find that they need to learn about what happens in the outside world. A lot of people do appreciate that the white culture, as they say, is the dominant culture. I think that a lot of the kids who are coming through—and adults, of course, who are taking on an apprenticeship or training—are realising that: 'Yes, I can still live my culture at home but I need a skill of some sort that I can sell off to someone so I can make a living.' And that is the case now.

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS—The reason for asking the question is that there has been some evidence given to us by employers who have successfully employed numbers of Indigenous people. A lot of their evidence is pointing to the fact that they have actually acknowledged that there is an Indigenous culture and that they build a relationship with their employees so that each understands the other—so that, to put it bluntly, on the one hand the Indigenous employee understands through that relationship-building that they may have an obligation to say, 'Look, I need time off; I've got to go to a funeral,' but on the other hand the employer understands what it means for that person to need to go to a funeral. So there is a two-way street of education going both ways. That was the reason for asking for your perspective, because other employers who have gone into Indigenous employment successfully have said that that has been a very strong platform for the relationship to exist. That is why I was asking your opinion. Do you agree?

Mr Deemal—Yes. Some host employers have worked really well because they have an understanding. I know of an electrical company here where the majority of the employees are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. They have many contracts here and they are a mainstream electrical company. There is also a garage building organisation most of whose trainees—there are about six—are Indigenous.

Mr SNOWDON—What process do you go through to recruit potential trainees and apprentices? And what are the major impediments to people getting access to training and apprenticeships? Say, for example, a person expresses an interest but does not really pass the test—whatever the test is; I am not sure what you do to make the assessment—what are the major stumbling blocks that people confront once they express an interest?

Mr Deemal—Do you mean local—urban—or in the community?

Mr SNOWDON—Either; both; the lot.

Mr Deemal—For people in communities it is quite easy for them to go and register for an apprenticeship because basically if there is a position on the council then they just need to approach the council. Most of the councils do a three-month testing, to make sure that the applicants have got a good work ethic before they get signed up for an apprenticeship.

We have something like 70 vacancies in the urban region here which we constantly are trying to fill; we are trying to fill them at the moment. I try very hard to get Indigenous applicants through. Some of them still lack schooling and a lot of them have problems getting through the interview stage. So we try to coach them in interviewing. I also do one-to-one talks. Yesterday I went to Abergowrie College, down in Ingham, and we had discussions with grade 12 kids because we have a lot of vacancies. So we are trying, through our recruitment process, to make them aware that there are jobs available, and if they want them they are there now.

Mr SNOWDON—We had a long discussion with the people at Comalco. They said one of the major impediments to employment was bad health. They said there were people who could not pass their health checks because of lifestyle diseases—diabetes, hearing impairments, that sort of thing. Is that an issue which you confront as well?

Mr Deemal—Comalco do medical tests, but they are probably the only employers who are doing it in the region at the moment. I know that there are employers who do drug and alcohol

tests. We do aptitude tests with them, but that is as far as we go with most of our apprentices regarding medical checks.

CHAIR—The Indigenous Coordination Centre—has there been any contact at all?

Mr Deemal—No.

CHAIR—Are you familiar with them?

Mr Deemal—No.

CHAIR—What are the two or three main ingredients that result in positive outcomes for Indigenous apprentices, to your mind?

Mr Deemal—I know that I have assisted and I know that a lot of people have said that if I had not been around for their apprenticeship they would never have completed it. So I guess it is a matter of the support that we give, but added to that support is knowing who they are and knowing their family line, and being able to recognise if there are any problems.

CHAIR—What about the old basics of a little bit of literacy and numeracy and that type of stuff? Is it getting through there?

Mr Deemal—It is very difficult, in a way, to pick an apprentice because of his schooling. I am sorry that I do not have the statistics, but in a lot of cases that I know of, once an apprentice has started to think about what is needed in literacy and numeracy in an apprenticeship, basically they may struggle at first but if they persist they will get through. Once they start developing knowledge and adding to it, it is very clear to them what they need to do. We have had extremely good success with electrical apprenticeships, and an electrical apprenticeship means that they have to do physics and that the mathematics is complex. In one case I had a 29-year-old from the community at Napranum who had grade 9 education, and they said, 'No, you can't do an apprenticeship,' but we gave him a go. His name is Darren Evans. In his second year at college Darren was tutoring other students. So it is very difficult to say, 'No, you can't do it.' You need to give people an opportunity.

CHAIR—There is a bit of the chicken and egg in this question. It seems to me that maybe, as they see the need for the numeracy, that drives the desire to get it or achieve it. Is that fair?

Mr Deemal—I think so. Where they see it being applied then they can use it. But at school, where it just has to be done, it does not become relevant.

CHAIR—Forgive me for this question. I come from a long line of tradesmen and I am the only non-tradesman in my family. My brothers have done their apprenticeship. Have you done an apprenticeship yourself?

Mr Deemal—Yes.

CHAIR—So you understand that discipline that is needed and what is needed in the current crop of apprentices.

Mr Deemal—Yes.

Mr SLIPPER—What apprenticeship did you do?

Mr Deemal—Carpentry.

Mr SLIPPER—There is a real need for them in Weipa. I was once a lawyer. My understanding is that in Queensland Indigenous employees are bound by the same industrial laws as non-Indigenous employees.

Mr Deemal—Yes.

Mr SLIPPER—If an Indigenous person absented himself or herself from employment for cultural purposes the employer would be just as entitled to dismiss that person as they would be to dismiss a non-Indigenous person for absenting himself or herself for the same period of time. I have not practised for a long time, so I might be rusty and I might be stating an inaccuracy. If my understanding is correct, in the general community what incentive is there for employers to employ Indigenous employees, bearing in mind that they have to confront the cultural sensitivities in addition to the other challenges of putting on an employee, which are substantial?

Mr Deemal—The state government has a program which ensures that, when they give out government tenders when they are building major projects, they have to have a 20 per cent labour content of Indigenous employees and apprentices or people in training. So I guess that is one incentive.

Mr SLIPPER—What about small firms and private employers?

Mr Deemal—Do you mean financial incentives?

Mr SLIPPER—No. I do not think there are any, to be honest. I think this is a barrier to Indigenous employment. This is one of the reasons I raised it. Suppose, for instance, you are a builder and you employ 40 men. If you have five Indigenous men, who for one reason or another would find it culturally necessary to absent themselves for periods of time, it is clearly going to be much more difficult to operate that work force of 40 men than if you had non-Indigenous men, who would not be absenting themselves for cultural purposes. I am really saying that I think this militates to a certain extent against people employing Indigenous people. I do not know what we could do, but it worries me that this is a barrier to Indigenous employment.

Mr Deemal—It does impede employment, I guess. People do not say it outright, but I think that a lot of employers, when they look at putting some new apprentices on, must consider that, if they are Indigenous, they have these situations. At the moment, they do get some financial incentives. The Commonwealth government are giving substantial incentives in some cases where they can assist. At this time, there are a lot of job ready, job preparedness programs that can help apprentices to gain some skills before they go into an apprenticeship.

CHAIR—Is there anything you would like to conclude with?

Mr Deemal—I have worked with apprentices and trainees; I am basically talking about Cape York. In Cape York, when apprentices complete their apprenticeships, that is where our training and our involvement with those people stop. There are times when there needs to be further Indigenous training for the tradespeople to develop businesses—taking them a step further. There needs to be training to help license electricians and plumbers, and register builders. I can see that happening. With a bit of speed, if there was more emphasis on getting those people extra qualifications and business skills, Indigenous employment in any area will build up because they will provide services and employ people.

A good example is the Bamaga Island community, which is based on the Cape. Quite a few of the apprentices have completed their time. A couple have started building companies. There are also a couple of people who have done retail training and have now opened their own shops. There are also people who have done a transport or mechanics apprenticeship and have opened up backhoe and earthmoving equipment hire businesses. They are slowly developing. In order to enhance that, there need to be programs that are actually aimed at developing—

CHAIR—I know what you mean. We were in Brisbane a couple of days ago, and this sort of thing came up as a mainstream issue regarding, say, a plumber or an electrician. Quite often they are keen to get into business, but they found that the business skills were not there; quite often they fell over. It was not as successful as it might have been. Therefore, they were saying there was a need for those skills. I was wondering how you connect them, after three or four years of the apprenticeship. They might be keen to get out there. They might be sick of the books, but how do you attract them? Do you incorporate it in the four-year course, or do you do it afterwards? Do you see what I am saying?

Mr Deemal—Yes.

CHAIR—That might be a way forward.

Mr Deemal—Maybe it should be incorporated in the four-year course.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That was comprehensive. It is a valuable snapshot of what is happening here. You are looking after nearly 1,000 people—that is a big job. How many people are in your company?

Mr Deemal—We have a staff of 80.

CHAIR—It is a big organisation. Thank you very much.

[2.05 pm]

PHILLIPS, Mr Tom, Private capacity

CHAIR—I invite you to tell us about the capacity in which you appear before us today.

Mr Phillips—I am here as an individual today. I actually wrote the submission while I was working for a company. Seeing as I am not with them any more I decided to go it alone.

CHAIR—Thank you for your submission. Do you have an opening statement?

Mr Phillips—Mainly what I have in there is what the submission is all about. The heading 'Education, Commitment, Honesty, Training and Reward' really says it all, even within the document itself. I feel very strongly about some of those areas.

CHAIR—You obviously have a long experience with these matters.

Mr Phillips—From 2001 for 12 months I was with the Bamaga Island Council. I was there purchasing and supply manager and I was put in there for 12 months to start up a new warehouse system for them, which I did. From there I took on a two-year contract with Saibai Island Council as their enterprise business manager. From there I went to Coen as their chief executive officer and from there I went to an organisation called QILGAI, which is the Queensland Indigenous Local Government Association Incorporated. You need two business cards for that! Anyway, that is where I was until 17 June.

I achieved a fair amount while I was at Bamaga, employment-wise. We had a fellow who kept coming to work drunk every day, if he came to work, and we struck a bit of a deal. I gave him three months to shape up or ship out. I kept an eye on him and I promised I would promote him. He did the right thing for three months. He got on the turps on the weekend but for three months he came to work on time regularly. So I went to my hierarchy at that time and tried to get him promoted. That was like showing a red rag to a bull. Anyway, I stuck with it. I promised the man I would do it and I did it. He was the first Indigenous person at Bamaga to be promoted to supervisor. He now happens to be the chairman of Bamaga Island Council. So these things, as far as employment goes, can happen. They do happen.

When I went to Saibai there were three or four people employed by the enterprises. All the enterprises, apart from the canteen, were losing money. After nearly two years I had 18 people employed—island people. I still signed them up to a two-day CDEP because that helped my finances to run the enterprises. But they all had a job five days a week. I brought in goods for the enterprises, the variety stores, and we were selling goods up there for the same price that you could buy them for down here in Cairns.

Mr SLIPPER—When were you in Saibai?

Mr Phillips—January 2003 until July last year. I employed 18 people there. Some of these people in these Indigenous areas are absolute thieves. There are no ifs and buts about it. But

some are hard-working, genuine people. So I sorted out the good from the bad. I found over a period of time that you gain a lot of respect for doing that. They could see that the businesses were earning money, they were getting goods at the same price they were paying here in Cairns, so their community was benefiting. They were employing their own people on a five-day-week basis. I have been gone from there for 12 months and I know for a fact it has gone the other way—absolutely gone downhill.

It is not necessarily the Indigenous people who are always at fault. Some of the managers we put in these communities are at fault—badly. They go in there, they take their $50,000 or $60,000 or $70,000 a year, they sit there on their bums and they do absolutely nothing. Then they wonder why the dark fellas hate us. You have got to encourage these people in their own ways. I noticed earlier you were talking about a culture. There is a culture, but we have a culture too. If they come to me and say, 'I have got to go off for two or three days for a funeral; it is on the island'—okay, fine. My culture is: 'That is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and you're back on deck on Friday at eight o'clock. And if you're not, don't come back, you haven't got a job.' Over a period of time, they are fine. And you have got to do it, not just threaten. It is no good if you just let it go like water off a duck's back. They respect that, and they will come and work for you. You respect their culture, but they have also got to respect yours, which is the way you earn money for their community.

CHAIR—Can we go to the basics. The fellow who was the good news story and you struck the resistance: he had his battles and he came through that, but what was his education and general approach to all of that?

Mr Phillips—He finished year 10. He was reasonably switched on and I thought he was worth having a crack at. He wanted to do it. This is the thing: he wanted to do it. I have had others who front up and are just not worth it. You have got to sort the good from the bad. I noticed the comments from the young fellow who was a witness before me about apprentices and these group training organisations. That is fine, but one question I would have asked him is: while I was at Saibai Island, why the hell did the council employ 14 carpenter apprentices? There are only 350 people on Saibai. What are they going to do after they have done their four years? One of them was 60 years of age. One of them was 61. He will be picking up his indentures when he is picking up his pension. Why do they employ people of that age? There has got to be a financial something coming into these companies that are employing them. I am sorry to say that, but that is the truth of it. If you were the employer, would you employ somebody who is 61 and take him on as an apprentice? No way.

CHAIR—Given my age, I might have a different view of that!

Mr Phillips—I am not far behind you!

Mr SLIPPER—I have been to Saibai Island. Do you think there are many differences in approach to employment between Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines?

Mr Phillips—Do you mean in the employment of them?

Mr SLIPPER—You have worked in both communities, although Bamaga would have a lot of Torres Strait Islanders, I think.

Mr Phillips—Yes, a majority.

Mr SLIPPER—Do you find, for instance, that it is easier to employ Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders, or are the problems and challenges the same?

Mr Phillips—Without a doubt, it is easier to employ an Islander. The majority want to do it.

Mr SLIPPER—Why is that?

Mr Phillips—I do not know why. I think it is just the nature of the people.

Mr SLIPPER—I see that you say, 'I consider a stronger emphasis should be placed on the formation of small and medium business in remote areas, which would in the long term enhance local employment' et cetera. How do you see those small and medium businesses being fostered, given the lack of business skills? Even in the general community, I think something like 80 per cent of small businesses fail in the first five years. If that is in the general community, you would expect it would be at least that—and probably higher—in the Indigenous community.

Mr Phillips—I certainly would not just give a handout to a person because he wants a fishing boat to go fishing for prawns. He would be no different to any other business. You do your business plan, you see if the bloke wants to do it and how enthusiastic he is.

Last year the TSRA, the Torres Strait Regional Authority, employed a person as a small business manager. I got short-listed for the position and did not accept it. His job was to go around the islands on the Torres Strait. The Islanders were all told through their individual councils that they had the opportunity to start a new business. They were told: 'But don't just walk into this bloke's office and ask him for $10,000, because you are not going to get it. You have to come up with a business plan, just like you do in the mainstream.' This fellow goes around and does the submissions for the Islanders. They are based on merit. It then goes back to the TSRA for final approval. If it is approved, every three or six months that fellow goes back to those communities and sees how that business is running and monitors it.

Mr SLIPPER—Given the lack of employment opportunities on most of the Torres Strait—I am thinking in particular of Saibai and Boigu—and given the fact that Papuans have traditional rights to come across, do you find that presents challenges to the administration with respect to employment, health and other matters? I understand from talking to the nurse on one of those islands that apparently 30 to 40 per cent of the work done by the health clinic, for instance, is servicing the health needs of Islanders from across the strait. Yet the $3 million a year which the Australian government gives to the Queensland government has been siphoned off elsewhere and is not put on to those islands. Is that correct?

Mr Phillips—That is quite correct. When it comes down to the Papua New Guineans and the Islanders, as far as I am concerned, if I am living or working on Saibai then the Islanders come first. When the boat comes in every Friday and these 20 pallets are unloaded for the Ibis store, they take a hell of a lot of money, and a lot of that money comes across from Papua New Guinea. They come across on their tinnies, they get all their sugar and flour and everything else. They spend thousands of dollars there. I know for a fact that the store manager there was paying the Papua New Guineans X amount of dollars just to work for the day to unload those pallets. The

council put the hammer on him because he was not employing Islanders. The store is not run by the council, it is run by Ibis. He said, 'Okay, you get six Islanders here on Friday morning at six o'clock and I will employ them for the day.' For seven weeks he never had one turn up.

Mr SLIPPER—But the Papua New Guineans would?

Mr Phillips—They put the hammer on the Papuans coming over to work. They were not allowed. So he and his offsider have to unload 18 or 20 pallets every Friday.

Mr SLIPPER—Thank you. I understand that is a real problem and I think that is something that is going to have to be addressed. It might not necessarily be within the terms of reference of this committee but it is certainly something worth looking at. I see you were tied up with the Queensland Indigenous Local Government Association. You smile.

Mr Phillips—Yes, I do.

Mr SLIPPER—Is that an association that used to represent the communities once known as DOGIT communities, or are there other communities included as well?

Mr Phillips—With the demise of ATSIC, the Queensland Indigenous Local Government Association Incorporated, QILGAI, thought, 'It costs $700,000 to administer the 17 DOGIT communities.' So the government decided, 'We will give each DOGIT community $50,000 to administer themselves.' That is what they got—$50,000. QILGAI decided, 'We will take a good handful of this and we will represent the communities.' So they took on board three communities. That was it. The funds started to run out. I kept writing letters and saying, 'There is no more money coming into the coffers.' All we had left there at the end of June was enough money to pay the income tax, and we could not use that. I said, 'I want to close the corporation down.' Four or five weeks after that I heard that another community had put in another $35,000.

If you look at this organisation closely, it does not do anything for the communities whatsoever. It has got a plan. It is supposed to employ purchasing officers, legal officers, health officers, education officers. But there is nobody there. There is nobody in that structure to do the job. So the money is coming in, it is getting paid to the CEO—or was—and the bookkeeper. That is $100,000 a year between the two of them. And they are paying rent in a place—I have got a desk, a computer and a phone—which was costing $1,500 a month. I wrote to the executive committee and said: 'We need to get out of here. I can do this job at home.' I never got a reply.

So there was a lot of money coming into that organisation and a lot of money going out, but nothing was being done for the communities. If somebody phoned up and said, 'We've got a problem with health,' or 'We need some legal advice,' the fellow that was there before me operating it—and he was still there—would say: 'That's all right. We'll get them to get on to their solicitor.' So they still had to pay for the basic services that this organisation was supposed to provide.

CHAIR—You made comments about the high school facilities and you go through the population and—

Mr Phillips—I might add that is a little bit out of my scope but nonetheless it was fair comment.

CHAIR—You were making the point, I think, about the need for high school education and the need to provide that opportunity. It raises a point of mine about where the state school system is operating within Indigenous communities particularly. You talked about the commitment—that it is letting people down for whatever reason, it is not delivering for whatever reason.

Mr Phillips—That is right; it is not.

CHAIR—Do you have any views about what we might do there? You have indicated a little bit your views about the high school situation. Do you have views you could share with us about the school system generally? There are all sorts of issues. Shared responsibility agreements are part of the debate at the moment. There are issues about welfare incentives or welfare disincentives to get children to go to school. There is a whole range of debates occurring around the community. In fact, it was in your local paper yesterday, in the Cairns paper. Can you make a comment about education?

Mr Phillips—Education is not really my forte, but I think that with these shared responsibility agreements there should be something that can be put into place, as they are doing here at Warraber, where they are forcing the responsibility back onto the parents to make sure that their children get to school. What we are doing here with the high school people is sending them to a mainstream school, which is all very well, but that education system is not suiting them. I have been around the communities and I have spoken to people. You can get a grade A in Coen. You can get a grade A in Bamaga. You come down here and you put that pupil in a school in Cairns, you are lucky if he gets a C or a D. They say, 'That's not true.' It bloody well is true and it is happening. So they are not getting the education that they require.

Plus there is the fact that you put them on the plane, they come down to Cairns and they disappear for two or three weeks before you find out where they are, whereas if they are in their own community they have got mum and dad looking after them. They have got Uncle Fred down the road, or 15 uncles, kicking them in the backside to get them into school. A lot of those areas do not have a high school, but a lot of those areas have only got 200 or 300 people; how many high school students are we looking at—five, six, seven? Why don't we send a teacher up there? We have got a high school, we have got living facilities for teachers. We could put a high school teacher up there.

CHAIR—My geography is a little soft here—I do not know the communities well enough—but yesterday we discussed the Western Cape College, which has campuses in about four communities. I cannot tell you exactly where but, certainly, Weipa was part of it and a central part of it. Are you familiar with the Western Cape College?

Mr Phillips—I have heard of it, that is all.

CHAIR—I will not go any further, but there was some endeavour to address it but not in the way that you are suggesting. You are really saying that a teacher there would be far better and would give them an opportunity which is not there at the moment.

Mr Phillips—Yes.

Mr SLIPPER—The Christian churches are fairly strong in the Torres Strait. I am thinking in particular of the Church of Torres Strait. Do you think that governments could achieve desirable social outcomes in the employment area and maybe other areas if there were more of an effort to work through the Church of Torres Strait, the Pentecostals or the Anglican Church up there? Do you think the churches could be better involved in delivering government programs up there?

Mr Phillips—In my personal view, no. I think churches should be there for the purpose of being churches. Churches get involved when it comes to family violence, looking after children and that type of thing, which I think is fine. But when it comes to the employment of Indigenous people, I do not think the churches should be more greatly involved—and I do not think they would be looked on favourably for that either. That is my own view, though.

Mr SLIPPER—I appreciate that, thank you.

CHAIR—Would you like to make a concluding statement?

Mr Phillips—In some of these areas, a lot of the money does not necessarily go to the employment of local people. Some people in these areas, and Indigenous people too, who are on councils and have jobs through different departments—the Department of Communities is one I know of in particular—are just rorting the system and yet nothing seems to be done about it. My predecessor at Coen was the accountant here until 2000 and then took over as the CEO. He pulled out all the administration staff and all the finance staff, which included to Indigenous people, moved down here to Cairns and then charged the council up there $120,000 a year for their services. We are talking about employment of Indigenous people. How much employment could I have given to Indigenous people if I had that type of money? These things do not get out. Nobody speaks up about it.

CHAIR—Who would have allowed that decision?

Mr Phillips—The council.

CHAIR—Put to them by the particular individual to approve, I suppose?

Mr Phillips—Yes. I know there is not much you can do about it, because when you go to these areas the councils say, 'It's our area and our money and we'll do what we like with it.'

CHAIR—I suppose it is a question of which is their money and which is other people's money.

Mr Phillips—It is the taxpayers' money. That is right—where is it coming from first?

CHAIR—Thank you for submission. I greatly appreciate the effort that you put into that. We wish you well.

Mr Phillips—Thanks for your time.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Snowdon**, seconded by **Mr Slipper**):

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

Subcommittee adjourned at 2.28 pm