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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Reference: Indigenous employment

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SYDNEY

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Friday, 19 August 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: Dr Lawrence, Mr Slipper, Mrs Vale and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

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

WITNESSES

Subcommittee met at 9.01 am

HAYNES, Ms Simone, Executive General Manager, Human Resources, Voyages Hotels and Resorts

CHAIR (Mr Wakelin)—I declare open this public hearing of the ATSIA committee's inquiry into Indigenous employment and welcome our small gathering here today. This inquiry is one with a difference in that it focuses on positive Indigenous employment outcomes with a view to advising future government policy. I remind everyone that these are proceedings of the parliament, and we need to treat them as such. Would you like to make a short opening statement about what you do and how you do it?

Ms Haynes—Voyagers is an Australian company. We have 16 properties, all in remote areas: the Northern Territory; Far North Queensland; Western Australia up near Kununurra—El Questro was a recent acquisition; and Cradle Mountain Lodge down in Tasmania. Primarily, in the Northern Territory we operate Ayers Rock Resort, Alice Springs, Kings Canyon and then up at some of the Queensland islands and the Cape Tribulation area of Far North Queensland.

CHAIR—Significant capital value.

Ms Haynes—Yes. We have approximately 1,800 employees across all of those properties and we have all sorts of jobs and positions from the normal traditional hospitality workers to trades, tour guides, nature guides and that type of thing as well as water sports and so on. We employ a huge range of people across all of those activities. We have a very large commitment to the community and environment and, in particular, to the communities around our properties. There are some key ones and, in a lot of respects, the Mutitjulu community at Ayers Rock is a key focus for us. We have established the Mutitjulu Foundation that works with the community. We are looking to provide better education, health and so on for that community. The other part is to provide employment for them, and that is a key focus for us.

CHAIR—How long have you been with the company?

Ms Haynes—I have been with the company since the end of October. I was primarily involved with the casino prior to Voyagers. I worked in city areas and retail prior to that, but industrial relations has been a big component of my work life.

CHAIR—I am partly a neighbour of the Northern Territory—that is, my northern border is Pitjantjatjara, which of course has some partnership around Uluru—so I am familiar with some parts of your organisation. With the corporate structure that you have, how do you think the company sees the commitment at a board level and from within your organisation in terms of access to a good resource, the Indigenous experience? How would you describe the purpose of Voyages in terms of its relationship with the Indigenous people?

Ms Haynes—Given the locations that we are in, our relationship with the Indigenous people of the areas is absolutely paramount to making sure that we are able to offer guests the experiences that they expect when they go out to these locations. The commitment, certainly from our perspective, is right through the organisation. We have an Indigenous employment coordinator now out at Ayers Rock to progress the employment side of things.

Cultural training is a really essential part. I know that when I grew up in Australia we did not hear a lot about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. It was just not part of the school curriculum. It may be now. But I know that, when coming into my role, I had a lot of questions about whether I might offend someone if I said a particular thing and so on. I think understanding the cultural issues is a real key for us to ensure that we can progress that employment.

We have done a lot in the last six months. There has been a real move forward. Our new Indigenous employment coordinator is of Indigenous background herself, so that has assisted, I think, in breaking down some of the barriers. The kids at the community do see her as a role model for something. She is degree qualified. She is a really great example of someone who can move forward. So I think it has brought it a little bit closer.

CHAIR—I am sure that is important, and I am sure that much of corporate Australia is engaging more and more. I know we have been impressed in the initial stages of our inquiry by some of that work in the mining industry, the tourism industry, your industry et cetera. But, just in a general sense, we have been given some advice that perhaps up to 80 per cent of international tourists coming to Australia would be seeking an Indigenous experience. You touched on that earlier. I do not know what the research is. I have not actually studied the hard research to know whether that is right. But perhaps the more interesting part is—and you might make a comment about that—that perhaps 10 per cent or 15 per cent of international tourists actually have an Indigenous experience. So there seems to be an unmet demand. Do you have a view about that?

Ms Haynes—The feedback we receive often from guests is: where are the Indigenous employees? They do not seem to be—

Mrs VALE—Do you actually get guests asking that question?

Ms Haynes—Yes, we do, because I guess when you go to Uluru you expect to see some Indigenous people.

CHAIR—That is a good point.

Ms Haynes—I myself, prior to even working for the company, went out there and expected to see them. Even in national parks you do not see many. One of the things you need to understand from a lot of that is that certainly the Anangu people out around Uluru are a fairly shy people and are not really into, say, customer service, where they would be very visible if we had employed them in those areas. They tend to want to work in the landscaping and the more behind-the-scenes things. So, even if you did have them employed, you probably would not see them much anyway. So there is that understanding of the culture and the different areas.

Dr LAWRENCE—Can I press you on that a little bit, because I have visited these places—many of us have—and I have had the same reaction as a lot of tourists: 'Where are all the Indigenous people? Why aren't they visible here?' In the resort that I went to, I eventually found one Indigenous person working in the laundry. She was the only Indigenous person employed, as it happened, in the entire resort, which was on Indigenous land. I think it has a bit to do with the work practices and culture that we insist is the only way for Indigenous people from a traditional

background to be employed. I know that when Indigenous people themselves are managing the tourism agencies, which they do in some places, they have a much different approach to the work. Senior people are very keen to share their culture and, far from being reticent, they come out, because it is to do with the authority of their knowledge.

Collectively, we do not bring the best out in Indigenous communities. I think a lot of employers do not either, because they insist on a way of working that is entirely alien to Indigenous people and does not respect their knowledge and cultural confidence. When even the apparently shiest Indigenous person is on familiar territory, they are anything but shy. So I just wonder about work practices.

Ms Haynes—We absolutely agree with that. Anangu Tours is an Indigenous run tourism company that do tours around Uluru and so on. We have helped them establish that business. They work on a system of pooling where essentially there is any number of people trained to do the tours. Someone just has to turn up every day. It does not matter who it is as long as someone is there to do the tour. Among the things that we are looking at to try and encourage more employment, because we are very committed to it, is that type of thing. Obviously, in a resort environment, certain things have to happen at certain times. So for some jobs someone has to be there. That is a key. But there are others where we can be a little bit more relaxed, such as landscaping and that type of thing where we can have that pool environment happening. As long as people turn up to do the work, it really does not matter who comes to do it.

We have set up a steering committee that involves the community, the resort and so on to try and identify what some of the barriers are. The way we work is to get to work at 8.30 and leave at six. Those very big restrictions are not normal or do not come easily to that culture. So we have to try and identify how we can massage, if you like, what we do around it so that it will work. If we can do some of those things then the doors will open.

We have 12 Indigenous employees who are currently part of our Structured Training and Employment Program, and we have a number of others who are not part of STEP. The 12 who are part of that are mostly at Ayres Rock Resort, Alice Springs, and Kings Canyon. The other thing for us is that the STEP that we originally were involved with meant that the employees had to come in and do certificate training. In a lot of respects they were just not up to doing a certificate 2 or even a certificate 1 for that matter in terms of their language and literacy skills. We have changed our STEP. DEWR have amended it so that we have some employment. We just employ people on a full-time or part-time basis.

CHAIR—Is that since you put in the submission?

Ms Haynes—That has been since then, yes.

CHAIR—It is good that you mention that.

Ms Haynes—It was one of the issues we raised in our submission. We have been back to DEWR. So, instead of having to have 20 people under the certificate regime, we have 10 under the certificate regime and 10 who are just straight-out employees on a full time or a part-time basis. So that makes it a little bit easier for us. The fact that we are out in those remote areas is a bit different from working in a city location. In terms of employment practices, we have to look

at different ways of doing it. There is also support. For any employee or for any person, particularly young people, to move to somewhere like Uluru or Yulara to live and work is a fairly daunting experience anyway, let alone if you are a very community based person, so mentoring is a key issue for us out there.

Mrs VALE—Who does the mentoring? Do you have a senior Indigenous person who does the mentoring or do you do it yourself?

Ms Haynes—We have our Indigenous employment coordinator, as I said, Carol. She is of Indigenous background, and she does a lot of that. We also have various other people.

Mrs VALE—And she does it for all of your properties all over Australia?

Ms Haynes—She does, yes. At the moment our focus is on Ayers Rock Resort, particularly, and the Northern Territory, because I guess that is where we are closest to Indigenous communities. We do have other people who act as mentors—the various managers of departments. Obviously, they have been trained in culture and so on. They are familiar with what they need to do in those respects. But there are some other issues, like getting to and from work. A lot of the locals do not have vehicles. We are 20 kilometres from Uluru. The Mutitjulu community is the other side of that. The issue is getting people out. We do a work observation program where they will come out and look at what people do. We have it for some of the older people, as well as the young ones. The whole community gets involved in it and sees that there are some opportunities and that this is what happens. Then we go to work experience and have a try of it until we can get to part-time employment, to start with. Hopefully, then people can move on to full-time employment. That is the way the plan is rolling out.

CHAIR—You may not be able to answer this, because it is just coming up to 12 months for you. In 2004, when Voyages joined the Corporate Leaders Program—and this was part of my earlier question—what was the motivation for it to be part of this? I presume it came from the corporate leaders' initiative. I am just trying to understand Voyages' motivation.

Ms Haynes—We as a company have a very big commitment to community and environment. As I said earlier, this year we have produced a community and environment report on what the company have been doing. It is not a public document at this stage. It is a first try at it, to see where we are at. It is not just a case of 'let's be part of this because it will be good for us'. It is very much a philosophy that the business holds and it is very much supported by the board.

CHAIR—We know this is a very tough area, and your submission was very good in that it makes the point that, as yet, you do not have an employee on the ground. You have the resort at Kings Canyon, don't you?

Ms Haynes—Yes, we do.

CHAIR—There is no employee there either, is there?

Ms Haynes—No. We had a couple of young girls, sisters from the local community, out there, but they have since resigned, unfortunately.

CHAIR—What I am trying to get on the record—and it is not rocket science—is an understanding of how tough it is and that it is something that your organisation has made a commitment to, as part of its philosophy as much as being a profit driven motive. We have agreed that international travellers and urban Australian travellers do look for that Indigenous experience. By the way, congratulations on Anangu Tours. When I saw it, I knew that that was in part of my electorate. My electorate includes the Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands, the AP lands. It is the 'g' in 'Anangu' that gets me every time. I want to draw out a little bit the relationship between the organisation, Voyages, the corporate leaders and DEWR. They had enough flexibility for you to be able to work with them to adapt this to what you needed.

Ms Haynes—That was something I was not aware of, having only come into the role in October. I kept getting this feedback: 'We can't get anyone into the program. They are not up to the certificate.' If I look at where everyone we employed comes from, I see that they are from everywhere other than around the properties.

CHAIR—That is a really interesting point. We were at Desert Park—do you know Desert Park in Alice Springs?

Ms Haynes—No, I do not.

CHAIR—That is a very good facility with Indigenous employment. We noticed that there were just about no local locals employed. That is another issue. I do not want to take you away from the point you were making, which was on the list of people you have coming from outside the area but having the flexibility from DEWR rather than meeting some rigid criteria.

Ms Haynes—Yes, that was one of the things. We kept getting feedback, certainly, from the Mutitjulu community, who thought it was great that we were involved in this program—but where was the employment for their people? That was one of the issues. So I went to DEWR only a couple of months ago. The contract was about to finish and we said, 'Look, what can we do, because we are just not going to achieve this.' Basically I was advised that we could go ahead and actually change it so that we did not have to have the certificate training. Certainly I was under the impression that that was the original—

CHAIR—This is a really important point—to meet where people are at. Given the mentoring you mentioned and your experience, it seems to me to be quite vital to be able to meet it without being rigidly contracted to something which is never going to work.

Mrs VALE—You need that flexibility.

Ms Haynes—Absolutely. One of the things that I have identified is flexibility. It has to be flexible. It goes back to work practices—they have to be flexible. It is also the funding, if you are going to try and do something. Look at the transport: if we could get a bus or something that would bring people out to work, we will get them in there—we can do stuff. These contracts and any type of funding have to have the flexibility inbuilt. It cannot be rigid, because it is not a matter of one size fits all.

CHAIR—That was the wonderful point that Dr Lawrence picked up. The job itself almost, I think you were suggesting, weren't you, Carmen, in terms of how employers adapt? But if the employer cannot adapt on certain criteria within a program—

Dr LAWRENCE—There will be a mismatch, that is right.

Mrs VALE—It is really a reverse of what we do, isn't it—the employee in our culture fits the role whereas we really have to make the role or the job fit the employee?

Ms Haynes—Yes, that is right. From our perspective we can do that—we have some positions that we can do that with. A lot of it has been getting the relationships built—getting the trust between everyone working. That is happening really well now. We seem to have a bit of momentum. The whole exercise is about flexibility. That is where we are at—we are just trying different things.

CHAIR—To give credit to your organisation and to the corporate sector, it is a commitment that you people are genuinely making, too, I think.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—It is something that is at an early stage for many. Do you know of Cape York Partnerships? Have you heard of some of the Pearson work—or Michael Winer?

Ms Haynes—No, I am sorry.

CHAIR—That is fine. There are a number of corporations—Rio Tinto in the mining industry—that are really committing. They have altruistic reasons but also very strong commercial reasons, and I am not criticising either.

Ms Haynes—No, I think they are both valid at the end of the day.

CHAIR—They have to be.

Mrs VALE—Absolutely. The commercial reason is the best guarantee that it will continue to happen.

Ms Haynes—Yes, that is right.

CHAIR—I am just trying to draw out that flexibility from DEWR. I have no more questions just at the moment on this particular area. There are a couple of areas I want to go to. Carmen or Danna?

Dr LAWRENCE—What is the value of the contract you have with the government?

Ms Haynes—The latest contract is a maximum of $221,500.

Dr LAWRENCE—The target is to employ 20 people?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—Was that the first year of operation?

Ms Haynes—It commenced in June 2004. It will now end in June 2006, but we need to have everyone commencing employment by 14 December 2005.

Dr LAWRENCE—That $221,500 is for three years, is it?

Ms Haynes—Yes. It was originally supposed to be for 12 months but it is stretching out because we have taken time to get the ball rolling.

Dr LAWRENCE—So the length of the contract has been extended, but not the amount of funding?

Ms Haynes—The amount of funding went up slightly. The original amount was $214,500, so it has been slightly adjusted.

Dr LAWRENCE—You have mentioned some of the accountability requirements. Are they, in your view, reasonable amounts?

Ms Haynes—We need to complete claims on an ongoing basis. They are milestone payments for people at each 13-week period. The payment times are at 13 and 26 weeks. I don't believe it is onerous in terms of needing to report. There has to be some kind of structure around that.

Mrs VALE—Was it initially dependent on people acquiring their certificate level?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Mrs VALE—So this is why you went back and had it changed to employment only in some cases?

Ms Haynes—Yes. We originally—and unfortunately I was not involved in this, so I have walked into it—ended up specifying certain numbers of people who were to be doing certificate II, III or IV in hospitality or tourism. Then it went down and we said we would have certain numbers of part timers. Then we identified which properties would have the numbers of people. That is way too rigid for what we are looking to do. We would just like to get Indigenous employees employed. It does not matter where they are, as long as they are employed. We are moving forward. We have gone back and taken all that out. Our new contract states that there will be 10 participants in full-time employment and that they will undertake certificate II, III or IV in hospitality or tourism. We have identified some specific language groups which are around the properties. This is to try to not just cast the net down to Sydney, Darwin or wherever—which was where we started and were originally gaining employees from—rather than the local community. The contract then talks about those employees being in pretty much any type of job and receiving on-the-job training and so on. It is to give some employment.

Dr LAWRENCE—Are you linked up with anybody else? This is traditional land you are on under the Northern Territory land rights legislation.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—This is presumably community land?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—Do you have any obligations under your operation to the Indigenous communities directly? Do you have links with other bodies that are attempting similar work?

Ms Haynes—We have a very close relationship with the college out there, Nyangatjatjara. They also have a job network out there who we work closely with. The job network do not have a great training facility, so we give them our training facility to use. So they will bring the people in too.

Dr LAWRENCE—Who is responsible for that job network?

Ms Haynes—The Nyangatjatjara College.

Dr LAWRENCE—Is it run by the community?

Ms Haynes—The community, yes. As I understand it, the Mutitjulu community has a number of offshoots. There is the college, there is the job network and so on. There are a few other things. We have made our training centre available for them, so they bring people over and do the training in our facility there. From an operational perspective, apart from the employment side, our resort general manager spends a lot of time with the community working on issues that obviously affect everyone. There are a lot of issues up there.

Dr LAWRENCE—There has been some recent publicity, obviously, about the coroner inquiring into deaths from petrol sniffing.

Ms Haynes—That is right. We work closely with the community on some of our liquor licence restrictions in terms of what can be sold as take-away to people who live in the area. It is a dry community; therefore we have restrictions like those. So we do work very closely with them on those operational issues as well.

Dr LAWRENCE—But you do not have any agreement with them per se as to operating on traditional lands?

Ms Haynes—Not that I am aware of.

Dr LAWRENCE—Not like those with some of the mining companies?

Ms Haynes—Not that I am aware of. There may be but I am not aware of any.

Mrs VALE—How long has the company owned these properties?

Ms Haynes—Voyages has been in operation since 2000. In 1992 the Ayers Rock Resort was formed. Prior to that the properties were owned by various different owners, so I guess you could say 1992 was when it came together as one company. GPT, General Property Trust, own the properties. We operate them for GPT.

Mrs VALE—They are essentially five-star resorts, aren't they? They are pretty high-level resorts.

Ms Haynes—They range from five-star resorts to campgrounds. Ayers Rock Resort has luxury accommodation in terms of Longitude 131^{o} but we have a campground and three-, four- and five-star accommodation as well. There is a backpackers dormitory and so on. It is actually quite a community out there.

Mrs VALE—So it was really in response to requests from tourists about having an Indigenous experience?

Ms Haynes—Not necessarily. It is more about the company philosophy. We have an absolute commitment to that community and environment. We have been working with the community for a long time. As for the issue of Indigenous employment, it seemed to be a matter of saying, 'Let's move forward now and work out what we can do.' It is always one of those issues of the time becoming right to start to have a look at different things. Prior to my starting, someone has obviously come forward and said, 'What can we do to really encourage it? Let's really put some resources into it rather than just waiting for something to happen.' So we have decided to move forward on it.

Mrs VALE—Was the company employing Indigenous people from the surrounding communities before you joined the Indigenous program?

Ms Haynes—I believe so but probably on a limited basis and not through any lack of trying.

Mrs VALE—This formalised the focus?

Ms Haynes—That is right. I think that if you put resourcing into something it will happen, so there became that commitment to actually resourcing it to make sure it happened.

Mrs VALE—So besides the funding you get from DEWR for programs, particularly under STEP, there is a significant contribution from the company?

Ms Haynes—Absolutely. We are not just relying on the funding from DEWR, because we believe it is the right thing to do anyway. It is good for the community and it is good for the business. It is the right thing to do, so at the end of the day if the funding disappeared we would still continue to do this. The funding allows us to put some more resourcing into it and to focus on things like having that Indigenous employment coordinator. It is absolutely essential for us to have that person.

Mrs VALE—How long did you say she had been with you?

Ms Haynes—She has been with us for only about four or five months. We did have a lady prior to that. Carol, with her Indigenous background, has really formed some great relationships.

Mrs VALE—It is a shame that we are not speaking to you two years down the track.

Ms Haynes—Yes, it would be nice to come back at that time.

Mrs VALE—I am interested in the focus that you now have. It is not just on training, as you had with DEWR; it is actually also on employment. I would like to ask if there is any cross-over by the people who are just employed, people who, because of their employment experience, could actually then step across and articulate into doing some sort of certificate.

Ms Haynes—Absolutely. That is what we are looking at.

Mrs VALE—It is a matter of their getting the exposure.

Ms Haynes—It is a matter of getting people in and employed. The certificate training is available to everybody. We have a relationship with Charles Darwin University up in the Northern Territory. Their people come down and do training for us on a regular basis. Our theory is that if we can get people employed we can then start offering them all the training that we offer every other employee, and hopefully they can then move on to certificates and so on.

Mrs VALE—Was there any requirement from DEWR to let them know, in your reporting at the end of the program, what you have found to be best practice that really works?

Ms Haynes—Not that I am aware of.

Mrs VALE—I know that there is no magic bullet.

Ms Haynes—No, not that I am aware of. I have been to a couple of conference and seminar type things in recent times.

Mrs VALE—So it is a learning experience for you, too.

Ms Haynes—Absolutely.

Mrs VALE—And for the other staff it would be a voyage.

Ms Haynes—It is. One of the things I have found is that we seem to be a little different in that we are in these remote locations. Accor have a very good program for Indigenous employment.

Mrs VALE—Accor?

Ms Haynes—Accor hotels have a very good program, they have been very successful, won a lot of awards and so on. I have had a lot of discussions with them, but the difference with them is that they are mostly in city locations and they do not have some of the issues that we are trying to deal with in terms of language, literacy and those types of issues.

Mrs VALE—They probably have higher levels of education.

CHAIR—Just to pick that up: are those issues of language and literacy the main two? You mentioned transport.

Ms Haynes—Transport is an issue too, absolutely, but language and literacy—

CHAIR—I think you have really hit on the key points. I just wanted to make sure I was clear on that and to get it on the record.

Dr LAWRENCE—Can I add to that, because I think it is not always just language and literacy, is it? It is a whole culture that is relatively unaffected, still, by European practices—

Ms Haynes—Absolutely.

Dr LAWRENCE—whereas, with a lot of the people in Sydney and Melbourne, their families for generations have been cheek by jowl with practices, have been to school and have worked. The differences are much greater, I would have thought, amongst the traditional people. It is a state of mind as much as it is language. It is culture.

Ms Haynes—It is culture. In fact, Carol, our Indigenous employment coordinator, nailed it for me. She is degree qualified and her mum and dad went to work, so she has lived in that environment and is familiar with what we understand—

Mrs VALE—Learning by osmosis.

Ms Haynes—such as time controls and all those kinds of things. As she said, she is used to that. That is what happens. Her kids have watched her do the same things, whereas in these communities, a lot of the time, that is just not being—

Mr SLIPPER—I apologise if I am asking a question that has already been answered.

Mrs VALE—No, I was just going to say that I understand that one of the biggest concepts from the industrialised world is actually fitting into a time clock. In one way, we could say we are all enslaved by time.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—In a lot of respects we are. I must say that I do not think it is a matter of argument. We are.

Mrs VALE—Actually, you have a manacle on your wrist.

Mr SLIPPER—In Cairns we had some evidence which essentially said that businesses have to accommodate cultural sensitivities and cultural practices. We heard how it is sometimes, therefore, more challenging to employ Indigenous people because, for instance, if there is a family funeral they might find it necessary to absent themselves for some time, whereas if we had a non-Indigenous person that would not be done or expected to be tolerated. Do you have

much of a problem with your Indigenous employees in this area, insofar as you have got someone coming to where you are or you are taking someone somewhere and someone just does not turn up? That makes your business look a bit unreliable. How do you get around that? Have you got this dialogue with people?

Ms Haynes—Yes, we did. As I said earlier, in resorts there are specific things that have to happen. If a guest is having breakfast, dinner, lunch or something, we have got to have people there to serve them and so on. There are things that are very time driven and so on. There are other positions that are not so reliant on that. I would use landscaping, gardening and that type of thing as examples. It does not necessarily matter if someone does not turn up today, because it is not driven by guest relations. For us, when the guests want something, we need to deliver at that particular point in time.

Mr SLIPPER—When a gardener does not turn up for cultural reasons, presumably you have educated people to say that if they are not going to turn up they, at the very least, should tell you—

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Mr SLIPPER—or tell their supervisor. When someone does not turn up—they might be absent for, say, three or four days—do you treat that as unpaid leave, do you treat it as paid leave or do you treat it as sick leave?

Ms Haynes—We have not had a lot of that at this stage, because most of the Indigenous employees we have come from the city areas. This has been one of our issues: we have not been able to employ a lot from our local communities because of various issues—

CHAIR—Job readiness.

Ms Haynes—Job readiness is a key issue. What we need to do and what we will be doing, moving forward, is that we are about to trial a cultural awareness program—we are working with Bob Randall from the Mutitjulu community on that—to try to allow us to identify what the cultural issues are. It is the things like the funerals and so on, where people do go for extended periods. Certainly from my perspective as the HR manager, as long as we know where someone is, it is not such a problem. The thing I hate is not knowing where people are, and then you start to worry about what has happened to them and so on. That is probably very much a European thing, but when people go missing for days and you have not had a phone call, at least if you get a phone call to say, ' I've got this on; I'm going to be gone for a period of time'—

Dr LAWRENCE—I am sorry to interrupt. How easy is it to do that out at some of the traditional communities?

Ms Haynes—Sometimes you cannot.

Dr LAWRENCE—When you go into some of those communities, there is no phone.

Ms Haynes—No, that is right, and I guess that is part of the problem.

Mr SLIPPER—But once we improve rural telecommunications everyone will have a mobile phone!

Ms Haynes—There you go—yes!

Dr LAWRENCE—I think it will take a bit more than that, Peter.

CHAIR—We need to start winding up. Can I just say to you in a general sense that I think we are all sharing the journey a bit here.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—We would not be having an inquiry if we did not think there was an issue. So we are going to the positive examples.

Ms Haynes—Definitely.

CHAIR—Yours is a little bit mixed and early at this stage.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—We really appreciate that you are coming on the journey with us. You mentioned the negotiation with DEWR, which is an important part of it.

Mrs VALE—I have a quick question. You said that you do not employ any of the Anangu people, yet in one of your transition to work programs in a two-week period in late 2004 you did employ 30 Anangu of all ages who undertook work experience in various resort departments.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Mrs VALE—What was the outcome of that? There has been no transition on to anything other than that at this stage?

Ms Haynes—Part of the problem is that there is a lot of work to do in getting them job ready, to hold down a job. That is part of the issue. We are continuing to do work experience. We are continuing to do work observation. We have had Anangu employed at different times, but not under STEP—not under the actual Indigenous employment program. We had a couple of girls whom we got an email about last week, after hearing all the media reports about what had happened out at Mutitjulu. Someone said, 'Look, there are some positives that do happen.' There were a couple of the girls who went through and did the hospitality certificate. This was some time ago. This was our original stab at trying to do something. They eventually finished it over a two-year period, and they are now out working at the community in child care. A couple of the other girls are working in—

Mrs VALE—That is a good success story—

Ms Haynes—Absolutely.

Mrs VALE—even though they are not still working for you.

Ms Haynes—They are not still working for us, but we trained them and they have now gone on to do some other things and work for their community. If that is all that happens, that is really good.

Mrs VALE—They were not on the DEWR program?

Ms Haynes—No, they were not on the program at that stage. Essentially, our general manager there, who is now up at Alice Springs, really took them under his wing, and they went through a lengthy process.

Mrs VALE—In the DEWR program, is there any way that they evaluate the program?

Ms Haynes—We have not got to an end of it, so I am not quite sure.

Mrs VALE—It is a bit early to ask you.

Ms Haynes—It is a little. I have been down to give them feedback. The feedback I gave them was that we were struggling to get people into the certificate training, so I asked: what can we do about changing it? So that was some feedback there. I guess they measure the success based on the number of payments that they make, because that means people are still employed and still there. I am not sure that there is a final sit-down discussion—'How did it all go; what happened?' and so on. We have not got to that point. But I have given them the feedback.

Mrs VALE—Or even, indeed, how many people perhaps left your employment but have gone on to other employment?

Ms Haynes—That is right. Yes, that is something that would be nice to have a look at.

Mrs VALE—It would be handy for governments to have some information about what is working.

Ms Haynes—I guess that is the thing. As I say, when you hear that, of the girls who did the original program, one is working in child care, someone else is doing this, someone else is doing that, you think, 'Great, that is fantastic.' We expect that we will be able to train some of the local people and that they can go back and use that in the community and not necessarily work for us for the next 10 years. They will be able to go back and utilise it in the community. There are some great positives. The last time I was at Uluru I went out and visited the community and the college and had a look at their facilities. There is a lot of work being done at the college at the moment with new buildings and accommodation and so on. There is a lot happening.

Mrs VALE—That would have been interesting to see while we were out there—to see the college and how they were doing.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—I guess I am mindful of the great challenge that you have in a general employment sense. I wondered whether you had any idea, as a human resources person, of the changeover that you have. Is the churn rate a significant—

Ms Haynes—Turnover of staff?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Haynes—It is huge.

CHAIR—That is a real challenge.

Ms Haynes—It is a challenge in itself. One of our biggest difficulties as employers in remote locations is that people decide to go there, in their minds, for 12 months. Some people get out there and love it and stay forever, while I have heard of others literally getting on the next plane back again. They are just not able to deal with it. I guess we do have a very high churn rate. We are trying to address it through a number of issues, but there will always be an issue there. Our other problem at the moment is low unemployment.

CHAIR—That is a big issue in Sydney as well.

Ms Haynes—Yes, it is. We draw our people from everywhere other than where our resorts are, so we have a ready pool of jobs to—

Mrs VALE—That is why your guests want to go there, because it is remote.

Ms Haynes—Absolutely.

Mrs VALE—But that poses other problems.

CHAIR—My question was really related to the point you made when you said, 'We would like to see this program gain some formal recognition as we believe it is a foundation to the Structured Training and Employment Program.' That is the job ready approach. I think it is a good concept—that there be some formal recognition that the current system does not have. Do you want to add to that? I should explain that Transition to Work is a formal recognition of that as the foundation, because that is what is really needed to get some kind of job readiness.

Ms Haynes—Yes. I think there are a lot of job ready programs around—the Job Network kind of do that. But that is only about how you manage your finances and time and all those things. Some of the things we are trying to do in the observation work experience part of things, before you even get to job ready, is to show people what working is, what a job is and what type of things they could do. For us, it is absolutely important that we do that.

CHAIR—It is a stage that is missed so much in the system, particularly relating to Indigenous people, I would suggest.

Ms Haynes—Yes, I believe so, particularly in relation to remote locations. It might not be such an issue in cities, but certainly in remote locations it is a really key step as part of that process.

Mrs VALE—What is the name of the college? You did mention it before.

Ms Haynes—Nyangatjatjara College

Mrs VALE—And this is a community college?

Ms Haynes—Yes. It is a college that is basically set up for the young people of the Mutitjulu, Docker River and Imanpa communities. The boys come in at particular times, then the boys go away and the girls come in. It is a secondary school. They keep the sexes separated; that was decided a long time ago by the elders. They come in and they do their training. We have some apprentice chefs there at the moment who are living on the site and working on the property.

Mrs VALE—So it is a live-in college?

Ms Haynes—Yes. They come in for eight weeks to do their schooling and training and then they go back out. Our work observation starts at the year 8 to 10 levels. We bring them over and show them what working is about.

Mrs VALE—How many students do they have? It would not be hundreds and hundreds. Would it be about 40?

Ms Haynes—Probably about that.

CHAIR—You can take that on notice, or we can make our own inquiry about it. Can I just leave you with a thought on the Pitjantjatjara, Nyangatjatjara and Yankunytjatjara: those three tribes are spread across the borders of the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. Good luck. Thank you for your time.

[9.51 am]

MUIR, Mr William George, Vice President, Aboriginal Education Council (New South Wales) Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We really appreciate your taking the time to be with us. I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Muir—The Aboriginal Education Council, which is based in Redfern, is a volunteer organisation, a registered charity, and has been going for about 40 years. It was started in the 1960s by a gentleman named Alan Duncan, who had taught in Aboriginal schools in the west. He came back to adult education at Sydney University and saw the need and that something had to be done. He gathered together support from the parents and citizens organisations, the teachers federation and a number of business sponsors. He pioneered programs in education for Aboriginal students in New South Wales, including the first Aboriginal teaching aides for schools. He set up the education program for them at Sydney University, homework centres, coaching programs and secondary scholarships. Quite a number of these pioneering ideas were later taken on by government organisations.

The AEC sincerely believes that education is a major element that contributes to the employment of Aboriginal people. We must assist students to get the necessary skills to contribute to their own education and to the wider community and in doing that we must start early. I know that this committee is inquiring into employment but we feel that, unless you start at the preschool level, then you are cutting back the chances of success in what you are looking for. We believe that support at the preschool and primary levels and incentives to continue through secondary school and support for students at TAFE and tertiary levels are important.

Currently, the AEC provides scholarships at the primary school level. We provide secondary scholarships, which are called incentive scholarships, which are provided in one year and, depending on success et cetera, they continue through to years 9 and 10. We also provide 12 tertiary scholarships for Aboriginal students who are working at a university level. Some of those include a scholarship for a young Aboriginal woman who will graduate at the end of this year. We believe she will be the first female Aboriginal commercial pilot in Australia. We have a single mother with four children working in the inner city area supporting young Aboriginal girls. She is doing a degree in social science. We have a young fella doing law and we have a couple of people going in for teaching, a number of whom are willing to go and work in their communities when they finish their degrees.

We see great value in having role models, especially in the employment of Aboriginal workers in schools. It is different in different areas, and I think the previous speaker referred to some of these things. There are different challenges in urban, rural and isolated areas. The AEC sees great value in schools—what are called full-service schools in the report that I put in—especially in more isolated areas, being community centres where local people can be employed in full-service schools. That would have many benefits. They would provide links between the school and the community, role models for the students, local employment, develop individuals' self-esteem and community self-esteem, provide more support for the local economy and career

paths for Indigenous people. We see these centres—which would incorporate preschool, primary and secondary schools, health workers, youth support and DOCS—as being educational community centres.

We believe that the employment of people in these programs should not be short term. It should not be a one-year program that is funded for a year and then ceases. I believe evidence had indicated that where this had been done in the past, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction in somebody who was learning to be effective and they were not employed anymore. In some cases, they then move from their community.

We also see great value in the role model of sporting heroes. We know that sporting heroes are held in high regard by Aboriginal students. In fact, one of the tasks I undertake for the AEC is that each year I visit all of our secondary scholarship holders throughout the state. One of the questions I asked the students this time was to name an Indigenous person who has succeeded, who has achieved. Over 90 per cent of the responses from these students at secondary school level were sporting heroes. I raised some others with them and it was interesting that they did not realise that there had been a fella such as Harold Blair who was a tenor. I then asked: what happens after their sport? We hold these people in high esteem, their sporting career has finished. What can we give them to support them to then continue with a career that can also contribute to their community? This has occurred to some students. A rugby league player in a leading Sydney team is back at one of the schools I visited working as an Aboriginal assistant, and he is held in very high regard by those students.

We need to look at successful programs. This is probably more in the area of other people, but we have had feedback from things like the employment program in the Moree and the Goondiwindi-Termeil areas, where there is a combination of secondary schools, vocational education, local communities and local employees who are prepared to give students a chance. We also think it is essential that some sort of incentive be given to those students who have dropped out of high school to continue their study of HSC at TAFE. We find that some students have difficulties coping with high school, but they can cope with the TAFE environment and we think that that proposal should be supported.

Similarly, we support vocational education programs in schools. That would be significant for the area that the students are in. We think that lots can be done and that education is a critical part in the whole program. It cannot be done by education alone; it needs the combined efforts of the education and health departments, DOCS and those other services throughout the country. The other thing that we believe is essential is positive cooperation and efforts between state and Commonwealth organisations to maximise success.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Muir. Why do you think education is relatively unattractive to Aboriginal people?

Mr Muir—My own belief?

CHAIR—Yes. Your belief or the organisation's—either.

Mr Muir—I would rather speak for myself, because there may be people who have different ideas.

CHAIR—I am sure there will be.

Mr Muir—I think it has a lot to do with history and the role models of the past. We did not provide education to a suitable level for a lot of the parents and the grandparents. The children have not seen this as an example, whereas other members of the community, such as me and you, did. That is where we see the role model aspect being particularly important.

CHAIR—This may not necessarily be race based. It is a role model issue, in your view.

Mr Muir—But it applies far more to some sections of the community than to others.

CHAIR—The name Redfern conjures certain images—probably unjustly and unfairly, but also based in some fact. What is the link between the Redfern community and the Aboriginal Education Council? Is there one?

Mr Muir—The Aboriginal Education Council originally started at the University of Sydney. Being a charity, we were then provided with premises in Glebe at a church hall where we worked from. We employed only one person—a part-time secretary—and that person was based there. Recently the church had to take over that area and we had to move. The Department of Education and Training in New South Wales provided premises for us in the Alexandria Park Community School near Redfern. That is where our office is based. Any connecting links that we have there are because there are other community organisations based there as well, but we are an independent organisation.

CHAIR—Clearly education is predominantly constitutionally a state matter. The Commonwealth supports where it can and there is debate about how well those relationships are managed. In your view, or the view of the Aboriginal Education Council, if you like, what are a couple of the main impediments within our state system which do not allow us to do better than we would like to do in this area?

Mr Muir—I think it is finance to a great degree for some of the programs that could be regarded as essential. Recently the state Department of Education and Training had an inquiry into Aboriginal education. There were a number of issues that came out in that report that could be taken up, but they would depend on funding, so I think funding is a great restrictor.

CHAIR—You would have some statistical evidence about comparative literacy and numeracy—the basics, if you like—for Indigenous versus non-Indigenous people.

Mr Muir—Yes.

CHAIR—How is that shaping up at this time? Do you have anything on that?

Mr Muir—Again, I can only refer back to the studies that have been done. We are still behind, but the educational levels of Aboriginal students are increasing. They are getting better. I think a number of the programs that have been in place in the past will continue to see that improvement, but we are still behind.

CHAIR—I have two final questions. You touched on the relationship between employment and education. In your experience, in today's job market, are there particular areas where Indigenous people—you mentioned sport, but it goes a little broader than that—seem more inclined to go, even though they do not want to go?

Mr Muir—It is hard to answer that.

CHAIR—We mentioned tourism and mining, where there is evidence of some progress. We have some evidence that things are quite tough in retail, for a range of reasons, but then it varies across Australia. Some of our committee members are keen to understand where Indigenous people are more inclined to succeed in employment opportunities.

Mr Muir—I refer to our secondary scholarship holders, which is the main area—

CHAIR—It is not a bad indicator.

Mr Muir—One of the questions I also asked them was: what would you like to be? These are students in years 8, 9 and 10. A number of them still have not decided. However, the responses I got back were: teaching, law—there is one young character in Sydney, who I have been visiting for three years now, and he has wanted to be a lawyer from year 8; and I guarantee that he will be a lawyer—dance and the performing arts. Many of them have not yet seen the incentive of working in areas like trades and whatever, and there is enormous potential there. There is no doubt that these kids have the ability. It is an area that could be developed through vocational education.

CHAIR—This is my last question. We think in terms of role models and Indigenous people going back into the Indigenous community. Do you think at times we make it a little too tough for some people to bear? In other words, should we be a bit more focused on individual Indigenous people living their own lives and developing their own lives, rather than thinking of them as being role models and getting them back into their community where some of these issues are very tough? How much extra burden do we put on Indigenous people by placing these expectations on them?

Mr Muir—I think it is very much up to the individual. A number of those with tertiary scholarships indicate that they want to go back. They are at university, they have seen what the world is like and they want to help their communities by going back. It depends on the individual. Some would not want to do so. Some would not be capable of doing so, but others would have the ability.

CHAIR—Just by way of a supplementary: Professor John Lester from the University of Newcastle has great experience in this. It seems to me he would carry that load quite comfortably and quite easily.

Mr SLIPPER—Mr Muir, allow me to congratulate you on the work your council does. How is your organisation funded and how did you personally become involved? You are obviously someone who puts a lot in and who is highly committed. I am interested in how you came to fulfil the role that you now fulfil.

Mr Muir—As we said, it is a volunteer registered charity. When it originally started Alan Duncan received the support of those organisations, and some business organisations as well, to get the first programs going. Currently we depend on donations, bequests, from different organisations.

Mr SLIPPER—No government funding?

Mr Muir—No government funding at all. As I said, we employ only one person part time. All of the other members of the group are volunteers. A lot of us come from education and some from the business sector. We put in requests wherever we can to some organisations that announce they have a foundation. We have had some terrific support from some. I will not mention any now because I might forget some, and I would rather not do that. We have had terrific support from some organisations. The other thing is bequests. We have people that know what we do and in their will they have left us some funds. That is basically how our funding comes through.

How did I get involved? I went through the New South Wales department of education as a teacher, inspector of schools, director and district superintendent. At that time I worked with Aboriginal people in Western Sydney and I saw the challenge that was there. Around that area of Western Sydney at that stage, Doonside had the biggest Aboriginal population outside of Redfern. There are a lot of people doing some terrific work given the challenges. When I retired I heard about the organisation. I joined it, and it has taken a fair bit of my time since.

Mr SLIPPER—I am also interested in the fact that you said that the council does some work in Queensland around Goondiwindi.

Mr Muir—The council does not do the work. I was referring to a vocational program that was developed. We were then advised of it. It is in a New South Wales town just over the border. There is Goondiwindi in Queensland.

Mr SLIPPER—And there is Boggabilla—

Mr Muir—and Tummaville. Apparently they have a vocational education thing whereby some of the people in Goondiwindi are employing some of the students. That was my understanding of the information that came through.

Mr SLIPPER—My last question relates to the different sorts of programs you have. You are obviously dealing with urban Indigenous people, and that must have certain challenges. Then you have other challenges in dealing with rural Indigenous people. How do you compare those differing challenges?

Mr Muir—I am not sure what—

Mr SLIPPER—Generally speaking—if you can generalise, and maybe you cannot—do you find that the aspirations of those in Sydney, for instance, would be different from the aspirations of those who live in northern New South Wales?

Mr Muir—My comment would be no. Remember that I work with the secondary schools. I think that, of the students, those that I deal with in the city schools are basically similar at that age to those in the other schools. But I am not dealing with extremely isolated schools. The furthermost I go out to is Mungindi and Collarenebri in that area. Part of the difficulty is this: with our secondary education program, every year we have a visit from a person from the committee who talks to the kids—and I gave examples of this before—about enthusiasm and self-esteem and, as a matter of interest, the principals of a number of those schools have said to me that, while the funding we give the scholarship is $300, the self-esteem of these students is worth more than $300. When I go, some of the schools invite the parents and carers and a couple of elders from the local community and we talk with the kids. There is that carryover and connection, which is a very valued link. I find the students out there are pretty keen to do something at this stage. I hope they do not get off the track as they get a little bit older.

Dr LAWRENCE—Can I ask a couple of questions about the schools themselves. You have obviously got a lot of experience apart from your current involvement. How well do schools—and I guess you can speak as to only New South Wales—actually do in dealing with Indigenous students? I am aware of plenty of places where they do not do very well, so I am not going to generalise here. How well are the schools prepared—and how well are the teachers prepared—for dealing with the somewhat different cultural backgrounds and circumstances of Indigenous people? How well are they doing?

Mr Muir—I think it is a challenge, especially to the teachers, because so often in these relatively isolated schools there are very young teachers appointed to be out there for training. I know that one of the suggestions that came through recently from the review was a support tutorial program and support for the teachers in those schools. I think it is essential that that be done. I have met some fine teachers out there as well. I would love to have had a couple of them in some of the schools that I was working in when I was employed.

Dr LAWRENCE—Is rapid turnover a problem in those more remote country schools? I know it was in Western Australia. You would have them for two or three years and then they would disappear, so that experience was often lost.

Mr Muir—I cannot comment on that. I do not know. But I know the rapid turnover of some of the funded programs was a problem, and I have referred to that.

Dr LAWRENCE—Year on year.

Mr Muir—Somebody says, 'Okay, yes, we'll fund a teacher's aide for 12 months,' and then at the end of the time that person finishes and there is no more funding. I know that caused distress and disturbance and was negative in what occurred.

Dr LAWRENCE—The other thing is that obviously you are selecting students for these scholarships and support. Do you have any data on how well they do in further education and employment compared with the average performance, if you like?

Mr Muir—Yes. We call it the Secondary Incentive Scholarship Scheme. The schools nominate them; we do not choose them. We have chosen schools where there tends to be a drop-out rate, and we work through the Department of Education and Training to get those figures. In

the incentive program, they are nominated in year 7. They get a scholarship in year 8, but—and the incentive is there—they have to spend that money on something to do with school. That is something we discuss when we go up there, and they have to have attendance, improvement et cetera. The three criteria are that, first, the kids have ability; second, they are possibly at risk of not continuing; and, third, there is need. So some of the students we are targeting are at risk, for a start. We have found in the last figures we got of those that have gone to year 10 that we have something like a 70 or 75 per cent retention rate into year 10. I am very interested to see how they go in year 11, because we can only afford the scholarship for the three years.

Dr LAWRENCE—To year 10, yes.

Mr Muir—Yes. So we will be waiting to see. But, as I said, the feedback from the schools has been so positive about the program—that it is not a handout. And the schools have been particularly good in supporting the kids for their programs. They discuss it with them. If, for example, a student says, 'I want to spend something on a computer program,' they talk it over with the Aboriginal assistant at the school and the school agrees, we agree. So that is the way they deal with their money. But they are responsible for the money. The school does not handle it, but they can talk over how to spend it.

Dr LAWRENCE—The individual benefits, and that is great. Do you see any evidence that the school community as a whole benefits? Do you see improvements in morale and retention across the whole school and not just with the students who have been selected?

Mr Muir—Just as my own feeling, yes.

Dr LAWRENCE—It is a bit hard to test, I guess.

Mr Muir—But that is very much a personal judgment, yes. And I am involved in the program fairly heavily, so maybe I have a reasonably rosy view of it.

Mrs VALE—I am just trying to get my head around exactly what you are doing. I did not realise that you assisted through scholarships or bursaries, so it just took me a while to understand that. How many people do you have who work within the charity organisation itself? You say you employ one person.

Mr Muir—Yes. Our chairperson, James Wilson-Miller—who apologises, by the way; he was going to come to support me this morning—is an Aboriginal person. He started by training as a teacher, then did some further studies. Currently he is the curator of the Aboriginal section of the Powerhouse Museum. He had an important business engagement today.

Mrs VALE—What a shame he was not able to come here this morning.

Mr Muir—Yes. On the current committee, we have two retired businesspeople. One was a very highly regarded Rotarian. Alan Duncan, the originator, is now 80 years old. Alan still enjoys us. He has an Order of Australia award. Two or three people from the P&C organisation are involved. The basic committee comprises about eight people.

Mrs VALE—So the people who are on the committee really constitute the organisation of the charity?

Mr Muir—Yes.

Mrs VALE—And through the bequests and the funding that you receive, you then distribute scholarships or bursaries?

Mr Muir—Yes.

Mrs VALE—I am interested, inasmuch as the education is free to Aboriginal children, but you have obviously identified this real need. Is it because you see the self-esteem and the encouragement of the young person getting that extra—

Mr Muir—That is why we say incentive. It is an incentive scholarship.

Mrs VALE—So it is an incentive.

Mr Muir—We do other things as well in the education area. For example, we have recently funded an arts program in which a high school is coordinating—and this is a fairly isolated area in New South Wales—with a number of the primary schools to get an Aboriginal artist in, bring the kids in and do some studies of their local community. We are funding a program like that. There is another one in a Sydney school. It is an after-school program in mechanical things that they have asked us to fund. So we do have one-off fundings as well. What we are waiting for is the nominations from both Commonwealth and state governments as to where they are funding, so that we can then work in areas that might have need but are not funded at the moment. We are just into that area, so we are very interested in what comes out of this.

Mrs VALE—Who would be one of your, can I say, favourite success stories: someone that you have given this incentive scholarship to and who has taken that as a real incentive? Had the gentleman who you were going to bring, who was the curator of the Aboriginal Indigenous section of the Powerhouse Museum, been through your scholarship scheme?

Mr Muir—He had.

Mrs VALE—Had he?

Mr Muir—Yes. It was years ago. The judge who recently died, Bellear, was also one of our scholarship recipients.

Mrs VALE—Wonderful.

Mr Muir—Yes, so there are people that are there. We currently have principals in schools who went through on our scholarships as well.

Mrs VALE—After the children have received an incentive scholarship, do you keep track of them and what they do?

Mr Muir—The secondary incentive scholarship has only been going for four years, so we are very interested in how they go through years 11 and 12. Staying up to years 11 and 10 is absolutely critical, because of the level. As we say to them, 'If you leave at year 9, you can do X. If you go to year 10, you can do X plus Y. If you get a year 12 certificate, there is a whole world opening for you.' Hence the connection, we see, between education and employment.

Mrs VALE—Absolutely. I think we all do. Thank you.

CHAIR—I have a few things to wrap up and then you might have a concluding statement. Do you have an idea of approximately how many Indigenous teachers there are in the New South Wales environment? Do you know whether the percentage is increasing or decreasing? Do you have a feel for how many Indigenous people there are within the education system, both independent and—

Mr Muir—I cannot answer, but I am certain it is increasing. I know someone could get those figures. One of our members is the leader of the Aboriginal teachers' federation. She might know, but I do not.

CHAIR—We might seek that information. Thank you. In terms of Aboriginal policy at a federal level, you may or may not have heard of the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination. You would have heard of ATSIC.

Mr Muir—Yes.

CHAIR—That is virtually the replacement, I suppose, in a sense. Though there be debate, there is also an advisory council which has been appointed by the government since the abolition of ATSIC. It probably makes the next part of my question even more important. If you could wave the magic wand, what is the most useful thing that a federal Australian government could do about this issue of education related to employment? Have three wishes. What are the keys? The issue that we are faced with is that this is essentially a responsibility of the states. That is a constitutional requirement. How does an Australian government of any colour work with the states and territories to try to get the outcomes that we would all aspire to?

Mr Muir—By getting together positively to work on programs that meet the needs of that state. For example, I would say, having heard a little before I came in, that the work being done in the Centre meets different needs than we would have in Redfern, Blacktown, Mungadai and around there. I did refer to that connection, that linking with the states. I do not necessarily see a Commonwealth decision to do something right across Australia as the way to go. I see working with the states on their programs as the way to go—but then again I was a state employee for 40 years.

CHAIR—I think that is very realistic. We have a federation and we have to be very mindful of that. I have been thinking about the impact of the referendum in 1967. I have people in my own state of South Australia who believe that money is not necessarily the answer to a lot of these issues and that the federal money has not necessarily been a good thing, in many ways.

Mr Muir—The money is necessary; the program is the essential part. That is where I would come from. The program has to be valid.

CHAIR—Picking up on the 75 percent retention, that is pretty good. That is a very significant outcome. It must give you encouragement.

Mr Muir—We have indicated to the people who funded these programs that we are targeting some students at risk. We would love to have 100 per cent, but it is good to get 70 or 75 per cent.

CHAIR—You would not get that in the general community, would you? In the wider community you would not get 100 per cent.

Mr Muir—No, I know.

CHAIR—Seventy-five per cent seems extremely good.

Mr Muir—Yes. We hope we can keep that up

CHAIR—We do too. Is there anything you would like to say as a concluding statement?

Mr Muir—Just to thank you for the invitation to come here. We believe that education is absolutely essential when we are talking about employment. It is a critical thing, and support for educational programs for Aboriginal people will benefit not only their community but also the wider community.

Mrs VALE—Do you interview the young people who are presented to you or do you go on reports by their teachers?

Mr Muir—Is this off the record?

Mrs VALE—No, we are still on the record.

CHAIR—But you can request that this be heard in camera.

Mr Muir—No, that is fine. Our tertiary scholarships are by application and interview. Our secondary scholarships are by nominations from the school by the principal, who discusses them with the classroom teachers and the Aboriginal workers in the schools. Hence the three criteria that we had. The primary ones are nominated by the local region, by the district or whatever it is. The schools nominate some students, and at the local level they are nominated to us. So we have three different procedures for the different levels.

Mrs VALE—The students must feel very special that they do get nominated and that they receive a program grant.

Mr Muir—The secondary ones, especially.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 10.29 am to 10.58 am

MOORE, Mr Ron, Director, Finance and Corporate Strategy, Blacktown City Council

GIACOMELLI, Ms Lisa, Manager, Community Development, Blacktown City Council

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for being with us this morning. Would you like to make a brief opening statement to add to your submission?

Mr Moore—Thank you. Probably just by way of background to help the committee, you may be aware that Blacktown City Council is the largest local authority in New South Wales and one of the largest in the country. Our existing population is approaching 300,000 people. It is projected to reach 450,000 before reaching its fully developed level. We have the largest urban Indigenous population in New South Wales and one of the largest Indigenous populations in the country. With that, the council has quite a commitment to supporting its Indigenous population in both its cultural and social plans.

In terms of the submission that we have put forward to you today, we do not have an established, formal Indigenous employment strategy. Over a number of years we have participated with various other levels of government in employment strategies for Indigenous people, particularly in the area of recreation and in apprenticeships. At present we have a number of Indigenous officers with the organisation in the recreation area, as well as several apprentices. One apprenticeship currently in gardening is targeted specifically for Indigenous people. We also have an Indigenous community development worker who was originally appointed to the organisation as part of an Elsa Dixon scholarship and who continues to be an important part of Ms Giacomelli's team.

In addition, as we stated in our submission, in recent years we have developed a broad relationship with the AFL in terms of meeting the goals of both our organisations in developing a much stronger social fabric in the community. The organisations fit very well together.

Dr LAWRENCE—The AFL?

Mr Moore—The Australian Football League. They have a program called the Kickstart program. It is sponsored by a number of high-profile AFL players or ex-players—in particular, Mr Michael Long.

Dr LAWRENCE—I was just surprised when I read 'Sydney AFL', and I thought: 'They can't mean football!'

CHAIR—I thought exactly the same. I am glad we have clarified that.

Mr Moore—They have a very broad strategy of wanting to participate more in Western Sydney, and they have targeted Blacktown as their partner in doing that. The Kickstart program is all about providing opportunity particularly for Indigenous people throughout the country. They launched their Kickstart program a couple of years ago in Blacktown. A key component of it was for the two organisations to work together to provide a number of traineeships that would give young people within the city of Blacktown the opportunity to experience local government

and business in a broader sense as a career, I suppose, as well as recreation and sport via the AFL.

The first three of those scholarships or traineeships, each of which goes for 12 months, were targeted at young Indigenous people within the city of Blacktown. They were appointed 12 months ago approximately and have worked through their traineeships. One of them still participates on a part-time or casual basis with the council in one of our major leisure centres while putting himself through university. In a nutshell, that has basically been our approach to participation in Indigenous employment.

CHAIR—Ms Giacomelli, do you want to add something?

Ms Giacomelli—Yes, just in terms of having managed the AFL trainees for the time that they were at Blacktown. Their time was split between two days per week with Blacktown City Council and the Community Development Unit and two days per week with the AFL—

Mr Moore—Just by way of explanation, Lisa heads up our community development part of the organisation and has had the core responsibility of managing the AFL traineeships.

Ms Giacomelli—On the two days that the trainees were with us—we had six trainees in all—three positions were identified as 'Indigenous positions' and three positions were what we referred to as 'generalist positions'. I guess one of the benefits for us of having such a high-profile program with Indigenous young people in the area was that, when we went to recruit for the generalist positions, we ended up appointing Indigenous young people into a couple of those. The number of applications that we received from the Indigenous community for the generalist positions was overwhelming. I think that was due in part to the obviously very high-profile partnership between the AFL and Blacktown City Council.

Also, part of the success of having Indigenous trainees with our unit was that they were supervised and supported by our Indigenous community development worker. In terms of sustainability of employment and giving young people an opportunity to work in their own communities, having an Indigenous supervisor was a very important part of their success and made them feel that there were people in the organisation whom they could relate to culturally, and it gave them an environment that was friendly and supportive of their career development.

Something that the trainees said throughout their employment with council was that they felt very comfortable in the fact that there was an identified Indigenous worker that they could team up with and that they could work with. They also felt it very beneficial that they were working in their own community and that they were providing service to their own communities and their own people.

CHAIR—Very good. Life is full of surprises—such as coming to Sydney and hearing about the AFL. It is linked to the Swans and the competitive nature of our society. The AFL is very keen to establish itself in this town.

As I said, local government is the level of government closest to the people, and it might be useful—for my purposes anyway—to define the Indigenous and employment issues that we have

in this large local government area. I would not have a clue of the ratio and how it works. Could you give us a picture of Indigenous involvement in Blacktown, currently?

Ms Giacomelli—Certainly. Do you mean involvement in terms of the way we interact with our community?

CHAIR—Yes. I mean what sort of population is there, what are some of the issues, what has led to this and how did your council become involved? That is the type of thing.

Ms Giacomelli—As Ron stated earlier, we have a very large Indigenous population and that is reflected in the census. We are always a little bit sceptical of the census data that we receive on the Indigenous population, because historically it has not been a particularly accurate indicator of the population of Indigenous communities. We have a high rate; I am reluctant to give you an exact number but I think there are probably around 6,000 to 10,000 Indigenous people living in our community, as reflected by the census.

The issues for our community are obviously quite complex. We have a high level of young Indigenous people in our community. There are issues for them about access to education and employment. There are obviously issues about the fact that a lot of our Indigenous population have come in from other areas and so there is a lot of displacement—people living away from their own lands and from the areas that they identify with. We have quite an interesting population in that they call Blacktown their home but there are obviously other areas that they have affiliations with.

Mrs VALE—Do the Indigenous people mainly come from New South Wales?

Ms Giacomelli—Yes, mainly from rural New South Wales. We have a very active Indigenous community sector, in terms of Indigenous organisations and individuals who are really quite keen to be involved in working with the community. Council has an Aboriginal Advisory Subcommittee that meets monthly to provide information and advice to council on Indigenous needs in the area.

CHAIR—Are they elected members?

Ms Giacomelli—They are residents who nominate onto this committee. The committee is supported by councillors who attend and is resourced by our Indigenous community development worker. That is a forum for those residents. Some of them are workers as well, but they are all residents of the Blacktown local government area.

CHAIR—What sorts of numbers would you get at a meeting like that?

Ms Giacomelli—We probably get anywhere between five and 10 people. For example, they worked on our NAIDOC Day celebration with our Indigenous worker. They also raise issues in the area; one of the projects they are currently looking at is the development of an Aboriginal cultural centre in the Blacktown local government area. They are a really active group and a very good resource for council to have, because it gives us people we can talk to and avenues into the Indigenous community that we might not otherwise have.

CHAIR—I am quite grateful for that because—I am sure Dr Lawrence does not mind me mentioning this—we were talking informally earlier about the issue of employment. It is an issue in which there is quite often a focus on rural and remote areas—where I come from—but it is at least as much, if not more, an issue of urban Indigenous employment.

It is very valuable for me to get that general feel—I am trying to develop an instinctive feel for your issues and problems. Do I call them problems? I guess some of them do become problems and issues for you. Are there issues of criminality and additional damage to property? What is the feeling? You have described the positive side. How tough has it been for you over the last 10 or 15 years? Have some serious issues surfaced now and again for you?

Mr Moore—To expand a little on Lisa's point, 50 per cent of our population is under 30 in the city of Blacktown. We have the challenge of youth and helping our youth to grow in a positive way right across the spectrum. We are culturally a very diverse city. We have a touch over 100 cultures represented and about 99 languages spoken within the city of Blacktown. Our experience is that the challenges are more age-related and probably in terms of diversity but not so much specifically targeted towards our Indigenous population. The incidence of antisocial behaviour, let us call it—whatever name you wish to call it—within our Indigenous community is probably proportional to their stake in our city. I do not think anything has come to our notice that suggests that is overly so. So I would say, yes, the problems are there, but they are representative and equal to the other parts of our community.

CHAIR—The other part of that is to then go on to ask—and it is a question that fascinates me—about Indigenous employment and opportunity. I will come back a little later, if I get a chance, to talk about the AFL and its contribution as a role model and all those positives you would hope would come and probably are coming from it. In terms of Indigenous employment, are there particular areas—and this might just relate to the general topic of youth—of employment opportunity which are obvious to you? These are not just local government opportunities but in the community itself? I do not know what your employment make-up is and I do not know what your main industries are. Is there any comment you would like to make about what people are doing and what opportunities they have?

Mr Moore—If I could speak in a broader sense, that was an issue for Blacktown a number of years ago. There were not a lot of local employment opportunities and the opportunities that existed were predominantly unskilled. Over the last, say, 15 years the council as a community and as an organisation has worked very hard trying to change that. In the last five years or so it has been very active in economic development in order to provide opportunities. We always used to sit well above the state average in unemployment—youth unemployment and other forms as well. One of our goals has been to address that situation, and a key component of that was obviously attracting industry to the city and, as best we could, providing local job opportunities for local people.

If you use state average unemployment as a benchmark, we now sit, according to the most recent census, quite below that. We have been quite successful that way. Our experience is that we are also starting to provide more skilled opportunities within the city of Blacktown. For quite some time we were getting a lot of warehouse type industry coming because of the cheap land and the good transport logistics—people putting their warehousing facilities there with the types of jobs that go along with that. However, we are now finding a higher level of skill requirement

is coming to the city courtesy of some more effective transport links but also through things such as the impact of the University of Western Sydney and greater educational opportunities. We are finding our young people becoming more skilled. More and more we are finding that a greater proportion of the kids in Blacktown are attending university or tertiary education via TAFE or some other form, and that in itself is changing the demographic.

Again, we have had nothing to suggest that the opportunities for our Indigenous youth are not there—definitely the opportunity is there for them to access it. We do not have any information, I believe, that suggests they are accessing it less than others. In general we are finding that there has been a positive trend.

CHAIR—That is a pretty positive story. You have really come a long way in 15 years.

Mr Moore—We have.

CHAIR—Right at the beginning you gave that very positive growth indication about where you are going. There must be huge growth occurring?

Mr Moore—Yes, there is. We are a very important part of the north west sector growth commission that you have probably heard the state government talking about recently. A great proportion of that happens through the city of Blacktown, heading out to the Hawkesbury, Baulkham Hills and places like that. In my time there, Blacktown has also looked to really engage in and celebrate what is quite a rich Indigenous heritage. Blacktown's name comes from its Indigenous history. It is my understanding, but I could be corrected, that it was one of the places where Indigenous people came way back perhaps to be more assimilated into European society in New South Wales. That is where the name of Blacktown actually comes from. There is a strong and detailed history there.

CHAIR—Even that has a positive to it, by the sounds of it. People were comfortable to be there and the community is well used to this interaction. It is part of their heritage, really.

Mr Moore—Yes, but there are some negative connotations—and rightly so, to some extent, I would say. When you talk to the Indigenous community there is still some disenfranchisement from this concept of attempting to integrate and not celebrate their own culture and, as I understand it, not necessarily going there of their own free will in some cases. That still very much exists, and that is why the council is trying to take a very positive approach to embracing its Indigenous community—to try and change some of those things. There are some positive signals.

CHAIR—The community group and Lisa touched on having the Indigenous people actually lead some of this. That is very important as well.

Mr Moore—With the Indigenous committee that Lisa talked about, we did quite a bit of research and consultation with our Indigenous community before structuring that committee just to make sure that it did actually work in a way that they were comfortable with. So it is led by them.

Ms Giacomelli—That committee has had a significant impact and the advent of having the Indigenous community development worker—who only came on board in about 2002—within council has had a significant impact on council's relations with the local Indigenous community. The impact of having the Aboriginal Advisory Subcommittee has meant things like councils becoming much more aware of the importance of doing things like a 'welcome to country' when they have events and recognising the traditional ownership of the land. Although it may sound like a simple gesture, for our community it is really important.

Mrs VALE—It is recognition.

Ms Giacomelli—Yes. For our community it is really important to have the councillor stand up and say, 'We recognise the traditional owners, we thank them for their custodianship and we feel honoured to be sharing this with them.' It sounds like something so small, yet it is something so big for our community. It really has built a bridge between the local community and the council. We now have things like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in the council chambers along with the Australian flag. Those sorts of influences have meant that council has become much more aware of how to service its Indigenous community, how to strengthen its relationship with the community as well and have quite good communication with them and have places where we can go to seek advice about the way we conduct our business.

CHAIR—It is a two-way street, isn't it?

Ms Giacomelli—Yes.

CHAIR—It is not just about respect for the Aboriginal people; it also brings into focus the balance of society and the relationship between and acknowledgment of both. It is a positive thing.

Dr LAWRENCE—I appreciate what you are saying because my local council has worked very hard to do similar things and it seems to be paying dividends. In your opening statement you mentioned a local government Aboriginal employment strategy. What is that exactly and who funds it? Is it just something that the local governments themselves have worked to establish, or is it something that is being sponsored by state or federal government? I am not familiar with it.

Mr Moore—Nor am I. It is probably a generic term we put in there. We do not actually have one ourselves—a local government employment strategy. But over the years there have been attempts to do that, to provide positive measures to allow for the local Indigenous population to become employed. I think the generic term in our submission was just that.

Dr LAWRENCE—We can follow that up. You are obviously consulting with local people, so you would be aware of the difficulties that they are confronting in employment in any case. Are you linked up at all with state or Commonwealth agencies in terms of funding support or logistical support in employment in particular? Is there any sort of communication or support?

Ms Giacomelli—Not formally or on an ongoing basis. As opportunities arise we may avail ourselves—

Dr LAWRENCE—By applying for projects?

Ms Giacomelli—Yes, but we do not have a formal, ongoing relationship that I am aware of.

Mr Moore—Most of the positions we quote in our submission had their commencement through some form of funding, usually by a state government.

Dr LAWRENCE—State government funding for a seeding period. Do you find the short-term nature of a lot of those programs relating to employment, cultural development and so on difficult?

Mr Moore—Yes, particularly where they are good initiatives. There is a whole issue—and this is a separate topic—of cost shifting. I know that local government particularly feels that it is a waste when that happens. In some cases there is a real benefit. Where it is something that you would like to get off the ground and that you would probably do anyway, if you can get some support to at least seed it and let it grow that is good. But predominantly it is a challenge when you have a really good initiative but you do not have a revenue stream to support it and the funding stops.

Dr LAWRENCE—It all comes to a sudden, shuddering halt.

Mr Moore—But the community has grown quite attached to it.

Dr LAWRENCE—That is right. And people often lose employment as a result.

Mr Moore—They do.

Dr LAWRENCE—That is the ridiculous thing. The promise has been held up and then it disappears. That is all from me. Thank you very much.

Mrs VALE—Thank you both for coming in and for your submission. Apropos of what Carmen was saying, I suppose we would have to change the whole nature of how governments operate. You are not the first people who have come to register concern about the short-term nature of funding for these programs. Congratulations on what you are doing and also on the fact that you have, as you say, a level of mentoring. What was the main reason you decided to put on your own Indigenous community development worker? There obviously must have been a real commitment by the council to do that.

Mr Moore—Yes, there was. It was driven by the council, by the elected body. As they became more aware of the actual size of their Indigenous population and its impact, they saw a clear need to make a positive step towards embracing it. As a result of that, the council moved very clearly towards the appointment of someone in that position.

Mrs VALE—How did you become aware of the size of your Indigenous population? Were you always aware of it, or did you get some good statistics from ABS or somewhere?

Mr Moore—It was always known but it was not brought to a high level or focused on. Also, I think information improved over time.

Ms Giacomelli—In terms of identifying our local Indigenous community, under the state government legislation we are required to produce a social plan at least once every five years. There are seven mandatory target groups in the social plan, and one of those is the Indigenous community. So, on top of data that we would get from the census, when we engage in our social planning processes we also engage in community consultation and surveying and literature searches and use a range of other social research tools. So we have gleaned a lot of information from our social planning processes about a lot of our local communities, including the Indigenous local community.

Mr Moore—It has only been in the last six years or so that the social planning process has been developed.

Mrs VALE—That is a fantastic initiative. It sounds like it is an excellent tool to inform governments and your councillors. With the mentoring that you do—and I understand that that is part of the role of the Indigenous community development worker—is there any educative process for the rest of the council and council workers about Indigenous culture? Has there been any need to have that sort of dialogue with the non-Indigenous workers you have on council?

Mr Moore—Lisa will go into this in more depth than I will, but we do have a fairly effective EEO policy and EEO committee that work towards a broad range of issues, including Indigenous issues. That is about as far as it has gone, I would say, although the issue that you are talking about has been discussed. It has been thought that there is perhaps a need for us to have a broader awareness of Indigenous issues within the organisation, but to my knowledge that has not yet been actioned.

Ms Giacomelli—As Ron said earlier, we have an incredibly diverse community. One of the challenges for my team internally in our organisation is: how do we communicate with other members of staff? How do we provide that cross-cultural training element? We are working on that at the moment. We have an access and equity policy and an action plan that my unit is responsible for rolling out across council. Obviously, one of the considerations is: how do we get our staff to a point where they are aware of the communities that they service and how can they service them in the best possible manner? It is something that we are aware of, but it is not something we have yet started to do too much work on. We are aware that we need to address it.

Mrs VALE—The idea of an Indigenous advisory committee seems as though it has been a tremendous success. Apart from the fact they can inform you, I should imagine there is a cross-fertilisation of information and knowledge, isn't there? It is a relationship-building exercise more than anything else.

Ms Giacomelli—Yes.

Mrs VALE—Do you see the role of an Indigenous community development worker as being pivotal to the success of Indigenous employment regarding the outcomes of the apprenticeships and the other job training opportunities that you have provided?

Ms Giacomelli—I think it is with respect to the AFL traineeships because that position directly supervised or mentored those positions. Our community development worker seeks to contact other employees of council who are Indigenous as well, just to make contact and say,

'Hi, how are you doing; I'm here.' We do not have a formal structure within which that occurs, but I know that she contacts them on an ongoing basis just to let them know that she is there. So it is not a formalised process as part of an internal strategy.

Mrs VALE—Does the council have many other Indigenous employees besides those involved in the apprenticeships and the programs that you are implementing? Do you have some permanent people who have been there for some time on the staff?

Mr Moore—Yes, we have. I could not tell you the exact number today, but we have a number.

Mrs VALE—Do you know what roles they fulfil?

Mr Moore—A cross-section of roles?

Mrs VALE—Yes.

Mr Moore—Traditional outdoor labour type roles, but also a number of them work in professional or paraprofessional roles within the administration in our civic events area. There are a number of people in our line management area: overseer, supervisor type roles. It could be one or two; I am not quite sure. We have several people in our recreational area as well.

Mrs VALE—Is there any single stand-out factor which was a real success, a very good initiative, that you would like to continue or follow or you can tell us about and we can share?

Mr Moore—The one that I think has the broadest impact on our community that not only leads to opportunity for part of our Indigenous community but also provides a broader community benefit would be the joint partnership with the AFL and the council. It not only provided opportunity for some employment of Indigenous people; it enabled us to bring a new partner to the city that adds something new and different to the community.

Mrs VALE—In other ways, too; it is not just for Indigenous opportunities?

Mr Moore—Yes, and we broaden that to include the whole young community in terms of employment opportunities—there were some targeted ones, but then there were some extra ones. There is also the level of activity that we are able to expose our young people to. Another thing I should mention is that we have a fairly large Department of Housing presence within the city of Blacktown, not only because there is Department of Housing land but also because there are generally some socioeconomic issues. Part of Lisa's access and equity policy identified that one of the biggest challenges for the lower socioeconomic groups in our city was access in its base form: accessing our facilities, accessing the activities that we undertake. Some people did not have the transport to get to them.

Mrs VALE—Just tickle stuff?

Mr Moore—Yes.

Mrs VALE—It is not rocket science.

Mr Moore—This partnership provided us with an opportunity to bring those things to them or, alternatively, bring them to those things and to actually engage them. In a lot of cases, those base access issues make people feel quite alienated and they are not willing to participate. It had those sorts of benefits for us as well.

Mrs VALE—For somebody who is a non-football person and has managed to successfully avoid it—even on the television; you can press a button—how does the strategic alliance between the AFL and the council actually work? How does the rubber hit the road?

Mr Moore—The AFL's vision is that they see Western Sydney as a huge market that they have yet to tap into—

CHAIR—Are you sure you are not venturing into areas you know nothing about, Mrs Vale!

Mrs VALE—I should probably leave this question to you! So there is a commercial interest also from the AFL?

Mr Moore—Yes, definitely. Their goal is to—

Mrs VALE—That is good, because that means a continuation of that program.

CHAIR—How was that for a male chauvinistic intervention!

Mrs VALE—I thought you were just having a crack at me like you normally do!

Mr Moore—They see that the only way they will have a sustainable presence is to grow out of the community. That is quite visionary of their executive. From our point of view, it is the opportunity to bring the resources and the profile—on a whole lot of issues; from an economic point of view, a social point of view, a recreational point of view—of a partner of that nature into Blacktown. The key component of our whole economic development strategy, believe it or not, is focused around tourism. We take tourism in the sense of visitation. We do not have the Great Barrier Reef in Blacktown, but we do have very strong sporting facilities, from a local through to an international level, and a highly participative community when it comes to sport. A lot of representative sport, and the like, is played in Blacktown; people come to Blacktown to play sport.

Mrs VALE—Is Eastern Creek Raceway in Blacktown?

Mr Moore—Yes, it is part of Blacktown. For the Olympics, the venue for baseball and softball was in Blacktown, and there are a whole lot of other facilities. We have the only wave pool in Western Sydney; a $25 million leisure centre we built a few years ago—things like that. There are a whole lot of things like that within the city.

Mr SLIPPER—Was the Olympic rowing in Blacktown?

Mr Moore—It was in Penrith; the next one over. They are our little brother.

Mrs VALE—Blacktown council is one of the councils that is in the black, isn't it?

Mr Moore—Blacktown council was the first or second council—definitely the first large council—to become debt free. We did that in 1998, by choice; we continue to be so. We are quite proud of the fact that we are one of the most financially secure organisations.

Mrs VALE—And successful, by the sound of it.

Mr SLIPPER—So you are not about to be sacked by the state government.

Mr Moore—Fingers crossed!

Mr SLIPPER—I do not know the geography of Sydney very well. Is Western Sydney partly rural and partly urban, or totally urban?

Mr Moore—We have a reducing rural component to the city; it is part of the north-west sector growth commission. Over the next 20 years we will probably become fully developed.

Mr SLIPPER—You have given evidence that you have between 6,000 and 10,000 Indigenous people. Would the proportion of Indigenous people in Blacktown City be higher than in other parts of the Sydney metropolitan area? And, if so, why?

Mrs VALE—Traditional focus, isn't it?

Mr Moore—Yes. In answer to the first part of your question: we would have one of the higher densities. We have an existing population approaching 300,000 and we will be 450,000 when we are fully developed, so we are a large population anyway. There are a couple of cities such as Campbelltown in the Western Sydney area that I know have a slightly denser—as a proportion of their population—number of Indigenous people than Blacktown, but in gross numbers we have the largest.

Mr SLIPPER—How big is the municipality in area?

Mr Moore—About 240 square kilometres. Blacktown's name comes from the fact that it was a place where, many years ago, Indigenous people were brought to try and be integrated better into European society—there is a history there.

Mr SLIPPER—To what extent are they fully integrated in Blacktown? To what extent do they maintain their own separate culture? How do you find the challenges of employing them different from employing non-Indigenous people?

Ms Giacomelli—The question of integration is a difficult one; we probably would not look at our Indigenous population as to whether they are integrated or not. Our Indigenous community certainly has a very clear and vibrant identity—

Mr Moore—Which we encourage.

Ms Giacomelli—which we encourage and support.

Mrs VALE—I should say that Peter comes from Queensland. It is not that in Blacktown you actually have a particular community camp like you have in big country towns. This is really a residential town. It is outside of Sydney. You were saying about things encroaching. It will probably be encroaching residential and there will probably not be a spare acre.

CHAIR—Have you become a witness, Mrs Vale?

Mrs VALE—No. I have some local expertise. I could see what Peter was getting at.

CHAIR—This lady is very versatile!

Mrs VALE—The Indigenous people live within the community themselves, don't they?

Ms Giacomelli—Yes. That is exactly right.

Mrs VALE—That is where Peter was coming from with his question.

Ms Giacomelli—We obviously have pockets where there may be a higher population of Aboriginal people living, but we certainly do not have one specific concentrated area. We look at our community as a whole. As Ron said before, in terms of employment and education opportunities, we would assist that community, just as we would assist any other community, to access those opportunities in terms of ensuring that they know what is available and supporting them as best we can in order to move them into education and employment.

Mrs VALE—As for the AFL and that alliance that you have, do they actually have programs on a weekend for young people to join? I want to know how it works.

Mr Moore—The Kickstart Indigenous program and the traineeships are one component of it. I should probably let you know that, with the support of the state government, the AFL and the New South Wales Cricket Association, the Olympic Park facility that I talked about, the one with the softball and baseball, is being expanded and developed with a new $20 million facility to accommodate the New South Wales Cricket Association and the AFL as their home in Western Sydney. So that is another major component of what we do.

Mrs VALE—And it would raise the profile.

Mr Moore—Most definitely, and it makes that venue a lot more viable for us too in the long term. As I mentioned before, they are keen to get into the community and to be part of the community.

CHAIR—I am really curious about this. This has probably not that much to do with the inquiry but it is important. How does it make it more viable? I am interested to understand, and I am sure it would help me to understand the investment and the way you bring it together. I suppose it is about multi sports. How does it develop your viability, given what you have got at the moment? How do you bring it together?

Mr Moore—I will come back to your bit in a minute, Mrs Vale.

Mrs VALE—Okay. We are going to get kickstarted on this. We have had a few false starts so far.

Mr Moore—As for the venue itself, it is made up of an international standard softball facility and baseball facility. It has the same running track as the one that was used during the Olympics, the one that is no longer at Homebush.

CHAIR—So it is the multiplicity of use.

Mr Moore—That is there, but at present the other sports are high-participation but low-revenue sports. These ones are top end of town sports. The other component of the relationship is that we have a quite extensive program of community based events that happen during the course of the year. A lot of them have a heavy recreational focus. The AFL participate in those. They provide any number of clinics. The Swans come and participate on those days. An example is that last weekend we had what we call our 'annual sportsfest' where we get together at Olympic Park all the sports that are represented within the City of Blacktown and provide them with an opportunity to have a stall, demonstrations, opportunities for kids to participate, sign-on days and things like that. We provide ancillary entertainment and activities and also refreshments. It is a free day for the whole community to come to look at what sports are available in the City of Blacktown.

Mrs VALE—It is a lovely family day.

Mr Moore—Yes. We try to do those things. The AFL are a very heavy component of that.

CHAIR—That is fantastic.

Mrs VALE—That is really great.

CHAIR—So you bring people in and then the organisations have that opportunity to promote and relate?

Mr Moore—Yes.

Mrs VALE—You have created a dynamic community.

Mr Moore—It is all the various groups of people.

Mrs VALE—Apart from the clinics, do the AFL run a competition amongst young people? Is there a junior competition? That is probably what I am asking.

Mr Moore—There is. There is not currently an AFL club in Blacktown. Their goal over the next couple of years is to actually establish an AFL club in Blacktown. Who knows what will grow out of that in the future?

CHAIR—Amazing. Are you familiar with a group called the Aboriginal Employment Strategy run by Mr Dick Estens or Cathy Duncan?

Ms Giacomelli—Yes. They actually gave a presentation to our Aboriginal Advisory Subcommittee probably about two months ago.

CHAIR—The submission from the Commonwealth department, DEWR, mentions that they are expanding the program with $17 million of funding to other new locations including Maitland, in the Hunter Valley, and Western Sydney. The submission says:

The western Sydney office will also operate an outreach employment service in central Sydney.

Are you able to give us an impression of what you heard?

Ms Giacomelli—I was present for the presentation. It was a couple of months ago and it was at night, so I probably could not give a particularly accurate—

CHAIR—It was one of those—

Ms Giacomelli—It was one of those things I sat in on. It is always a good thing, I think, to offer employment strategies for any community. In terms of giving a better indicator of the presentation, and if you were interested, we could certainly get you some feedback from our committee about what their impression of the presentation was.

CHAIR—Can I be quite candid with you?

Ms Giacomelli—You can be.

CHAIR—I will explain my motive. This might help you. I believe in it myself from a regional and rural perspective with regard to Moree, Dubbo and the issues over the years, which you would be as familiar with as I am. Some individuals have not been able to make a significant difference. There has been some comment, criticism and debate over the years within the Australian government to the extent that this program has had some extra support. What surprised me in the submission was that the country, if you like, was coming to the city.

This is the rub: I was interested in how the city felt about the relevance. You have made the point that you would expect your Indigenous population probably to be integrated into the work force similarly to others. It is not an outstanding issue. You made the point that your statistics have become very good over the last five or 10 years. I am just curious about how the western suburbs feel about this program, which is essentially coming out of the west. That is all I am coming from. Maybe there is somebody there who could just give us a little bit of feedback on that.

Ms Giacomelli—That is certainly something we could arrange.

CHAIR—It does not have to be any big deal; just a little bit of an impression is all I am looking for. We went to Dubbo and we will be seeing these people in Kalgoorlie, believe it or not, in October. We are just curious. Our responsibility is to every Australian, wherever they live. We are getting a very good urban local government view but then we think we are in about three or four different categories: remote, rural, regional and urban. That probably does not do it justice but there are quite distinctive differences in how people see it. We are just trying to get

the balance as we do our report. That was a long way of saying that it reminds perhaps all of us—the few of us who are gathered—that that is part of the challenge of our inquiry, but we might just take you up on a little impression. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Mr Moore—I think we are okay.

CHAIR—I must admit, I am quite excited by what I have heard as an avid AFL supporter. I wish the new potential AFL club at Blacktown every success. Thank you very much.

[11.48 am]

HAMPSHIRE, Ms Anne Catherine, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia

LAWTON, Miss Jane, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have anything to say about the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Hampshire—Both of us are on Mission Australia's Indigenous working group.

CHAIR—Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms Hampshire—Thank you. First of all, we would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this country, the Gadigal Clan of the Eora Nation, on whose land we meet today. Mission Australia welcomes the opportunity to appear before the committee. Mission Australia is a national non-denominational Christian organisation that delivers community, employment and training services across Australia. In 2004, we supported 220,000 Australians, a significant number of whom are Indigenous, through our 270 services.

We still have much to learn in our work with Indigenous communities; however our comments draw on our experience on the ground delivering both employment and community services. Our front line staff have identified the following as some principles of good practice. Firstly, holistic and strengths based responses. Programs such as our Dubbo leadership and cultural development program and post release support programs in central-west New South Wales help build a strong sense of cultural awareness as a basis for personal development and achievement in a range of areas of life. The complexity of issues confronting many Indigenous clients also means that simply dealing with one presenting issue, whether it be unemployment or homelessness, will not bring about sustainable and positive change. We are quite uniquely placed because we have community services, training services and employment services and the interface between the three. Multi-level responses are often required as is the need to work not only with the individual but often with the extended family and community.

Secondly is program flexibility. Our work on North Stradbroke Island in Queensland has involved flexible approaches to training and the use of funds already available through the Job Network. This has contributed to the successful establishment of a local sea cucumber processing plant employing previously unemployed Indigenous people. Like their non-Indigenous counterparts, Indigenous Australians are not homogenous and what has worked in one location may be difficult to replicate or will certainly need local input to ensure appropriateness. Some will want Indigenous specific services; others will want mainstream approaches. Neither should be the sole approach.

Thirdly is partnerships. Much of our work with Indigenous communities is in partnership with a range of organisations, including Indigenous organisations but also various government agencies, community organisations, philanthropic bodies and business. Our regional environmental employment program in Victoria draws together a diverse range of organisations

to support disadvantaged unemployed young people into employment, education and training. The program has had good outcomes for Indigenous participants and is now being refined to work specifically in an Indigenous community in Gippsland. Our partnership with Australia Post, DEWR and the University of South Australia to train and employ Indigenous job seekers under the Structured Training Employment program, STEP, has also achieved good outcomes.

Fourthly, relationships will be a corner stone at both an individual and organisational level if real and sustainable outcomes are to be achieved. This will often require a 'slow approach' and will not necessarily be faster if staff are Indigenous. It requires a sustained and long-term commitment and may need to address wariness due to previous negative experiences such as short-term programs, one-off funding and high staff rotation.

Fifthly, mentoring and access to ongoing support are key elements of successful initiatives. Appropriate training for workplace mentors is critical in the transition to employment process. This needs to include cross-cultural training and may need to address workplace practices. Mentors need to be viewed as mainstream—everyone can benefit from a mentor or a network of support.

Miss Lawton—I am going to talk specifically about our activities within the Northern Territory. Mission Australia currently has 106 staff in the Northern Territory, 70 per cent of whom are Indigenous. Indigenous staff are engaged throughout the 16 programs currently delivered in employment, community and training contracts and in various roles including management.

The use of CDEP as a training program has been one initiative which has assisted in developing a skill base for positions. CDEP participants are provided with the same development opportunities as paid staff with an emphasis on the development of skills and qualifications. CDEP participants must demonstrate a desire to work within the program area and generally do not come with the level of experience or literacy skills that we require. CDEP participants undertake organisational induction and on and off the job skills based training, participate in monthly individual supervisions and are performance managed in the same manner as paid employees. The majority of CDEP participants engaged by Mission Australia within the Northern Territory have been successful in securing paid open employment within six to eight months.

Advertising of permanent positions is also dealt with in a different context. Regarding recruitment of permanent employees within Mission Australia, positions are required to be advertised and generally take the form of ads in local newspapers. Within the Northern Territory, we also advertise through various other forums such as email distribution lists—we have one called 'Cooee' for Indigenous employees—and through word of mouth, the *Koori Mail*, Larrakia radio and local Indigenous organisations.

Mission Australia in the Northern Territory has also recently completed a four-month contract to deliver a range of Indigenous recruitment services to the Northern Territory public sector within the Darwin region, and it offered some useful insights into things that need to be addressed. Participants interested in recruitment within the Northern Territory public sector lacked the knowledge of the recruitment processes of the sector itself. It was complex, it had difficulties addressing the selection criteria and did not have up-to-date resumes and did not have

relevant work histories. The selection criteria and position descriptions needed to accurately reflect the requirements of the positions. Skills and abilities needed to be written in a language that reflects the level of the positions. For example, we had positions at an A02 level, which you may be familiar with—they are quite low level administrative positions—that required the same sorts of skills that were needed at the A05 and A06 levels, so the employer base is not looking at what the actual needs of the jobs are.

The responsibility for career development support for existing Indigenous employees within the sector is not clearly identified nor are costs set aside for this important function. One of the things that we do extremely well within our organisation is the mentoring and support of all our staff, not just our Indigenous staff, and we commit to that financially as well.

CHAIR—Just career development?

Miss Lawton—Career development and support. Indigenous staff in the public sector saw a high usage of short-term contracts as placing them at a disadvantage. Some had been on short-term contracts in the same role for many years. These staff proposed that there be an increased number of mainstream positions identified for Indigenous staff, which was usually people in identified positions wanting mainstream positions identified.

The cultural information program that we provided—which is different from a cultural awareness program that most people have been through—is about local Indigenous people and the culture within the area. The contract confirmed the importance of cultural induction for all new recruits at all levels within the public sector, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We do that because we recognise the difference between Indigenous culture across Australia and urban, rural and remote and traditional cultures, and we work with a lot of traditional communities up there, so there needs to be a clear understanding of how to deal with those traditional people.

Institutionalised workplace practices regarding such issues as bereavement, ceremonial leave and family responsibilities may need to be rethought because of cultural issues. We have done that within our organisation. We actually incorporate ceremonial leave within our certified agreement and within a range of other areas to address the cultural needs of Indigenous staff. Mentoring is required not just for Indigenous staff but often for non-Indigenous staff who are managing them, the latter often needing training to undertake this role. There is a fear factor when non-Indigenous staff are dealing with Indigenous staff, and we found that that is extremely difficult to overcome.

Mrs VALE—Really?

CHAIR—What was the key phrase you used?

Miss Lawton—The fear factor of a non-Indigenous supervisor dealing with Indigenous staff.

Ms Hampshire—Mentoring is often seen as a one way thing, but it actually needs to be a two-way support—both for the mentor and for the mentee.

Miss Lawton—And it also involves an understanding. The supervisors do not have a level of understanding of the needs of their Indigenous staff and the Indigenous staff often have difficulties communicating those. So when there is family business, sorry business, all those sorts of things, often the staff member will just not show up at work. Luckily, we have networks that tell us when there is a deceased person and stuff like that. So, if one of our traditional staff member disappears for a period and there has been a family death, we actually relate that and we manage that through our internal processes. Sometimes those things are complex, and you have to be able to understand the context in relation to the Indigenous individual whom you are dealing with.

CHAIR—That is a new phrase. I had not heard it.

Mrs VALE—I had not heard of it.

CHAIR—It is quite important.

Miss Lawton—Mentoring support needs to be structured and ongoing. Collective Indigenous support groups can also play an important role. A broker will often be required to effectively market the public sector to Indigenous employees and to appropriately support potential and current Indigenous employees and those who manage them.

I have been called in personally on several occasions where other organisations are having difficulties managing the Indigenous staff. They think they should not do it through the normal processes or should do it differently. Usually it is the communications processes. There is a problem communicating effectively with any different cultural group that people have within their work force. It is making sure that the workplace has an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the people who are working within it.

CHAIR—Did I hear in there that you can mystify it a little too much?

Miss Lawton—Yes, definitely. People put all these parameters around managing Indigenous staff. We purposely set out to have a lot of Indigenous staff within our organisation because of the population base we deal with. I was always told that you cannot do it. Certainly, we do not have difficulty doing it. Our retention rates are extremely high. We have about a 2.5 per cent turnover per annum. We deal with traditional staff—people with no literacy skills and who have English as their third language.

CHAIR—So there is plenty of room for plain talking and clear communication.

Miss Lawton—Yes. Indigenous staff appreciate that. They do not want to be treated differently—and they do get treated differently. One other program that is reasonably new—it has been recently taken up by our organisation—is the Indigenous youth employment consultant role, which works with the Job Network agencies. There is some positive feedback in relation to that program. The program is about engaging disengaged youth back into education, training or employment. A lot of the young people that those roles are dealing with have very little family support. They are often living off the streets or are away from their family to undertake their education and training needs. By providing those supports in regional centres where those positions are and by working closely with educational facilities and employer bases we are

finding that where young people were looking at leaving to return home to family we have been able to keep them. We have been able to develop ways of communicating back to family on a regular basis so they have still got some support networks with family while they are away from community. The outcomes are very positive.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mrs VALE—I am interested in the fear factor. I have not heard that expression before, especially in this committee. The fear factor is there in the role of the monitor. Is that right?

Miss Lawton—Yes.

Mrs VALE—Jane, I always thought that when you had someone mentoring there is perhaps a greater level of understanding of the roles or whatever. Do you have experienced people mentoring, or is there still that fear factor?

Miss Lawton—There is that fear factor. All our supervisors are trained in supervision and mentoring and there is a very clear difference between the two. Staff have access to a number of Indigenous mentors within the organisation. I am one of those. Out of the 74 Indigenous staff we have there are about 30 in higher level positions who support the Indigenous staff in lower level positions. We provide that support outside the formal supervision process. We do not have supervision or performance management in the normal context. Where we have formal supervision we operate on a monthly basis with a discussion of how each individual is going and there is feedback about how the supervisor is managing within that role as well. We have the two aspects of supervision and mentoring happening within the Northern Territory to provide support and assistance to our staff. Most of our staff within our community sector came to us with no qualifications or experience. They are all undertaking certificates III or IV in alcohol and other drugs, youth work or community services. Through that process all our staff support each other. It is a self-paced program so those with literacy problems are being—

Mrs VALE—Are these staff members of whom you are speaking Indigenous staff?

Miss Lawton—They are Indigenous and non-Indigenous. All our staff have the same expectations put on them.

Mrs VALE—Are Indigenous people mentoring other Indigenous people?

Miss Lawton—Yes.

Mrs VALE—Do you sometimes find that there is this fear factor present there too? Is it the responsibility or the expectation—or even the unknown expectation, which is probably worse?

Miss Lawton—If you have a traditional Indigenous person versus a non-traditional Indigenous person, say, from New South Wales, there is a huge fear factor there, in that traditional culture is very different and you need to have an understanding of that in order to work appropriately within that cultural context in providing mentoring. If you understand traditional culture, there are areas you should not go, or that I should not go as female if I have a traditional male who has come to me for mentoring support. You have to have a clear

understanding about that and also about the differences between Kooris, Murris, Ngunnawals and other different tribal groups.

Mrs VALE—Different skin groups.

Miss Lawton—That is exactly right. There is the perception that an Indigenous person is Indigenous across Australia. Yes, they are, but there are different cultures that you have to take into context as well.

Mrs VALE—That is amazing. Also, one of the things that I think, Anne, you also pointed out, was about the holistic approach and how you can have that because your organisation is such that you do offer all of these many, varied and diverse programs. What do you think we could do better as a government, then, in delivering to our Indigenous population?

Ms Hampshire—I think we are on the right track in that we are talking about integration. But I think we could do much better in the implementation of that. For example, we still have pretty compartmentalised employment. It is at all levels of government. The employment department deals with employment, but Indigenous clients who are coming to us, as with all of our clients—and we have done a survey of our staff around this issue—often will come for employment needs, for training needs, accommodation needs, they will have drug and alcohol needs, they will have mental health issues. Our compartmentalising does not facilitate meeting all of their needs. So how can you move to employment unless you are addressing accommodation needs, mental health et cetera?

Mrs VALE—Employment is the last one down the line; it is not the first one.

Ms Hampshire—That is right, but the driver will be income support. So with the income support, once you register with Centrelink, there are then expectations that you will be looking for a job and then you get into the Job Network cycle. But you need to be able to have the other supports within that cycle that will meet the diversity of needs. I think we need the idea of shared funding much more across departments and across governments. I know that is very challenging.

Mrs VALE—There has to be an easier way to do it.

Ms Hampshire—Yes, so that the funding is actually related to the person and the person's needs, diverse and complex as they are, with a set of outcomes being, perhaps, secure accommodation, moving into employment, dealing with drugs and alcohol et cetera. At the moment, the compartmentalisation of how we deliver services right across Australia, to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, is one of our major challenges. It really stops us from helping people move forward on a whole range of areas that they want to move forward on.

Miss Lawton—There are also additional pressures. If someone is within the Centrelink system and moving from CDEP to Newstart allowance and back and forth all the time, there are also the additional pressures that are put on in relation to that is their income support but their needs are that they are living in the long grass with their family with five kids and they have not got accommodation. Under the mutual obligations, they have to look for work. But, realistically, where and how can that happen? So they are caught in that cycle of, 'I don't have anywhere to

live, I can't speak English, and if I go into a real estate office they won't look at me anyway,' all the way through. Even programs like the personal support program, and how to assess that more appropriately in relation to individual's social needs and whether they are met now, and whether they can progress into employment or not, needs to be looked at very closely. So, unless the social needs are being addressed before they start looking at the mutual obligations around the income support, no change is going to be made.

Mrs VALE—We really do have two different Indigenous worlds, don't we? We have the Indigenous world in rural and remote areas, and we have the Indigenous world in urban Australia, and their needs are quite different.

Miss Lawton—They are very different. I guess that is part of the point I was trying to make as well. I am doing work in different parts of Australia, because I have an Indigenous portfolio within the organisation, and when I go to different areas the needs are very different in those communities. People just make the assumption that this program is going to deal with the Indigenous needs of Australia—but it is not, because every community is different. We know that every local government is different and infrastructure needs are different within every community we go to.

Mrs VALE—The resources within the community are different, and the natural resources are different in what they can do.

Miss Lawton—With regard to the stuff I am doing in the cape, I was absolutely amazed that they have so little information about what is available. They do not know that there is grant funding available. They have had financial programs brought in and taken away. They are just given things and then all of a sudden they disappear.

Mrs VALE—They do not understand why.

CHAIR—Where do you work in the cape?

Miss Lawton—I am working on the west coast. We are doing a project with the west coast group.

CHAIR—At Cape York?

Miss Lawton—Yes. At Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama, Mapoon and Napranum—and sort of at Aurukun, but they do not want us there.

CHAIR—I asked because of the—

Miss Lawton—The Cape York Partnerships.

CHAIR—That is right. There is a great interest. Is there a crossover there anywhere?

Miss Lawton—Not yet. Mission Australia is involved with the Cape York Partnerships as well, but even in the context that I am working in at the moment—

CHAIR—So Mission Australia has some involvement.

Ms Hampshire—We are both in the same organisation.

CHAIR—But the program that you are talking about is separate from the Cape York program.

Miss Lawton—Yes. They are called the West Coast Traditional Owners Group. They are an incorporated group in their own right. They have done that because they are lacking resources. Some of these communities would argue against this assumption that the Cape York Partnerships deals with the needs of Cape York.

CHAIR—There is debate. There is this silo mentality where the government is constantly reminded of its accountability processes, which is something that bedevils all government. Since the abolition of ATSIC, the focus has been on whole-of-government and the Indigenous coordination centres. Would you care to make a comment on that?

Miss Lawton—I worked a lot with ATSIC when they were in existence. There are probably a few comments I would like to make about the Indigenous coordination centres. Although the intent is there, it does not break down the silos at all. In saying that, there are still all the guidelines around all the programs within each individual government department that they have to work in. You go to the ICC with a community need. The community need may be looking at the holistic approach. They may come back to you with this much, and that is not good enough.

CHAIR—Could you say that again, please.

Miss Lawton—You go to the ICC with the needs of the community, and realistic needs. What I do is I go into a community—

CHAIR—Which is something you have been encouraged to develop because that is the philosophy of the whole-of-government approach.

Miss Lawton—That is exactly right. So you go along, you take the whole-of-community need that you have identified. At the moment, a government department may not have money but one might have this much money, which is not going to address the whole-of-community need. So without doing that you are really putting the community in a predicament where you say there is a whole-of-government approach to service delivery to address the needs within community but there is no way the government can deliver it.

CHAIR—It is really creating at best a false expectation—

Miss Lawton—Very much so.

CHAIR—and probably more directly it is actually misrepresenting the concept of whole-of-government approach.

Miss Lawton—That is right. And it is still the top-down approach. The guidelines for funding are being developed up here. When you are trying to address community needs, you have to come in at community level. You have to listen to community. Community know what their

needs are but no-one is listening. Everyone is saying, 'This is what you can have,' and we do not fit into that. It is the same across Australia.

CHAIR—Perhaps we should develop the definition of a realistic expectation because, when we write our recommendations, if the bill is $10 billion and there is $1 billion—just hypothetically—then I know that that is not going to be credible. Could you give us an example of what a community plan might be, as discussed with you, which the government is not able to deliver for the reasons you have given? Could we just talk a little bit about that?

Miss Lawton—Let's talk about employment—it is an easy strategy that people can relate to—and how to relate CDEP training, education, employment and business development. Talk to the community about how to do that. CDEP was originally established as an infrastructure program and then it moved to training with employment outcomes as a preferred option. If you look at CDEP as the training frame—that is exactly what we do—with time frames around it, during those time frames the skills and qualifications that they may need are developed. You can bring in literacy and numeracy programs funded through DEWR, you can bring in your job seeker account from the Job Network, you can bring in moneys out of DEST for a specific skills based training for Indigenous people and you can look at group training coming in to provide motor mechanic qualifications—all those sorts of things—or commence them.

CHAIR—You have heard the term 'tool kit'?

Miss Lawton—Yes, the Indigenous tool kit.

CHAIR—Your mention of mechanic reminded me of tool kit.

Miss Lawton—An Indigenous tool kit is available to the Job Network and many other tool kits are out there. You take your CDEP as your base training ground for actually getting people to develop the motivation, the work ethics—all those sorts of things—and then you start looking at placing them. But you need a broker to work with the CDEP program and, if you want, we will talk IECs—Indigenous employment centres. The concept of the IECs is very good but, again, the knowledge base within IECs generally differs greatly. One IEC might have someone who has an extensive background in the employment sector and knows all the different personal support programs that you can bring in to support families, transition to work—all those sorts of things—whereby they can get money, and this IEC up here does not know anything.

CHAIR—There is a real inconsistency, and that is about the capacity of individuals—

Miss Lawton—There is a big inconsistency.

Mrs VALE—There is a lack of training, isn't there?

Miss Lawton—It is a lack of recognition or identifying that the government is going to set up Indigenous employment centres and that the people engaged in those employment centres need to have this knowledge base.

CHAIR—I venture to say it is still a lack of capacity—

Miss Lawton—It is.

CHAIR—of that IEC to deliver, and it may well relate to that individual. It is not necessarily the fault of that individual, but it is the position.

Miss Lawton—They could buy in partners—when I say 'buy in,' they could bring in partners. Some work with Job Network—

CHAIR—Which would lift the capacity.

Miss Lawton—Definitely. But there is this assumption that organisations know how to do that, and that is where my other challenge was before. Where do IECs in some of the remote communities get that information from? There are no funds for them to go to another IEC. Very few people want to come and work in those communities to start with. It is really difficult to get skilled people out there because the pay and conditions are just dreadful. So where do they get that knowledge base from? Where does that responsibility lie then?

CHAIR—In other words, we can draw a picture: the rhetoric is not matched by the delivery.

Miss Lawton—No.

CHAIR—This inquiry is endeavouring to look at the positive aspect. We could say that we could be in a position to deliver far better outcomes with—probably optimistically—not much greater outlays. An IEC that is delivering and an IEC that is not costs the same money, I would suspect.

Miss Lawton—Yes.

CHAIR—Therefore, with the skill of our inquiry—and we are fallible; we will not get it all—we need to be able to identify that probably you will get more positive outcomes if you ensure that there are a few quality controls, accountability and maybe sometimes a little bit more cash. It may not cost an arm and a leg; it may be more an attitudinal issue.

Miss Lawton—It may be an issue of moving staff from metropolitan centres into regional or remote centres. That is quite simple to do. Yes, you will have additional housing costs, but it will put in a level of expertise—

Ms Hampshire—On the ground.

Miss Lawton—and the supports around it on the ground to work within those communities. But it also sets up those individuals in a very difficult situation, because the community will expect them to deliver as well. So if you are going to have ICCs, you have the ICCs working in the communities that they are dealing with, with access to—

CHAIR—In a way, that would not necessarily be a bad thing, if you have people there under pressure to deliver. That seems better than having them removed and promising to deliver and not delivering.

Miss Lawton—Yes. And then they get transferred and the next poor bugger that comes along cops it from the community or gets shut out.

CHAIR—We started with you, Ms Hampshire, and the issue of the silo, which you have identified. We have come to the Indigenous coordination issue. If we were to be generous, without being too generous—it is not our responsibility to be generous to the government; it is our responsibility to be factual—it is new and some people are still learning but we should be at least asking for a much stronger degree of accountability that this claim can be delivered—and should be delivered.

Miss Lawton—It can be delivered. There is a fear within government departments—both Commonwealth and state—that putting staff into communities like that is difficult because first you have to attract them. They need to look at the capacity within the community already. I know of several communities that have highly qualified Indigenous people within their communities but do not have exactly what that government department is saying in their selection criteria so therefore they do not get employed. I know of a COAG trial where there were two qualified social workers in that community yet they had social workers visiting. I struggle with that. Communities have capacity but people do not look at the community's capacity. They just keep imposing and bringing in.

CHAIR—They presume.

Miss Lawton—That is right.

CHAIR—I do not know. I presume to presume that they have presumed.

Miss Lawton—Yes, I think you are dead right. Certainly, what I hear from the communities I deal with is that they all come but no-one stays.

CHAIR—This is the nuts and bolts. My background is not so much the rhetoric and the theory but the actual delivering. Individuals have different components and each is important.

Mrs VALE—What Jane was saying indicates to me that we are talking about a lack of relationship here.

Miss Lawton—We are.

Mrs VALE—This is really the clue. We are not changing anything if we are coming top down and telling people what is going to happen or restricting our response to articulated needs. There is a relationship here.

Miss Lawton—Very much.

Mrs VALE—I am wondering about the Indigenous people who might be skilled in sufficient capacity to take on some of those roles. Would that be too big an expectation upon them from the rest of their community?

Miss Lawton—Again, you need to consult community. The community knows the answers. Everyone consults, everyone researches but no-one actually listens.

CHAIR—I am wary of that statement. I challenge you on that: 'The community knows.' I want to agree and would dearly love to see that happen but I have sometimes seen governments—and I use that word in the broadest concept; parliaments, if you like—say 'Community can do it.' Therefore they tell the community to do it and that leaves them absolved. That worries me. It is the blending.

Miss Lawton—That is why partnerships are really important.

CHAIR—There has to be a degree of leadership and accountability, which we cannot walk away from. What I have seen happen in Aboriginal affairs too much is that we give it to the community and they lead it. That seems excessively optimistic. The partnership and the compatibility of the partnership are critical.

Miss Lawton—I will just talk about West Coast Traditional Owners Group. We know there are people in community who could deliver this particular program that we are looking at. They have the skills and the qualifications. They do not have the local resources. As an organisation, we do. One of the things that the community has been talking to us about is whether Mission Australia can work with their people. They do not know how to contract manage. They do not know how to implement contracts. So Mission Australia do that but there are people in community delivering the program. You do all the training and all the things that need to happen and make sure this person can do their job and can tell you when you are not doing your job properly.

Mrs VALE—It is like Mission Australia mentoring the Indigenous people to actually help themselves, provided there are resources from government.

Miss Lawton—Yes.

Mrs VALE—So it is that partnership thing and the consultative—

Miss Lawton—But we do that with smaller NGOs. I guess that is the thing as well. Smaller non-Indigenous NGOs will partner with us in the same context.

CHAIR—Let us look at the Tiwi health service. There was great optimism. You are probably familiar with the example. Do you know what happened?

Miss Lawton—Yes.

Mrs VALE—Actually, I do not.

CHAIR—Territory and Commonwealth resources came together. We put an independent group in charge of it and within a very short period it crashed, to the great disappointment of everyone. They have taken months to rebuild themselves and still have not quite got there. That is where I get wary about grand plans and partnerships.

Miss Lawton—That was before my time in the Territory so I do not know if it was tendered or anything like that. I have no idea. I know that it crashed and did a major scene nationally and all those sorts of things. But, again, community has to be comfortable with the relationships that they have. They have to have faith in the organisation that they are working with. That organisation has to be extremely accountable.

CHAIR—Perhaps the people they employ have to be accountable to the community.

Miss Lawton—Yes.

CHAIR—The community has to have a capacity to know that the people they have employed are doing the job.

Miss Lawton—And it is communicating clearly about all of that when you are doing those partnerships. It is really important. Fred Hollows does stuff as well.

CHAIR—Is Olga Havnen still there?

Miss Lawton—I am not sure about her. I am down at the Bino Toby level! I know Bino. She works the Katherine east side of the Territory. They do exactly the same thing. They will partner with communities to deliver 'this', and communities and the organisation negotiate what that will be. They meet with community as well. The organisation comes back and feeds back. So there are a lot of accountabilities built in.

CHAIR—We are right down to the micro here and we have had quite a lot of time on it. I just wanted to get some of that discussion on the record so that we can remind ourselves of this conversation and some of the issues around it. I have to move on. We have to give Mr Slipper an opportunity. I have a couple more questions. Mrs Vale, I assure you that you will have another opportunity. With regard to communication and clear language, I am really worried about culture abused as a guise in order to not get down to what needs to be done. That is a harsh statement. But I note your point about direct conversation, that these people want honesty, they want directness. I just want to ask about *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die* and Trudgeon. You would be familiar with those. When you talk language, do you also see English as the third language sometimes?

Miss Lawton—And the fifth and sixth and seventh. The Indigenous interpreter service that is currently funded, I think, and run through CDSCA in the Territory is crucial in a lot of the communications that go on up there. Although it is only being delivered to government services at the moment, we certainly are keen to access that as well. But instead we employ language speakers. One of my staff actually speaks nine languages, although they have no literacy skills. But it is critical that we have someone who understands and can communicate effectively in language. We are actually looking at a program that we can have translated in language with a voice-over. So we will have a practical demonstration in a video concept with English and written language, and then a voice-over in language. It is about the delivery methods to make sure your communications are effective.

Mr SLIPPER—What proportion of your Indigenous clients would have a language other than English as their first language?

Miss Lawton—Of the whole organisation or in the Territory?

Mr SLIPPER—Both.

Miss Lawton—In the Territory, in our community services, about 98 per cent of our clients have English as a second language.

Mr SLIPPER—98 per cent of what number?

Miss Lawton—We did not bring the numbers, but huge numbers.

Mr SLIPPER—Take the question on notice.

Miss Lawton—We can get you the numbers. We run a lot of community patrols. Do you know what community patrols are?

Mr SLIPPER—No.

Miss Lawton—They are services that deal with antisocial behaviour, and intervention services. It is funded through the Northern Territory government for people living an itinerant lifestyle, so homeless people in the long grass, drinkers and non-drinkers. We run a medical transport service for rural and remote communities across the Territory. I can tell the figure for that one: we probably have about 7½ thousand individual clients using that service every year.

Mr SLIPPER—Do you do anything at Kintore?

Miss Lawton—Kintore?

Mrs VALE—It is a remote community west of Alice Springs.

Mr SLIPPER—It is close to the Western Australian border.

Miss Lawton—They would go to the Alice Springs hospital. Most of our community services are in the Top End. We do stuff in Katherine.

Mr SLIPPER—Do you find that a lot of the Indigenous people who do not speak English well basically do not speak their own language well either and some people are caught halfway, speaking a bit of their language and a bit of English, like a pidgin?

Miss Lawton—No. Most of the people we deal with will speak anywhere up to seven Aboriginal languages and then English. That is because of the language groups and how they work within the Northern Territory. Where you may have four language groups bordering a tribe, there is a crossover language with each of those groups. I think it has been documented that there are around 450 languages just in the Northern Territory.

Mr SLIPPER—This is not in the terms of reference but what is the long-term prognosis for those languages? Are they going to die out?

Miss Lawton—I do not think it will happen in the Territory; elsewhere in Australia it already has happened. I do not think it will happen in Northern Australia because of its remoteness. When kids are born the language that is spoken at home is their language, and it is when they go to school that they start learning English. In the home they are still using language.

Mr SLIPPER—How different are these languages from one another?

Miss Lawton—They are hugely different. I could get figures for you from the interpreter service. In East Arnhem I think there are about 50-something languages. People from East Arnhem cannot talk to the Alice Springs mob in their language, they will use a creole or a pidgin English.

Mr SLIPPER—Would the languages be as far apart as, say, German and English?

Miss Lawton—Yes.

Mrs VALE—They are not even dialects, they are different languages.

Miss Lawton—Totally different.

CHAIR—The same word can mean totally different things.

Miss Lawton—Yes, and you have to be careful! So there are lots of different issues. And on the issue of having a Koori go up and work in a traditional community, it is totally incorrect to think that an Indigenous person from down here can do that.

Mr SLIPPER—What is the difference between a Koori, a Murri and a Myall?

Miss Lawton—Again, you are looking more at borders than anything else.

Mr SLIPPER—Where you come from?

Miss Lawton—Yes, it is where you come from. Murris refers to Queenslanders, Kooris are from New South Wales, and there is Yolgnu, I think from Western Australia and Victoria—

Mrs VALE—Others call us cockroaches and sandpipers.

Mr SLIPPER—What does Myall mean? Is that a region?

Miss Lawton—No, it is not a region. If I used it—and I would not be insulting someone—I would say: 'You're talking Myall. You're talking upside down and back to front. You're talking silly.' Come up to the Northern Territory and we will give you some education.

Mr SLIPPER—Thank you for the education. I appreciate it.

Mrs VALE—This issue of languages is interesting because in some cases, I am told, there can be as few as 50 people who speak a particular language.

Miss Lawton—Exactly.

Mrs VALE—And the small number of people who speak the individual dialects or languages makes it more complicated.

Miss Lawton—The CRC in Alice Springs is probably a good organisation for the inquiry—

Mrs VALE—CRC?

Miss Lawton—It is a desert research centre in Alice Springs. They have a map of all the languages.

Mrs VALE—Jane, I am personally pleased to hear you talk about that interpreter service, because I will have to accept the blame for that. It is important sometimes for us members of parliament to get some feedback that you can make a difference if you stick your neck out long enough. It was part of the mandatory sentencing program—part of the money went to that.

Miss Lawton—That is why it is funded through the justice department.

Mrs VALE—That is why it is funded through Justice and that is why the money has come. There was $20 million—I think you have had $40 million over eight years or $20 million over four. I hope it continues. If it does not, let me know—

Miss Lawton—I hope it gets expanded.

Mrs VALE—because I am told that it has helped immensely in the delivery of health services in the Northern Territory.

Miss Lawton—Not just health but also the legal assistance for people getting through the magistrates system.

Mrs VALE—That is what it started off with, the magistrates. But, to continue, it is just so important for us to know that you can make a difference—

CHAIR—Are you heading back to employment?

Mrs VALE—Yes, because I want to know about—

Miss Lawton—They are all Indigenous staff within that centre.

Mrs VALE—Yes, they are all Indigenous.

CHAIR—I will be accused of being in a silo, but I am just—

Miss Lawton—In that service the interpreters are actually employed on a sessional basis.

Mrs VALE—That is right, and it is all run by Indigenous people, and sometimes that money that comes from interpreter services is the only money that goes to some of those very remote communities.

Miss Lawton—Exactly.

Mrs VALE—So it is actually having a huge impact.

Miss Lawton—It is paying people in communities to do the interpretations.

Mrs VALE—And that is an employment service, so we cannot let it drop.

Miss Lawton—That service, using that model that I am talking about—engaging local people to deliver the services within the community—is doing exactly that, but no-one recognises it.

Mrs VALE—If it is the only thing I ever do while I am in parliament, I am very pleased to hear you say that.

Miss Lawton—Congratulations.

Mrs VALE—Thank you. I also want to ask you about the sea cucumber processing plant. Is there much of a market for that?

Ms Hampshire—There is an enormous market.

Mrs VALE—For sea cucumbers?

Ms Hampshire—In Asia, and it is a potentially growing market.

Mrs VALE—Is it really?

Miss Lawton—They are horrible.

Ms Hampshire—They literally look like slugs to you and me.

Mrs VALE—I know. I have seen them. They look like giant cucumbers, don't they?

Ms Hampshire—They are highly sought after. That is an excellent example of a partnership working on the ground between an Indigenous organisation and us as a Job Network provider. There has been good funding from both state and Commonwealth, so it is a really concrete example. North Stradbroke Island is not an enormous island. There is a population of 2,000, of whom about 14 per cent are Indigenous. The results so far are 14 Indigenous people employed and 11 fully off benefits in a very short period of time. Previously they were long-term unemployed.

Mrs VALE—How long has it been going?

Ms Hampshire—Only for the last six to 12 months.

Mrs VALE—This is the sea cucumber processing plant.

CHAIR—Yes, I know, but this is the outcome for this group. We were in Brisbane about a week or so ago and we had the opposing group, who were concerned about not having access to land. You are probably familiar with the issue.

Ms Hampshire—Yes.

Mrs VALE—That is a great success story. So it has export potential?

Ms Hampshire—Absolutely. It is being exported. The sea cucumber get exported to—

Mrs VALE—And it has growth potential too.

Ms Hampshire—Yes.

Mrs VALE—That is a good story.

Ms Hampshire—So it is an example of a small social enterprise—

CHAIR—There is a debate about who should have access to the land.

Ms Hampshire—That is a different issue.

Miss Lawton—It is Aboriginal politics.

Ms Hampshire—This issue is about a small local enterprise that has brought together a diversity of players and funds.

Mrs VALE—Again, relationships, partnerships and networking.

Ms Hampshire—Absolutely—relationships and doing things a bit differently.

CHAIR—Can I just challenge it slightly. The view was put to us that it was restricting the opportunities, in that the cucumber could be farmed in a more extensive way; that, whilst we had outcomes at that point, if they could agree and come to the party and work with the science and with the state authorities then there could be a much more extensive industry. That is the debate, so I want to put that on the record.

Ms Hampshire—I think what we started with was very high rates of unemployment in that community. This is an initiative that is starting to move towards addressing that. Yes, there will be some issues around how it grows and expands, but there are the results to date in terms of addressing that unemployment issue and allowing employment on the island, which is really what the elders wanted. They wanted their young people to stay there on the island. There will be issues to be worked out, but I think the potential is really quite significant.

CHAIR—That was the problem: the potential was not being realised. That was the argument.

Ms Hampshire—The starting point was the very high rates of unemployment. So I think where they have come in a relatively short period of time—

CHAIR—I deliberately challenge you because I need to know where the restriction was.

Miss Lawton—To add something else, I have spent quite a number of years developing business and Indigenous business. I was working for an organisation in Queensland. We ran some NEIS equivalent programs for ATSIC some years ago. I think there is huge potential in that area but, because of those silos again and all those sorts of things, it really restricts. This opportunity may need other involvement but you have to include those partners. You need major businesses to partner. You need major financial institutions to partner—not for providing loans et cetera but for providing the financial expertise to manage the business. It is like *My Restaurant Rules* where they have a financial consultant go in and actually work with them and have joint control or whatever over those—

CHAIR—Back to my Tiwi health example.

Miss Lawton—Yes. One bad one, but lots of good ones out there.

CHAIR—That is right.

Miss Lawton—You will always get a bad egg.

CHAIR—It was a brave experiment but if you miss one ingredient you can have a rather unfortunate outcome. It is really regrettable because it started with so much hope. It takes a while for people to build their confidence again. I have at least three more questions. In your submission, you talk about choice—the preference for mainstream options versus the traditional options. Can we talk a little bit about why someone might choose a mainstream option versus the more culturally appropriate?

Ms Hampshire—Do you want us to talk about our personal experience?

Miss Lawton—I am a Queensland Murri—fair skin. I joined the Commonwealth Public Service I do not know when—it was so long ago that I left.

Mrs VALE—A Queensland Murri?

Miss Lawton—A Queensland Aboriginal—a fair skin. When I joined the Public Service, I came into the social security Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit with Eunice Watson. I do not know if you know Eunice at all. She was my mentor, if you want to put it that way. I worked in identified positions for quite a number of years through social security, through Commonwealth rehab, through the CES—lots of different forums. I guess I was very lucky because I am fair skinned. When I was applying for positions, if I managed it right I might get mainstream but if I had been darker I would not have got mainstream. But I did and I think I was the first Indigenous person to move from identified positions across into mainstream employment. But I never had a choice in whether I wanted to stay in identified positions or be

mainstream. I really wanted to be mainstream because that is where the managers were, that is where the bucks were, that is where the career opportunities were.

Mrs VALE—You sound like a woman!

Miss Lawton—That too! I had to leave to do it.

CHAIR—So, really, it is racism.

Miss Lawton—Yes, let us be honest. Definitely. A lot of Indigenous people who work in government will tell you that racism is still rampant, depending on how dark you are. It does restrict you in some ways. They do not recognise the value of your contributions. What they value is the stat that they have got to say, 'I've got Indigenous employment.'

CHAIR—That is really tough. This mainstream option versus more culturally appropriate—how do we describe it?

Miss Lawton—Or identified roles?

CHAIR—Let me go to the submission. I probably will not be able to pick it up quickly enough. The submission says:

Mission Australia staff indicated that Indigenous specific support/services may be an appropriate model for some individuals moving back into the workforce, while others preferred 'mainstream' options. Neither should be the sole method of delivery.

We would agree about that. But what you are saying is that it is a much tougher thing.

Miss Lawton—Yes, it is, if you want me to be really honest. My staff are extremely lucky because they have me heading the Northern Territory. But within the organisation I do not think we suffer it at all because Indigenous staff know that there are senior Indigenous people within the organisation who are respected for their skills, knowledge and experience.

CHAIR—You might be able to help me with this as well. It would be desirable for the maximum number of people to have the freedom of choice and to choose the mainstream option if that was there, without any blockage. That is obvious. But there is more to it than that.

Miss Lawton—Yes. The feedback from the Indigenous Public Service staff was interesting as well. They would like mainstream positions identified for Indigenous staff so they could move to the mainstream. So in very simplistic terms I am probably suggesting that what they are saying is that there should be a quota put on public sector Indigenous people in mainstream and that departments should be held accountable in that context rather than in the number of Indigenous people who are employed in identified positions—that is easy to do—and then left to sit there and rot and not be developed and those sorts of things.

CHAIR—I will have to go and think about that.

Miss Lawton—I could probably get you a lot of people like me who have been through those experiences and would never go back there.

Mrs VALE—The irony is that I have heard women say what you are saying on the basis that they are women.

Miss Lawton—Exactly.

Mrs VALE—White women in a man's world—

Miss Lawton—The old boys' club.

Mrs VALE—Yes, very much so. So I think there are always challenges, whichever world you are in. There are always challenges.

Miss Lawton—I guess it is really important to realise that, although we are looking at issues around Indigenous employment, it is about the disadvantaged, full stop—end of story. It is not just Indigenous people who suffer it. Women still suffer it. People from ethnic backgrounds and people with English as a second language still suffer it. Everyone still suffers it, but the Australian community believes it does not exist.

CHAIR—We have to work at it. It is a constant challenge.

Miss Lawton—It is also about changing business's perception of the value of that cultural diversity.

Mrs VALE—And the value of the individual and their contribution.

CHAIR—In Alice Springs there is an issue about retail employment. As to the reasons for that, firstly, you could say it is not attractive to Indigenous people—and why is it not attractive to Indigenous people?—and because of the difficulty and challenges of negotiating employment. Also there is tourism and mining and those sorts of things. So there are almost hidden barriers or barriers that are not spoken about. If you take retail versus those other industries—

Miss Lawton—If you take Alice Springs versus Darwin—

CHAIR—Sure.

Miss Lawton—You could take Coles Myer in Darwin, which has an Indigenous employment strategy, versus Woolworths, which does not have an Indigenous employment strategy.

CHAIR—In Darwin—in the same town?

Miss Lawton—Yes. The difference is huge. Coles has Indigenous employees and in Woolworths you do not see black faces. It depends on your HR manager, your board and all of those senior executives who make the decisions for the organisation. It depends on the business viability. Coles was lucky enough to have an HR manager who knew all of the buckets of money that you could tap into, so the costs were minimal for the risk that the organisation believed that

they may be taking. The turnover of Indigenous staff was not an issue because those costs were really being recouped. Australia Post is probably another one. They use STEP extremely effectively.

Mrs VALE—They are giving opportunities, aren't they?

Miss Lawton—That is exactly right. It is about changing senior executives' perceptions and working that within an Indigenous employment strategy.

CHAIR—That issue is really at the core of Australian values and beliefs.

Mr SLIPPER—Do you think that Woolworths has made a conscious decision not to have Indigenous employees?

Miss Lawton—No.

Mr SLIPPER—If that is the case—

Miss Lawton—Woolworths actually employed my son without knowing he is Indigenous because he is so fair.

Mr SLIPPER—Has anybody approached Woolworths?

Miss Lawton—I do not know, to be honest.

Mr SLIPPER—Maybe it is something that someone should do.

Miss Lawton—There are a lot of corporate partners within the Indigenous employment program, such as Qantas. We laymen who have to try and get people jobs approach the Qantases of the world. They have their wonderful little recruitment strategies, but how many remote Indigenous people do they actually employ? Tourists coming to Australia want to see traditional Aboriginal people. They want to hear the language and those sorts of things. Are they really meeting that need?

CHAIR—It is very good. These are the tough issues.

Mrs VALE—It has been very worth while.

CHAIR—We need to talk about them, and it is good to have some discussion on them. I have three issues. The issue of teaching in the field is mentioned in your submission, and TAFE is given some recognition for that. It seemed to me quite important. Are there alternatives to, and can you give us a couple of pointers on, teaching in the field?

Ms Hampshire—Our REEP, Regional Environmental Employment Program, is a good example. In theory the teaching should happen in the classroom. That did not work, particularly with Indigenous students, so the staff go out to the field. There is much less emphasis on the written word. It is a practical employment related activity, so it is very good. It has been the key component in getting outcomes for all of the clients of that program but in particular for the

Indigenous clients. I think one of the points to make is that we think the silos are not just government silos.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Ms Hampshire—It is really important for us to say it is not just government's role. It is the silos that exist between business, government, non-profit bodies, the academic world and everybody else. REEP is a particularly good example of the silos breaking down, because it brings together people who do not naturally come together. It brings together the environmental groups of the local community, training groups, local government, state government, philanthropic dollars, and non-profit bodies like us—people who do not normally get together. I wanted to broaden out that discussion around silos.

CHAIR—That is a very good point. I really appreciate you doing that, because this is the challenge for all of us. Whatever we can harness in this issue will be of national benefit.

Ms Hampshire—REEP has the employers as part of the steering group with environmentalists, trainers and non-profit bodies like us. As Jane was saying, the broker is often the key to the community. We are being the broker in that example.

CHAIR—I had some experience this week in Canberra with a group who are doing this internationally and endeavouring to open it up in these difficult areas, which is a huge unmet need as well. Moving on to the key motivators for employment, do you have a couple of key motivators that invite people to get out of bed in the morning and that type of stuff?

Miss Lawton—It depends on where you are and on everyone else, on what your family is like. My mother used to flog us to go to school. If she had not flogged us, we probably would not have gone to school.

Mrs VALE—What a wonderful woman!

Mr SLIPPER—That would not only happen in Indigenous families.

Miss Lawton—That is exactly right. It is across the board. It is about the family unit and the social impacts of your family.

Mrs VALE—It is the same for everybody.

Miss Lawton—If you live in a remote community where there are no work opportunities, the motivator would be thinking, 'I want to go and see what this stuff is.' In one of the poorer housing commission areas anywhere in Australia, people would think about work, 'Why should I?' But in other family groupings and other areas within those communities there would be a different attitude again.

CHAIR—That is good. That is similar to what one of our previous witnesses said.

Ms Hampshire—I know we hear a lot about self-esteem and what makes someone get out of bed. Our experience with clients is that, unless you feel vaguely good about yourself, you will

not get out of bed for anything. Many of the Indigenous clients we work with do not have a strong cultural awareness or sense of their cultural background.

Miss Lawton—True.

Ms Hampshire—The starting point is asking how Job Network can work with them unless they have some fundamentals happening. Many of our programs begin by working on self-esteem and on Indigenous background and culture, because that is a positive. We know cultural identity is a positive for resilience right across everything we do. Clients start to get their lives together and then employment comes. Unless you have a sense of who you are, a sense that life is possible and a sense of self-efficacy and think, 'Yes, I can achieve,' then—

Miss Lawton—It is about a passion. People have to have a passion. That is where I am lucky. Every single person that I employ has a passion. That is not a selection criterion but if they do not meet that requirement for passion then they will not get the job. The other bit is not important.

CHAIR—I could not agree more. I want to move on to the Aboriginal Employment Strategy. There are a couple of well-known people from New South Wales. Are you familiar with that strategy and the Moree example?

Ms Hampshire—Yes.

CHAIR—With Dick Estens and Cathy Duncan?

Ms Hampshire—Yes.

CHAIR—Is it a fair question to ask how you see that strategy?

Miss Lawton—We have had them come up to the Territory and talk in Katherine because of the issues in Katherine. I think what they have done is extremely good for some, but not all, issues. They still have social issues that they have to address and all those sorts of things. So there is still a long way to go and I think that creating the silos—by looking at the employment strategy and not the social needs of that community—is being a little bit negligent. I am not sure about the family groupings in that area but there are people being brought into a status by having a job and being able to move up, and those sorts of things, and people get envious and there are more conflicts. There are traumas with people thinking, 'Well, why didn't I get the opportunity?' and all those sorts of things. Those are social concerns.

CHAIR—That is an international issue, isn't it?

Miss Lawton—Yes.

CHAIR—Are you familiar with Steve Cornell and the work of Harvard University in the US?

Miss Lawton—No, I am not.

CHAIR—There is a really interesting discussion about welfare—the carrot and the stick argument, basically. They are very wary of regarding welfare as the key plank. It is more about the incentive to self-motivate.

Miss Lawton—It is so terribly hard when you have one or two family members who are in well-paid jobs. In traditional communities the idea 'what is yours is mine' is very real—whereas I can say no to the kids and I am okay about it. That really puts a strain on the family relationship and in an Indigenous culture family is everything—as with every culture.

CHAIR—I saw that when I first served on this committee a long time ago, back in 1993, in Western Australia in an urban setting. We had the 'Aboriginal bureaucracy' if you like—people employed in good jobs—and the members of the community, and you could cut the air with a knife. The tension was there and it was quite clear. We could go on.

Miss Lawton—We could. This is my passion, and I am employed and I can make a difference.

CHAIR—And rightly so! The national benefit will be served by more people having a passion.

Miss Lawton—One comment that I would like to make is that in what government decides to do there needs to be some way of giving an opportunity to someone who has some innovative approaches to dealing with this stuff. It may be that a small community in the back of nowhere has some ideas—I know that at Pormpuraaw they have some business ideas but how to get the services there. There is nowhere for us to turn and say, 'We'll go and get funding from here or there.' As well as being able to run a business we have to build all the buildings and all the sorts of things that go with it. So there needs to be some flexible bucket of money or whatever that can be accessed for innovative approaches to dealing with whole of community needs. It does not exist and it is too hard for any community—black, white or brindle; I don't care—to keep having to go to all these different buckets and try to make up all the bits and pieces that will make an improvement to a community.

CHAIR—It is misrepresenting the case to suggest that the current approach is going to solve issues. I almost thought of it as mutton dressed up as lamb but I will refrain from saying that. It is a misrepresentation. Ladies, it has been wonderful to have you with us. We thank you for working in with us as well as for the wonderful discussions.

Miss Lawton—Thank you for your time.

Ms Hampshire—Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 1.00 pm to 1.59 pm

FRIEND, Ms Caroline, Director, Rainbow Serpent Pty Ltd

PARNES, Mr Brad, Director, Rainbow Serpent Pty Ltd

CHAIR—I declare reopened this public hearing of the ATSIA committee's inquiry into Indigenous employment and I welcome the representatives of the Rainbow Serpent here today. Would you like to make a short opening statement, add to your submission or both?

Mr Parnes—I would like to introduce ourselves and our company, if I may.

CHAIR—You are well aware that we have a submission from you. The normal process is to invite you to add to that and to go from there.

Mr Parnes—The Rainbow Serpent, as mentioned in the submission, is a family owned business which has been trading successfully at Sydney and Brisbane international airports for the last 15 years. We thought it necessary to respond to the invitation and make this presentation as there are great opportunities for Indigenous employment in the arts and craft market, but there are also many threats. We are continually advised that Indigenous Australians experience greater levels of social and economic disadvantage than non-Indigenous Australians and that the Australian government is committed to addressing this disadvantage and providing Indigenous people with the same opportunities as other Australians.

We are aware that tourism is the largest employment sector in Australia, and so, with a major need in Indigenous Australia to provide employment opportunities, tourism is a wonderful opportunity. Tourism is a $73-billion industry that employs over 500,000 Australians. In 2004 the international arrivals reached an all-time high of 5.2 million visitors.

The Rainbow Serpent does and can provide many opportunities for Indigenous Australia as a significant market for artists and craftspeople, and as a venue for employment. However, the industry is being undermined by cheap, unauthentic product and, without government support—either financial or regulatory—the authentic craft market may cease to exist. The Rainbow Serpent is currently at crossroads and must make some difficult decisions if it is not supported.

CHAIR—Caroline, do you want to add anything at all?

Ms Friend—We work with 80 Aboriginal artists and craftspeople directly. We would inject $450,000 annually and more into the Aboriginal art and craft industry. Indirectly, there would be about $100,000 in royalties from our business alone going to the artists that we work with. Our company is in a great position to work with artists within the marketplace. I have covered the artists and craftspeople, and Bradley has given you a bit of information about our company, so I will not mention that.

Mr Parnes—I will give you some more company background. We have been trading since 1991, as mentioned, and we have turned over in excess of $46 million in 15 years. We pay in excess of $1,250,000 per annum in wages. We do have an Aboriginal employment policy. And, as Caroline mentioned, we pay in excess of $420,000 per annum directly to artists.

CHAIR—How many Aboriginal people would you employ directly in your business?

Ms Friend—At the moment we have three Aboriginal staff out of 50 employees.

CHAIR—Full-time staff?

Mr Parnes—No, they probably work around 30 hours a week, because we are airport retailers.

CHAIR—Thank you—I just wanted to get a picture.

Ms Friend—We have employed many Indigenous people over the years. We are also talking to DEWR at the moment about STEP. We have just employed another Indigenous staff member. Let me just say that the Aboriginal craft industry is in crisis. There is a proliferation of questionable and unauthentic product in the marketplace—artefacts such as boomerangs, didgeridoos and paintings which do not have a name. Some souvenir companies manufacture artwork that looks like Aboriginal product but it is not. These products end up in tourist outlets and Aboriginal craft stores. There is imported product from Indonesia.

Mrs VALE—Really?

Ms Friend—We have brought you in a sample today.

Mr Parnes—I jumped on Google and did some searches. This didgeridoo costs $US14.35 without freight and customs clearance. It actually cost me a small fortune. If you use economies of scale and buy a container load, it is very inexpensive. But I bought five didgeridoos and 20 boomerangs as samples, and it cost me a lot of money. They also gave me a sample of a drum with a skin and feathers on it, so everything had to be quarantined and transported.

Mrs VALE—Is that an Indonesian style didgeridoo? **Mr Parnes**—It is a didgeridoo. It has beautiful art work and it is made of beautiful timber. Over here we would pay anywhere between $200 to $300 wholesale—

Ms Friend—We would pay over $250 to the artist for something of that quality—maybe even more because of the shape.

Mrs VALE—It has an unusual shape for a didgeridoo.

Mr Parnes—No, they are mostly like this; they are mostly bells.

Ms Friend—Bell shapes are highly prized.

Mr Parnes—They are most sought after.

Mrs VALE—Are they?

Ms Friend—Yes, and so they command a premium price when you are buying an authentic piece.

Mr Parnes—When sound waves travel down a thin throat they are very close together, and then they get further and further apart. That is how the sound resonates. The boomerangs are $US1.43.

Ms Friend—For an equivalent product, we would probably pay an artist $17 or $18 wholesale and sell it in our store for $40.

CHAIR—That is quite remarkable.

Mr Parnes—We represent lots of artists and they are all complaining that the market is shrinking. Many of the authentic art and craft stores are closing down because they cannot compete with the cheap imports, which are actually of fantastic quality and have great artwork.

Ms Friend—And they are undermining the marketplace for the work of Aboriginal artists and craftspeople.

CHAIR—So the question becomes: what are the mechanisms that regulate it or that are needed to regulate it? It would appear that there is little regulation. I suppose there are two main schools of thought. You can promote the genuinely authentic work—and your documentation has just answered that question. Are there legal processes which prohibit or inhibit unauthentic work?

Mr Parnes—We have written letters to various ministers, and we have been advised that under the free trade agreement we cannot stop or ban the import of this type of didgeridoo. I was hoping that that was possibly an avenue.

Ms Friend—Legally, if there were an infringement of copyright and a possibility to pursue it in Indonesia, it would work. But I think that is a pretty difficult proposal.

CHAIR—The other avenue is to find evidence of dumping. That is when a product has been produced at ridiculously low prices—at below the cost of their production—and dumped on the Australian market.

Ms Friend—Which it has.

CHAIR—That is the only avenue I know of, but it is probably a little outside our terms of reference. Whilst we understand very much its impact on employment, and particularly on Indigenous employment—

Mr Parnes—The whole industry is being undermined.

CHAIR—it is difficult for me to see that at this initial stage of your evidence. Let me hear your full submission and then we will talk about it.

Ms Friend—The label of authenticity was an attempt to promote authentic product. Unfortunately, it did not. It got off the ground but it went no further. There were problems with the administration of it. I think the most successful way to educate the market—the marketplace being international travellers—would be to provide them with information when they get off their planes so that they are armed. I think that is going to have the most direct effect by informing tourists that they should look for an artist's name, an artist signature and look for the copyright if it is a licensed product, otherwise they will be buying those items with no name and they will not be able to question where it is from.

Mr Parnes—I guess price point also comes into it too because, with our margins, we have to be profitable, so we have to sell the genuine item expensively and our competitors are selling the unauthentic product inexpensively. I guess when the bottom line hits customers, even though they are requesting the real deal, they will quite often go with an unauthentic product.

CHAIR—Yes, I understand.

Ms Friend—Four stores have closed in Sydney in recent times. They were ethical traders in Aboriginal arts and crafts. Most of them have moved into fine art; the craft industry has been left behind. Those businesses are: Cooee, who were trading for 20 years in Oxford Street; the Aboriginal Tribal Art Centre, which has recently closed down at The Rocks and at the Opera House because they cannot compete with the saturation in the marketplace; and Bandigan, who were at Macquarie Street and were supporting a lot of artists and craftspeople by purchasing bags, vases and handcrafted items as well as fine art, and they are specialising in fine art only now.

Mr Parnes—Another effect of the store closures has been that artists are also leaving the industry. If their market is shrinking they cannot afford to keep on producing.

Ms Friend—Artists such as Don Nolan, who had been creating artefacts for over 30 years, left in 2002. Kevin Nolan, Don's nephew, took up Don's craft with his permission but Kevin could not maintain his business in the marketplace. Mundara Koorang from Queensland left in 2004 and Ian Skeen, also from Queensland, also had to finish his business during that time.

Mr Parnes—Wholesalers are closing as well. Australia Dreamspace is about to close. They are closing in the next three months if they cannot sell their business and that does not seem to be achievable. They only employ seven artists at the moment but, up until about 12 months ago, they were employing 25.

Mrs VALE—Do they actually employ their own artists?

Mr Parnes—Yes.

Mrs VALE—Do you employ your own artists, or do you buy on consignment?

Ms Friend—We buy direct from our artists.

Mrs VALE—You buy direct?

Mr Parnes—Yes.

Ms Friend—We are a marketplace and we have a lot of artists who work with us and distribute exclusively to our stores. There are some artists here who we represent and who supply us. If you have a look on our web site you will see that there are about 30 artists who you can read about and see where they are from.

Mrs VALE—The people who import these manufactured artefacts, do they import from here and order in bulk and have stores themselves? How do they sell? Do people order from the internet?

Mr Parnes—I believe they would order from the internet but, from just walking around The Rocks and looking at our competitors, whether they be direct or indirect, I think there is a lot of unauthentic product.

Mrs VALE—So there are people around The Rocks who actually have these products on sale?

Mr Parnes—Absolutely.

Ms Friend—They also have products that are made in Australia. They are by artists who are non-Indigenous, so they are making Aboriginal style art in the form of paintings or boomerangs. So they are made in Australia but they are not made by Aboriginal artists.

Mr Parnes—One such store was closed down. When did AAA go?

Ms Friend—That is a manufacturing outlet. The ACCC reviewed Australian Aboriginal Art, which was employing non-Indigenous people to paint Aboriginal artefacts. That company closed down after the investigation. There is still a fair bit of that going on.

Mrs VALE—If that were the case, why can they not lever off that to prevent it from being imported, because it is not what it says it is? It should come under the Trade Practices Act. They are not goods that meet the description of what they say they are.

Mr Parnes—They get around it by saying 'Aboriginal design' as opposed to 'Aboriginal made'.

Ms Friend—Aboriginal style.

Mr Parnes—Aboriginal style.

Mrs VALE—The seller is holding it up as ostensibly Aboriginal art and the purchaser is buying it on the basis that it is Aboriginal art. You cannot have it both ways.

Mr Parnes—Most certainly. I think they got around it with semantics by saying it was Aboriginal inspired or Aboriginal styled.

Mrs VALE—Is that how they label and sell it? Did it have any labels on it to describe it that way?

Mr Parnes—I do not know.

Mrs VALE—It seems pernicious.

Ms Friend—We are endeavouring to employ Aboriginal people in the shopfront—I think that is really important—but, because of the commercial needs of the business, we need a little more help. That is why we are talking to DEWR about training and support.

Mr Parnes—We would love to become a national brand, grow our stores—have a critical mass of 20 or 25 stores—have a lot more opportunities for Indigenous employment and support our suppliers a lot more.

Ms Friend—And ownership.

Mr Parnes—But it is a tough industry and we cannot do that without support. We will be shrinking, as opposed to growing.

Mrs VALE—Rather than financial support, there could be regulatory support to prevent impostors from having access to the market. We have free trade, open borders and a level playing field. However, this is not what it holds out to be: it is a fraudulent representation, and I would have thought that this would carry some weight.

CHAIR—I think we should bring the presentation together and get it structured or we will drift off into other bits and pieces.

Mrs VALE—This is where the employment happens, isn't it?

Mr Parnes—If we were to grow the business, there would be lots of employment opportunities, in-house training opportunities and indirect employment through the creation of art and craft.

Ms Friend—We have been speaking to a few artists. Michael Lyons is from the Wiradjuri nation and he lives in Narrandera in western New South Wales. He said that if the industry continues to be undermined by unauthentic products saturating the marketplace then 'skills, culture and spirituality will not be passed down to the next generation and will be lost forever'. Michael's brother Owen makes fine quality items—boomerangs, artefacts and didgeridoos. He told me he is having trouble finding Aboriginal people to work with him. He said to me, 'Would you mind if I employed non-Indigenous people to help?'

CHAIR—Then you would probably be back to that ACCC issue.

Ms Friend—Yes. Don't tell me! Owen said there had been success stories with CDEP programs. Dhurrawa Shed ceramics in Grafton is one of those programs. They are now marketing ceramics. They identified a hole in the market for good quality ceramic work and repeat patterns. We purchase a lot of their product and they sell to other companies and businesses as well. That is a success story from a CDEP program. They bought a large kiln from Italy and they can service the market, which is growing for them.

Mr Parnes—Murra Walker, an Aboriginal family based business, is another success story. There are a few out there but generally speaking most of our suppliers are complaining about the shrinking market.

CHAIR—That is excellent. You have given us a very good topic. There are some huge issues. I cannot mislead you by saying our humble inquiry will offer you all the solutions or indeed any solutions—to be quite candid—that might lead you to your dream, your viable business. While seeing the direct opportunities for employment, which would be significant, it is a long bow to draw to go from our terms of reference, which are about the positive examples, to something which could be a positive example but in actual fact has a lot of very significant challenges or real impediments. We will not dwell on that. We all know the issue; you have explained it very well. We understand the score. I accept the cultural significance. That last point rang very much true. This is an authentic art form, a traditional culture which on the face of it could well be under threat or challenge. Let us go the positive route. You mentioned without betraying commercial in confidence the current state of the market. I know you said you employ 80 people. Do we have any idea what the employment opportunities might be out there? What is the approximate national value of the market and that type of thing? Any ideas?

Ms Friend—There has not been any recent information about market value. I think the Australia Council did review it in the early 1990s and said how much the Aboriginal art market is worth.

CHAIR—I will take it another way. In Cairns the other day we were told that 80 per cent of international visitors—of the 5.2 million or whatever—that is, about four million, are looking for an Indigenous experience.

Ms Friend—An authentic Indigenous experience.

CHAIR—We might get into a debate on totally authentic. I will accept authentic at this stage. That is four million international visitors. They estimate that that demand is by no means being met. I ask the question: do we know what percentage of international visitors want Aboriginal art? What is your gut feeling about the number of people that take a piece of Aboriginal art away?

Ms Friend—The majority, I would say.

Mr Parnes—A huge percentage.

Ms Friend—Americans, Japanese, Europeans and Koreans are probably the strongest market. A growing market is China and the Middle East but they do not have as much understanding of or information about it. That is a place where education can go towards making them aware.

Mr SLIPPER—What sort of price bracket?

CHAIR—We have had that earlier. We are talking $250 for authentic and down to $14.50 for that piece of card over there. The boomerang there was $1.20.

Mr Parnes—It is $US1.43 from Bali.

Mr SLIPPER—What would it be in Australia?

Ms Friend—We do not sell them.

Mr Parnes—We do not sell anything similar to that.

Mr SLIPPER—Oh, I see; this one is from Bali. How much is that one?

Ms Friend—Probably $US15. We would pay around $250 to $400.

CHAIR—That is pretty significant.

Mr SLIPPER—I have started collecting Aboriginal art. I have quite a lot of it on my walls.

CHAIR—Would you buy authentic, Mr Slipper?

Mr SLIPPER—I bought my stuff at Alice Springs. I imagine it was authentic. I bought it from the Aboriginal lady herself. A friend of mine collects Possums. He has probably $1 million worth of Indigenous art. Some of it is incredible. I want to commend you if you are selling internationally. That is excellent. But, how can you compete with that?

Mr Parnes—That is just it. The challenges are also the changing demographic, so even though passenger numbers are finally on the increase, the demographics are changing. As Caroline mentioned, instead of Japanese and Americans, who are traditionally our biggest buyers, it is more Indians, Chinese and Saudis.

Mrs VALE—Have you written to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on this issue?

Mr Parnes—I have. I have written to pretty much all of the ministers.

Mrs VALE—What sort of responses have you had?

Mr Parnes—I got a great response from—

Mrs VALE—On the basis that this stuff that is being imported is fake and it is undermining our industry on the basis of fraud—

Ms Friend—It is also the products that are made in Australia by non-Indigenous artists. That is another major threat.

Mrs VALE—As the chair said, this is probably outside the terms of reference of this committee. It is really looking at trade protection measures.

Mr Parnes—With regard to that, this is a letter from the Hon. Fran Bailey. I point out the middle paragraph.

Mr SLIPPER—Are the works that are being done by non-Indigenous artists being passed off as though they are Indigenous works, or are they simply being sold as being in an Indigenous style? I personally do not see anything morally wrong with a non-Indigenous person liking the Indigenous art—the dot paintings, for instance—and doing some of those. I do not see anything morally wrong with that at all, just as some people copy the Yugoslav naive art. Art is an evolutionary sort of thing. I do not believe we should say that just because you are not Indigenous you should not be able to do this. But it would worry me if these works were being passed off as something they are not.

Mr Parnes—They are sold in art and craft stores, generally speaking. I guess a lot of the problem is coming from souvenir stores. People probably realise that it is not—they probably do not even think about it—

Ms Friend—They do not ask the question. So you will see a boomerang on a boomerang stand with 'made in Queensland' on it and that is as far as it goes. The question is not asked.

Mr Parnes—Or it can be just 'boomerangs'.

Ms Friend—It is not asked. In our stores, people ask. I started off at Aboriginal Arts Australia Ltd. I worked at the store in the Opera House in 1990-91, just before it folded. I suppose that laid the foundation for our business. Every day people would come in and ask: 'How is this benefiting Aboriginal people? How is this sale benefiting Aboriginal Australians?' I can say, 'We've purchased it direct from the artist.' We keep it as a marketplace for artists. As far as a licensed product goes, as long as it is licensed, the artist is receiving an income in the form of royalties from the sale. That is a significant market for a lot of artists as well.

There was a time when images were ripped off from artists. A major case was the carpets case, in which some designs were taken from a folio produced by either the Queensland Art Gallery or the National Gallery of Victoria. They were turned into carpets, which were selling for a few thousand dollars each. The artists were never told about it or requested to give permission to use the designs. The National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association at the time found out about it, represented the artists and won a case on behalf of the artists. That was a landmark case and there have since been other cases. I think that now that NIAAA has gone, that representation is no longer there and there is no steam left to fight those battles. I have not seen too much rip-off art around. No-one really shows it to us, because we want to buy an authentic, licensed product.

Mr Parnes—Our position is that we have our own commercial realities. If we cannot do anything about it, we are going to have to jump on a plane and do the same. This is really distasteful to us and it does not benefit Aboriginal Australia whatsoever, even though everybody has the right to paint in dot style painting.

CHAIR—It would go right against the grain. I see that Minister Bailey's letter mentions the ACCC. Have you had a response from the ACCC at all?

Mr Parnes—No, we have not.

Mrs VALE—Are you going to pursue that option?

Mr Parnes—Yes, absolutely.

Mrs VALE—I think Minister Bailey also suggested that you speak to or write to someone from Customs.

Mr Parnes—Yes.

Mrs VALE—Have you pursued that?

Mr Parnes—Yes, I have. We are still going down that avenue.

Mrs VALE—I think there are measures that you can take. I am concerned that this is fake. This has nothing to do with free trade. This is a misrepresentation of an alleged artefact, and I do not think that our particular industry should be held to ransom because of something that is clearly a misrepresentation as a matter of fact. That is just wrong.

Mr Parnes—Yes.

CHAIR—Which would be entirely your position.

Mr Parnes—Absolutely.

Mrs VALE—This is wrong. This is not free trade; this is a fraudulent misrepresentation.

Ms Friend—A friend of mine who was going back to San Francisco to visit took the catalogue of our products to see if she could sell some on behalf of our company. The feedback she got from the stores where she was showing the catalogue was: 'I can buy this in Indonesia. I don't need to buy your real Australian product.'

Mrs VALE—Yes. That is the problem. There might be measures or mechanisms that could be put in place to prevent its importation to Australia, but that does not mean that we can stop it from going to any other part of the world. But you would know that.

Mr Parnes—Yes, absolutely. That is the wonderful thing about Google and the internet: anything can be purchased anywhere at any time, rightly or wrongly.

Ms Friend—And dangerously, I suppose.

CHAIR—What would you have the government of the day do? Would you have three steps or five steps?

Mr Parnes—Ultimately we would love to grow our business to become a national brand.

CHAIR—That is not the question. We need to come to the policy matters here, and we have canvassed them pretty well. We need you to be advocates, certainly on behalf of yourselves but also on behalf of the authentic industry. What I am trying to put to you is, as advocates of the authentic industry, how do you think the government could best help? Things come to my mind

and I am sure they come to yours. For the public record, would you like to have a go at saying what you would like to see the government do to defend the authentic industry, to have an authentic industry?

Ms Friend—Probably it would be to inform the international marketplace to buy authentic product.

CHAIR—Yes, marketing or a strategy.

Ms Friend—A marketing strategy to inform them about authentic products and what they should look for before purchasing a piece of craft or fine art, or even a T-shirt.

CHAIR—But, from a government perspective, is it not also to challenge—

Mr Parnes—Correct labelling.

CHAIR—what effectively is in some people's minds if not fraudulent then a misrepresentation of the genesis? Is it not that something about this is not kosher, not a representation? I accept all the difficulties and I accept the international trading environment, with all its perversions, but is it not about the authentic Aboriginal art industry and its future and, therefore, about establishing the integrity of that industry? The Australian government could be challenged. I do not know whether the Australian government would want to do it, or whether any Australian government would want to do it, but is there not something in asking the Australian government to—I cannot put words into your mouth—challenge this whole issue of what is authentic and what is not? Given an international world where there are no borders, if this art form is totally different that means that this authentic art potentially may be threatened. I need you to say that; I cannot say it. Are you going to try to say it?

Mr Parnes—Is there a better labelling?

CHAIR—No, it is not about labelling. It goes right to the guts of it.

Ms Friend—It is about us saying that the art and craft industry is being threatened by unauthentic products being produced overseas and in Australia and that the government could assist it by promoting and supporting the industry.

CHAIR—You might even suggest that you want to prevent it.

Ms Friend—Yes, definitely, by trying to stop that.

CHAIR—But I cannot say that, because I do not know the full case.

Ms Friend—It could be done by preventing those imports coming in and by preventing souvenir manufacturers from producing boomerangs masquerading as an Aboriginal product when they are not.

Mr SLIPPER—I see those as being two issues. I have every sympathy with the first proposition that you put—namely, stopping imported items from coming in and wrongly passing

themselves off as being authentic Australian products. It would be worth inquiring as to what powers the government would have in that regard. I think the government would be on fairly strong moral ground if we were stopping people from bringing in artworks that fraudulently purported to be Indigenous. I think there must be some provision in the appropriate customs and import regulations to stop that. I think that is something that maybe we should have a look at. The second thing I see as being more difficult, insofar as we all have freedom of expression in a democracy and, let us face it, dot paintings have only been around for 35 years, they tell me. Some guy—

Ms Friend—It was Geoffrey Bardon at Papunya in 1971.

Mr SLIPPER—That is almost 35 years ago. So I have a real problem with your second proposition. I do not think that you can stop other Australians from doing what they want to do in a form of art, but I am strongly opposed to stuff coming in pretending to be Aboriginal when it is not.

Mrs VALE—Further to that, you are quite right—you cannot stop Australians from painting whichever way they want, but they should not be able to offer it as authentic Aboriginal art if they are not Aboriginal.

Mr SLIPPER—I would agree with that. I can see that, certainly.

Mrs VALE—So that is the misrepresentation there. Is there any process of copyright over Aboriginal art and craft?

Ms Friend—Yes, there is. If the original designer recognises that their work is being mass produced by someone else without their permission, then there should be a copyright on it.

Mrs VALE—So that is in an individual case?

Mr SLIPPER—That was the carpet case.

Mrs VALE—Is there a national Aboriginal body that can—you mentioned one—

Ms Friend—The National Indigenous Aboriginal Arts Advocacy Group.

Mrs VALE—Does that no longer exist?

Ms Friend—It folded after the label of authenticity launch, which was an attempt to promote the authentic product and authentic collaborative products, which are manufactured items where the designs are used under licence.

Mrs VALE—So that was not a government body; that was a national organisation of Aboriginal—

CHAIR—and industry—

Mrs VALE—That was an industry body, was it? That is a shame, because I should imagine that that might have been a body that could have actually got a copyright on Aboriginal art forms and protected against the importation of fraudulent art forms. Is there no way that could ever be started up again?

Ms Friend—Possibly.

CHAIR—We need to conclude shortly. I think I probably ran the risk of leading the witnesses a little bit, but I think we were just trying to draw out where your opportunities may lie. We are only a small part of the story, but we get the picture very clearly about what you are saying. I am really appreciative of my learned friend on my right and my learned friend on my left, who are both trained lawyers.

Mr SLIPPER—You would be an excellent barrister though, Mr Chairman—leading the witnesses, you would be an excellent barrister!

CHAIR—Do you have a final comment before we wrap up?

Ms Friend—No, I do not think so. I hope we have given you as much information as we can.

Mr Parnes—I think the visuals really say it all.

CHAIR—Yes, they do, don't they?

Mr SLIPPER—I do not know how you get the visuals into *Hansard*, though!

Mrs VALE—Best of luck with following up those other suggestions by the minister, Brad. Those options might give you a little bit more muscle than you think.

Mr Parnes—Absolutely. Thank you very much.

CHAIR—Yes, thank you. Brad and Caroline, thank you very much for your time today.

Ms Friend—Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with you.

[2.41 pm]

BROUN, Ms Jody, Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales

CHAIR—Welcome. I understand there is no submission.

Ms Broun—We have a submission to table.

CHAIR—Thank you. Would you like to give us a brief summary so that we can have a discussion about some of the issues?

Ms Broun—Yes. Before I start, I would like to acknowledge the Cadigal people of the Eora nation, who are the traditional owners of this land. As Director General of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and also as an Aboriginal person I welcome the opportunity to have some input into this inquiry. It is a very significant issue, obviously, for Aboriginal people Australia wide but also in New South Wales. The level of employment for Aboriginal people as against other Australians is a key social indicator that reflects the economic health and social wellbeing of Aboriginal communities. For Aboriginal people the unemployment rate remains disproportionately high compared to that of non-Aboriginal people. The 2001 census indicated that 135,000 Aboriginal people in New South Wales—

CHAIR—Just so that I do not forget, would you like to table that submission now so that we can authorise it for publication?

Ms Broun—I can, yes.

CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee to accept the submission as evidence? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Ms Broun, I am not sure whether you intend to read for some considerable time—

Ms Broun—No, I do not think it is that long.

CHAIR—If it is only for five or six minutes then it does give us that opportunity to have—

Ms Broun—I very much hope that we can start discussion rather than just having a speech. I am not sure how useful it is for you to have some of the statistics that are in here. You might already have all of that.

CHAIR—We would hope that we would have some, but it may give relevance to what you are saying so it might be important. Thank you.

Ms Broun—For Aboriginal people in New South Wales the unemployment rate is three times higher than for the total population. That figure is inflated with the inclusion of Aboriginal people in CDEP in the figures. If those figures were included, the rate of Aboriginal unemployment would have been 34 per cent instead of the 20 per cent that was recorded. So you can see how much it inflates that.

There are several consequences and causes of Aboriginal unemployment. Unemployment is linked closely to drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and the likelihood of interaction with the criminal justice system. Aboriginal employment, where it exists, is overrepresented in labour-intensive production, transport, clerical, sales and service industries. A lack of appropriate skills and training hinders many Aboriginal people from participating in the more skilled occupations, although employment prospects for Aboriginal tertiary students are almost identical to those of non-Aboriginal students, which emphasises the role of higher education. Racial discrimination by some employers continues to be a significant obstacle to Aboriginal access to work. I hope it is something we might talk about, because I see it as one of the critical barriers.

Mr SLIPPER—In 2005?

Ms Broun—Yes, definitely

Mr SLIPPER—That is sad.

Ms Broun—A significant proportion of the Aboriginal population is aged under 15. In New South Wales, 40 per cent of the Aboriginal population is under 15. So the demand for employment opportunities is going to increase, and we really need to get ahead of that. Obviously, that means that a concerted approach by all levels of government is necessary to establish and support Aboriginal employment initiatives in the public, private and community sectors that will provide a living and sustainable wage for Aboriginal people. The active involvement of Aboriginal people in communities is essential to the development of effective employment strategies that address the needs of the diverse communities across New South Wales and Australia.

I would like to put forward some brief statements, supported by the submission, on some of the areas we are focusing on: an assessment of broad-level Aboriginal employment policies, Aboriginal employment in the public and private sectors and Aboriginal self-employment and enterprises. In New South Wales we have 'Two Ways Together', an Aboriginal affairs plan which is driven by my agency. It plays a coordinating role in whole-of-government actions across priority areas, including economic development, culture, heritage, justice, education and the like. I will give you a copy of this plan and the report as well. Two Ways Together is built in partnership with Aboriginal people at all levels. It is aligned with the Council of Australian Governments *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage* key indicators report that has recently been released. There have been two reports. We have used the indicators in New South Wales to build a structure to support getting better outcomes against those indicators.

We have established cluster groups of agencies to address seven priority areas. Those cluster groups include federal and state agencies and they also have Aboriginal peak bodies at the table. The cluster groups develop action plans that are consistent with the national indicators and the key action areas. Agency heads are required to report biannually against the key indicators and the action plans. Under that structure, we have an economic development cluster group, which focuses on improving the economic wellbeing of Aboriginal people through job and wealth creation, education and training, and improved quality of life. The cluster plan has identified actions against four priorities: employment, enterprise development, asset utilisation, and training and skills development. Actions listed under the employment priority are: increasing Aboriginal participation in self-employment, and employment in the public and private sectors.

There are a range of strategies which I will go into in more detail. They include the Aboriginal Participation in Construction Guidelines. I have a copy of that for you.

The New South Wales government recognises that increasing Aboriginal public sector employment will improve service delivery to Aboriginal people and communities. Increasing the number of public sector employees is generally overseen by the Premier's Department. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has a support role in that. We have a target of two per cent Aboriginal employment across the public sector. The strategy has specific programs to meet those targets. Two examples of that are Aboriginal identified positions, where there are direct services to Aboriginal communities, and the targeting of mainstream programs.

Mr SLIPPER—What is the percentage now?

Ms Broun—It is currently at 1.7 percent, so it has not yet reached the two per cent target—which is based on the Aboriginal population in New South Wales—although some agencies have exceeded that target and are setting targets more aligned with their client base and client needs. For example, the Department of Corrective Services and the Attorney-General's Department have achieved about four per cent Aboriginal employment in their agencies. I understand the Department of Juvenile Justice is closer to 10 per cent.

Mr SLIPPER—What about the police?

Ms Broun—I do not have police figures for you. Another important factor is setting and reporting against a meaningful and measurable target. We have done some work talking to different directors-general about what targets they might like to reach within their own agencies—as I said, based on their client base; or the location of the office. It is not just about having two per cent in every office.

CHAIR—It is relevant to the local situation.

Ms Broun—That is right. Some of the public sector employment initiatives worth noting are a cadetship program, which combines tertiary studies and work placements in the government sector; the Aboriginal Employment in Practice Support Strategy, where New South Wales government agencies can receive financial assistance for employing an Aboriginal person; and the Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program, which is an annual application based funding scheme for government agencies and local government.

Factors that contribute to that success are the partnership arrangements in those strategies—for example, the Premier's Department and the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations both contribute funding for cadetships, apprenticeships and traineeships that increase Aboriginal employment in the New South Wales public sector; and partnerships with the tertiary education sector. The New South Wales government encourages Aboriginal students to pursue higher education, for example by sponsoring the Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School. The Aboriginal cadetship program also links tertiary education with public sector employment.

I would like to move on to government strategies for private sector employment. The private sector plays a critical role in increasing Aboriginal employment. The New South Wales

government is providing support in this area through guidelines and strategies such as the Aboriginal Participation in Construction Implementation Guidelines. Those guidelines use the government's construction contracts and the state's purchasing power to train and employ Aboriginal people and engage enterprises that are Aboriginal owned. The guidelines require government construction projects, particularly those which significantly impact on Aboriginal communities, to plan for and include Aboriginal employment and training and the use of Aboriginal enterprises. The government construction contracts must employ Aboriginal workers and engage Aboriginal contractors when the building is for Aboriginal community use or located in a region where there is a high Aboriginal population. That is not to say that any other contract cannot also have those guidelines applied.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs' Aboriginal Communities Development Program, the New South Wales Aboriginal Housing Office and the New South Wales Department of Housing all use the guidelines with construction contracts. Other agencies, such as the Roads and Traffic Authority, are encouraged to make greater use of the guidelines in their construction works. As you can appreciate, the Roads and Traffic Authority is in charge of a significant amount of construction.

My department has a program called the Aboriginal Community Development Program. That is a nine-year program with $240 million over those nine years. Its aim is to improve the environmental health and living standards in 22 priority communities. It essentially involves housing and infrastructure—its upgrade as well as new construction. The employment and training component provides on-site building and construction training to Aboriginal apprentices and trainees. The program has provided training for upgrade and construction to 222 apprentices across the state.

I would like to provide an example of the ACDP on communities, particularly remote communities in New South Wales, where a lot of the program is aimed. At Lightning Ridge, which is in the far west of the state, the five-week prevocational building course that was implemented by Barriekneal Housing and Community Ltd and Moree TAFE has been completed. Fourteen participants commenced the course and 11 of those completed the course. With the incentive of competing for four carpentry apprenticeships, the 11 students gave a 100 per cent commitment to their attendance at and completion of all 12 modules. The Barriekneal coordinator was so impressed by the commitment of the students that she approached a number of local businesses to offer traineeships to the remaining students. In addition to the four apprenticeships, traineeships in painting, tiling, building and electrical trades have now been awarded and all students have now been employed.

Mrs VALE—Did you say this was at Lightning Ridge?

Ms Broun—Yes.

Mrs VALE—That is very good.

Ms Broun—I suppose it highlights that there are jobs out there and that it is a matter of breaking down some of those barriers. It also is a matter of providing the training for people.

Mrs VALE—Yes, to get them ready for employment.

Ms Broun—That is right. Through ACDP we have also helped to establish Aboriginal community building companies. These are Aboriginal enterprises following the inception of the ACDP, and they deliver some ACDP and Department of Housing projects, creating further training and employment opportunities. For example, 13 communities are using Aboriginal building companies for their projects, with a total budget of $106 million. Not all of that $106 million in those 13 communities would be going to the Aboriginal building companies, but a fair proportion of it is. Often we will split the contract between a number of contractors.

ACDP has formal arrangements with New South Wales TAFE to deliver on-site training to apprentices and, for the first time, teachers are travelling to remote Aboriginal communities where the apprentices live and work to deliver the theoretical components of the coursework. Almost all ACDP works occur on land held by Aboriginal communities through Aboriginal land councils. Aboriginal land rights provide communities with land, which can be used to provide economic benefits to those communities.

I will not go into too much further detail, but it relates to economic development generally and having an economic base for Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act in New South Wales was established in 1983, and there are 122 local Aboriginal land councils that own 616,000 hectares of freehold land, valued at $952 million. Much of that land was granted through land claims, and owning the land does offer an economic foundation to those land councils.

Mr SLIPPER—It is freehold; can it be sold?

Ms Broun—Yes, it can be developed and sold. There is an act that controls the sale and development, but the opportunity is there to do it.

Mr SLIPPER—Does the fund come from 10 per cent of the land tax?

Ms Broun—I do not have the details, but up until about 1998 a percentage of the land tax was put into a statutory fund. The state land council manages that fund and it uses the interest to manage the whole system.

Mr SLIPPER—But that has stopped, hasn't it?

Ms Broun—It has stopped.

CHAIR—The accumulation has stopped but the capital fund is there.

Ms Broun—The capital fund is there, and it grows on an annual basis. It is not government money; it is controlled by the state land council.

Mrs VALE—Jody, we have Gandangara Aboriginal land development, which is a subdivision in Sutherland, in my electorate of Hughes. I am told that the way in which they have developed it has set a benchmark for residential subdivisions not only environmentally but also as far as sustainability is concerned. They have done a very good job.

Ms Broun—Yes, that is as I understand it. The information I have suggests that is the case. Many land councils have significant landholdings and are in positions to develop and sell that land. They can do other things with it, such as leasing it as a rural industry, or it might be culturally significant land that they can run cultural tours on.

Mr SLIPPER—If they sell it, what can they do with the proceeds?

Ms Broun—I would prefer not to go into that detail without having the information in front of me.

CHAIR—Take the question on notice.

Ms Broun—Yes. I would like to give examples of what some of the land councils are doing. The Forster local Aboriginal land council has been awarded funds by the National Heritage Trust to allow for water quality testing, bush regeneration and construction of a raised pathway and viewing platform in remnant wetland area, and that has provided employment in the area. Forster's Tobwabba bush and land restoration team have also been expanding business operations. They have a highly regarded native plant nursery, which they are expanding. They run an industry accredited nursery, highlighted for its commitment to protecting the environment and its reputation for high-quality work. And that will also provide employment opportunities.

In the promotion of Aboriginal economic development there is a range of programs operating in New South Wales. There are over 2,000 Aboriginal business operators in New South Wales, which is 0.5 per cent of the total number of Aboriginal business operators. It is still less than what you would see as the total population. Clearly, enterprise development is a key priority for Aboriginal people and New South Wales is taking a holistic partnership based approach with all three tiers of government, the private sector and Aboriginal organisations.

The New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development is the key business and economic development agency that creates initiatives that are then successful in building Aboriginal enterprise. It provides a number of different services to build Aboriginal services. It does Aboriginal business reviews, which are free assessments of the current situation of an Aboriginal enterprise and its growth opportunities, and provides that advice to the enterprise. There is an Aboriginal business link program that helps Aboriginal enterprises participate in trade and tourism shows. There is Badyari Ngalaya, which supports partnerships between Australian business leaders and Aboriginal enterprises. There is an Aboriginal business mentor program that delivers on-site business skills development and mentoring workshops.

CHAIR—Do you have anything that gives us a really positive number of employment outcomes?

Ms Broun—Do you mean one program?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Broun—Not really.

CHAIR—And then we go to questions of what made that happen and why did that happen.

Ms Broun—I have a couple of examples.

CHAIR—They are sometimes quite valuable. Going around Australia we have had some amazing surprises. You see something and say, 'How in the blazes did you do that when most of the rest of the country is unable to?'

Ms Broun—You are looking for one activity that is providing lots of employment?

CHAIR—Yes, that is right. It might be tourism or mining. It blows you away. Not only are they doing it and doing it very successfully, they aim to, say, double it. They might want to go from 17.5 to 35 per cent.

Ms Broun—I have a small example, but it is going in the right direction. Obviously, the Department of State and Regional Development offers a lot of different programs, so they are chipping away at that sort of enterprise development end of the work.

CHAIR—In your submission you talk about employment development in small business.

Ms Broun—I have two examples of Aboriginal enterprise. The tourism industry is an obvious example where economic enterprise can link with culture and the two can work hand in hand. Earlier in the year my department sponsored the first Indigenous tourism expo, which was held at the Opera House. The expo, which was the first of its kind, showcased Indigenous operators from across Australia, so it was not just New South Wales. The businesses ranged from cultural centres to bushwalking tours and art tours on traditional lands. Included in the expo were three premium New South Wales Aboriginal owned tourism operators. Muru Mittigar cultural centre in Penrith has cracked the Asian tourism market of Japanese, Korean and Chinese tourists with boomerang throwing and an art gallery nursery which grows bush foods. Harry Nanya Tours operates tours of the Lake Mungo National Park and Mungo Lodge is located in the Mungo National Park. Both the tours and the lodge are operated by the traditional owners and owned by Indigenous Business Australia.

There are 70 Aboriginal tourism operators in New South Wales and a lot of interest from Aboriginal communities across the state to use tourism further as an economic driver. Tourism does provide that sort of driver for Aboriginal enterprise. It is a foothold in the mainstream economy and also an opportunity to be a leader in the tourism market because, as you are aware, a lot of tourists are looking for those experiences.

CHAIR—From the New South Wales government perspective—and you may have covered this in your earlier comments—what is the key impediment to Indigenous employment? You started off on education. From the departmental position, and given that earlier statistic that we all know about, what is the key impediment to more positive outcomes?

Ms Broun—I would still suggest opportunities and racism are two of the big elements. If you go virtually anywhere in New South Wales—and anywhere around Australia—and go into the local shops, or the local Kmart or anywhere else, there would be very few Aboriginal people employed in those businesses. I would suggest that the jobs are there but Aboriginal people are not being linked into them.

CHAIR—Are you suggesting that the employer does not want to employ them?

Ms Broun—Yes, very much so. That may mean that government needs to look at incentives for enterprises to employ Aboriginal people or we may just need more marketing of the Aboriginal people and more linking of individuals—like the Lightning Ridge example. Sometimes that needs to be done on an individual basis so it is case management: here is the person and here are their skills; and matching that with an employer and promoting those good examples of where things are going well.

CHAIR—Are you aware of the corporate involvement in Indigenous employment? Are you aware of some of those examples where the corporate sector has been engaged?

Ms Broun—I know some of them are setting some targets and are doing more work in that area. It is still fairly haphazard and it is not consistent everywhere. The corporate world is not going to have an impact on some of the locations that have the highest level of need, either.

CHAIR—We had a very positive contribution from one of your local governments here in Sydney where they were of the opinion that the Indigenous involvement was really not much different to the general mainstream, so they had a really positive engagement with their Indigenous community. They were a large local government, 6,000 to 10,000 Aboriginal people, so it seems that involvement might be variable.

Ms Broun—Yes, definitely—I think there is a lot of variance across the state. But if you are asking for a general position: one of the barriers is racism and I think location is another one.

Mrs VALE—With a lot of those workplaces or shops that do not have Aboriginal people in them, in any work capacity, maybe there has not been even the opportunity for an Indigenous person to apply for a job. You hit on it when you mentioned—it is in your document—the importance of relationships. That probably takes a lot more time than government programs allow because it can be not just one-on-one. You talked about it in your Two Ways Together, in your clusters. That seems to be coming up; that it is important to work in those dynamic groups that have to be together.

Ms Broun—I think partnerships are a very important element of any success, and it is partnerships between governments and also between different sectors—.

Mrs VALE—And the private sector too.

Ms Broun—And with the private sector. The Economic Development Cluster group that we chair and manage has had the federal government involved right from the word go. So getting those relationships right and coordinating activity is very important. We have done a lot of that work but we have also had the Aboriginal community at the table the whole time. And then we have run workshops with Westpac and other corporate entities that come along and talk about some of their barriers as well and how they might be addressed. So there has been a lot of interest. As you say, the corporate world is interested and they have come to those workshops that we have held.

Mrs VALE—Is it fair to say that what could be perceived as racism—and I am sure that there is racism—could also be a lack of understanding on the part of a prospective employer about the ability and the capacity of an Indigenous person to perform the role. This perhaps is where we need that kind of education at a different level.

Ms Broun—That is right. There is also not the knowledge. If we were to say to contractors, 'You need to use an Aboriginal builder because it is on such and such a site', they would say, 'Where are they? We do not know where they are.' So it is developing a register, and saying, 'There is the register. There are lots of Aboriginal builders. You need to use one of them. You can contact them and use them.' It is the same for other enterprises. There are Aboriginal people in a lot of enterprises. It is linking them with, often, the bigger contractor of a job or a procurement.

Mrs VALE—The Two Ways Together program only started in 2003, and it goes to 2012.Has there been any evaluation of the success of that program, or is it too early to tell?

Ms Broun—It is too early to tell. We have only just produced what is a base line report from the work we have been doing across the state. That takes the indicators at a national level and puts them into a New South Wales context and breaks them down to regional data. That is a public document. It is too early to say how that is going. We are looking at our next report being done in 2007. We would hope by then we can see some evidence of things shifting.

Mrs VALE—Do you have a sense of how it is going?

Ms Broun—The commitment of all agencies has been terrific. Agencies are having to work a little differently. Working across government is quite different from working in their own agencies—

Mrs VALE—In their silos. Someone was using that term today, and saying that is the problem. It seems to me that New South Wales, with this particular program, is addressing a problem that we have heard identified previously.

Ms Broun—When I was talking previously about the barrier being racism, obviously that is one. There are probably several. A disjointed approach to programs and a lack of coordination across government is another. This process of Two Ways Together and a cluster group is hoping to remedy that situation and focus on the issues, saying: what bits need to be fixed by this level of government and what are the actions we can take collectively to address the issues?

Mrs VALE—Importantly, it is not just the interaction of agencies. You have also got Indigenous input. So the Indigenous community are expressing their needs.

Ms Broun—That is right. At a state level we had the cluster groups. At a local level, in a number of places around the state we have established what are called community working parties. They are not a fully funded entity. They are purely a structure that the community support to get together and talk about their problems and identify priorities and then are the point of contact for government to do business with that community. What that means is that the community are having much more engagement with government at that community level and taking control of some of those issues and saying that our priority might in some cases be

transport to and from different parts of the community; in another community it might be about housing and in another community it might be about aged care. So it is working closely on the ground.

Mrs VALE—So the responses of the government agencies can really target the needs of the individual communities.

Ms Broun—That is right. But it requires government to be listening. It requires government to be flexible in program delivery and to be responsive and then to be accountable back to the community.

Mrs VALE—As the Director-General, are you happy with how it is progressing to date?

Ms Broun—I suppose for me things are always a bit slow. It is a slow process of changing the way government might work and respond. So yes, things have changed, but in terms of whether I think it is at the point I would like it to be, probably not. We still have some work to do. But there has been a significant shift.

Mrs VALE—It is a big shift to work in dynamic clusters of objective-specific areas.

Ms Broun—It is about getting them to look at the indicators that have been set nationally and the actions they can take—either a number of agencies together or individually—to have a high impact on those indicators. It provides an opportunity for everyone at the table to talk about it and to look at the solutions. What we are trying to do is not just have solutions at a state level and then impose them on every committee around New South Wales. There are some state level actions that need to happen but, equally, there are regional level actions that need to be developed, agreed to and implemented. There are also local level actions, and for me they are the most exciting.

One of the other examples I was going to provide is the Euraba Paper Company. I do not know whether you know very much about that. It started out as a group of women wanting to start an enterprise. It is mostly made up of women from Toomelah Mission who have developed their own paper business. Their paper is used to make stationery, art, cards and certificates. They are now exporting internationally. It started out as a TAFE course and has been built up and developed into a business. That has grown organically into this business and their plans are to expand. When I went up there they had 10 employees; they were going to expand to 15 by the end of that year. This is in a very small, very isolated community up in the far north-west corner of New South Wales.

Mrs VALE—They have turned knowledge into a commercial reality.

Ms Broun—Yes. It is not the sort of thing government would come up with. It is community driven.

Mrs VALE—It has sprung from the community. What actually happened in Lightning Ridge with the furniture export company?

Ms Broun—That still exists. Lightning Ridge is probably an example of lots of things going right. I think you need a lot of factors to have success in this area. You need good governance and capacity at a local level. You need responsive and supportive government, and the support has to be offered at the right time.

Mrs VALE—Did the furniture manufacturing company at Lightning Ridge come from a tech course, too?

Ms Broun—My understanding is that it started through the CDEP.

Mrs VALE—That is good. If that is the case, it is a success story in itself.

Ms Broun—A number of the building companies that we work with have started through the CDEPs as well.

Mrs VALE—There is a real role.

Ms Broun—So there are some really good examples around. If you are trying to say, 'Okay, what are the contributing factors to success and how can we replicate that in other places?'

Mrs VALE—Which is what we would like to do, in a nutshell.

Ms Broun—I would say that some of it is government not being interventionist but supporting communities to come up with and establish their own ideas. That is, support at the right time rather than intervene.

CHAIR—We heard a phrase the other day: 'To be a facilitator not a benefactor'.

Ms Broun—That is right. I think too often there is a solution and people say, 'Oh, this is a great solution—let's put that in lots of different parts of the state', whereas it has to come from the community. It has to be built up and owned by the community.

Mrs VALE—One idea might work exceptionally well in one community but it may fail somewhere else.

Ms Broun—That is right. A lot of it comes down to community capacity and local leadership. Often you will see that something which is working fantastically in a local community has relied on one or two really strong people in the community doing the work. That is where it gets difficult to replicate it in lots of places. You are relying on leadership—

CHAIR—And of course the strong person may not always be able to be strong or they may move on.

Ms Broun—That is right. They often do move on. So, how do we develop more of the capacity and leadership? I think there is more work to be done there. I see that as a principal role of my department. We are just in the process of establishing five regional offices around the state. They will be at Bourke, Tamworth, Coffs Harbour, Wagga Wagga and Narooma. They have a number of roles, but they are there to facilitate the discussion between the community and

government. In most of those locations they will be co-located with the ICCs, which is the Commonwealth agency. So we will be in the same office.

Mrs VALE—That is a good idea.

CHAIR—Bourke was part of the COAG, too, wasn't it?

Ms Broun—Yes, it is—Murdi Paaki. I am hoping that through co-location we are going to get a lot more coordination between Commonwealth and state agencies on the same sorts of issues, rather than everyone scattergunning around a community.

Mrs VALE—A waste of resources.

CHAIR—That is the answer to my question. I was going to talk about COAG, the OIPC and the ICCs et cetera. Grabbing a bit from your submission, I want to talk about the overview of Aboriginal enterprise in New South Wales. We had a wonderful discussion during one of the parliamentary sitting weeks with an academic who has done a lot of work on Aboriginal entrepreneurship. I was somewhat staggered by the amount of effort this man, Mr Foley, has put in to establish the reasons these entrepreneurs succeeded. They were fairly modest but significant. It was revealing to think about how tough it was, particularly for Aboriginals. A significant number have succeeded, but they have succeeded through their own willpower.

I want to ask you about the overview of Aboriginal enterprise in New South Wales. There are 2,000 Aboriginal businesses listed by the ABS. Two per cent of the state's Aboriginal population are small business operators, with 70 per cent of Aboriginal businesses being run by men. Please talk a bit about the encouragement that your department gives them. You have talked about the Aboriginal Business Mentor Program, and I suppose it is linked to some of that. I do not know what question to ask you, but I am certainly acutely aware that this is part of the future for independence, self-reliance and employment creation. How do you see it?

Ms Broun—We obviously need to do more to engage our youth in schools and make sure they are resilient.

CHAIR—Given that the under-15s make up 40 per cent of the population.

Ms Broun—That is right. I accept that there are entrepreneurs who are successful without a great education. I think that comes down to a lot of intrinsic motivation on the part of those individuals, and I do not think you can ever expect that you are going to get that in everybody. But we do need our youth to come out of schools—whether they finish at year 10, year 12 or whatever—as strong individuals who are resilient and have some faith in their own abilities. We need to do more about connecting them straight into the work force so that they do not slide off the rails at all, and we need to do a lot more at the community level to develop the leadership skills of our youth and of other individuals.

I see some great examples where the youth are really taking the lead. It is so inspiring when you go somewhere. I went to a meeting where a young girl—I cannot remember her name—was talking about the community working party at Narrandera, which is historically quite a disadvantaged community with lots of problems. She would have only been in her 20s but she

was strong and forceful, answering questions off the floor and not in the least shy. You think: how do we harness that, and how did she get to be the sort of person who is willing to take the lead in a community, willing to stand up there and face the flak? How do we get more of that in our youth? That is really important.

CHAIR—If you could bottle it and replicate it—

Ms Broun—That is right. Something like the mentor program, which is specifically about Aboriginal business mentoring, would be good. I think mentoring people generally is quite a good method. How do you do that? We have to give some more thought to that.

CHAIR—It is still a work in progress.

Ms Broun—Yes. You might link individuals that you see some potential in with somebody who is in the community who is already a leader—and not necessarily an Aboriginal person. I do not think it necessarily has to be just around Aboriginal people with Aboriginal people. Let us break down some of those barriers and get youth working, get them strong and feeling like they can achieve things.

CHAIR—Those are good thoughts. My last question is on Redfern-Waterloo and the CFMEU. There was another inquiry about three years ago on community capacity. I see Redfern as one of the great opportunities of Australia because of its location in this wonderful city of Sydney, and yet we have seen too many negatives, as you know better than I do. I would like to talk about that—not necessarily about the CFMEU but about the Redfern-Waterloo project.

Ms Broun—I do not think I would be the right person to talk about the CFMEU!

CHAIR—No, but I see they are involved—

Ms Broun—There are obviously a lot of opportunities there. The authority, as it has been structured, is going to do a lot of work in redevelopment. They have made that a category 1 project, where any contractors will have to have an Aboriginal employment strategy. That should trigger some additional work down there. One of my priorities as an individual is employment and economic development. I see that as a real key to development in other areas. That is why we are still the coordinating point for the economic development action plan. It was really heartening that they did that, because it was not something I encouraged them to do; they did it off their own bat. I think that will see some really strong outcomes for Aboriginal people in that area.

CHAIR—You have that local ownership, by the sound of it.

Ms Broun—Yes. If you can get people engaged in employment, it does build up their self-esteem and has a whole range of other flow-on effects. It might mean that we need to match that by getting them ready through training opportunities, but it does provide those opportunities. The broad direction of the redevelopment of that area is probably well overdue. Having the community ownership of it and being involved in that work will be really critical.

CHAIR—There are no further questions. Would you like to make a concluding statement?

Mrs VALE—Perhaps we should ask just one question, though it is probably a big one. From your position as director general, is there any one thing that you would like to see the Commonwealth government do besides provide money? I suppose it comes to resources too, but if your wishes were granted what would you like?

Ms Broun—We have made a few recommendations in the submission. A lot more could be done in delivering on the CDEPs as enterprise opportunities.

Mrs VALE—I note you talk about the final disincentive to CDEP participants. Does that have a negative impact at all?

Ms Broun—That has been raised a lot. If you are on CDEP, you lose some of the other benefits that you would gain if you were on unemployment benefits, for instance.

CHAIR—It is a very good point.

Ms Broun—Another area that I think needs re-examination is the Abstudy arrangements.

Mrs VALE—Yes, we have that here too.

Ms Broun—That provides a whole range of incentives to go on to further education.

Mrs VALE—Just those two are very important.

Ms Broun—Very important. HECS, for lots of reasons, has a higher impact on Aboriginal people—they have to pay it back and it is a lot of money. So the arrangements there make a difference as well.

Mrs VALE—You suggest that Abstudy be extended. Who qualifies for it now? Is it limited now to—

Ms Broun—It is means tested, as I understand it. I do not have all the details, but I am pretty sure it is fairly heavily means tested. When I was at school—this is going back to dark history—we all got $3 a fortnight in early high school and $6 a fortnight in years 11 and 12. That does not sound like much, but it was an incentive to stay at school. Mum got help with books and things like that twice a year as well.

Mr SLIPPER—Was that in Sydney?

Ms Broun—No, this was in Western Australia.

Mr SLIPPER—You are not a local?

Ms Broun—No. I felt that was incentive, and you also got Abstudy when you went into tertiary education. They have made that very difficult. The incentives to stay on at school and the incentives to go into tertiary education are not necessarily as good as they were then. So there needs to be a re-examination of that. I think that would be a significant contributor.

Mr SLIPPER—With respect to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, do you act as a coordination agency for other departments? Is education delivered by the education department and health by the health department and you are the glue that holds it all together?

Ms Broun—Very much. Our role is coordinating and providing some expertise and advice where required.

Mr SLIPPER—But not the provision of services.

Ms Broun—No. We do deliver a program—the housing and infrastructure program—but that is really the only service delivery area. It is about making the mainstream do their job, I suppose, and coordinating across government is really critical to that. You might be interested in the publication that goes with the economic development cluster group, which is in brief what the cluster group is about, what areas it is focusing on.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. It is much appreciated that you have made yourself available.

[3.35 pm]

AUSSIE-STONE, Mr Marc, Chief Executive Officer, World Cultural Action

CHAIR—I welcome you to these public hearings of the ATSIA committee on employment today in Sydney. We have received your submission and I have a summary of it in front of me. You may like to add to that submission or give a précis of it. Then we can get into a discussion.

Mr Aussie-Stone—I have just come from the United Nations agency involving Indigenous business development in Brisbane. I was there for three days as an accredited journalist able to cover every section of it and bring back from there some interesting developments which are valid to this hearing and to my work. The United Nations has many agencies that can assist Aboriginal development in developed countries but are blocked by those countries from doing that. For the Kanaks in New Caledonia their country is declared to be France, a developed country, and therefore they cannot access UNDP programs. The Australian Aboriginals, because Australia is a developed country, cannot access UNDP programs. The point was made on the final day in the Brisbane declaration by the Kanaks, who were allowed to put their proposal to the floor and to the permanent UN delegates. I brought for you a paper from their Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which I table. I ask you to photocopy that and include it in your considerations and then get it back to me because it is my original.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Mr Aussie-Stone—It does include some of your documents but it outlines what they were doing to help Indigenous people. The point they made was that Indigenous people are not really aggressive politically. They were not seeking to be detrimental to France but they were seeking access to any positive agencies. This was heard. They were allowed to make a statement but it was not necessarily put into the Brisbane declaration. I feel that that was influenced by the Australian government controlling that operation.

However, I have been an activist for 30 years for Indigenous people globally. We have managed to bypass that in a meeting with the woman who was in charge of the Indigenous committee. They are now funding the senators to fly to the UN. They have heard their case and it will be considered. I now table the fourth day's paper in which you will see that the Kanaks were keen to access UN health. If they achieve that our Aboriginal people will also be able to access such help. So I commend it to you for your support and to share with whatever paranoid people we may have in this country who think that they might criticise instead of looking at that as a resource base—because there are a wonderful people in the world who are doing work that could complement everything that the Australian government would like to aspire to and see achieved with the Aboriginal people.

Mr SLIPPER—What sort of help could be expected?

Mr Aussie-Stone—They work on all areas. They work in health, education and now in business development. I have had discussions with IFAD.

Mr SLIPPER—Sorry, what is IFAD?

Mr Aussie-Stone—The United Nations is a world of acronyms. IFAD is the international something or other development. They control the FAO and provide all the funds for agricultural development for the UN throughout the world and also for community development—which is a breakthrough because they can fund a fishing business or an agricultural business and they can fund a large women's lodge which might generate income and employment and preserve the culture and crafts.

I presented the four same models to them. There has been a parallel theme behind my work for Aborigines, Fijians and the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. It is the same thing: trying to look at what they are interested in and what their natural skills are, and not trying to put them into a factory or put them into a big, foreign designed hotel, but to go with them. These models are now being considered by the UN on that basis. I am prevented from bringing those people into this country or even encouraging them to participate and be of assistance here because of this rule.

CHAIR—Relating to the Indigenous employment issue?

Mr Aussie-Stone—Relating particularly to Indigenous employment. I have tried to go before AusAID to explain that it is wonderful to support good governance at the top, out there in the Pacific but, as I sit and live in the villages in the Pacific, we do not see any practical microbusinesses being started in villages—which are the basis of their sustenance, whatever goes on around them. That was my message to AusAID: please, let us get some models going which can be replicated. There are lots of people working on it. At the UN hearing the heads of IFAD took me aside—that is, Thomas, who controls Asia and the Pacific, and Mattia, who controls the Pacific—and told me, 'Marc, we are vitally interested in your models, and we now want to work from the grassroots up and not from the top down.' It is a new approach and it is about time.

Secondly, I want to table for you a statement made to the Fijian government in 1996 as to what they have lost by not following my plans for indigenous development. It is the same basic model. I became an affiliate of the World Tourism Organisation nearly 20 years ago for eight years. I was permitted to speak at all the UN meetings on tourism development. I was then invited to be a guest of 11 developing nations. I have served the minister in Papua New Guinea on tourism development advice in Malawi, in Sierra Leone, in Zambia, in Nepal, in India and in Pakistan. I have been to their countries and solved problems for them in the field. However, in this country we have a very locked Australian tourism mission which has been focused on promotion ever since its foundation, and we have not looked at product development. That product development now, when we look at the Aboriginal industry, is one of the big doorways for them. So I would like to table a statement which was—

CHAIR—What is your estimate of the requirement or desire of their international tourists? What percentage of them is looking for the authentic Indigenous experience?

Mr Aussie-Stone—That has a name. It is a segment of the market. It is six to eight per cent of the global market. It is called 'the long-haul, across-border, special interest, culture-receptive

traveller. It has got a name and there are giant wholesalers, which I have spoken to at the ITB in Berlin, who are ready to send 5,000 to 30,000 people a month.

CHAIR—Can I just ask: the authentic Indigenous tourist experience in Australia—do you think it is eight per cent or is it higher here? We are hearing figures of 80 per cent.

Mr Aussie-Stone—If you talk to a person who is only interested in it, you have got 100 per cent. If you talk to somebody who is not interested, you have got zero per cent.

CHAIR—Sure.

Mr Aussie-Stone—It would depend on who you talk to.

CHAIR—But as part of the package—

Mr Aussie-Stone—The point is that Australia already has wonderful recognition through the Olympic Games, through that wonderful interface with the Aboriginal culture, through our art, through our sportspeople—

CHAIR—You do not have a figure in mind of eight per cent or 80 per cent?

Mr Aussie-Stone—This is the age-old thing, where the statisticians in the tourism world and research people say, 'Show me the research and we will build you the product,' and yet for the people who want to access the product there are no statistics to demonstrate what that is. So anybody who prematurely says now what they are, what we can say to you, though—

CHAIR—I have got a figure between eight and 80, and I am just trying to understand—

Mr Aussie-Stone—You still want a figure, but I am saying to you that what is recognised is that we are equally eligible as other indigenous nations—

CHAIR—No, I do not want a figure; all I want is an estimate of what our genuine demand is.

Mr Aussie-Stone—How big the market is?

CHAIR—And what I am going on to say, which I think is more important, is how we define what that Indigenous product is. It is not just the rock. This is the issue that we are—

Mr Aussie-Stone—The rock is not even an Indigenous product, although it has been done.

CHAIR—No, that is right, but what is the Indigenous experience from your perspective?

Mr Aussie-Stone—I think a very good example of it—and we can only go from examples here—was published 10 years ago. I have the document here. It is to do with a Cairns small dance theatre company that grew up to become a significant generator for all the other regions.

CHAIR—It is known as Tjapukai?

Mr Aussie-Stone—Yes.

CHAIR—I agree!

Mr Aussie-Stone—It was a wonderful example to show that, if you do it well with good operators who are sensitive and you work together, you can get a result. Now the whole industry is piggybacking on that result. I am not saying that the Australian industry, with its wealth of sheep, opals and cattle, has to piggyback on it. I am saying that, when we look at Aboriginal employment, not to allow it to come forward now is crazy because we are missing one of the great assets of this country.

CHAIR—I will interrupt you there because I want to pick up on that general Indigenous employment connection.

Mr Aussie-Stone—When tourism started it was where the crossroads were, so they built motels and made them into tourism hotels. Today we do not have the statistics.

CHAIR—I understand. Can I just say that, in the 15 minutes we have left, you have a couple of minutes to sum up and then we will have a few minutes to have a chat.

Mr Aussie-Stone—Okay. I will just table this document. This was written by the economic adviser to then Prime Minister Fraser by the state manager of Westpac for tourism for Tasmania and Victoria and by one of the men who runs the biggest tourism sites in the world, which is Stonehenge. He was one of four men who were involved, including Gordon Cook, who runs British heritage, and Alan Hayes, who was the chairman of our biggest consulting engineers. If you take Fiji out of it, everything in there still refers to the potential that we are losing by not bringing on appropriate—

CHAIR—Thank you. We are happy to accept it.

Mr Aussie-Stone—I will get back to my submission.

CHAIR—You have a couple of minutes. Just sum it up and we will have a chat.

Mr Aussie-Stone—To summarise what the Aboriginals have achieved to date, they have come from an oppressed situation to one where they now have political rights, land rights and a tent embassy, which gives them at least some integrity down there in Canberra, thank God. I hope it is still there and has not been crushed or moved away because it allows them to feel that they are someone in this country. They play a large part in the public face of our nation in culture, arts, sport and history.

Sir William Deane called for a new focus which involved education in our schools. I grew up with no education about the Aboriginal people. I went offshore and did work for Third World indigenous people before I even became aware of them. It was not until Charles Perkins and Ted Hampton were going to stage the first national Indigenous business conference in Alice Springs. Ted Hampton then attended my first global indigenous business conference, which had the Canadian Mi'kmaq Indians, the Pueblo American Indians, the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement

and the Fijians. They said, 'We want to attend to learn whatever it is that your people know about business development.' That got me involved.

When we went there, Charles Perkins, who was one of the great advocates, with his freedom rides, for making change in this country, had an agenda for establishing a black chamber of commerce. What happened was that, in the circles we sat in—I was one of the few non-Aboriginals invited to sit in those circles—much of the time was given to speaking in a merit debate over the black chamber of commerce. I cannot argue for whether it has merit or not. So the people came to those circles but what they did not do was open their briefcases or be heard, because 600 of them flew in from all over Australia and nobody knew what they were there for: 'What are you here for, Jack? Are you looking for finance for a new truck or whatever?' So Ted and I decided then that we would convene three listening Aboriginal and Pacific island business conferences, which we did. There were two in Sydney and one in Canberra. That is also discussed in my submission. We took every Aboriginal person aside into a room and said, 'You tell us why we are here.' We filmed that. We have a very beautiful historical record of these people saying what they want to do.

I have been back through a cross-section of Aboriginal writing in this country over 50 years. There were 33 books and there was a common theme coming from them: 'Please don't try and change us and put us in your money-making boxes or your GST things, but please listen to how we are, support how we are and let us live alongside you.'

CHAIR—You will need to wrap up.

Mr Aussie-Stone—That is also in my submission. I can see it is time that we, all Australians, were educated as to the full story of this great race of surviving Indigenous people. That can be done in a way that allows overseas visitors also to experience, enjoy and appreciate everything about this great race. But it can be done in a way which is 100 per cent owned and controlled by the Aboriginal people so that they allow us in and they close us out according to what they want. It is a linkage.

Because of the coup in Fiji, I happened to be idle for six months. I was back in Australia and looking around government offices to see what was going on in inland Australia. The Department of State and Regional Development approached me and asked whether I would look at the fact that they are not getting anywhere with inland Aboriginal business development. I said that I would. So I go out to the Orange office of regional development. They were supposed to show me their business plan so I could look at it and give them a view. I launched Kentucky Fried Chicken in Australia and I was the first head of the film production industry. I have a lot of knowledge on how to start up a small business. When I got out there they would not show me the business plan because they thought that it might reflect on them.

I am getting to the issue. I was then approached and asked to speak at a conference. I have finished with talking because it does not do anything. If you want to start some small businesses, I am your man; if you want a critique of small business start-ups, I am your man. So I answered no and yes. 'What do you mean?' she asked. I replied, 'No, I will not go and speak at the conference but tell me who is going to this conference.' She said, 'All the Aboriginal interests between Orange and Burke.' I asked how long we had and she said two months. I asked to be allowed to visit each of these individual communities to see if there was a sensible person or

family there with good resources and a unique aspect of Aboriginality. When I finished the tour I realised that on one road we could show off the whole Aboriginal nation. It touched my brain as being a wonderful thing that the globe would promote and that enhances existing people. I identified 22 people and they are trying to put them into a cooperative. I can tell you, Aboriginal people are tribal and like all Indigenous people they do not want to sit in a cooperative so it is at a two-year standstill.

CHAIR—Thank you. Turning to the general issue of Indigenous employment and culture, we hear about the need to understand it but we also hear about the impediments of it. I am particularly interested in understanding what you think we mean by Aboriginal culture and how we can make sure we retain the best of it but not use it as a reason for not engaging on employment.

Mr Aussie-Stone—If you talk to an elder he will have one view; if you talk to the next generation—my age—there will be another view; if you talk to a 30-year-old Aboriginal he will have another view. But the 30-year-old Aboriginal may still have the Aboriginal dreams pumping through his veins. For instance, in Coonabarabran you will find in a garage up there a proud Aboriginal family with their Aboriginal flag up. He goes off and cuts humps off trees and makes magnificent mulga tables and puts his Aboriginal name on them. That is all he wants to do. We need to support him and allow people to access him when he wants it. We have to support that Aboriginal for what ever it is that he believes in and that level of culture. At the world conference it was identified that cultures are being eroded because of television, phones and what have you but at this time it is not for us to say how they are eroded. We just need to give them support as they are and as they want.

Mrs VALE—Thank you, Mr Aussie-Stone for your interest in Aboriginal development. Have you taken your ideas about Aboriginal business development to Indigenous Business Australia?

Mr Aussie-Stone—That is interesting. In that bag there I also have Aboriginal Tourism Australia and Indigenous Business Australia and I was in deep discussion with the ATSIC business development section before it was disbanded, and there are reports after reports. I started to develop the highway. The first thing you do is access everybody and ask them for their input and whether it is a good idea or not. You get no responses. The biggest problem that we have—and it is something that we have to face; our Australian government has to face it—is that if there is going to be an improvement and if it is not happening under this structure then, as responsible leaders, we have to see whether we can develop another structure to do it. There is a partnership available of non-Aboriginal people who do not want to own the Aboriginal people and who can supply them, support them, respect them and appreciate them.

Mrs VALE—In the private sector?

Mr Aussie-Stone—In the private sector. It is huge.

Mrs VALE—Have you been able to tap into that?

Mr Aussie-Stone—Yes. I represent the wholesalers who are waiting for the appropriate development of a product so that they can have people arrive at the airport who are only interested in going out there, being hosted and meeting before they fly back again.

Mrs VALE—Were you hoping for government financial support for this idea about your special trail, your superhighway, or is it something that would be developed from the private sector?

Mr Aussie-Stone—It only needed to be taken a small step forward before I was frozen out. They left me dry after two years and I never heard from them again, basically.

Mrs VALE—Is this the New South Wales government?

Mr Aussie-Stone—Yes, the New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development in the Orange office. However, they then wrote to councils and the councils said to me, 'Marc, what's the answer?' I wrote back a seven-page letter, and we still have not had a reply. I went to my state parliamentarians. They organised for me to meet the regional director. I spoke to him. I got compressed down. I have a lot to talk about but I am restricted to their time frames. As a result of that they promised me a reply from Orange. I said, 'Here are the reasons why you should go in this direction,' and we have had no reply. If I am wrong, I am out. We are not here to score points; we are only here to move forward as a team.

Mrs VALE—And to assist the Indigenous people.

Mr Aussie-Stone—Absolutely.

Mrs VALE—Your submission refers to a number of Aboriginal business development conferences. Could you tell us what the key outcomes of these conferences were in terms of increasing Indigenous employment opportunities?

Mr Aussie-Stone—Ted Hampton was my full partner. He was part of the Aranda tribe and up from Alice Springs. We assembled Western businessmen and, if they wanted to know about financing, like the state manager of Westpac, we made two or three days available just to answer questions for the Aboriginal people. A lot of questions were answered. If I was asked if I followed up those delegates back to their homelands to see if they got any benefit, I would say that we may well have made a contribution in education from a practical point of view. I say: 'Don't buy new vehicles. A new vehicle is second-hand the day it is bought. Go and get yourself the best quality second-hand vehicle and save yourself 60 per cent of your debt. Do not go into debt with your small start-up.' We hammer that home. That may have had some influence; I could not tell you where those influences are.

CHAIR—We appreciate your time here today.

Mr Aussie-Stone—No problems.

CHAIR—We wish you well. Thank you very much.

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

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

Subcommittee adjourned at 3.57 pm