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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

(Subcommittee)

Reference: Indigenous employment

THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2005

KALGOORLIE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Thursday, 27 October 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: 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 2.00 pm

FLETCHER, Mr Ian Ross, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder

CHAIR (Mr Wakelin)—Welcome. We have seen a fair bit of each other in the last three days. It is great to be with you again in this sort of format to get a few things on the record. Do you have any comments on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Fletcher—I appear on behalf of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder to provide an outline of what our city is doing with respect to Indigenous employment initiatives and reconciliation.

CHAIR—Our committee does not require evidence to be given under oath, but I always have to remind people that these are legal proceedings of the parliament. Would you like to make an opening statement or some opening comments? Then we can just go into a pretty informal discussion.

Mr Fletcher—To go back, I have been in Kalgoorlie-Boulder for almost five years. Being a mining town, we have a very transient population. About a third of our population turns over every year. When I first came here in 2001, it was very evident that there were some significant issues between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Executive Director of the Goldfields Land and Sea Council had made the claim that we were the most racist town in Australia. As a consequence of that I approached Dr William Jonas, who was the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and asked if he could provide someone to come and have a look—not to have a formal investigation, but to have a look at what was happening in our city and see whether there were some things that we could do. The reason I approached them was that I wanted it to be seen through a completely independent and fresh set of eyes, not those of someone who lived and worked in the city.

Dr Jonas was kind enough to provide us with a person, Meredith Wilkie, who happened to be a Western Australian who had moved to Sydney to work with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Meredith came over here, looked at the city and met with a lot of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. She came up with an informal report. I guess the summary of it was that, yes, there were racism issues in our town, but they were no different to those in any other regional centre in Australia, particularly where you have people from remote communities coming in and, in effect, becoming fringe dwellers.

A number of recommendations were made by that Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report, one of which was to assist Aboriginal people to be aware of what their rights were when they were going to retail outlets, hotels and other venues. That was jointly sponsored by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission, which became involved in the review that took place.

The second recommendation related to establishing what they described as ‘Indigenous consultation protocols’. They suggested that we look at establishing those. We did so through a series of workshops. We engaged two independent consultants, not from the region, Mr Kim Bridge and Mr Tim Muirhead. They came to the town—in fact, this very room, the banquet

room. We had a series of workshops, one with Indigenous people on their own, one with non-Indigenous people and then we all came together.

The mayor and I have said many times, and Indigenous leaders have also said, that the outcome was the Indigenous consultation protocol—which I will refer to in a moment, and of which you have copies—but the journey that we went through to get to that outcome was just as important as the actual outcome. For the first time, Indigenous people realised that the mayor and elected members of council, who were present, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy and the chamber of commerce were approachable people who were no different to them in their aspirations and what they wanted. One of the very great positive outcomes was that there is now a great working relationship between the mayor and community leaders and Indigenous leaders.

We have produced the Indigenous consultation protocol. It is an unusual shape; it is a long and thin document. The reason for that is that, when it is framed, if you go into the foyer of a building, it is the sort of thing that draws your attention because it is a little bit different. I will quote from it. It is entitled *Dignity, respect and fulfilment: an agreement for working together in Kalgoorlie-Boulder* and it states:

We share a vision of a city in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are working together, creating an equitable and inclusive community that gives dignity, respect and fulfilment to all.

The aim is:

To bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together in a common effort to achieve our vision.

This agreement provides a shared foundation for pursuing our aim.

Any individual or any organisation can sign it. It says:

I—

whoever is the signatory—

representing—

whoever is the organisation—

believe in the vision and agree to act within the guidelines set out in this agreement to advance the aim.

It talks about recognising the sad history of Indigenous people in this part of the world, but looking to the future and how we work together.

There was a signing ceremony in December last year, which involved the Premier of Western Australia, Dr Geoff Gallop; the Mayor of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Mr Ron Yuryevich; and the Chair of the then Mulga Mallee Regional Council of ATSIC, Mr Brian Champion. I can say with great pride that these documents feature in all the major buildings that we have as a city council. It is not something that you are signing off with any legal obligation; it is just a statement of intent and commitment to what you believe in. We have had a great response to that

from across the board. Incidentally, it is being used as a template by some other communities within Western Australia, and on the east coast some local governments have asked for copies.

It was part of other initiatives we were taking. For instance, in 2000, we established a reconciliation committee of council, and we believe that was the first reconciliation committee of any local government in Australia. It is made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It meets every two months now and considers issues. You would recall that this morning at the National Reconciliation Forum we had a meeting of the reconciliation committee of council. It is a formal committee of council that makes recommendations to the council, and those recommendations are acted on by the full council when it considers the committee report.

This is all leading to the fact that, as far as Indigenous employment is concerned, we did not start with employment; we dealt with a whole-of-community approach. Basically, as a consequence of that, we have seen that the community has a preparedness now to do things that relate to Indigenous people, which in my view was not there before.

I draw your attention to the 2004-05 annual report, which you have a copy of. You will find that in that report there is quite a significant amount of space devoted to reconciliation. It starts on page 32 and goes through to page 35. It talks about all the different things we have been involved with; what we perceive as reconciliation; the reconciliation committee; the Boulder short-stay accommodation facility, which is a facility that we are establishing for itinerant fringe dwellers who come from Tjuntjuntjarra and Coonana and the Maralinga and Spinifex people, who originate in South Australia; the library, alcohol and other drug unit that looks at preventive measures as far as consumption of alcohol, particularly, and other drugs are concerned; the Rotary Peace Park, which has seen an Aboriginal interpretive garden built with money from the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation; Harmony Week, which is celebrated each year in March in Kalgoorlie-Boulder; and Reconciliation Week. I might add that the principal source of funding for the Boulder short-stay accommodation facility and the alcohol and other drug unit—the library—has come from the Australian government's Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation.

The annual report also talks about an Indigenous framework agreement which was signed at the beginning of 2004 by the Western Australian Minister for Indigenous affairs, the Hon. John Kobelke, the mayor and Brian Champion, as Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Mulga Mallee Regional Council. That talks about roles and responsibilities of the three levels of government. It clarifies how we interact, the Indigenous consultation protocols that I have referred to and the National Reconciliation Forum. Of course, the second National Reconciliation Forum has just been completed. This year it focused on employment; last year it focused on providing support to people who come from remote communities to a regional centre such as ours. We are looking at establishing a reconciliation park at the top end of Hannan Street—at the eastern end of the city; the eastern gateway—as a statement of what we are doing.

So we take the whole issue of reconciliation very seriously and we do subscribe to the view that a key part of reconciliation is that Indigenous people should be given the opportunity and support to get employment, because with a job comes higher self-esteem, some economic independence and the ability for people to move forward. Within the city council we have as our goal that six per cent of our work force should be Aboriginal. That reflects in very broad terms the percentage of the Indigenous population that resides here in our part of the world. We

continuously monitor that. We lose some people but we endeavour to replace them. We have had traineeships and we are exploring the concept of cadetships for Indigenous people. We endeavour to show others what can be done.

We also have a relationship with the Department of Justice, with the Goldfields Regional Prison. We have two prison crews who are supervised by our supervisors who work with our external staff of the works depot in horticultural activities, the idea being that they can get some experience which can be used for practical purposes when they go back to their communities. We are exploring the concept of traineeships where they can move from being in prison into a traineeship. The issue there is that most of the prisoners that are at the Goldfields regional prison are only short stay prisoners, principally due to fine defaults, where they have not paid fines, many of them related to traffic offences.

The state government has indicated that it is going to increase the population of the Goldfields regional prison over the next few years. It is going to rebuild the prison. Currently it has about a 120-bed capacity. The government is going to increase that to something like 300, and there will be some medium to longer term stay prisoners. We are very keen to explore with the Department of Justice the idea of the Aboriginal prisoners going with our works supervisors and getting some experience in the use of chainsaws and other basic skills.

One thing we are exploring with the developer of an 18-hole grass golf course and five-star resort is the idea that some of those people in due course could be employed at that resort. The golf course will be completed towards the end of 2007. We are looking towards that in the longer term.

They are my opening comments. There are probably other things that I could talk about. You are aware that I went on a Churchill Fellowship to Canada last year and, amongst other things, looked at Indigenous employment. Two of the mining companies that happen to be major players in this part of Australia are American companies, specifically Canadian companies, they being Placer Dome and Barrick Gold, who are a 50 per cent equity owner in the super pit that is operated by Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines. When I made application for the Churchill Fellowship I got very strong support from Placer Dome. In fact, they arranged for me to go to their Musselwhite Mine, which is about 600 kilometres north of Thunder Bay on Lake Superior in Ontario Province.

CHAIR—We shared your experience this morning.

Mr Fletcher—Yes. I then also went with Barrick Gold to the Eskay Creek mine, which is about 500 kilometres north-west of a town called Smithers in British Columbia. Once again, it is a fly in, fly out mine where they have a very strong working relationship with the Tahltan First Nations people.

CHAIR—You mentioned there were no roads in.

Mr Fletcher—No. It is very hard to get into, because of the climatic conditions. Certainly in winter the only way you can get in is to fly in. That was great experience and I was able to talk with them about the potential for transferring what they had done in Canada to our part of Australia. There was a clear message of support. In fact, at this year's National Reconciliation

Forum, Placer Dome indicated that they are going to start an employment program for Indigenous people, which is very heartening. Barrick Gold are not directly operating the super pit. They are a joint venture partner with Newmont. It is really up to the operating company, which is Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines, to take that up. But I know that Barrick are very keen to pursue that. Barrick Gold and Placer Dome also have operations outside our city boundary up in the north-eastern goldfields, and they are looking at Indigenous employment programs up there.

CHAIR—With the benefit of the last 2½ days listening to some of the discussion, I would like to lead into this intergovernment relationship—that is, federal, state and local. In your Churchill fellowship report you made what I thought was a really interesting statement, that the maturity was different between the provinces and the central government in Canada. I confess that the ability of our federation to work as effectively as it might is something that has troubled me for a very long time. In fact, there was a very interesting discussion on it at the Institute of Public Affairs this week.

Mr Fletcher—Yes.

CHAIR—Could you tell us a bit more about what you saw in Canada that encouraged you to think they had come a little further on this path?

Mr Fletcher—The interesting observation I made in Canada was that the provincial—

CHAIR—I know your background; you have covered the whole spectrum.

Mr Fletcher—Yes, all three levels of government in Australia. The national government in Canada has had a longstanding relationship with first nation and Inuit people. In fact, there was an attempt made by the Canadian government some years ago to actually withdraw from aboriginal matters. That was where the Assembly of First Nations had its origins as there was concern among first nation people. The observation I made, as I said at the National Reconciliation Forum, was that there has been a tendency within Australia for it to be imposed from the top down. I put that down to our European settlement. We started off as a penal colony; we had a bureaucracy right from day one. I think that has had an impact on the psyche of Australia. In the case of ATSIC and its predecessors, basically they were structures determined by government as to how Aboriginal people would be represented. I think that is a starting point.

In Canada I saw some interesting issues in terms of the Canadian government focusing on a whole-of-community regional approach. I must say that I am aware that the federal government is now looking at that. But it seemed to be at a more advanced stage in terms of how it worked. The Canadian government tended to take the lead, whereas in Australia there is still confusion. For instance, there is confusion about the state Department of Indigenous Affairs in Western Australia and where the Indigenous coordination centres sit relative to it. I for one often asked the question as to why we have two departments there. If you ask what the Department of Indigenous Affairs do, they say, 'We're here to coordinate things.' Then, if you ask the ICC, they say the same. I venture to say that we probably have one level of government too many in Australia. I am speaking from having spent almost 20 years with the federal government, about nine years with the Tasmanian and Western Australian governments and now five years with the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder at the local government level.

Having had that experience, I think that local government, particularly outside the metropolitan area, has much greater capacity to deliver. I make no bones about the fact that this is the best job I have ever had because you can actually cut through a lot of the Byzantine layers you have to deal with. If you have a very good city council and a good mayor, which we are fortunate to have here, you can actually get things done. In the federal model in Australia, there is this constant jockeying between federal and state. It is about money, it is about all of those things. I think a lot of time and effort is wasted on that. I also think it is a criticism of Western Australia—and Australia, to some extent—and what can sometimes amount to a silo mentality. Things are not looked at on a regional level. Basically, if it is to do with education, the local district director has to answer to the director-general of the department in Perth and then to the minister. It is the same with federal government departments. The Indigenous coordination centre is clearly an attempt to change that. I would say the jury is out at this stage because it is too early to see how that is going to work in terms of mainstream agencies.

From what Dick Estens has said, there have been some issues in Canberra where the individual agency had to be told by Dr Peter Shergold from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that maybe they needed to be a bit more flexible. Certainly, as a CEO of a city in regional Australia, it gets very frustrating when you can identify an issue but everyone has got their budget. They say, 'We can't move outside that.' It would be terrific if you could pool some of that money and say, 'How do we deal with that collectively and make local decisions instead of this accountability back to Perth or to Canberra?' That is what I saw in Canada. The Privy Council Office, which is the equivalent of Prime Minister and Cabinet, had set up working models which allowed there to be a pool of funds that could be determined at the local level as to how it might be used. I think that that is the way to go. From what I have read, I think that is the intention of where the government wants to go but, as I say, it is early days at this point in time.

CHAIR—In the last 2½ days, we have had some input from ICC but we also had a representative from DEWR this morning. I noted her comments about not having the capacity to pool like some have. I have noted that and I am somewhat puzzled. I need to flesh that out a little bit further. It seemed to me there were some pretty good officers in the ICC. I just make the observation—you may wish to comment on it—that they are still very much getting used to this role.

Mr Fletcher—Very much so.

CHAIR—You would have heard my comment on Tuesday about Peter Shergold having to shake a little bit and say, 'Let's just remind people what this is supposed to do.' Would you care to comment on how you think the ICC is emerging at this stage?

Mr Fletcher—We are fortunate in this part of the country to have a very competent person as the manager of the ICC—Adrian Brahim. We have very committed officers who work in the individual areas, be it DEST, DEWR or other areas. It is a bit like a matrix model. They have got a line that answers to someone in Perth. It is about how you bridge that and how much delegation there is. For instance, the DEWR person from Perth today made the point that the state manager for DEWR has a delegation of up to a million dollars to deal with things. It still has to go out of here to Perth.

I understand the accountability requirements because everything that the Australian government does uses taxpayers' money and it has to be accounted for but I think there has to be a model which allows some local decision making and crosspollination, if you like. For instance, what was said today is that the conduits are there but the destination is not there. You might get the education side of it right but, in terms of getting a job, the question that was very clear at that plenary session today at the National Reconciliation Forum was: how do you connect those two together?

CHAIR—We have not got that yet, have we?

Mr Fletcher—No.

CHAIR—I think Mrs Vale was keen on the ICC.

Mrs VALE—Yes, I was. I think you are right about accountability but the budgets are very strict and they are structured. Of course, traditionally, there has always been an individual budget for an individual department and then your secretary and your heads are responsible all the way up the food chain. If there were a budget allocation that actually allowed flexibility to work within other agencies and if it were specified for that—no agency will do anything without funding and any initiative is going to have to have a funding dollar attached to it—do you think it would be a little bit more efficacious, even if it were distinctly allocated that it was for negotiation or working with other agencies for an agreed outcome?

Mr Fletcher—Most definitely. I will give you a couple of examples. This is more a state government issue but it does have some impact on the ICC—that is, transportation of Indigenous people from the lands, from remote locations. At the moment there is no coordination. Basically a person can be discharged from hospital or prison and they have to find their own way back.

Mrs VALE—Gee, that is hard.

Mr Fletcher—It is very hard. We first initiated something along these lines to get a transport service. A lot of Indigenous people might come in on a truck that is empty, with plenty of space. But then the truck gets loaded up with supplies to go back and there is no space for them, so they have no means to get back. Many of them have unroadworthy and unlicensed cars. We have seen the *Bush Mechanics* program on the ABC, and it is very true. A lot of those cars barely get them here and then they fall to bits, basically. There is no way they can drive them back.

About three years ago we attempted to get a coordinated transport service. This was with state government agencies, and everyone was saying, 'No, it's not my responsibility.' Everyone was pointing at everyone else. In the end it was done through the intervention of John Bowler, who is now the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development and whom you both know. John said, 'I'm not going to put up with this,' and he asked the Goldfields Esperance Development Commission to fix it. We had done all the work initially and we were looking at seeking funding from Lotterywest, but then one of the state government agencies said, 'You haven't consulted enough,' and all that did not go anywhere. But we had done all the research and John Bowler, to his credit, said to the Goldfields Esperance Development Commission, 'I want this fixed and I expect you to fix it.' So we actually have something happening, but it is through that body; it is not through a cooperative endeavour with a pooled funding arrangement

that can be used. It does not have to be all the money. There will be core responsibilities of each of those agencies.

Mrs VALE—Exactly. You just need a discretionary amount.

Mr Fletcher—Yes, we need a discretionary budget—which should be managed very carefully so it is not seen as a way to source extra money if you are not managing your budget properly—to allow some flexibility at the local level. There is no doubt in my mind since I have lived here that people who live and work in this environment have a much better understanding of what the requirements are. They are much better connected and they are more able to get leverage as a consequence of that.

During the forum discussions over the last few days I have referred to partners in prosperity. We have a commitment, a sign-off, from the two chambers, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chambers of Minerals and Energy, and us, and they can come into that and be players if we have that flexibility. And there is another organisation we have in Kalgoorlie which is unique, and that is called Investing in Our Community. That is a whole-of-community organisation that is chaired by Esther Roadnight, who happens to be a councillor on the Kalgoorlie-Boulder City council. That is a whole-of-community approach to dealing with the community. It came out of police and justice matters. It was originally the Safer WA committee for the—

Mrs VALE—So it is a grassroots committee. It is coming up—

Mr Fletcher—It is a grassroots committee, and we actually now have what we call heads of agency meetings. People from service providers like Centacare, local government in the case of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, and state and federal government agencies meet around a table once a month and talk about where things are going and take a more strategic approach. But that group does not have any executive powers and it certainly does not have any discretion about incurring expenditure. What tends to happen is that, if an issue is raised, there will be a collective view taken but then it will be given to one agency to take the lead and coordinate. So we get around it but there are better ways of doing it. I think there should be a capacity to set up a discretionary fund, which it is quite clear there has to be full accountability for, to allow people at the local level to make decisions.

Mrs VALE—And perhaps spent on a decision by joint agencies that is an agreed objective. One page 1 of your submission you talk about the cooperation between local, state and federal agencies. We have been told that a key element in the new arrangements in Indigenous affairs will be to listen to local people regarding their concerns and priorities. You have actually established this wonderful committee—what is it called?

Mr Fletcher—It is a reconciliation committee.

Mrs VALE—I know we talk about things coming from grassroots, but have you seen that as a vehicle to put the concerns of your local community to the relevant state and federal ministers?

Mr Fletcher—Yes.

Mrs VALE—I should imagine that, because you speak with a combined voice and because this committee came into existence through a consultative process and is becoming very well known because of this document, you would carry a lot of political weight. To be able to send information up the stovepipe in the other direction, if you like—I would have thought that would be an excellent vehicle for you to get that grassroots message to federal government and to state government.

Mr Fletcher—Most definitely.

Mrs VALE—Have you done that yet? Have you been able to utilise that?

Mr Fletcher—There have been a couple of occasions when we have, but we have not done it as much as perhaps we should have. Another group that we have, which is an informal group, is the mayor's Leadership Group. That comprises the mayor, as chair; the President of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Chair of the Eastern Region Council of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy; the Chairman of the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission, which is the state economic development agency; state and federal members of parliament on both sides of politics; until now, the Chair of the Mulga Mallee Regional Council of ATSIC; and the respective officers, like the CEO of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce. That meets as the need arises. So there is another link there.

Often issues will come out of the Reconciliation Committee which will go up to the full council, and there will be a resolution of council strongly advocating a certain approach. That goes through to state and federal ministers. Alternatively it can be done through the mayor's Leadership Group, which includes Barry Haase, as the member for Kalgoorlie. He actively participates in that. Chatham House rules apply. It is not as though anyone goes out from that meeting and starts to talk to the media. Basically the mayor is the person who speaks. But it is not a formal arrangement. It is one of those things that we deal with.

In fact, when we had the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, when Bill Jonas came over to present his report, it was actually to the mayor's Leadership Group. So there are bodies that speak for the community. I agree with you entirely that when you have the mayor and those community leaders or the Reconciliation Committee of council reporting to the full council and the full council endorsing that resolution, it does carry a lot of weight, because it is actually the voice of the community that is speaking, saying, 'Hey, we want this to happen.'

CHAIR—Can I go to the local government purchasing. I was fortunate enough to hear the conversation just before we came here about, if you like, the statutory requirement or preference of local government or a particular level of government to give bias, to encourage. Can you remind us of what Kalgoorlie-Boulder do. In the tender process, I understand, there is a 10 per cent tolerance or something like that.

Mr Fletcher—Is this the city you are talking about?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Fletcher—The city is subject to tender regulations, which are no different to the policy that the federal government has. We tend to piggyback off the state tender regulations, but there are regulations which are associated with the Local Government Act. In these regulations it makes it very clear that there is a weighting—I think it is, from memory, 10 per cent—for local content. Let us say it is a building job and we want some change rooms built. If it is under $50,000, three quotes are required. If it is over $50,000 then you actually have to go out to tender. In getting the three quotes if it is under $50,000 or if a tender is drawn up and people respond to a tender, one of the components is: is this a local contractor? If that is the case, they get a 10 per cent weighting in their favour. The potential does exist for contractors to indicate whether they have Indigenous people employed by them, for them to give an outline of that and for that to be taken into account. As I mentioned at the forum—

Mrs VALE—You do not have a weighting for that at the moment?

Mr Fletcher—No, not at all. The only thing we have it for is local content preference to encourage you, if you are able to, to use local goods and services rather than for those having to come from Perth or interstate. As you may be aware, I am going to work for BHP-Billiton next year as the vice president of government relations for Western Australia. In the Pilbara, BHP-Billiton Iron Ore have a very clear policy which says that contractors must indicate whether they have some Indigenous employees. We talked about it this morning. As a general guide, six per cent of the population in Kalgoorlie-Boulder happen to be Indigenous, so we say: 'Let's have that as a goal we aspire to. At least six per cent of our employees should be Indigenous.' That is what BHP-Billiton have done in the Pilbara. I suspect that Rio have probably done the same thing with Pilbara Iron. So it is possible. It is already being done in a commercial environment.

As we saw yesterday, if you look at an organisation like Brambles Industrial Services, there was an Indigenous person who started off being trained to be a crane operator. Then he bought his own crane. Now he has got a very successful business. So I can see that. When Daniel Tucker from Carey Mining made reference to that, I thought there was a lot of merit in that. That is the way you are actually going to demonstrate that you are very serious about what you are doing, and it will encourage you. There is an incentive there for contractors to start looking very seriously at taking on some Indigenous employees.

CHAIR—Can I try to sum that up? The aim is that the six per cent pertain to the actual local region?

Mr Fletcher—Yes.

CHAIR—Has that been reached here?

Mr Fletcher—We are moving towards it. We did reach it, but then we have had people go.

CHAIR—It is around the mark?

Mr Fletcher—From memory, the 2001 census said the Indigenous population is about 5.7 per cent of the total. So we round up to six per cent. Of course, the national average I think is about 2.9 per cent. We are about double that. Pilbara Iron talked about 15 per cent yesterday, so it is

higher in the Pilbara than it is here. Of course, you always have to be a bit cautious about the ABS census.

CHAIR—I was just going to ask you about that, because of the movement of population. Would you like to enlarge on that?

Mr Fletcher—We are the regional centre for an area which probably covers about a million square kilometres. The Goldfields-Esperance region goes from Esperance in the south out to the South Australian-Northern Territory border, up to Wiluna, which is 600 kilometres to our north, and then out to the Shire of Yilgarn, which is 200 kilometres to our west. In between you have the Shire of Coolgardie and now also the Shire of Ravensthorpe, which is where BHP Billiton's $1.4 billion Ravensthorpe nickel project is.

This is the centre to which there is a relationship. This is where the major discount department stores are, this is where the courthouse is and this is where the hospital is. So you have a lot of people coming here, particularly from the north of the region. We have a Target discount department store. For people in Southern Cross, it is quicker for them to come 200 kilometres to the east than it is to go 400 kilometres to the west. We are starting to see that pattern.

So you have a lot of Indigenous people coming here for health reasons, to visit relatives in jail, but also to catch up in terms of purchasing things. There is quite a population that moves through. There was a migratory pattern from South Australia across to Kalgoorlie and then back again well before European settlement. That is the Spinifex and Maralinga people originating in Ceduna basically. Brian Champion is married to someone who comes from that part of the world—one of the Spinifex people, I think. Then you have the Ngaanyatjarra lands, which goes out from Warburton out that way towards Alice Springs. So you do have a population that moves through. That is the nature of Aboriginal people—they tend to move on.

CHAIR—Do you have much of a debate with other agencies about what your population really is and the allocation of resources? I suppose that comes up.

Mr Fletcher—Yes, continually. One of the issues there, of course, is fly-in, fly-out, because we do have a fly-in, fly-out work force. If you go to Kalgoorlie airport you will see buses lined up. People get off the Qantas flight or the Skywest flight, jump on the bus and go out to a mine site. The other thing that the mayor always says, which is very true, is that we have a housing boom on at the moment—more houses and units are being built—yet all the old ones are still occupied. That says something. The ABS census in 2001 said we have a population of 28,000. Our estimate is that it is probably around 35,000. It has increased again, because at that stage—

CHAIR—You also made a comment about the significant movement of people; there is a turnover.

Mr Fletcher—It is estimated that a third of the population turns over every year. That is just the nature of mining. You know what the mining industry is like—you might be here today and tomorrow you could be up in Queensland, Papua New Guinea, South Africa or South America. That is how mining works globally.

CHAIR—We need to get an understanding of the great variation, perhaps the inaccuracy, and need to make sure that there is some kind of reasonable measurement in allocation. Can I just go back to that six per cent of the work force. The contractors have that capacity. Would you have an estimate about how much business locals would get?

Mr Fletcher—It would be hard to say, but clearly there is the potential there. And, in evaluating a quotation or a tender, it is not a mandatory thing. At the end of the day—

CHAIR—You have the option.

Mr Fletcher—you factor that in and say, 'Okay, I've looked at that,' but you look at the service they are going to offer or the product they are going to provide. It is actually raising the consciousness that you are not ignoring that. People have to go through that process.

CHAIR—I will just stretch it to something that I think Carey Mining really encapsulates. You would outsource some of your services?

Mr Fletcher—Yes.

CHAIR—You would have private contractors doing some of your work. It seems like a great opportunity. And do you have the odd Indigenous contractor working for council?

Mr Fletcher—No, we do not have an Indigenous contractor.

CHAIR—I will just go to two things. You would have heard my comments about education, and they came out through the last 2½ days.

Mr Fletcher—Yes.

CHAIR—I do not underestimate how tough it is. I say this every time this comes up, whether it is the department or whoever it is. But I do agree with the general principle that government has that responsibility, and government has not fulfilled that responsibility. It alarms me to think that the community sector ends up picking it up, whether it is the Polly Farmer Foundation or whatever. There are all sorts of mechanisms that people are trying to use to tidy up something where the job just has not been done. It is not your area, but I thought from the Churchill Fellowship—and I suspect there is some stuff in there as well on similar kinds of issues. I know there is. Could you just give us a quick comment about education? It is really from your broader experience, I think, as much as from your role as the city's chief executive.

Mr Fletcher—Education holds the key. I share the view that came through very strongly over the last few days: you really have to start at primary school. There is no evidence that I can see where we are actually starting to target kids in primary school. We do with anti-tobacco messages and environmental issues, but in this area there is a need to start at that level, and I do not see anything in the curriculum that says, 'This is one of the areas you should be looking at.'

CHAIR—Ian, I put it to you that this is classic government. This is generally a state bureaucracy with the Commonwealth nibbling around in there somewhere.

Mr Fletcher—Yes.

CHAIR—It seems to me that this just needs a total rethink. This is not just giving it a valve grind and putting it back; this is about totally creating something different here. It needs something radical to shock the boots off something to make it happen. For example, I think Mrs Vale was with us in Alice Springs with the Alice Springs Desert Park people, and a young Aboriginal woman said to us, 'Can't we actually say that the Aboriginal families should not get the welfare benefit unless those children are going to school?' That was not us promoting that. You would recall that.

Mrs VALE—She actually wrote to me afterwards.

CHAIR—Yes, that is right. I remember we went into some depth, and Mrs Vale, as she said, received correspondence on it. Perhaps you saw on the front page of the *Australian* this morning the endeavours to try and challenge this. Was there anything in Canada that came out? I want to wrap it up on that; I do not want to bog down on it, but it seems to me to be so critical.

Mr Fletcher—What I saw of education was that there was an emphasis with First Nation communities in their communities. It is a little bit different in the sense that the climatic environment is colder. Really, they have similar issues, and I do not think they are any further advanced with respect to education from what I could see. But I will say that people laughed at the idea of 'no school, no pool'. I remember that it was actually Kim Hames who was the—

CHAIR—Yes, I remember this debate, over the last 10 years.

Mr Fletcher—Yes, Dr Kim Hames, who was the then minister for Indigenous affairs in the government of Richard Court, the coalition government of Western Australia, came and spoke to me when I was Richard Court's chief of staff. It is a simple but very effective program, and in fact it has proven to be very effective. There are health benefits from those kids going into a pool with chlorine and all that sort of thing. So it is simple things like that which actually serve a very useful purpose.

Mrs VALE—But you can show where it is working, Ian. Miriam Baumann is up there in the Roper River—I cannot remember the Aboriginal name for the mission; do you know it?

CHAIR—No, I cannot remember.

Mrs VALE—It is an old mission site. She is a fully fledged educator in her own right. Do you know Miriam Baumann?

Mr Fletcher—No, I do not.

Mrs VALE—She is a brilliant woman. She must be about 6-foot tall—I have never seen such a big Aboriginal woman; she is huge. She is a woman of amazing presence, a very powerful presence. The pool is fenced off and all those children have got a stamp they have to show, but she is in control. Not only that, she is teaching other Aboriginal women to be teacher assistants and teacher educators. It is just fantastic to see what she is doing, and it is working.

Mr Fletcher—Absolutely. I must say, dealing with Aboriginal people in this part of the world, they understand parameters. I think non-Indigenous people tend to be quite patronising. If you deal with Indigenous people as equals and talk to them just as you talk to anyone else, not in a patronising way, they are terrific people to work with. They understand the framework.

CHAIR—You mentioned the prison. Once again, it is outside your brief, but I am mindful of the wonderful body of knowledge from Canada and the Churchill Fellowship. We know the figures. You would know the figures as well as I do—two or three per cent and 20 to 25 per cent incarceration rates. I hear that a lot of these young people are in there with basic breaches of licence and this sort of thing. I think we have very good or much improved diversionary programs for drugs, for example, in this country. Yet we have not been able to do that in this regard. This is a state area, but being close to the management of it and working with some of the people, could you give us your view?

Mr Fletcher—Sure. I do have a direct involvement, because I am a Justice of the Peace. Once a month I sit on the bench on a Saturday morning and 95 per cent of the cases I hear involve Indigenous people. Those cases will be related to excessive alcohol consumption/antisocial behaviour or, as you say, motor vehicle or driving offences. When you get the charge sheet and the summary and you look at their findings, it is like a meter ticking away. It reaches the threshold and then of course they go into jail. It is totally inappropriate. We are very fortunate: we have a resident magistrate here by the name of Dr Kate Auty. Dr Auty came from Shepparton in Victoria. She was involved with the Koori Court. She has been here for just over 12 months now. To her credit, she wants to pursue that. My understanding is that the Western Australian Attorney-General, Mr Jim McGinty, is keen to have that move forward. There is still some re-offending and people still re-offend, but the level of recidivism in Shepparton—I would not want to be held to the figure—is about 75 per cent less than what it used to be.

CHAIR—I am familiar with the Shepparton example.

Mr Fletcher—It actually works. It is intimidating for anyone, but you are sitting up on the bench looking down on a person who in many instances may have English as their second language; they come in from the lands, they have had a skinful of grog and they have urinated on the street or something like that. Okay, it is an offence and the police have to do their job, and they do it very well. But you know the person is in a completely foreign environment—it is almost as though they have landed on the moon. The Aboriginal Legal Service does an excellent job, but it is time that we got past that. A lot of resources go into putting them into jail overnight, bringing them across. At the end of the day, they are not really serious offences. I think there is a lot of room to do things in that area.

Looking at it from the other point of view, where people do get incarcerated for those sorts of offences, if we can start to develop more constructive programs and assist in partnership to give those people some basic skills and they can go back to their communities and use those skills, the observation we have made is that you really need to have a cohort. There is no sense in giving one individual prisoner some basic skills if, when they go back to where they came from, there is no-one else with them. If there is a group of them they can share in that experience together and support each other.

I think it is totally inappropriate that in the current system we put people into jail for what are really traffic offences. Also, as was discussed over the last few days, getting a driver's licence is quite a complex process. It is not as though the manual is one or two pages long. It is quite a complex document. Then you have to do the driving test. Someone I have a great deal of admiration and respect for—and I mentioned it at the forum—is Mr Ron Harris, who is a founder of Harris Technology. He is doing some very exciting stuff out in the Ngaanyatjarra lands, where he has developed computer templates—

CHAIR—I am glad you are putting that in the *Hansard*; that reminds me.

Mr Fletcher—He was the founder of Harris Technology, which is now owned by Coles Myer, but he retained a lot of the software intellectual property that he has developed. He actually develops computer based learning templates, but he gets the Ngaanyatjarra people to speak in Ngaanyatjarra language, so they can look on the screen and they can learn what the rules of the road are. We are working with the local Department for Planning and Infrastructure, with the Goldfields regional manager, to get that up in the Ngaanyatjarra lands out at Warburton. It is very exciting. If you put it in simple language that people can understand, it is not intimidating. We are very confident that, subject to meeting the requirements of the Road Traffic Act, we will see people getting licences. At the moment it is just so foreign to them that they will never get them. Then of course they want to come to town. They drive, they are unlicensed and they drive an unregistered vehicle. You have a double whammy and yet it can be addressed.

CHAIR—There could be an issue of registration there somewhere.

Mr Fletcher—Yes. Mr Harris lives in Kirribilli in Sydney and he does get down to Canberra quite often. He is a very passionate person about these issues. I think there is much wider application in terms of educating and training in remote communities using computer based learning.

CHAIR—There is another issue in there in terms of—and I will not go into it now—the accident rate, the fatality rate and all that sort of stuff, which is quite severe. I must go to Mrs Vale because we are going to run out of time.

Mrs VALE—Thank you very much for your input and your vital leadership. Obviously you have been a pivot, from what I can observe. I want to go back to Miriam Rose Baumann. I think we have all agreed that education is the key. It opens the door. It does not matter who you are. Miriam is a Master of Education. I will never be her equal. I could just stand back and look at her in awe, but so does everyone else who meets her, whether she sits down with the local police commissioner of the state, the Administrator in the Northern Territory or senior government officials. She is a woman of great power and leadership. But this is where education is the great leveller. Knowledge really is power. You can see it in a remote Aboriginal community with this woman who is leading her community, and leading them in education. And not just that: you come to her community in an aircraft; everything is desert and this is a little oasis of green. Everyone has their own house and they are all looked after. The lawns are actually sprinkled to keep the dust down. That is why they have grass. She is just so practical. This is where knowledge is power, and she has it.

Mr Fletcher—It is, yes.

Mrs VALE—It is absolutely awesome. Having said that, when we talk about education, do you have a problem here with Indigenous children attending school and keeping up their attendances?

Mr Fletcher—Yes, there are. But I think it is also worth noting that East Kalgoorlie Primary School is basically an all-Indigenous primary school, and the principal is an Indigenous person. She is quite outstanding—very similar in her role. That is not in a remote community setting, although Ninga Mia, which is the Aboriginal community on the edge of the city, is quite close to East Kalgoorlie Primary School. East Kalgoorlie Primary School is on the east side; it is in an area which is known as Williamstown. But they have started to introduce things for those kids. For instance, they have a thing called the 'make a book' program. They make books at the primary school in the Wongatha language. The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder has been involved in that through the library. You are actually teaching them their own language and their own culture on the way through, and that gives them greater self-esteem, pride and confidence. If you look at secondary school, particularly—more than primary school—you do have higher levels of truancy but there are a number of initiatives being taken. The Eastern Goldfields Senior High School has a middle school campus and a senior school campus. The senior school campus is on the Curtin University campus just around the corner from where we were for the National Reconciliation Forum.

CHAIR—It is very good—

Mr Fletcher—Yes. There is a new principal of the senior school and a new principal of the middle school, and they are very committed to doing things. What they have identified is that for some kids—particularly now you have compulsory secondary education, with the age level being raised from 15 to 17—they are looking at alternative programs. There are some kids who do not want to go down the normal curriculum path.

Mrs VALE—I do not know about you, but I did not. I left school at 14 and could not wait to go. But what are you doing for those kids? Are there trade opportunities or vocational opportunities?

Mr Fletcher—That is what is happening. It is now being recognised, and I must say it is a credit to the director of schools, Mr Larry Hamilton, and to the two principals and the education and training department that they are starting to look at that area and having those linkages for years 11 and 12 where you have the transition to apprenticeships and so on.

Mrs VALE—I understand that totally.

Mr Fletcher—Of course, in this part of the world there is an incredible shortage of skilled labour, so it makes sense.

Mrs VALE—Yes, absolutely.

Mr Fletcher—And there is a linkage for the senior school. It is on the Curtin university campus, and Curtin university not only takes higher education but also deals with VET, with further education, on the one campus. Certainly there are discussions under way. I should mention the Aboriginal radio station, the studio. Barb McGillvray, the chair of the reconciliation

committee, was explaining today that Lord Forrest Olympic Pool is no longer used as an Olympic pool. We have an indoor leisure and rec centre. But that will be a youth facility. Part of it will be a studio which will be used for the Indigenous radio station and also for recording. That will become part of Curtin university's VET curriculum. So kids can go there—whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous; it does not matter. That is all part of it. It is getting away from your traditional sort of very formal education to where kids learn but can have fun. Certainly there are moves afoot to look at alternative programs that are more in keeping with what kids who do not want to go through an academic stream want to do. It is early days, but there are things happening.

Mrs VALE—That sounds very promising.

Mr Fletcher—We have a facility at a place called Millen Street which is run by Centrecare as a service provider organisation. That deals with a lot of Indigenous kids. We got a living in harmony grant from the federal government back in 2002 and we did a youth needs analysis. It looked at high-risk Aboriginal kids and what their needs were. The one thing that came through very strongly was that they wanted a place to hang out which they could call their own. An old hostel, which was owned by the state Department for Community Development but was on Aboriginal Lands Trust land, was vacant. They have set it up at Millen Street now; the Indigenous kids down there are going through programs which are giving them considerable confidence and doing great things.

Mrs VALE—You talk about immigration and that a third of the population changes. Is that a third of the total population of Kalgoorlie, a third of the non-Indigenous people or a third of the Indigenous people?

Mr Fletcher—Total population. It is a ballpark estimate.

Mrs VALE—So you have fly in, fly out workers at the mine.

Mr Fletcher—Yes, the fly in, fly out we do not treat as local. Their principal residence is in Perth, and for census purposes they are not counted. This is the local people who live and work here.

Mrs VALE—Then you have the Spinifex people who come on some annual nomadic walk.

Mr Fletcher—Yes, they move through. They move on a cycle. They come across and go back. They are very transient.

Mrs VALE—Thank you, Ian. I think we could talk to you all afternoon but in deference to the chair—

CHAIR—Ian, the last three days have been a pleasure. All the best in the future in your new position, but we are very appreciative of your time today. Thank you.

Mr Fletcher—Could I put on record my thanks to you and to your colleague Danna Vale for putting the effort into coming to the National Reconciliation Forum. As Brian Champion said as chair of the forum, the fact that you were there for the 2½ days and you were listening and made

a great contribution—and Danna Vale being there today—is much appreciated. You are actually out here in a place where there is a 'can do' psyche. Believe you me, if you ask Kalgoorlie to do anything, they will do it.

CHAIR—That is very generous of you.

Mr Fletcher—You have a copy of the summary of all the things we are doing, which may be of some benefit. Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence.

CHAIR—All the best.

[3.00 pm]

CONNORS, Mr Lennis, Community Liaison Officer, Pilbara Iron

McCRUM, Mrs Kellie, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for being with us today. We do not require evidence to be given under oath, but these are legal proceedings of the parliament. Would you like to make a few opening comments?

Mrs McCrum—I have not prepared a formal speech or presentation.

CHAIR—You are probably pretty well practised after the last couple of days.

Mrs McCrum—Pilbara Iron is a member of the Rio Tinto Group. We operate the assets of Hamersley Iron and Robe River. Our mining operations are based in the Shire of Roebourne and the Shire of Ashburton in the north-west of Western Australia, and we have a corporate office in Perth. Some of the communities that are within our areas of operation include Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Pannawonica, Karratha, Roebourne and Wickham.

We have a history of relationships with the Pilbara Aboriginal communities. We have 37 different communities within the areas of our operation, and the relationships that we have built are based on respect and also the provision of practical support. We are in a period of expansion and growth, as you are probably aware, driven by the demand for iron ore in the Chinese market. As such, the expectations and opportunities for Indigenous employment have also grown.

At Pilbara Iron, as a corporate member of community, we take our responsibilities extremely seriously with regards to sustainable development of the communities in which we operate. There are also sound business drivers and reasons, to do with access to land and use of land for our mining and exploration activities, for having good relationships with our local Aboriginal people.

Both Lennis and I work within a unit called ATAL—the Aboriginal Training and Liaison Unit—which was established in 1992 specifically to develop relationships with the local people. We have had 13 years of developing strategies and programs in the Pilbara aimed at increasing both the economic status of the Aboriginal people but also the employment opportunities.

We certainly have the capability to support Indigenous employment, but local Aboriginal people face significant barriers to gaining employment with us. We have been successful, certainly in the past five years and in partnership with the federal government through the STEP contracts program run by DEWR, in providing entry-level employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Probably the main barrier that we have observed is that Indigenous people have a significant disadvantage in fitness for work. As a mining company, we have requirements for the basic level of physical health and fitness for people that are employed with us. At times, this is challenging

for the Indigenous population, who have issues with cardiovascular health, diabetes, drugs and alcohol and numerous other health challenges. Literacy is also a significant issue, and obviously that is related to educational outcomes. The attendance and completion rates of Indigenous people are significantly lower than non-Indigenous people in the Pilbara.

Other issues relate to the availability and affordability of housing in the region, and the difference between the age at which youth are departing the school system and the age at which we may be able to employ them in our organisation—there is a disparity and certainly that is a large proportion of the Indigenous population. That is a period of concern because that is an opportunity for young people potentially to become disengaged both from school and from employment in the labour force.

In summary, our programs have been most successful when we have partnered with other organisations—whether they are government agencies, non-government organisations, schools or community groups—to deliver programs. We have been successful when we have taken an individual approach to supporting individuals in our business and providing them with the support that they need both inside work and outside of work, particularly over the first six months of employment. We have been successful when we have been able to provide mentoring support where there has become a critical mass of Indigenous people, maybe within a team, and when we have also provided good cultural awareness to provide a supportive environment for them to come into. So we provide a number of educational programs for our broad work force. We provided education for our supervisors and superintendents. There are also numerous programs available for our senior leaders and management. I think that concludes my opening remarks. I am happy to take questions.

CHAIR—Thank you. Lennis, do you want to say a few words? I enjoyed what you had to say in the forum. Would you like to have just a couple of words on it?

Mr Connors—I agree with what Kellie says. From my point of view, obviously being an Indigenous person in the company, over the years I have seen a lot of changes for the better starting in the company. I was the only Indigenous person out at Marandoo for the first couple of years, and back then native title was a big uncertainty. There were a lot of issues in the work force itself. I faced a lot of problems because people did not understand where I was coming from and what my values were. Since then, ATAL has obviously grown in its size and moved inland. The support networks they are able to provide now and being a part of that have made a big difference to the whole company culture in terms of an understanding of Aboriginal people and the people themselves being confident now that they have people here who they can go and talk to and who will help them out. So, from an Aboriginal point of view, an Indigenous employee's point of view, I am happy with the way the company is going. We are certainly heading in the right direction. Like Kellie said, there are lots of programs in place and it is up to the individuals themselves to take those opportunities. I am certainly happy with the way the company is going and I certainly support what they are doing.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I go to the disengaged part. Just remind me of those ages and some of those issues, because it is pretty basic, isn't it; it is pretty fundamental?

Mrs McCrum—We engaged a gentleman called John Taylor from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University to gather some information

about the local demographics. I think a lot of information he gathered was probably based on the 2001 census, but when looking at the age profile of the Indigenous population there is an overwhelming predominance of population between the ages of five and 14. So, I guess from that we can draw the conclusion that the next 10 years are crucial, in terms of keeping those students engaged in school so that they gain the literacy and numeracy requirements they might need, they gain positive work experience and they can participate responsibly in society, so that in 10 years time they can be considered the future employees of Pilbara Iron or any other organisation in the Pilbara.

It is early days, but some unique work is happening at the moment. More recently, we have been meeting and collaborating with the teachers at Roebourne High School. They are looking at a program to address issues of retention for high school students in years 9, 10, 11 and 12. Many students will leave school at early ages or their attendance will be very poor. That program looks at providing a more relevant school program for those years. It looks at building into those years periods of paid work experience. It is hoped that the pay received for those periods of work experience will exceed would be gained on CDEP so that it becomes more attractive for the student to participate in school based learning than perhaps to leave school and move on to a CDEP program.

That will also involve things like helping students to gain their drivers licence—obviously at the legal age. But the teachers cite experiences where students often drive without licences. Then they get picked up by the police, are fined and are not able to pay their fines. So the cycle continues and they are not able to get their licence. So there is a cycle also with the issue of drivers licences.

CHAIR—Let me be clear. The schools are you referring to are those where you have your operations predominantly.

Mrs McCrum—Yes.

CHAIR—It is important to have good relationships with your community and with your school. You heard what I said about it really not being fair that the community has to do what it has to do. But that is irrelevant, because it is where we are at. Could you just take us through how you collaborate—I have heard some examples of how you might do it—and how you develop the relationship? What do you think might most assist our education system? This is where we get into dangerous waters. You work with it all the time. What might help our education system?

Mrs McCrum—Our experience so far has been that we provide practical and, in some cases, some financial support to the schools or teachers looking to implement programs that we think might have a good chance of succeeding. I do not have the figures on what that financial contribution is.

CHAIR—We should be able to get those.

Mrs McCrum—We provide practical assistance as well. We participate, for example, in the Gumala Mirnuwarni project, or what is now known as Follow the Dream. That has been picked up by the Polly Farmer Foundation. We participate on a steering committee that helps oversee

the governance of that program. That is our way of being involved in programs and then hopefully closing the gap between school and industry so that, when these students come through, we are able to keep track of their progress more easily and then provide the relevant employment or training opportunities they require when they finish their schooling.

CHAIR—You heard what Cathy Duncan said the day before yesterday about being keen to get in there in years 4 and 5 and have some exposure to these sorts of principles. You would be focusing on secondary school predominantly, or do you tend to do some primary work?

Mrs McCrum—We do some primary work.

Mr Connors—In the Wakathuni community, which is an inland base just out of Tom Price, we have helped to develop an early years program, which concentrates on the zero- to six-year-olds. Basically, it is kids who cannot get into kindy and are learning their ABCs and one, two, threes and that sort of stuff. We find that, by the time they get to school age, they are already far behind the other students who obviously have had access to kindergarten and pre-primary.

Also, as part of the Gumala Mirnuwarni centre, which means 'children's ground of learning', we have a homework centre which concentrates on grade 7 through to year 12. Aside from that, we set up a homework centre in the same place, out of Wakathuni, which solely concentrates on the primary school age children. It is an add-on to a lot of the stuff that they are doing in the schools now, where they are doing a lot of their homework in school hours. The communities in Gumala Mirnuwarni and Pilbara Iron have got together. The community has said, 'We want this for our kids as well, to improve their education skills in primary school level.' Obviously we are finding that a lot of the high school students' levels are still back to grades 3 and 4. Then you put them in the special classes, and the kids perceive those as 'dumb classes'. You get a lot of that happening. So we have developed the homework centre out at Wakathuni.

Through the enrichment centre in Tom Price we are able to provide funding for a coordinator there as well as professional tutors and teachers to give a bit of their time to go out, support the kids with their homework and develop them along. The hard part has been getting tutors to Tom Price. Obviously you do not attract a lot of staff, and the staff we do have need a life after school—they are not always available. We are able to get a few. They do, I think, three days a week out there for an hour and a half a day. So we have those programs set up.

I heard you talking earlier about this other lady doing this other stuff, like getting kids to school. From my point of view, to help with the education process of the kids somehow we have got to get the parents more involved with their children. Inland we are crying out for more male role models. Through our programs we are able to provide premises, and we go and talk to the kids. But there is a need for parents to get more involved. Through our programs we have some parents involved, but there are a lot of kids who go to school whose parents—because the communities breed this function, I suppose—are either drunk or living with somebody else. We need more family and parental support, I think, to improve education levels.

CHAIR—That is first rate. Thank you for that.

Mrs VALE—You have explained some of the situations that you feel give you some success, especially that when you get a critical mass that does help. I can understand that. I think the

people in Alice Springs found the same thing. They would not place, say, one young Aboriginal girl in a shop without having two, because it is just too much pressure on her. What do you see to be the key personal motivators? Have you been able to identify any within the Indigenous people that you can say have been successes? Has there been anything that we, as a government, could try and encourage? Is there something that you have actually got through yourself, then, that you have found a response to?

Mrs McCrum—That is probably something that we could do: ask the people that are working with us a little more about what it is that sustains them in employment. It is probably not something that we have actually done.

Mrs VALE—And you have done so much.

Mrs McCrum—The thing that has been important for us is that the training programs and the entry level employment programs deliver nationally recognised qualifications to these individuals. They are gaining something. They may never have done well at school or completed their TE or done any post school training, but the programs that we offer will see them complete with a certificate II or a certificate III in metallurgy or mining.

Mrs VALE—They get a certificate?

Mrs McCrum—Yes. We are a registered training organisation, so we deliver accredited training. It is a very important part of our programs that they are real qualifications and at completion—

Mrs VALE—There is a sense of achievement for the participants.

Mrs McCrum—Yes. Is there anything else, Lennis, that you have noticed about your employees?

Mr Connors—Some of our employees are fascinated with the big machinery they are operating. For others, money is a big incentive. They are put on pretty good money up there, and that means their lifestyle is good. They are able to afford new cars and get what other people have.

Mrs VALE—It gives them control over their lives.

Mr Connors—Then they have the opportunity to go and see other parts of Australia and other parts of the world. They get to live like everyone else. That is a big reward for a lot of them.

Mrs VALE—Is the fact that a job or the training that will lead to a job will actually give them control over their lives is something that they are told, or is it something that they find out incidentally?

Mr Connors—In my role, I see that a lot when they go through hard times. With a lot of them, it is just a case of supporting their families, and that is what they want to do. In Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal society, you have to understand that there are pressures from other community members.

Mrs VALE—Family commitments and things.

Mr Connors—If you miss funerals and that sort of stuff because of work, that can work against you. Other family members may not understand what you have to go through to have what you have. They are some of the downsides. Most of them get into it and want to do it because they have their own families and they want them to have more than what they had when they were kids. They are looking to the long term and their future comfort, I suppose.

Mrs VALE—Do you have any opportunities or mechanisms whereby you can actually let governments, state and federal, know of your success and how you are achieving, and also of the needs you have? I know you are speaking to us today as a federal government committee but do you have any other mechanisms or opportunities to do that?

Mrs McCrum—We are part of the corporate leaders program. We are a participant in that and that is probably a key forum for us. We are a signatory to a memorandum of understanding on Indigenous employment with the Minerals Council of Australia and the federal government. We recently had a meeting in Perth with a number of federal agencies that came and spoke with us about the issues with and the barriers to employment. So we are quite excited about the collaboration and with the ease of working with different agencies. Hopefully, that will become more streamlined. We have good relationships with DEWR through the fact that we have been closely working with them in providing numerous STEP contracts. They are some examples of our connection to government. I do not know of any others at this stage.

Mrs VALE—If you had your druthers, what would you like to ask the federal government to do to help in the situations and the challenges that you face with Indigenous employment? If you had your druthers, what would you like to say to the government? This is your opportunity. This is going into *Hansard*.

Mrs McCrum—There are some systemic issues to do with CDEP and we have spoken a fair bit about that at the forum over the last couple of days. There is an expectation that that should not be a destination in itself but a means to an end.

As I said in the opening statement, we have the capability to support more job-ready Indigenous people in our work force but the supply of job ready employees is probably not keeping up with the demands that exist in the Pilbara at the moment. We would love to see—and this is something that we spoke about a couple of weeks ago—a bit of a one-stop shop, where there is one simple face of government that coordinates service delivery for Indigenous people and delivers to us people who are work ready and ready to be employed.

Mrs VALE—Without the myriad different government agencies.

Mrs McCrum—That is right.

Mrs VALE—Do you see the ICC fulfilling that role?

Mrs McCrum—I do not know enough about the ICC. I understand that there is an ICC based in Port Hedland at the moment, but I do not have enough understanding about the role of ICCs—

Mrs VALE—So they have not contacted you at all to find out your needs and how they can be there to help and support what you are doing?

Mrs McCrum—They possibly have. Our training manager would have had that contact if that has happened. But I am not aware of anything at this stage.

Mrs VALE—Do you have anything you would like to tell the federal government—that is, that we can put in *Hansard*?

Mr Connors—Certainly from the point of view of our programs, it would be to have a look at the licensing system. I know there are probably reasons why it is as it is today but, from an employment point of view, it is a really grey area for us getting people into our operator training program. I know they are looking at ways of paying fines through pay deductions and that sort of stuff. For the operator training, you need an HR. Unfortunately, with the new laws in place, you need—

Mrs VALE—You said you need an HR.

Mr Connors—It is a heavy rigid licence. It is like the B class in the old format that we used to use in WA.

Mrs VALE—A state government agency would take care of that, wouldn't it?

Mr Connors—I am not sure. I think we have moved to a federal system now, haven't we?

Mrs McCrum—There is a national licensing system, but maybe it is administered by the state government.

Mrs VALE—That is all right; we need to know the challenges.

Mr Connors—All I am suggesting is having a look at that to see if there is any way to make it easy for those going into employment. Maybe there could be conditions put on licences and stuff to help.

Mrs VALE—Are there too many obstacles?

Mr Connors—We are dealing with blokes who have fines and that sort of stuff, so when they go to get a licence, if they have not had their licence—you are looking at from 18-year-olds to anything up to 40-year-olds who have not had a licence—

Mrs VALE—So the fact that they have actually accrued fines for perhaps driving without a licence precludes them from getting a licence if those fines remain unpaid.

Mr Connors—Yes. The other thing is that, if they have not had a licence—

Mrs VALE—They cannot get work.

Mr Connors—Basically, it is one of the criteria, the minimum, for the operator training program or for being an operator. We also take a lot of people in semiskilled jobs. Licensing is a big issue. For instance, getting a licence, you have to hold your P-plates for two years and you have to get 25 hours of practical driving before you can get your C class. Then it is another year before they are able to get their HR licence. So there is a three-year period there. Then they can come onto our program. So they obviously have to be over 21 and hold their HR for a year before they get an HC, which is for semis and so on, to cart around some of the earthmoving equipment that we use. I know it is a big issue with accidents and fatalities around Australia, but there has to be some way that we can put these guys through so they can get their licence.

Mrs VALE—If that is the only thing that is preventing them from being employed, is there any way that, say, a government agency could pay their fines for them and have the money taken back out of their salaries? Or would Pilbara Iron do that? How many people are in this position? There are lots of people, are there?

Mr Connors—We take on 24. There are 24 positions. It goes for about 12 to 18 months depending on their experiences, and we stagger the release of them because we obviously have to keep the skills base up to do a lot of the work we are doing with them.

Mrs VALE—I was just wondering if it would be possible for the company to actually pay the fines for them and get them taught or get them skilled up on their licensing—

Mr Connors—We used to do that but—

Mrs VALE—and then have the money they owe taken out of their salary.

Mr Connors—We used to do that but, unfortunately, with the change in the system, it is a long period. If they have not got a licence for a three-year period, they are just too much for us.

Mrs VALE—Oh, is it? Okay.

Mrs McCrum—Probably the other critical area is literacy training for people that have already left school but do not have access to literacy programs.

Mrs VALE—Is there any adult literacy program that is available?

Mrs McCrum—For example, in Tom Price, there is not. The TAFE have got some capacity to do it, but at times their ability to respond as needed might be limited—

Mrs VALE—By their funding.

Mrs McCrum—Yes.

Mrs VALE—So it would be a positive initiative to establish adult literacy classes?

Mrs McCrum—Yes, absolutely, ones that are suited to Aboriginal people, that are designed for that purpose. I think the other thing is, as I mentioned before, collaboration. For example, we have the fitness for work issues with health, but there is no one place to refer people to. We often

have job applicants that do not meet the requirements; they might fail a drug and alcohol test or they might be overweight or have cardiovascular issues. There is no one entity that can help that person to get the help that they need. They might have to go to three or four different agencies.

Mrs VALE—This is very much like what the previous witness was saying about the silos of agencies and very little cross-referencing.

Mrs McCrum—Yes.

Mrs VALE—And in this area you really do need something where there is more cross-referencing and that is more flexible.

Mrs McCrum—Yes.

Mrs VALE—That is going to be a challenge for administration, because, as you know, governments are huge administrative bureaucracies and they actually work and roll on on a broad-brush basis. Sometimes, to get down to individuals, it can take a different mind-set to bring in a new structure that does that. Maybe we are just going to have to learn to be creative and use your kind of organisation to deliver that, but maybe the governments could actually support you better in what we do.

Mrs McCrum—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you. Going back to the one-stop shop idea—and we could spend a lot of time on that—

Mrs VALE—Yes, it is a good idea.

CHAIR—I was going to remind you of what John Alexander, a fellow forum person of the last two or three days, said. I have never had to use a Job Network provider, but it just seems such a basic thing that there should be a corporate way of managing this to deal with the corporate people. It does not seem logical that a system is not able to cope with that relatively simply, if you are talking about service delivery and client focus, consumer focus or basic customer service.

I wanted to try and draw out something, if you could help. We are all very polite about it and we deal with each other as politely as we can, and may that always be the case. But government is different, as Mrs Vale was saying, towards corporate entities and towards individuals. What do you notice most fundamentally, coming from a well-respected corporation like Rio Tinto, when you go and talk to government—and we will not even name a department, to be fair to them. What is the main difference? You have targets and you have particular things to do. What is the main difference? It is a tough question.

Mrs McCrum—It is a hard question. We have certainly been successful and hope to be even more successful, because we have very clearly defined targets and key performance indicators, and they affect people's performance and their pay at the end of the day at all levels of the organisation. Our organisation is still hierarchical, but maybe there are fewer levels and it is easier to communicate between the different levels. Sometimes we might communicate with

people from agencies in the Pilbara who are at one level but are not able to actually make the decisions that need to be made or say, 'Yes, we're going to do this' or 'I can give you this funding.' They have to defer to someone else in Perth or in Canberra. That is an additional level of communication and time.

CHAIR—The critical thing, as you are probably sensing with me, is that you know and we do not. You know what you sense.

Mrs VALE—You need delegation. You need to get delegated authority a lot closer to the coalface.

CHAIR—More important to me, I need to understand what you feel would make it work better and what would relate to your culture, if you like, more than their culture. I got a clear impression from a wonderful young woman this morning who did a great job of explaining it. However, as we all commented anecdotally afterwards, it was pretty much an own goal. She said that there was not very much paperwork—only 10 pages! Most of us thought, 'Hang on, that's too much paper.' She was a terrific person and a great officer, but she could not see that 10 pages was probably too much—it was not relating to that audience, in my view.

Mrs VALE—She did not think it was too much at all and she said so.

CHAIR—Exactly. We have to call it for what it is, because you people at the end of the day deliver. We have a responsibility to remind our departments that they have the same responsibility. That is what I am endeavouring to understand, with no disrespect to anyone, because I do not think our departments understand that well enough. I have met with other officers from your organisation, and one officer in particular—one of your leaders—made the comment that we have become very skilled in patience. Does that ring a bell?

Mrs McCrum—Yes.

CHAIR—I want to ask about ATAL, and I want to try and blend it with culture. Could I get an understanding of cultural difference, so we can all perhaps understand a little better what we are dealing with. I think we need to understand it better. What does it mean and what does ATAL try to do in that liaison?

Mr Connors—It is about understanding the people's culture in terms of inner skin groups and how the communities work and understanding the impact of a non-Indigenous male going to an Aboriginal lady and how that affects the community, the home life and that person. They are not very open to talking to non-Indigenous people if they do not know them. It is about knowing how the other community works. Where do you start with culture? I could sit down and talk about it all day. It is about understanding the extent of the obligations of extended families and how they play a role. In most companies they concentrate on immediate families, but for an Aboriginal person his immediate family is his brother's kids, his sister's kids and his mother's brother and it goes on and on. It is about knowing the skinship system and how it works and knowing how they must respect people in their community—for instance, an Aboriginal man cannot talk to his mother-in-law. An Aboriginal man has more than one mother-in-law. It is about knowing certain behaviours that are required, say, in a room like this; knowing why he is turning

and looking the other way or why he is talking through this person to tell that person—the indirect talk and that sort of stuff.

Mrs VALE—What do you mean when you say an Aboriginal man has more than one mother-in-law?

Mr Connors—It is not that I have a lot of wives. My skin group means that I am a Bunaga man. In Aboriginal society you are born into a position and that skin colour gives you that position. That tells you who you are related to, how you relate to that person and who you can marry and so on.

Mrs VALE—Is the position decided by the elders?

Mr Connors—No. It is decided by your mother's skin colour. The reason it is your mother's skin colour is that in Aboriginal society the mother is the one true parent.

Mrs VALE—Yes, I understand. Everyone knows who your mother is.

Mr Connors—Everyone knows who your mother is; fathers can jump the fence.

Mrs VALE—I understand that Jewish culture is very much the same.

Mr Connors—Yes. So it is knowing the dynamics of that, I suppose. It is knowing, when you are talking to Aboriginal people, the effects of staring at them over the table into their eyes, which can be threatening and disrespectful. For most Aboriginal people, when they are staring each other down is normally when the situation is pretty serious and they are having a pretty heated exchange or argument or something like that. We teach people to understand that when they are talking to Aboriginal people they should sit alongside each other or jump in the car and go for a drive rather than sitting over the table. It is the same when a man does it to a woman—it can have sexual connotations. An Aboriginal person at work might do something really good in their work. If you are in the smoko room and you say, 'Well done! Good job, mate,' he will take it the wrong way and feel that you are shaming him in front of all his people.

Mrs VALE—Even though you are complimenting him?

Mr Connors—Even though you are complimenting him. We would encourage people to go up to him quietly when they saw him alone and say: 'You know that job you did over there? You did a good job with that.' Understanding those small things make a big difference when you are dealing with Aboriginal people.

Mrs McCrum—The ATAL unit and concept that Pilbara Iron has developed has been successful because it has tried to understand the communities and the people. We have archaeologists that go out with the elders and do heritage surveys. We bring in representatives from the claimant groups and talk to them about how we are going in terms of meeting our obligations under native title agreements. We get them involved in a group training scheme to give feedback on how our training and employment programs are going. We have tried to develop this relationship based on trying to understand what the community needs, treating them with respect and providing practical support.

Mrs VALE—Are the traditions that Lennis has explained all taught in a cultural awareness way to the non-Indigenous employees of Pilbara, including the high levels of management?

Mrs McCrum—They are. We do a number of levels of training or induction. In terms of the formal programs, we have a cross-cultural training program that is delivered by a local Indigenous man. He will bring into that training a number of elders from the local groups. They will be there providing support and talking about their experiences. We provide training for supervisors and superintendents. Importantly, our senior leaders, from the managing director to our general managers and other senior management—and I think they did this in about April this year—go out camping overnight with a group of the local elders. They spend the night with them out bush and they talk about issues. I think this year it was with regards to leadership.

Mr Connors—Basically, there is no set agenda. They get to talk about what they feel they want to talk about. That ranges from the cross-cultural stuff through to drugs and everything that happens in the community—what the problems are and that sort of stuff. Our cross-cultural training also covers a lot of the recent history—the dog licences, citizenship rights and all that sort of stuff, the pearling industry, the pastoral industry and the mining boom. It gives the people in the business an idea and understanding of what people went through, where they are at now and what they suffered to get there. It gives them an indication and a bit of an eye-opener about what Aboriginal people went through over the years, right up until 30 years ago. Thirty years ago, one of the old men who worked and lived in the country got shipped to Onslow. He went back looking for a job in the sixties and was put in jail for three months. It was a closed town back then, and all that sort of stuff. Thirty-five years ago is not very long ago. People need to know that those things happened so that they can appreciate some of the people and issues now and can help with the way forward.

Mrs VALE—How long has this ATAL unit been operating?

CHAIR—Since 1992.

Mrs McCrum—Approximately 13 years.

Mr Connors—All of our programs are done with consultation with Aboriginal people. We go and consult them before we start the program so that they have an idea and have input into what is being done. They are given some sort of ownership of it. That plays a big part in their participation in it.

Mrs VALE—You have these discussions with the 37 different communities within your reach?

Mr Connors—There are not 37. There are 37 in the Pilbara. There is a misunderstanding there. There are 37 discrete communities in the Pilbara. We deal with four inland communities and probably four or five on the coast. At a rough estimate there are probably 10 communities including Pannawonica and Onslow. We deal with people in Onslow and even in Hedland, because obviously their homelands are where our mine sits. We are dealing with people in those towns as well because their family ties and cultural connections are back where the Tom Price region is—the area of Paraburdoo, Yandicoogina and West Angelas—so they have ties to there.

Mrs VALE—Is your role within the unit as liaison officer?

Mr Connors—Yes, basically. I am the Indigenous support person. 'Community liaison officer' is my title. I go around to all of the inland sites to catch up with the Indigenous workers. With shift rosters and so on I sometimes get to see them monthly or every two months. It depends on the rosters they are working. We are getting a few in now, so it is getting a bit harder, I suppose. We are looking at maybe increasing the support workers. Basically, it is just a support person for them and for their supervisors. I let the supervisors know when different events are happening in the community. Going into the summer period, we have our law and culture period so I let the supervisor know what is happening and who might be affected. I let them know who might have to get a bit of time off because meetings or funerals are happening in certain communities. I tell them who is related and how they are related and that sort of stuff. I just help them on the communication side with their supervisors.

Mrs VALE—Do Indigenous families understand too that, if a supervisor is planning some production, they really need to know if their people are not going to be able to be there? Is that an understanding too as part of the liaison?

Mr Connors—The way that funerals, for instance, work in the Pilbara and around a lot of the Aboriginal communities is that normally a funeral would be planned in non-pension week or a week where everybody is getting their dole or pension or whatever so that other family members from other communities can come. So normally you are looking at a two-week period after a death. Normally after a week they know the funeral arrangements, so they are able to tell the supervisor that there is a funeral at a particular community at a particular time and they have to go to that. That gives them a week to plan around manning levels and that sort of stuff. We have to do a lot of education on that and on communication for the guys as well as how to manage annual leave and stuff.

Mrs VALE—Do you have your licences on these big trucks and everything?

Mr Connors—Yes, I have. I am a boilermaker by trade. I have been working for the company for 11 years. I have been part of the maintenance crew, moving the trucks in and out. I am not an operator but I can drive them in and out of the workshop and that sort of stuff. What I actually do is get on the trucks with them so I am not stopping them from working. I get onto the machines with them and drive around the pit and so on, depending on where they are working.

Mrs VALE—You are obviously literate, Lennis.

Mr Connors—Yes, I have been to school.

Mrs VALE—I know that I am going to run out of time, but I would love to ask you about your success story. You are obviously self-actuated and actually taking on your role in the company.

Mr Connors—I think I have been one of the lucky ones. My mother went to school. She started at 11 and finished at 13. My dad did about five years of schooling. I think the key to my success is family support. I have had quite a bit of support through my parents.

Mrs VALE—So your mother and father supported you in your education?

Mr Connors—Yes, through my apprenticeship and education. I am pretty fortunate in that area. A lot of the kids do not have that. I think that is where a lot of it is breaking down.

CHAIR—A lot of good people are boilermakers—my brother is a boilermaker.

Mrs VALE—Congratulations, Lennis.

CHAIR—Is there anything else you would like particularly like to add?

Mrs McCrum—Thank you for the opportunity in inviting us here to speak with you today. It has been a learning opportunity for Lennis and me. We have enjoyed the chance to tell you a bit about where we come from and some of the programs that we are doing. Thank you very much.

CHAIR—It was our pleasure. We really appreciate your time. You are probably aware that we have spent some time at Weipa with your people there. You call yourselves sister or brother companies. I am not sure what your structure is, but I would guess that the companies come from slightly different backgrounds but are all under the family roof of Rio Tinto.

Mrs McCrum—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

[3.52 pm]

DAVIS, Mr Lester, Manager, Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you care to expand on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Davis—I am here to assist the committee in understanding what we do in Indigenous employment and training.

CHAIR—Would you like to make a few opening comments?

Mr Davis—Yes. I was most impressed with our colleagues from Pilbara, and I could almost say 'ditto' in relation to many of the things. I note that Rio and Newmont are participants in many of the same schemes. I think that that bodes well for the industry. Newmont is part of a larger group. It is part of the Newmont Mining Corporation, which is the world's largest goldminer. In Australia, we operate three mines at the present moment. We have just got rid of one. We have a fourth mine in New Zealand, at Waihi. We have two regional support centres, one in Adelaide and one in Perth, and we employ about 1,000 people.

At the moment, on our best estimate, somewhere between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of our employees are Indigenous people. We have a number of programs that operate, one of which is a cross-cultural awareness program which is very similar to that which you heard about, although I think in our case it is more of an immersive program. We actually take the roles of different family members and other people. It is compulsory for every person to do and for our contractors who come on site. We have a part-contracted work force of about 700 people, so all up there are roughly 1,700 people. We are a part-owner in the Kalgoorlie super pit, as you heard about earlier on from one of the earlier witnesses, although in our case the joint venture is a total of three other organisations making up the Newmont banner, so it is not exactly a tidy 50-50 split, although it tends to work out that way.

I think it is fair to say that, from our managing director in Denver, there are two primary thrusts for our involvement. One is that there is a business case for being involved with the communities and being involved with Indigenous activities, reconciliation programs and all of those sorts of things. There is a business case which is well supported. There is also a values based case. From our president and director, Wayne Murdy, in Denver, right down, that is not a small issue in any way, shape or form. In fact, part of the disposable income of all people down to the most junior leader levels is made up of our values and in the way in which people are evaluated against how they uphold those values. Some of those are acting with integrity, respect and trust. Another one is providing social licence and all the things that go with respect for the environment, safety and of course the communities in which we operate and live. So there are these two cases that are the drivers. I have heard parallels with the previous witnesses, on much the same fronts. I think that is good.

We are also a registered training organisation. No doubt you will ask questions later about education, and I will have our answers on that. But I think also it is fair to say that our senior executives take a very active role in a number of the community activities and industry activities

such as Reconciliation Australia and the mining council initiatives with the federal government at the moment and the ICC and indeed the ways in which we can benefit community is at a local level.

CHAIR—Just take us through that again. It was the Australian government and—

Mr Davis—The ICC. They have formed a memorandum of understanding. Indeed, part of the pilot project that comes out of that is in a number of locations in the Pilbara and the Western Kimberley area. We in fact have three of the pilots in that area—one being Wiluna, the second being Tanami Desert Mine and the third one being the Boddington activity just south of Perth, where we are seeking to open up an existing mine, which will make our fifth in Australia.

I guess I also need to point to people like Christine Charles, whom you may well know. She is currently the chair of that committee within the Minerals Council of Australia and takes an active role. I think that opens up the discussions in terms of the programs we provide. I will happily take questions. I have documents here, but unfortunately I was not aware of the requirements to produce the number that you ask for. I am happy to give you what I have. I think it is your requirement to have one for every person here.

CHAIR—No, that is fine; the staff will work through that. I wonder whether it would be useful to go through the MOU. I have heard it mentioned, but I am not aware of the details. I think I have seen some television coverage. Perhaps you could take me through it. I am not across it.

Mr Davis—It is a memorandum of understanding between the federal government and the ICC. They are one part of it. The Minerals Council of Australia is the second part of it, with the member companies. I will read from the memorandum:

The MOU establishes broad principles to guide activity at the regional level. These principles are:

1. Collaboration and partnership between the parties based on mutual respect.

2. Collaboration and partnership between the parties and Indigenous communities based on shared responsibilities and respect for culture, customs and values.

3. The integration of sustainable development considerations within the MOU partnership decision-making process.

4. Joint commitment to social, economic and institutional development of the communities with which the parties engage.

They are the broad principles of this operation.

CHAIR—Which department and which ministers—do you know?

Mr Davis—I do not know.

CHAIR—We will track that down. We have some work to do there.

Mr Davis—The parties nominated in the document are just the Commonwealth and the Minerals Council of Australia. Of course, the ICC is part of that process.

CHAIR—Mitch Hooke is obviously in the centre of that. I remember Mitch. He was with the Grains Council some 15 years ago, but he is now with the Minerals Council.

Mr Davis—And Peter Coates, the vice-chairman, is a signatory to this agreement, with the other signatories.

CHAIR—That is a bit of homework for me to do, to understand that a bit more.

Mr Davis—The signatories are Senator Vanstone, of course, as the minister at the department of immigration; the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP; the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP; and, of course, the vice-chairman, Peter Coates. They are the signatories to that document, so that will give you the departments, obviously.

CHAIR—Yes; that is something for us to do. I turn now to education. It is something that I have been asking for years but have never really got a satisfactory answer on. We know that it has got to operate within the federation, et cetera, and it is a state responsibility, and there are all sorts of reasons. But you heard what I said before—that essentially, it seems to me, there has got to be some innovation; there has got to be a better way here, somewhere. And I would welcome your comments on the subject. Is there anything obvious to you? When you get to these tough issues, just about everyone has been there, haven't they? They have had a crack at it. But I would like to hear your views on education, I guess, for starters.

Mr Davis—I have been involved with this organisation and with others. My own observation is that there seems to be a lack of where it takes people. In the communities that I have had involvement with, education does not seem to have a connection with an outcome. In a Western society, your education has an outcome in terms of employment and skills acquisition and those things. Within the communities in which we operate, employment is very, very low. It is almost like you are doing it just for the sake of doing it.

CHAIR—Because you have to, or because you should—

Mr Davis—The parents and the elders know that education is the key to it, but the young people do not see any tangible evidence that it takes them anywhere. Some of the programs that you have enunciated, that get young people into schools—such as the swimming pools program or other similar ones—have a good outcome. And there are other models around Australia, like the Cherbourg activities and similar, that do have tangible outcomes. People go into apprenticeships, they build their own homes, they sustain their own communities and they can see the immediate benefits.

Wherever we have been, and certainly in my previous work, we have always looked to try and make one dollar do two jobs. So if you get a federal road grant, you turn it into a training program; you build the roads, people learn the skills and acquire outcomes. If you have it around a mine site, you tag it to employment outcomes, or something tangible that serves as a model. That is not always easily seen in some of the places that you go to.

CHAIR—That is as good response as I have had. You have got to have an outcome; you have got to be going somewhere.

Mr Davis—The people who go into it have got to see an outcome. The young people have got to see that it takes them somewhere and does something for them.

CHAIR—I turn now to the Indigenous organisations. The new ones: the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, Indigenous coordination centres—are they words you are familiar with? Have you had much contact with them and how do you think it is going?

Mr Davis—It is early days. I think the runs have got to be seen as yet, and we have got to work to produce those. I guess it is fair to say that we are still doing a lot of good work with some of the older institutions, such as the land council. We do a lot of work through the Central Land Council. We get great responses from that and great cooperation. So I guess there are horses for courses, if I can put it that way—that where we have found an ability to work with a partner and achieve results, we have put a lot of energy into those. Some of the newer ones, of course, are just that—new and yet untried.

Mrs VALE—You were waiting to answer some questions on education, Lester. What would you like us to know, and what would you like to have recorded in *Hansard*? You said that you have already targeted relevance—

Mr Davis—I think you will see—of the people who have come before you so far, previous to me—at least Rio Tinto, and others that you will meet, become registered training organisations in their own right.

Mrs VALE—Yes, because the education is not relevant.

Mr Davis—Because it has not been there. You have to go and do it yourself in order to get the results that you want. I think that points to an anomaly in the system. If all these organisations are going to become private training providers, why is it so?

Mrs VALE—Yes; good point.

Mr Davis—The existing institutions do not operate 12-hour shifts and nine-to-five activities. They are not able to respond to you at a phone call's notice. They have different agendas. And so the mix between industry and the providers, the ones that government operate, are not terribly helpful, I would suggest. There are roles though.

Mrs VALE—But, Lester, hasn't it always been the case that industries usually provide the training, either with apprenticeships or on-the-job training?

Mr Davis—Absolutely. I have been in the mining industry a long time and a training developer in the mining industry for a long time.

Mrs VALE—It happens with non-Indigenous people too, doesn't it?

Mr Davis—It does. The industry has provided its own skills for a variety of reasons. No-one else can afford the equipment, for one. Second, of course, is that you cannot get the programs operating out of the public institutions, many times. If you have a look at the financial anomalies, some research I did in Queensland prior to this shows that five per cent of the funding went to mining courses and programs, and mining produces 26 per cent of the GDP. There are some great disparities between income production and the amount of support that you get. So what is the obvious choice? You do it yourself.

Mrs VALE—You also get the kind of training that you want.

Mr Davis—Exactly.

Mrs VALE—You get it targeted to your needs.

CHAIR—Let me be very clear too that with education what I am objecting to is the basics—the things that I thought our schooling systems would be expected to do. I do not pretend it is easy; I do not pretend there are all sorts of reasons.

Mr Davis—You have to look at the outcomes. We are all outcomes-driven organisations. If the outcomes are not there then you have to question the inputs.

CHAIR—In such a competitive era for skilled people, does cherry picking occur with apprenticeship training? Could you give us a feel for what is happening there? I suppose it is a competitive market and you go out and find people where you can. But is there such a thing?

Mr Davis—It is well publicised that there is a national skills shortage; a number of those things are of our own making. Essentially, it is because we did not invest earlier on and we are now reaping the whirlwind of that. We are trying to address it, but I think we are still working with an 18th-century model. I notice with some interest that at the present moment there is a move to reduce some of the apprenticeships in Western Australia to two years and so on, particularly in some of the carpentry trades, and to make fine fields so that you could specialise in housing development and those sorts of things. I think that that will occur and that there will be more of that type of thing. Some you cannot do that with—mechanical trades and so on are very complex and—

Mrs VALE—Or electricians.

Mr Davis—Yes. They use all of their skills, whereas some of the carpentry skills are learnt but never used again. That is shifting. Some of the initiatives that are coming out to get people into trades and into work based learning are very good, but I think there is some more work to do.

Mrs VALE—Do you get any specific feedback that we could take on board about what works from your Indigenous employees in response to either your recruitment or your training?

Mr Davis—Our approach to getting people to come in is personal. We go out and speak and meet with people; we do it personally. We do not broadly advertise. We do not use those sorts of things. We go through third parties or we go to people personally. It is a relationship thing.

Mrs VALE—Do you use an Indigenous liaison officer?

Mr Davis—Yes, we do. The best case, if you like, of that working is using the Central Land Council in Alice Springs, who deal with the Yuendumu and Lajamanu communities. We have our own cultural relations people. By and large they go and speak with the communities and make the opportunities known. We go out and test and evaluate people and then bring them in. That is what I mean by saying we are personal and relationship based. It is not a spreadsheet. We do not put ads in the paper. We do not do that sort of stuff.

Mrs VALE—I have one last question. If you had the opportunity to say to the federal government what you would like to see done to help your company employ more Indigenous people—whether it is training or whatever—what would you like to record on the *Hansard*?

Mr Davis—I think it is the base. I noted from what my colleagues said previously that it is the base that you pick up from. It is not solid; it is not there. The base education is poor and lacking. We invest in having people who act as mentors and coaches just to give the base numeracy and literacy skills.

Mrs VALE—So you do not just offer training: you also offer basic literacy and numeracy?

Mr Davis—Yes, we do. People cannot interact and learn unless they have those. In all of the mining industries with the mining legislation these days there is a requirement for people to be competent. Part of that analogy is that they have to be able to look after themselves.

Mrs VALE—For occupational health and safety issues.

Mr Davis—If they cannot read the warning labels, see the danger signs and take in information for themselves, they are at risk. So part of the base has to be a good base of numeracy and literacy. It is not there.

Mrs VALE—It is the story of *Trumby*.

Mr Davis—Sorry? Is it?

Mrs VALE—Slim Dusty. Trumby was a ringer, and a good one at that, but he could not read the sign on a billabong that he came to saying that it was poisoned. It was a very well-known and famous old Slim Dusty song. It is exactly what you are saying.

Mr Davis—Another thing I would leave you with is that it is all about relationships and layering of support. We have registered prevocational programs and those sorts of things, and everybody in the industry has. It is really a matter of getting a team of people together who have a relationship one to the other at all the different levels. We have people who work at the community level; we have people who work at the site level; we have people who work at the regional support level. Then you have the seniors and that sort of thing. They are all working and integrated in fairly interesting ways to make sure that the outcome that we want occurs—employment and growth. One chap from the department said, 'Can we take your program and just plonk it in at this location.' We said, 'Well, you can, but your levels of success are probably going to be pretty small.' They were going to employ one person to do it. It is the realisation that

it is not just one person who does this. It is layered. It is supported by the elders, the communities and a whole host of different people.

Mrs VALE—And it is supported by a basis of relationships that you have created.

Mr Davis—It is all about relationships. It is absolutely about relationships.

Mrs VALE—What is your message to government? Is there anything you want to say?

Mr Davis—It is this: support where you can, but do not try to be all things to all people. You cannot do it—just as we cannot be an alternative government.

CHAIR—A colleague in another company in the mining industry had a phrase that, in terms of the Indigenous relationship, there is a need for a facilitator, not a benefactor.

Mr Davis—Yes, I think so.

CHAIR—We pay a very high price, it seems to me, if we do not understand that. I note that in your core values, your integrated management system, at point 4—and I find this really interesting—you say:

Provide economic value in the communities where we operate that extends beyond the life of the mine.

Mr Davis—That is right.

CHAIR—Can you develop that. That is a pretty responsible and visionary kind of statement.

Mr Davis—Let me try to answer it in two parts. Recently, within the Wiluna community, we looked at how we gain employment at the Jundee mine. We had to go back a step and prepare people for engaging in the mining operations, which meant developing people within the community.

There were a number of things that the community said it wanted in the community, like a swimming pool, a learning centre and a variety of things. We saw that we could be a catalyst for that by helping them learn the skills to build their own swimming pool. In fact, we had suppliers and contractors who would do that. So the building of the swimming pool led to skills that we could use in turn in the mine site. The provision of a laundry service could come out of the community health programs, as could community support and activities. So, what can we do? We can help by offering traineeships, partly in the medical and community support areas and partly in our first aid stations. Again, one dollar does two jobs. With that interaction you can have a grander vision for the community which it owns and aspires to. The spin-off is that we get people who we can employ in the mine. They have a set of skills that we can engage.

I mentioned to you earlier a colleague we use as a private provider. We always used to look at it this way: when you go into a community and you want to leave them with skills, take the dollars that come in and convert them to learning programs, i.e. road maintenance and those sorts of things. You get your roads built and the same road grant teaches people to have sustainable skills. They can do it for themselves. We have a project in the Northern Territory

called Woodcutters, and part of that is to leave people with skills so they can maintain the environment and that mine site and look after the environmental issues. Our part of that is that we obviously provide some financial support for the acquisition of the skills, but we also provide them with the skills to maintain the ground. Then, as part of that, there is a trust so that the interest from the trust also supports the ongoing maintenance of their skills.

You do not really need to have one person in every job. One of the things that overcome a number of the cultural issues, community responsibilities and those sorts of things is to look at jobs in terms of how many people can move through them or operate in them. For example, we have an operation at Jundee, where we are seeking to provide the laundry service. We need four or five people for that, but they do not have to be the same four or five people. We could have 20 people cycling through that process, as long as we have five people on any one day who turn up to do the work and are skilled to do it.

Mrs VALE—And, in allowing for cultural responsibilities, it might be wise to have several people trained up to do the one job.

Mr Davis—That also allows for such things as having—

Mrs VALE—Flexibility and rosters.

Mr Davis—requirements for family business and Sorry Days and all of those sorts of things, but we are still achieving the working outcome. The community is still achieving the income. They are sharing that role and responsibility and it is not onerous on any one person at any one time. It is a slightly different way of looking at employment.

CHAIR—I think one of the great things that no-one talks about very much is the financial capacity infrastructure that is left behind—whether it is a road, a bridge or a railway or whatever—it is rare that there is not a positive left behind in strong infrastructure. I can think of a number of examples in my electorate where there is very good infrastructure because of mining activity that is long ceased. That is another aspect, but probably not what you had in mind. You are thinking more about the people investment.

Mr Davis—There is certainly that, but in most mining operations these days you have to maintain the site for some time after you have physically left the premises, to make sure that there is no change in the ground conditions, that it is well looked after, that the vegetation grows as it should and that there are no contaminants in the soil—all those sort of things are very important. So there is always that kind of ongoing maintenance, particularly with hard rock mining.

The other aspect is that of the human capital development—that is, people acquiring skills on which they can trade. If we are not there, somebody else will be in close proximity, so they can move to other employers and trade on those skills. There is another ‘leave behind’ activity, if you like.

CHAIR—It just sort of struck me.

Mr Davis—In mining towns these days, if you go in to upgrade a mine you must also have an exit strategy, or you will not get started.

Mrs VALE—What is the length of time you are normally in a location?

Mr Davis—It kind of varies as to how long the gold lasts.

CHAIR—Olympic Dam might last a bit longer than some others?

Mr Davis—Certainly. You have 20-year or 30-year life-of-mine projects, but in some of the others you might be in there for two or three years.

Mrs VALE—That short a time?

Mr Davis—In our part of the business. In iron ore, coal or any of those, you have generational stability.

CHAIR—Middleback Range would be approaching 100 years, I think.

Mr Davis—Surely. And if you look at iron ore in the Top End—

CHAIR—Yes. Mine is a little baby compared to that. We need to wind up. Can I offer you the opportunity to add anything you want to or round off in terms of this whole issue which I think there is some progress on but where there is plenty of work ahead.

Mr Davis—There are some good initiatives out there at the present moment. The mining council is doing some interesting things. The MOU that we just spoke of is a good initiative. But at the end of the day it is really about relationships at the community level. You must take on board how the different communities and the cultures operate. You cannot overlay the cookie cutter processes that you might think of.

Mrs VALE—I have a very short question. Are all the communities very similar with their requirements or do communities differ? Do they have differences within the communities that you have to accommodate?

Mr Davis—Very much—as do we. But in many of the remote areas their differences are usually just about fundamentals—clean water, housing, schools, shortness of life and medical problems. They vary from place to place although they seem to be common threads.

Mrs VALE—Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you. We are grateful for your time today.

[4.22 pm]

TUCKER, Mr Daniel, Managing Director and Owner, Carey Mining Pty Ltd

TUCKER, Mrs Lynley, Owner, Carey Mining Pty Ltd

CHAIR—I welcome representatives from Carey Mining. I need to simply say that the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, but these are legal proceedings of the parliament. I invite you to make some opening comments.

Mr Tucker—I would just like to mention a bit of history on Carey Mining. Carey Mining is a wholly owned Aboriginal company. We have now been operating for over 10 years. We started off here in the goldfields, in Laverton. Over the years we have employed hundreds of Aboriginal people. We currently employ about 65 people. The majority of those people are Aboriginal. We now have our head office in Perth. There are reasons for that. I do not know if anybody here has been to Laverton, but it is a small mining town and it is very hard to attract people there. We employ mining engineers. There is a general manager. We employ HR people and accounting people. To employ those people and try to get them to come and live in a place like Laverton is very hard. Even to get them to come and live in Kalgoorlie is very hard. We have now located our business in Perth: we work out of our head office there. We work on a number of different sites, mostly in the goldfields.

Over the years also we have been invited to go to different communities to try to assist Aboriginal people in business. We went up north to work with people around Mining Area C with BHP. We were invited, with some of the people from South Australia, to go across there a couple of years ago. I will talk about that very quickly. Out at Whyalla there was no action going on. Nothing was really happening in Whyalla. Shortly after we went across and started talking to the people in Whyalla and the OneSteel people, things started to happen with work opportunities there. We have also been invited to go to places as far away as Queensland, but we need to basically look at where we are working. But we have helped out the Aboriginal people in setting up businesses—that is what I am trying to say.

I was speaking at a forum that has been happening here over the last couple of days. I believe one of the best strategies for employment programs for Aboriginal people is to assist Aboriginal companies. When you engage Aboriginal companies you will get Aboriginal employment. Aboriginal companies know Aboriginal people. We know how to mentor and source our people. We know where to find our people and how to deal with them. I think that is why we have been able to build our business to where it is today. But we need opportunities. That is the other side of the stick. If the opportunities are not there, the Aboriginal companies will not be there.

We cannot get opportunities by just going through a tendering process because we will never get through that process. We need to have some type of action, which I spoke about. We need to have some type of affirmative action in place, led by the government. Then we will find mining companies and other industries will follow. That will open up opportunities for Aboriginal people and you will find that Aboriginal people will want to start businesses. Some of them will. Out of that you will have Aboriginal employment and training.

CHAIR—Let us start with affirmative action. I think that is where you and I first met a couple of days ago. You jogged my memory about what we had been talking about over previous months, so I am grateful to you for that. Affirmative action takes many forms. You have been through them, but perhaps you would like to go through them again so that we have it on the public record. I think it is quite important that you take us through it. I can think of two or three things, but you have your own way of explaining what you mean by that.

Mr Tucker—It has been spoken about over the last couple of days at this forum. A shire here is looking at putting in targets of six per cent Aboriginal employment. I would like to see those types of strategies but expanded to business opportunities. I spoke about affirmative action. Mining companies have been doing some of this already back when Mabo first happened but things are starting to slow down now and dry up. I am talking about opportunities. Affirmative action can happen in a number of ways. If, for example, there was a contract that was going to be let and the contract is valued at, say, $100 million, a portion or percentage of that should be set aside for Aboriginal people to participate in.

The percentage of Aboriginal people in Australia is less than two per cent or thereabouts. That might not be anything meaningful. We could say 10 per cent because in some places the Aboriginal population is quite high—for example, up north in the Pilbara area. In the Goldfields area, if you are looking at the full Goldfields area, there might be 10 per cent or more Aboriginal people there. If we use that argument and say that 10 per cent of that $100 million contract is $10 million then $10 million of that job should be set aside for Aboriginal companies. That is an example. There are other examples. If people are letting those contracts, they could stipulate that whoever wins the contract must look at engaging Aboriginal subcontractors as part of the process. That is another mechanism of affirmative action.

Mrs VALE—Even the companies themselves, if they do not have to engage Aboriginal contractors, could engage Aboriginal employees, reflective of the population in that area. So it is really three levels, isn't it?

Mr Tucker—It is three levels.

Mrs VALE—It is the affirmative action for the corporation itself, then for the subcontractors and then perhaps for the employees of a tenderer.

Mr Tucker—Yes. My main focus and my main message to the committee is business. Employment and training should happen as a given, but we must have business opportunities. If Aboriginal people are going to progress in this 21st century we must have business opportunities. If there are opportunities you will find that Aboriginal people will start getting off their backsides and looking at opportunities. It happened in the goldfields. The year 1893 was when Paddy Hannan first came here. From 1893 to 1993, for a hundred years, there were no Aboriginal businesses at all. Mabo came in 1993. The Native Title Act came shortly thereafter. Over 20 Aboriginal companies started up here in Kalgoorlie alone. Some of those companies are still going, some of those companies are still sitting on the shelf looking for opportunities and some of them have shut up shop and are looking at something else. But the opportunities came and people took those opportunities. If there were another shift in policy or direction in Australia so that we put in place some affirmative action for business, you would find that Aboriginal people would get involved in business. When business happens, employment will happen. That

is the part we need to focus on, I believe. I have been doing it for 10 years. Employment and training is a given, but business is the tricky bit that we need to get across.

Mrs VALE—That is the next lever, isn't it?

Mr Tucker—That is the lever that should be looked at right now, I believe.

Mrs VALE—Daniel, are you Indigenous?

Mr Tucker—Yes.

Mrs VALE—What is your story? How did you become such a success? Success stories are what we want to hear, and you are one.

Mr Tucker—I did all my schooling here. I was born in Leonora, which is just up the road.

CHAIR—I know his story, but go on.

Mr Tucker—My mother and father were both born at Mount Margaret Mission, which is an Aboriginal mission not far from Laverton. My people come from this area, the goldfields.

Mrs VALE—And you got a good education?

Mr Tucker—I did all my schooling in Kalgoorlie, from grade 1 to grade 7. I did all my high school here in Kalgoorlie, from year 8 to year 12. I finished year 12 in 1980. When I was going to school, in year 11 and 12, a teacher said to me: 'Daniel, you're wasting your time. Get out and get a job. No Aboriginal people go this far in school.' I do not know whether that teacher was a racist teacher and a very bad teacher or whether he was a very smart teacher and was using reverse psychology. I do not know. I finished year 11 and 12. I met my wife in year 12. Lynley was here also. We were the only two in year 12 at that time, 25 years ago. When I left school I went and got a job in mining, because that is where I wanted to go. I applied for an apprenticeship with Western Mining and they gave me a job as a cleaner. So I was mopping floors, polishing floors and cleaning toilets in the power station for a year.

Mrs VALE—One of our colleagues in federal parliament, Mr Warren Entsch, who is the federal member for Leichhardt, started off by cleaning toilets as a railway boy when he was 14. Obviously you cannot keep a good man down.

CHAIR—Daniel, continue. The story gets better.

Mr Tucker—I stayed the full year, working for Western Mining. The second year I also applied for an apprenticeship. This time we sat in a big room. There were about 30 or 40 students doing the aptitude test. The person who did the aptitude tests said, 'Daniel, if it were up to me you could take your pick, but it is not up to me; it is up to the mining company.' The company gave me a letter that said: 'Daniel, you were unsuccessful because we believe you will not successfully complete the course.' That letter is laminated at home. I do not know why I did it, but I kept it. I am like that; I keep a lot of rubbish. I kept working there. It did not bother me.

Mrs VALE—They thought you would not complete the course?

Mr Tucker—Yes. They thought that I would not complete the course and would not be successful. I stayed working there as a train engine driver. I got my engine driver's ticket. I was the power station engine driver. I had people working under me. I was very young. When people came into the control room they use to walk right past me and ask other people if they could go and do this and that. The people used to say, 'Don't ask me; you've got to ask that other bloke over there.' That used to make people red sometimes.

But I went for the apprenticeship the third year, and in that year Western Mining said, 'Daniel, take your pick.' I said, 'Okay; I want to be a fitter.' In my first year as a fitter I was top of the state. Western Mining flew us to Perth and gave Lynley and me accommodation there. It was in the newspaper, the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. In the second year, I was top of the state again in work trade. And again in the third year—three times in a row. I did my apprenticeship in three years. I stayed working with Western Mining for over 13 years. I left there, went to uni, studied geology and then Mabo came on the scene. That is when I headed back home and started getting involved with business. That is where we are today. When we started off Carey Mining, we went to places like ATSIC and CDC. They said: 'Daniel we cannot fund you, because you are not a community organisation. You do not have everybody involved in your business. Anyway, we cannot fund you, because you are asking for too much money.' So we had to go and negotiate with the banks. We borrowed money from the ANZ bank and started up our business.

Mrs VALE—Did you get a degree in geology?

Mr Tucker—No; I did not finish off my degree. I did two years but I did not finish it.

Mrs VALE—It is still out there.

Mr Tucker—Yes.

Mrs VALE—You can put it in your retirement plans, Daniel. That is a fantastic story. Was the company you started a mining company?

Mr Tucker—It is a contracting company. There are a couple of prongs to it. It is a contracting company, and we provide services like contract mining. On small jobs we do it ourselves; on big jobs we do joint ventures with people like Roche Mining or MacMahons.

Mrs VALE—You leverage.

Mr Tucker—Yes. And we have done that. In some cases, a mining company has given us a tender document and we have said, 'That is too big for us.' We asked LionOre if we could do a joint venture and they said, 'Yes; do it.' We invited Roche to join us, we joined together in a 50-50 joint venture and we won the job. We worked the Thunderbox open pit and we employed a lot of people through that process. So it is a two-way street. It is not just us always holding onto the coats of the big boys

CHAIR—Inviting others in.

Mr Tucker—Yes. So that is one part about business. We also are getting involved with asset acquisition. We bought some leases about three of four years ago from Western Mining. We have back-doored those leases into a public company that is producing nickel. We are looking at producing gold soon. Carey Mining is a major shareholder in that company; there is also View Resources. There was mention in the newspaper today, I believe, about some of the things we are doing. We are also looking at floating another company, Terrain Minerals. So the opportunities are there and Aboriginal people can do these things. We do contracting plus also these other things—looking at these corporate plays. There is all this wheeling and dealing going on in mining companies and Aboriginal people can be part of that type of thing.

Mrs VALE—Obviously, you are very flexible in your approach to what you can do and what services you can deliver. You see a need and you try to fill it.

Mr Tucker—Yes. On the contracting side, we focus on civil and mining. On the civil side, we are trying to speak with the government in Western Australia, especially in Perth, because, as I said in one of my speeches, there is so much work happening in Perth. They will be building roads, they will be building dams and they will be building infrastructure for as long as we are living and breathing. The mines will come and go; government will be building things forever. There are so many opportunities in Perth; but it is so hard to take those opportunities, because there is no mechanism there—nothing.

CHAIR—Do you know of any Indigenous business in Perth?

Mr Tucker—There is. We are the ones breaking the water there. We got involved in the Tonkin Highway. We were speaking with Alanna MacTiernan, the minister, about getting involved and she wanted us to help her out. So we got involved working on the Tonkin Highway extension. We are now looking at working on the MetroRail project. But it is small stuff because the mechanisms are not there. When I say 'mechanisms' I mean that it is not what you know but who you know. The tendering process involves people who know people who will always feel comfortable going with certain types of people. Aboriginal companies, if there are no mechanisms there, will never get a leg-up. We are a minority group of people in Australia; if the government does not help us, nobody will.

CHAIR—This is just by the way, but it is interesting that the Indigenous organisations that were set up that were supposed to help could not and it was private enterprise that eventually backed you. That is, of course, a real credit to you. There are a couple of things I need to ask that are slightly off that track. The issue of so-called cultural values, which are said to be impediments, I cannot pretend to understand. Can you help me to understand what is the appropriate respect for cultural values in employment? What do we need to understand better?

Mr Tucker—There is a difference with Aboriginal culture. I have not really sat down and thought about it, basically because I am looking at going ahead; I am not looking at all the barriers that are there. So I do not really know how to answer that.

CHAIR—That is all right, thank you. I think it was Cathy Duncan who said, 'It is not black or white, it is business.' That is what I think I hear.

Mr Tucker—If there is nothing there for Aboriginal people we will go back to what we always know and we will always go back to our cultural comfort zones. That is what I see. Here in Kalgoorlie what I saw over the last 10 or 12 years, since Mabo, was that the place was buzzing. Aboriginal people were buzzing about business. They wanted to start something up. They wanted to get involved with business. Everybody was trying to do something. But because things were getting harder and there were no opportunities and things changed through the government's changes, whatever, it got so hard that everybody then went back to their comfort zone and to the cultural comfort zone: back onto the CDEPs, staying in those Aboriginal corporations and then sitting there. The feeling was: why stick your head up or your neck out when it is going to get knocked off or you will get nowhere? That is what I see. I would also say that if there were opportunities there, if there was a mechanism to go for opportunities, you would find people would have a crack—they will get up.

CHAIR—Excellent. I want to ask about education. I probably said something on Wednesday about education and where the future lies. Can you give us your view in relation to your own employees but also more generally about the issues of literacy and numeracy and how we make education relevant?

Mr Tucker—I will talk on this first and Lynley might like to say something as well. I believe education is the key. That is the reason we as a company get behind the ALTA-1 program that Lynley can speak to, if there is time. That is the alternative training program. We invest money into that education program—not money from the government but money from our own pocket—and we also put in our time. We have brought people up for this function—those two young fellas. Education is the key. If we need to move forward as a group of people, as a race of people, we need to get educated—no ifs, no buts. We believe strongly in that.

Mrs Tucker—I am involved in the ALTA-1 program. It is a private initiative. ALTA 1 is actually a private company. We link in with a private school that is based in Perth. We currently have three sites. We run a curriculum based program which involves numeracy and literacy—basic maths and English—at year 11 and 12 levels. We focus on 15- to 19-year-olds. As part of that program we also run a workplace readiness every Tuesday on another site. That is part of our transition for those students who come into the ALTA-1 program. We also run interpersonal skills, which involves a whole heap of things—learning about themselves and going through a lot of personal development things, such as learning about budgeting, so that they can acquire life skills.

As part of our program we also have school based traineeships, where we have the involvement of AFL SportsReady and SMILE. They provide the backup for that: the RTO systems and administration. We also provide mentors and pastoral care to those children. It works really well. We currently have roughly 60 students. Of those 60 students, 40 are Indigenous. We are also picking up another 30 from Esther House. They are non-Indigenous students. We will be sending our teachers and mentors to them at their site.

CHAIR—This is a fee for service program within the education system? Your people pay for this service?

Mrs Tucker—Yes. I think it has been going about two years. When we started there was no government funding. It has taken 18 months to lobby government. We currently receive some

Commonwealth government assistance. We charge fees for those children to come into the program.

CHAIR—And you are really pleased with the outcomes?

Mrs Tucker—Definitely.

CHAIR—You are really going well with this.

Mrs VALE—What is the name of it, again, Lynley? I did not quite hear it.

Mrs Tucker—ALTA-1. It stands for 'altering lives one at a time'.

Mrs VALE—You say you offer it at three sites.

Mrs Tucker—Yes, we currently have a site up at Wangara, which links in with the local community, which is Noongar kids. We have another site at Lansdale. Most of our Kimberley and metro kids come there, and we have another site over at Girrawheen, which does the workplace readiness.

Mrs VALE—Is it a curriculum that is in addition to school? These children are 15- to 19-year-olds. Have these children left school?

Mrs Tucker—Some of those kids either fell through the cracks at school or do not want to be there. They have had other issues, like being expelled. They may have home issues. It provides an alternative for them.

Mrs VALE—And they come to a classroom to do it?

Mrs Tucker—They come to a classroom, but it is not a traditional classroom. It is very user-friendly. They can work on their own individual programs at their own pace. It provides support for them.

Mrs VALE—Lynley, are you an eductor or a teacher?

Mrs Tucker—I have an administration and education background. I have worked in Laverton School. I am currently studying for a Bachelor of Education; I am in the fourth year.

Mrs VALE—It is a work in progress, like the degree in geology.

Mrs Tucker—Having all this experience with Carey Mining, I can pull in the employment side of things.

Mrs VALE—Fantastic.

Mrs Tucker—It works well.

Mrs VALE—It is the key for all of us, isn't it: having an education. It is the key for all of us. Would you believe my father actually said that education is the only salvation from being born a woman?

Mr Tucker—Just adding to that: we believe education is the answer for our people. We are also involved in setting up an education foundation. In our arrangements with View Resources, one of the things I have said is that we will work down this road but I want us to set up an education foundation together. So, of every ounce of gold we produce, $2 goes into this. We are looking at setting this up now. The focus of it is to assist Aboriginal people going on to further studies, whether it is high school, university or tertiary studies—we are working through that now.

Mrs VALE—Lynley, do you have any information on this program?

Mrs Tucker—I do in the car. I have a brochure that explains all the things I have covered.

Mrs VALE—Could I ask that it be sent to the committee?

CHAIR—Yes, we would love to receive that.

Mrs VALE—What is your success rate? Have you been able to assess your success rate yet, or is it too early to tell? How long have you been running the program—three years?

Mrs Tucker—I think I said two years. I have only been involved for 10 months. I am the chairperson of the committee that advises ALTA-1 on Indigenous issues.

Mrs VALE—Who funds it? I know that you get some fees from some of the students, but who seeded it, to start with?

Mrs Tucker—Sorry?

Mrs VALE—Who gave the funding up-front?

Mrs Tucker—At the beginning?

Mrs VALE—Yes.

Mrs Tucker—The Kingsway Christian College sponsored them when they started up.

Mrs VALE—Is it too early to tell how good a success rate you have?

Mrs Tucker—To get the funding that we have got, we had to produce benchmark outcomes, so we have met the requirements so far.

Mrs VALE—That is very interesting. Thank you for telling us about it.

Mr Tucker—What we also do with our program, because, like I say, we support it in a big way, is that we have released Lynley from our organisation to work full time with ALTA-1 at no cost to ALTA-1. We still pay Lynley, because it is our company. We pay for Lynley's time, which is worth about $40,000 a year, and there is no benefit to Carey Mining, but she is placed with ALTA-1 to help and assist that program. So we do that, and we also put some money into ALTA-1 ourselves to assist that program.

Mrs VALE—I would like to know more about that program. If it is working, that is good.

CHAIR—We need to start wrapping up the proceedings. Would you like to offer some concluding comments? How do you see it? What do you hope for the future? And I think I have an idea of that.

Mr Tucker—I would like to leave this with the committee: opportunities matter. If there are no opportunities, there will be no progress for our people. I am not talking about employment opportunities. That should be a given. I am talking about business opportunities. Speaking to some of the major mining companies around here who work in Canada and other places, I know that they do things differently in Canada because there is a different playing field, one could argue. They say, 'Look, the governments here are not behind any of the stuff that we do over there, so we are really constrained.' If the government were to get behind us and start looking at affirmative action that we can put in place, that will flow on to other industries and other sectors of the community. It will then create opportunities for our people to start businesses.

You have got funding programs in place already through DEWR, IBA, CDC and those sorts of organisations. But what is the use of trying to get that funding if the opportunities are not there? If you get the funding from these organisations, you need to try really hard to find the opportunities. If the opportunities are there to match those programs, you will find more people accessing programs, taking up opportunities, getting involved with business, and getting involved in the real economy. Employment and training will then follow, and everything else will follow—education will follow and the standard of living of Aboriginal people will start lifting. So it all comes back to opportunities.

CHAIR—That is an excellent point. You are not asking for subsidies, you are not asking for money, you are asking for opportunities, and you cannot get fairer than that.

Mr Tucker—I know somebody said that money is not the answer, and I agree that money is not the answer. The answer is opportunities.

CHAIR—Beautifully said, Daniel. I really appreciate, Daniel and Lynley, you coming here today, and I thank you for your time. All the best.

Mr Tucker—Thank you.

Mrs VALE—And thank you for your contribution, Lynley—and you were not even going to come and sit at the table to start with. It was a very valuable contribution.

Resolved (on motion by **Mrs Vale**, seconded by **Mr Wakelin**):

That this committee authorises for publication the transcript of the evidence taken by it at the public hearing today.

Subcommittee adjourned at 4.54 pm