

Role of government

History shows that doing more of the same is simple not an option.¹

Practical reconciliation

- 7.1 Improved employment outcomes are an important part of practical reconciliation. Reconciliation can be measured through employment indicators and Indigenous people moving from unemployment or CDEP into jobs and opportunities to develop businesses.
- 7.2 Evidence was mixed on the contribution of practical reconciliation to improved employment outcomes, with most submitters not directly addressing the issue. The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research stated that it was too early to assess the effects of practical reconciliation:

In our view it is too early to address this question using Australian Bureau of Statistics surveys and the National Census. Policy, particularly in this area, has long lead times and many of the changes made by the Howard Government did not occur for several years after their election in 1996 and a number of changes did not occur until after 2001 (such as Shared Responsibility Agreements). In addition, many of the effects of policy changes on labour market outcomes will take several years to occur. By the time of the 2006 Census we should be in a much better position to assess the contributions of practical reconciliation.²

- 7.3 On 12 July 2005, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress stated:
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1 Ms Ah Chin, Principal Advisor Indigenous Policy, Office of Commissioner for Public Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 20.

2 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 5.

... we do not believe that practical reconciliation has achieved enough to be claiming 'wins' on its scorecard for Indigenous employment yet.³

- 7.4 Tangentyere Council submitted that they excluded the topic because it was not clear how practical reconciliation had added to the provision of essential services.⁴

Reconciliation is not about becoming white men, but sensitively accommodating cultural differences in a supportive and cognizant kind of way. In this manner I see that management has a significant role to play in that transition and I found great mutual respect was gained and significant support was forthcoming from the employee as a result.⁵

- 7.5 Funds provided for services and programs for Indigenous people are largely essential services and the contribution of practical reconciliation can not be identified separately.⁶

Our responsibility is to harness the capacity of government, whether it is mainstream programs or Indigenous specific programs, to ensure that they are working far better for the Indigenous client group that they are servicing.⁷

- 7.6 In contrast to other submitters, the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination responded to the Committee's questions about the impact of practical reconciliation very positively pointing out that the unemployment rate for Indigenous people has fallen:

The strength of the economy, as well as targeted assistance through the Job Network and the Indigenous Employment Program, would have contributed to these changes.⁸

3 Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Inc, *Submission No. 101*, p. 3.

4 Tangentyere Council, *Submission No. 69*, p. 3.

5 Shire of Trayning, *Submission No. 22*, p. 1.

6 Tangentyere Council, *Submission No. 69*, p. 3.

7 Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 19.

8 Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Submission No. 73a*, pp. 4-5.

More effective service delivery

- 7.7 The National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Indigenous Australians is based on shared responsibility, involving mainstream, streamlining service delivery, establishing transparency and accountability, developing a learning framework and focusing on priority areas.⁹ The recent review of the COAG trials found that there was a better understanding among officials 'of how the way in which governments deliver programs can contribute to lack of ownership and action by communities'.¹⁰
- 7.8 It appears that many features of the previous system have continued in the Indigenous Coordination Centres. In relation to the lack of awareness in the broader community of the work of the ICCs, the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination commented that:
- We are not focusing too heavily on promoting the architecture or the formalities of the system. We are more concerned about what the impact is locally for people and whether our colleagues in other departments and in other governments are coming on board in terms of changing the way they are doing business. Our Indigenous Coordination Centres are slowly building their profile. People have heard about the abolition of ATSIC. They have noticed that a lot of services are still continuing. To the extent that they want to engage with Indigenous Coordination Centres around shared responsibility agreements, for example, that is slowly building. We are up to around 160 agreements. It is a big transition. We did not just stop everything and say: 'As of now, no longer will we be engaging with you in the old ways, all those programs and services will stop and, as we get around to talking with you, then we will start the ball rolling.' That was not feasible. So it is an evolution in terms of the implementation.¹¹
- 7.9 In relation to the lack of awareness in the Public Service of the work of the ICCs, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations commented that:

9 Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Submission No. 73*, p. 6.

10 *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations; Report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination*, Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd, Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, November 2006, p. 5.

11 Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 20.

Generally people across the Public Service will be aware of the directions because there are a lot of meetings across government about the directions that are occurring. Individually the head of the tourism division may not, but we have engaged with that group, for example, around the tourism strategies in Indigenous employment. ... I probably do not know all the committees and structures that operate through the tourism department. I have a good idea, but if you asked me I probably would know about tourism because we have paid particular attention to it, but I would not know of all the structures that each individual agency operates. People can be excused if they do not always know, but I know that we work with that agency.¹²

Whole-of-community, whole-of-government and whole of industry approach

*... whole-of-community, whole-of-government, and whole-of-industry, founded in mutual respect and the recognition of Indigenous Australians' rights in law, interests and special connections to lands and waters in Australia.*¹³

7.10 The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination stated that the whole-of-government approach, through COAG trials and negotiating arrangements between governments and with communities is about bringing the 'disparate elements into some coherence'.¹⁴ The five principles underpinning the new arrangements are collaboration, regional need, flexibility, accountability and leadership.¹⁵

...despite some cynicism at the outset, all partners believed that other partners engaged with the Trial Process in a spirit of genuine commitment and good faith.¹⁶

12 Mr Bob Harvey, Group Manager, Indigenous Employment and Business Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 5.

13 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 1.

14 Mr Wayne Gibbons, Associate Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p. 23.

15 Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Submission No. 73*, p. 4.

16 *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations; Report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination*, Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd, Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, November 2006, p. 5.

- 7.11 There has been enhanced cooperation between the States and Federal public services.¹⁷ While the whole-of government rhetoric is not new, there has been a culture change within the bureaucracy:

That is a bigger challenge, I suggest, than communities. It is led at the top ... And, starting from the next budget, the budget process will be informed by an evaluation of what is working and what is not working. That has not been tried before in a whole-of-government context. It is still early days but there is no doubting the commitment and determination of the political and the administrative leadership to try and make change here.¹⁸

- 7.12 The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination commented that it was:

... very encouraged by the seriousness of the commitment to get together with us and sort out these issues. That means that if you are working in a community where this is in place – instead of 40 or 50 sometimes programs being delivered by 20 or 30 agencies without any reference to each other, with 40 or 50 different agreements and accounting obligations, and programs designed in Brisbane, Canberra or Perth and fitting the community into those programs – we are able to say: ‘Well, forget our programs. We have got a combined resource’.¹⁹

- 7.13 The Central Land Council made the point that:

What we have identified recently is that there is a lot of goodwill. There is a lot of discussion about partnerships. There is a lot of direction being given to both Northern Territory and Commonwealth agencies to get out and get involved with Aboriginal communities. It is creating a bit of mayhem in a way, with people tripping over one another. Aboriginal people are quite rightly covering their bets and taking in all-comers and expressing their issues to them. There is definitely a large need to sit down and get these things better coordinated ... I know that the Commonwealth and Northern Territory have different responsibilities and directions, but it would be helpful to all

17 Mr Dennis Bree, Chairman, Northern Territory Government Task Force on Indigenous Economic Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 2; Mr Bernie Carlon, General Manager, Employment and Indigenous Initiatives, Queensland Department of Employment and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 July 2005, p. 5.

18 Mr Wayne Gibbons, Associate Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p. 7.

19 Mr Wayne Gibbons, Associate Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p. 6.

concerned out bush if there were a one-stop shop to address all these things and get better coordination.²⁰

- 7.14 Indigenous Coordination Centres are required to find out the needs and priorities of communities with regard to issues such as employment, education, health, and housing, and to broker solutions.²¹

Then they must package it all up and deliver it to the community so they achieve, from our portfolio perspective, employment outcomes and business outcomes, but also education and health and housing and social ...²²

- 7.15 Mission Australia believes that while the intent is there with the Indigenous Coordination Centres, the guidelines remain around each department.²³

Community know what their needs are but no-one is listening. Everyone is saying, 'This is what you can have,' and we do not fit into that. It is the same across Australia.²⁴

- 7.16 It has not been easy and some companies, local agencies and community people are frustrated by being unable to 'get the message across to well-intentioned bureaucrats who still could not understand that the first thing you do is shut up and listen – not say, 'Hey, we're here'.²⁵ The Committee was told that the reality is that you either play by DEWR's rules 'or you won't play at all'.²⁶

- 7.17 The Director General of the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs considered the lack of coordination across government and the disjointed approach to programs as important impediments to successful Aboriginal employment outcomes.²⁷ Capacity building is a challenge for

20 Mr David Alexander, Manager, Land Management, Central Land Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 52.

21 Mr Bob Harvey, Group Manager, Indigenous Employment and Business Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 August 2005, p. 7.

22 Mr Bob Harvey, Group Manager, Indigenous Employment and Business Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 August 2005, p. 7.

23 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 49.

24 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, pp. 49-50.

25 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 6.

26 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 4.

27 Ms Jody Broun, Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2006, p. 88.

the Public Service involved in a whole-of-government approach as well as for Indigenous people.²⁸

For those of us familiar with the long history of national commitments and statements about improving Indigenous affairs, we have heard a lot of talk about improved coordination but not anywhere near enough action. I believe that the approach that has now substantially been embedded in terms of the infrastructure to support the new whole-of-government approach has been well established, but we now have to get on very much with the real and full implementation of that. You are right: at various points in the bureaucracy there are still – I would not say points of resistance – people not being clear or not being skilled or not understanding how they need to work differently in how they come on board, if you like.²⁹

7.18 The whole-of-government approach:

... involves some very significant changes in the way that the public sector does its business and requires quite a lot of cultural change on behalf of people from the grassroots level right up through to the senior levels of the organisation. The Australian Public Service is a big ship of state; it is geared and has been for the best part of 100 years. Of course we are trying to connect to state and territory public sectors as well, so it has been a gradual transition. Without the leadership politically and bureaucratically that has come in behind this, I do not believe that we would have made the progress that we have.³⁰

7.19 The Wunan Foundation does not believe that the reform agenda is being adequately communicated to those who need to understand it and to adjust to the changes.³¹

I think that is an incredibly difficult thing to do, because you have a very tall, deep, complex, unwieldy bureaucracy between Ministers and senior policy makers and the local ICC.³²

28 Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 16.

29 Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 16.

30 Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 16.

31 Mr David Addis, Chief Executive Officer, Wunan Foundation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 26.

7.20 Mr Paul Briggs stressed the need to deal with power imbalances and the position of Indigenous people in the dominance and paternalism of politics and the bureaucracy over time.³³

7.21 The Queensland Government added that:

A major impediment to the effective implementation of such policies has been inconsistency in interpreting policies and defining appropriate measures for success. The interpretation and implementation by Government often does not reflect Indigenous values, priorities, strategies and performance measures.³⁴

7.22 Participation by the community is an essential part of successful programs:

From my extensive study of the COAG process and from the good feedback which the Indigenous leaders gave me in Shepparton, the common characteristic of Indigenous employment initiatives led by DEWR and its leadership of the COAG process is that it consistently excludes Aboriginal people from determining what success would look like.³⁵

Time for change

7.23 Ms Ah Chin is of the view that:

... if we continue to look at this problem as we have traditionally then we are not going to find the solutions. We need to be very creative. I know you would have heard this before but I cannot emphasise it enough: we need to be able to look at what is now an old problem in new ways. We need to look outside the box and identify where we can get synergies. I think that one of our failures is that we think we can solve the problem ourselves. We cannot do that; we need to look at a whole of government and whole of community approach and make sure we get input at a community level.³⁶

32 Mr David Addis, Chief Executive Officer, Wunan Foundation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 26.

33 Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 2.

34 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 4.

35 Mr Anthony Cutcliffe, Director, The Eureka Project Pty Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, pp. 7-8.

36 Ms Ah Chin, Principal Advisor Indigenous Policy, Office of Commissioner for Public Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 28.

- 7.24 Mr Peter Yuile described whole-of-government as ‘hard yakka’ but his experience was of an enormous amount of good will but ‘we have to think about different ways of doing things from what we had in the past, and accounting’.³⁷

In addressing Indigenous employment we have to look strategically and not isolate or silo the issue of employment into its own category without being conscious of the social and economic issues underpinning the Aboriginal community and the relationship that exists between people in the community in which we live.³⁸

- 7.25 Increasing the pool of work-ready Indigenous people is an issue of national significance.

While a number of Government initiatives aim to achieve Indigenous employment outcomes, their administration and implementation is often undertaken in isolation or independent of other Government agencies, and/ or industry stakeholders. This has resulted in confusion within Indigenous communities regarding government and industry commitment and support to Indigenous employment, a duplication of government effort, ad hoc and or duplication of service planning, development and delivery, and reduced outcomes for Indigenous people.³⁹

- 7.26 The consolidation of all current Indigenous employment and training programs into one department would improve accessibility but CAAMA reported that they had not seen anything happening.⁴⁰ Excessive government administrative compliance and the government programs are not appropriate for the realities of working on major projects.⁴¹ The mentor for the Adelaide City Council’s Indigenous staff told the Committee that he spends 60 to 70 per cent of his time on paperwork.⁴² The Council suggested that paperwork could be reduced if at the end of a

37 Mr Peter Yuile, Executive Director, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 February 2006, p. 10.

38 Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 2.

39 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 4.

40 Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, *Submission No. 32*, p. 4; Mrs Priscilla Collins, Chief Executive Officer, Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 July 2005, p. 16.

41 Northern Land Council, *Submission No. 103*, p. 7.

42 Mr Brian Varcoe, Development and Liaison Officer, Human Resources, Administration, Adelaide City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 20.

successful contract, the renewal process could be significantly simplified.⁴³ The change from three to two year contracts also adds to the work of councils.⁴⁴

The Australian Government needs to ensure that the process of gaining assistance under the wide range of different Indigenous and mainstream programmes in different agencies does not confuse, disadvantage, delay or discourage Indigenous progress.⁴⁵

7.27 Evidence to the Committee highlighted the fact that the commercial world is reluctant to deal with the bureaucracy because it is too hard. For example, the ANZ Regional and Rural Banking in North West NSW did not use government subsidies for Indigenous employees because it 'is too much work'.⁴⁶

7.28 Mission Australia added that although the intent is there, the Indigenous Coordination Centres are not breaking down the silos and it is still a top-down approach.⁴⁷ When a realistic community need is identified:

At the moment, a government department may not have money but one might have this much money, which is not going to address the whole-of-community need. So without doing that you are really putting the community in a predicament where you say there is a whole-of-government approach to service delivery to address the needs within community but there is no way the government can deliver it.⁴⁸

7.29 Mission Australia has found that there remains a compartmentalisation of employment within government:

The employment department deals with employment, but Indigenous clients who are coming to us, as with all of our clients – and we have done a survey of our staff around this issue – often will come for employment needs, for training needs, accommodation needs, they will have drug and alcohol needs,

43 Mr Trevor Stutley, Human Resources Manager, Administration, Adelaide City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 21.

44 Mr Brian Varcoe, Development and Liaison Officer, Human Resources, Administration, Adelaide City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 21.

45 Indigenous Business Australia, *Submission 104*, p. 26.

46 Mr Bruce McQualter, Regional Manager, NSW North West. ANZ Regional and Rural Banking, Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 16.

47 Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 49.

48 Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 49.

they will have mental health issues. Our compartmentalising does not facilitate meeting all of their needs. So how can you move to employment unless you are addressing accommodation needs, mental health et cetera?⁴⁹

- 7.30 The Committee appreciates that employment may only be achieved after many other issues are dealt with. Mission Australia commented that the compartmentalisation is one of the major challenges and suggested that unless the social needs are addressed there will be no change.⁵⁰ Mission Australia suggested an approach where:

... funding is actually related to the person and the person's needs, diverse and complex as they are, with a set of outcomes being, perhaps, secure accommodation, moving into employment, dealing with drugs and alcohol et cetera.⁵¹

- 7.31 Sustainable Indigenous employment has a basis in education and being work ready and appreciating that there is a purpose in having a job.

Funding is so disjointed. When you talk about employment, it is not separate from housing, it is not separate from education. It is not separate.⁵²

- 7.32 Mission Australia stressed that:

... there needs to be some flexible bucket of money or whatever that can be accessed for innovative approaches to dealing with whole of community needs. It does not exist and it is too hard for any community – black, white or brindle; I don't care – to keep having to go to all these different buckets and try to make up all the bits and pieces that will make an improvement to a community.⁵³

- 7.33 Improved coordination between state and Federal training and employment agencies is a critical factor to ensure adequate planning and

49 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 47.

50 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 47; Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 48.

51 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 47.

52 Mr Mark King, Member, Purga Elders and Descendants Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 July 2005, p. 55.

53 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 66.

resources to secure Indigenous jobs through select tendering and negotiated employment agreements with industry.⁵⁴

But it requires government to be listening. It requires government to be flexible in program delivery and to be responsive and then to be accountable back to the community ... We still have some work to do. But there has been a significant shift.⁵⁵

7.34 Lack of coordination was raised frequently throughout the inquiry.

... without a collaborative and strategic approach to literacy training, fit for work programs and family support, the number of local Indigenous people employed will continue to be relatively low.⁵⁶

7.35 Ms Jody Broun believes that coordinating across government is critical to ensure mainstream programs do their job.⁵⁷ The Queensland Government emphasised that:

A disparity of coordination and cooperative arrangements between government, industry, training providers and Indigenous communities impedes the flexible delivery and holistic approach needed to address Indigenous employment, social and cultural issues.⁵⁸

7.36 The New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs is establishing regional offices which will co-locate with the Indigenous Coordination Centres to assist in coordination between State and Commonwealth agencies.⁵⁹

There are far too many agencies and far too many programs, with little coordination and cooperation, making it difficult for miners to recruit and retain Indigenous employees and making it difficult for the communities to understand just what is on offer from government.⁶⁰

54 Great Southern Development Commission, *Submission No. 68*, p. 2.

55 Ms Jody Broun, Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2006, p. 89.

56 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 16.

57 Ms Jody Broun, Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2006, p. 94. See also Aboriginal Education Council (NSW) Inc, *Submission No. 38*, p. 2.

58 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 4.

59 Ms Jody Broun, Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2006, p. 91.

60 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 2.

7.37 Dr Patrick Sullivan stressed the complexity of the task:

The coordination across government departments obviously needs to improve, as I think everybody has recognised with this new approach. But there also needs to be coordination at the community level. It is not a straightforward matter to go into an Aboriginal community and ask, 'What do you need here and then what are you going to do?' Who are you talking to? What are the dynamics of the community? How are they related to other community and regional structures? Who speaks for the community? What are the impediments? No matter what they say, what is standing in the way of their being able to deliver? Those are very complex things.⁶¹

7.38 Dr Sullivan added that he remained unconvinced that the Indigenous Coordination Centres had the skills to deal with these complex situations:

They are supposed to be coordinating government services. On the other hand, they are supposed to be negotiating these complex shared responsibility agreements. Initially, my feeling is that they do not have the skills and resources to carry out that important job ... I do not think the ICCs will ever have those necessary resources and skills, and nor should they if they are able to rely on regional representative structures that will be able to deal with those sorts of grassroots issues themselves.⁶²

7.39 Work has commenced in this area. Seven pilot sites have been chosen for collaborative work between the Minerals Council of Australia and the Commonwealth:

The critical difference is that the communities themselves are taking charge of the agenda. Instead of government expenditure programs being checked off by somebody wearing long socks and with a laptop flying in and ticking things off, the agendas and the assurance process are being run by regional partnership committees made up of, in the case of Weipa, people from Comalco, local business people, Aboriginal people, Aboriginal council members and chamber of commerce members – in other words, it is not an Aboriginal problem any more; it is a matter of a community working together to develop opportunity. It is not

61 Dr Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, pp. 7-8.

62 Dr Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, p. 8.

quarantined and isolated out there as something that the civil servants flying in and the Aboriginal people are going to resolve for themselves. The broader community has bought into it. Where I can see it heading is that they will take overall accountability for the proper disbursement of those funds and the performance delivery. All they want is access to the resources.⁶³

7.40 The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination referred to the 'deep seated' ways the Public Service operates:

By and large we deliver services and approach our client base quite successfully for the bulk of Australians, and that involves people working in functional specialisations. For many Indigenous Australians, that has not worked, and we need to do it differently, but it is hard turning the efforts and energies of the service for what is a relatively small part of the population, but a critical one, when things are by and large working fairly well with reasonable outcomes in regard to the overwhelming majority. That is the challenge that is in front of us.⁶⁴

7.41 Mission Australia stress that there is much more to learn about working with Indigenous communities:

We have learnt over the years that you can set up any number of services to target Indigenous communities. Even if they're staffed and run by Indigenous workers, it doesn't mean they will be willing to participate. Things need to be taken slowly, and done in consultation with/alongside the Indigenous community elders. They need to see a reason to access the service, and be comfortable with how it is presented, and how they are treated.⁶⁵

7.42 The Yamatji Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation operates through working groups. Each working group is nominated by the native title claim groups and have authority to make decisions on behalf of the community about native title matters.⁶⁶

Working groups have the potential to take a leadership role in strategic planning for their communities and the success of this

63 Mr Bruce Harvey, Chief Advisor, Aboriginal and Community Relations, Rio Tinto Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 40.

64 Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 May 2006, p. 16.

65 Mission Australia, *Submission No. 90*, p. 4.

66 Yamatji Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 98*, p. 2.

model means that governments do not have to re-invent the wheel when it comes to engaging with Aboriginal communities.⁶⁷

- 7.43 Another suggestion from the Great Southern Development Commission was a Regional Indigenous Training and Employment Forum to bring together public sector training, employment and development agencies to coordinate Indigenous employment initiatives with job network members, Centrelink, relevant Aboriginal bodies and registered training organisations.⁶⁸

Community consultation

It is about having faith in a community's ability to deliver for itself ... Our program is designed to get creative thinking rolling, to bring out the flair, to get people working to their strengths.⁶⁹

- 7.44 Advice to the Committee was unequivocal:

The drift is that it is not a bad idea to shut up and listen, to understand the enormous cultural diversity and to understand that they operate and act in a manner that is quite different from our traditions of the Westminster system of government. As I said before, it is a case not so much of giving government a kick in the backside but of urging them to start to look at this from a different perspective than has been the traditional platform of the way governments deliver programs.⁷⁰

- 7.45 Mission Australia believes that communities are not being listened to and they are being told that 'This is what you can have'.⁷¹ Administrators and project coordinators need to listen to the community before deciding on community development directions.⁷² It is critical that Indigenous people on appropriate regional representative bodies are involved in the delivery of Indigenous employment services.⁷³ Mr Jonathon Link made the point

67 Yamatji Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 98*, p. 3.

68 Great Southern Development Commission, *Submission No. 68*, p. 3.

69 Mr Richard Estens, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 November 2003, for *Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous communities*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, p. 1383.

70 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 6.

71 Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, pp. 49-50.

72 Nyirragu Muay Wurrga'ada Association Inc, *Submission No. 48*, p. 11.

73 Great Southern Development Commission, *Submission No. 68*, p. 3.

that you must involve the clan groups as you cannot expect talking to one person will bring others to the table.⁷⁴

- 7.46 One of the basic objectives of Rio Tinto's Indigenous Employment Strategy is that 'outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will result from listening to them'.⁷⁵

Rio Tinto appreciates that relationships between mining companies and Indigenous people must be built on trust, sound local area governance, formal recognition of Indigenous land connection, and shared participation in the mainstream economy in areas where the Group operates.⁷⁶

- 7.47 The approach needs to include all chambers of commerce, confederations of industry and trade unions. Employment programs based on cooperation between local Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have been the most successful.⁷⁷ Programs that bring communities together in education and employment have great potential because of the opportunity for cooperation and understanding between communities.⁷⁸

- 7.48 There has been considerable success in the work being done in the Goulburn Valley:

... we have people aligned in the private sector, in business, across government with the COAG process and across industry and civic leaders in Shepparton who want to make a change and see this as an issue facing the community rather than isolating it as an Aboriginal issue of Aboriginal unemployment. I think that has been one of the wins that we identify when we talk about the capacity now of the Goulburn Valley to be innovative and to put down a model ...⁷⁹

- 7.49 The Negotiation Table process used by the Queensland Government has been successful in assisting a more co-ordinated approach for whole-of-government and industry.⁸⁰ The Cairns City Council, however, stressed

74 Mr Jonathon Link, Community Liaison and Development Officer, Mental Health Program, Royal Flying Doctor Service, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 53.

75 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 7.

76 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 3.

77 Aboriginal Education Council (NSW) Inc, *Submission No. 38*, p. 2.

78 Aboriginal Education Council (NSW) Inc, *Submission No. 38*, p. 2.

79 Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 2.

80 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 4.

the need for Job Networks to go into the suburbs and suggested they visit the community centres where they can sit down and talk to people.⁸¹

Social capital and infrastructure

7.50 The Minerals Council of Australia emphasised the responsibility of government to build social capital and infrastructure in Indigenous communities. This includes health, education and welfare services and work readiness skills, life skills, financial management skills, family support services, numeracy and literacy programs and fitness for work programs.⁸² There are a limited number of job ready candidates of people with employability skills:

This can create a free rider effect, where companies are enticing Indigenous employees away from other companies who have invested heavily in their training and development. We are seen to be stripping capacity out of communities, threatening their sustainability, or cherry-picking good employees. There are plenty of diesel mechanics moving out of local garages and across to the mining community. There are people coming out of the fish and chips shops and the local newsagencies and getting a job. The local accountant is getting a job with us. That is why we concentrate on building sustainable communities, not just on corporate employment programs.⁸³

7.51 ‘Cherry-picking’ good employees from communities means they are losing skilled people to the mining companies without being able to backfill these positions and this makes it difficult to maintain the high level of service to their communities.⁸⁴

Improving succession planning and building capacity in communities will enable a larger pool of people to be job ready so that as one employer attracts an employee the opportunity for new jobs are opened up and are able to be filled by local people.⁸⁵

81 Ms Joy Wii, Community Planning and Development Officer, Cairns City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 21.

82 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 2.

83 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 2.

84 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 15.

85 Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 15.

- 7.52 What is required is mainstream support services that can 'provide work readiness in a culturally appropriate manner'.⁸⁶ Consideration needs to be given to providing employment and training opportunities in a way that the skills can be retained in the community.⁸⁷ Work life balance is different for Indigenous people and flexible working arrangements are necessary.⁸⁸

There are a lot of factors that have led to failure in the past. Not the least of these is the assumption that mainstream programs will work. They don't because they are designed for white people who live in cities or large towns and they miss key elements that would support success.⁸⁹

Working with Indigenous communities

- 7.53 A recent review of the COAG trials found that one of the major challenges was that:

Many government staff lacked the skills and experience to work in whole of government and intergovernmental approaches. This was mirrored by many community leaders needing increased skills in relation to community governance and capacity building.⁹⁰

- 7.54 Mr Anthony Kelly, AFL Northern Territory Ltd emphasised that:

... we must first consider the need to do things with Aboriginal people, not to or for Aboriginal people. Words such as 'ownership' and 'empowerment' will only resonate truly if they are backed by policy that is inclusive of Indigenous Australians from the outset.⁹¹

- 7.55 Pilbara Iron believes that relationships are built on respect and the provision of practical support.⁹²

86 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 3.

87 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 13.

88 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 3.

89 Yulella Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 37*, p. 3.

90 *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations; Report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination*, Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd, Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, November 2006, p. 6.

91 Mr Anthony Kelly, Participation Manager, AFL Northern Territory Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 61.

92 Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 19.

Equally important is to ensure that future policy initiatives actively engage indigenous people and/or their communities in the development, implementation and monitoring of employment and training programs, especially in rural and remote areas. Too often programs are created that appear on the surface to meet community needs, but fail because they are not accepted or understood by the people they were intended to support. The lack of consultation/engagement is not intentional but a result of not knowing who to involve or how to involve them.⁹³

7.56 Mission Australia believes that a multi-level response is needed which may include working with the extended family and community:

The complexity of issues confronting many Indigenous clients also means that simply dealing with one presenting issue, whether it be unemployment or homelessness, will not bring about sustainable and positive change.⁹⁴

7.57 Mission Australia has a best practice model in five key areas:

- *Holistic and strengths based responses* which help build a strong sense of cultural awareness;
- *Program flexibility* as local input is needed to ensure appropriateness and it may be difficult to replicate the successes of one area in another;
- *Partnerships* with a range of organisations, government agencies and business have achieved good outcomes;
- *Relationships* at the individual and organisational levels can achieve real and sustainable outcomes; and
- *Mentoring and access to ongoing support* and mentors need to be viewed as mainstream as these are key elements of successful initiatives.⁹⁵

7.58 Another issue raised was the lack of consistency within the Indigenous Employment Centres.⁹⁶ The Committee believes that there would be some benefit in reviewing the quality controls and accountability of these

93 South Australian Government, *Submission No. 110*, p. 8.

94 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 42.

95 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, pp. 42-43.

96 Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 50.

centres. It was suggested that it may be beneficial to move staff from the metropolitan areas because of the level of expertise.⁹⁷

There is a fear within government departments – both Commonwealth and state – that putting staff into communities like that is difficult because first you have to attract them. They need to look at the capacity within the community already. I know of several communities that have highly qualified Indigenous people within their communities but do not have exactly what that government department is saying in their selection criteria so therefore they do not get employed. I know of a COAG trial where there were two qualified social workers in that community yet they had social workers visiting. I struggle with that. Communities have capacity but people do not look at the community's capacity. They just keep imposing and bringing in.⁹⁸

7.59 Mr Ian Fletcher, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder commented on the tendency of non-Indigenous people to be patronising. He believes that if you treat Indigenous people as equals they are terrific to work with.⁹⁹ The trust factor is important and has been developed over a long term relationship with the local Indigenous communities.¹⁰⁰

... best practice are based on situations where there are longstanding relationships with Indigenous communities and demonstrable mutual benefit, mutual trust and mutual respect. That is a fundamental precursor to success.¹⁰¹

7.60 The National Tertiary Education Union saw as critical the need for leadership to embrace the principles of an Indigenous employment strategy and to have a senior Indigenous person with:

... a strong mandate or capacity in the decision making process, particularly in relation to the development and implementation of Indigenous program activity relative to the organisation.¹⁰²

97 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 51.

98 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 52.

99 Mr Ian Fletcher, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 14.

100 Mission Australia Employment Services Bega, *Submission No. 99*, p. 2.

101 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 6.

102 Mr Joel Wright, Indigenous Officer, National Tertiary Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 27.

7.61 In Indigenous culture family is everything and when there are one or two family members earning a wage, it can put a strain on family relationships.¹⁰³ Miss Jane Lawton believes that it is negligent to look at the employment strategy and not the social needs of the community:

... but there are people being brought into a status by having a job and being able to move up, and those sorts of things, and people get envious and there are more conflicts. There are traumas with people thinking, 'Well, why didn't I get the opportunity?' and all those sorts of things. Those are social concerns.¹⁰⁴

7.62 Indigenous policies need to be flexible and allow for difference, have the capacity to allow the people in the communities to make decisions and for governments to make effective the rhetoric about coordinated approaches and have the same policy parameters across the various agencies.

Indigenous youth have shown that they can make a significant contribution within the local labour market. They only need the opportunity and a bit of encouragement and support to make a successful transition into the workforce.¹⁰⁵

Relationships

7.63 Newmont Australia Ltd stressed the point that it is a layered approach, emphasising that it is 'absolutely about relationships':

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 ... 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.¹⁰⁶

7.64 Mr John Corboy believes it is not about money and comes down to whether the Government genuinely wants Indigenous communities to

103 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 66.

104 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 65.

105 Job Futures – Bunbury, *Submission No. 30*, p. 2.

106 Mr Lester Davis, Manager, Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, pp. 38-39.

take ownership and participate in addressing the issues.¹⁰⁷ A reoccurring theme throughout the inquiry was that responses from government are not giving local ownership. Implementation of national policies must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate and support local solutions. One of the issues raised was:

The issue is not so much layers of jurisdiction but a preparedness by departments to accept that a methodology which looks and acts differently to their own is in fact legitimate.¹⁰⁸

7.65 Mr Corboy has found that the system is so rigid that you are unable to participate unless you fit into an existing program.¹⁰⁹

Or is it a matter of 'You can play, as long as it is by my rules, even if it does not make any commercial sense to you'? The response from business people is, 'We can go and make money.' None of us get paid for this. There is no vested interest for us. I think there is an enormous chasm there that needs to be bridged. I am not saying it is the government's fault, DEWR's fault or the employer's fault. I think there needs to be one good dose of commonsense in here.¹¹⁰

Partnerships

7.66 Pilbara Iron have found programs to be most successful when they work in partnership with others; government agencies, non-government organisations or communities.¹¹¹ The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry described partnerships between industry, communities and governments as central to what they do.¹¹² The Aboriginal Employment Strategy has also found partnerships to be pivotal:

I can sum up the success of our programs in six words
"Partnerships, partnerships, partnerships, mentors, mentors,
mentors".¹¹³

107 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 5.

108 Mr Anthony Cutcliffe, Director, The Eureka Project Pty Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 11.

109 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 6.

110 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 5.

111 Mrs Kellie McCrum, Superintendent Training and Development, Pilbara Iron, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 20.

112 Mr Dean O'Neil, National Manager, Indigenous Employment and Training, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 1.

113 Mr Richards Estens, *Don't care should care - Anti-Poverty Week*, www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=83 (accessed on 6 May 2007, p. 3).

7.67 The Minerals Council of Australia has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Government.¹¹⁴ MCA added that:

... it is hoped that the MOU will deliver enhanced Government accountability and service delivery to Indigenous people through improved access to:

- literacy and numeracy education;
- work readiness initiatives such as Fitness to Work programs;
- the acquisition of standard vehicle licences;
- drug and alcohol services;
- financial services;
- family support services including child care and counselling services; and
- human and financial capital to facilitate Indigenous enterprise development.¹¹⁵

7.68 The minerals industry sees government's responsibility as 'providing an enabling framework and community capacity to take up the opportunities offered by the industry, through the provision of quality public infrastructure, in terms of education, health and welfare'.¹¹⁶

... to ensure that Indigenous people are work-ready and have the appropriate support for themselves, their families and communities post employment, to stay in employment.¹¹⁷

Evaluation processes

7.69 An issue that arose repeatedly in the evidence to the inquiry was that of adequacy of the data collected. Incorrect data on the Indigenous population was a particular problem as this has implications for policy development, strategic planning and deciding future directions.¹¹⁸

7.70 The Committee remains concerned about the adequacy of data on which to base the formulation of new government policy. Notwithstanding DEWR's collection data mechanisms in various programs, given the whole

114 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, p. 2.

115 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, pp. 2-3.

116 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, p. 3.

117 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, p. 3.

118 For example see Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 2; Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 3; Centre of Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, *Submission No. 72*, p. 3; Mr Adrian Appo, Executive Officer, Ganbina Koori Economic Employment and Training Agency, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 75.

of government approach, this information needs to be available to the industry and community participants in a useful format.

- 7.71 Dr Michael Dockery expressed concern over what he saw as a lack of transparency and rigour in the evaluation of Indigenous labour market programs and economic policy.¹¹⁹ He referred to the mismatch between the objectives outlined in the policy documents and the measured outcomes. The basic elements of an evaluation framework are missing:

Having decided the objectives, you put in place some policy or processes that for some theoretical reason you believe is going to help bring about those outcomes that you want. Then to evaluate whether it is working or not you have some indicators, which you believe measure whether or not you are moving towards those objectives. These things are fundamental to any evaluation that you might conduct.¹²⁰

- 7.72 The way that performance is measured for Indigenous employment programs can undermine effective program delivery:

This is compounded by a lack of understanding of the social, cultural, and economic issues confronting Indigenous people by those responsible for making decisions about policies, programs and services to achieve Indigenous employment outcomes.¹²¹

- 7.73 The setting of goals must be realistic with the political and administrative capacity to achieve them.¹²²

... at the end of the day you do not want to be too hung up about achieving a particular number, which you may end up not achieving because of something completely out of your control like a world downturn. You had the example when the Job Network came in where people were given targets and they were funded according to certain placements. The really successful Job Networks ended up placing their full allotment and had to shut up shop because they were too successful. They had met their targets. If you achieve your targets, does that mean you then stop trying? I have concerns about targets. I think principles are more important.¹²³

119 Dr Michael Dockery, *Submission No. 6*, p. 1.

120 Dr Michael Dockery, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 December 2005, p. 1.

121 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 6.

122 Dr Michael Dockery, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 December 2005, pp. 6-7.

123 Dr Michael Dockery, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 December 2005, p. 7.

- 7.74 The Kaurna Heritage Board called for comprehensive longitudinal surveys and evaluations of Indigenous employment throughout Australia.¹²⁴ Rio Tinto Ltd is contributing to the development of a tool kit on Indigenous employment to assist mining companies to achieve improved employment outcomes.¹²⁵ The minerals industry has needed to build towns, hospitals, schools, airfields and railways line because there is an opportunity cost in a highly competitive market in waiting for governments.¹²⁶

Currency audit

- 7.75 Ms Deemal-Hall emphasised the need for a currency audit to identify the expertise available within government agencies and the communities' ability to engage in negotiations before commencing negotiations, including those for shared responsibility agreements.¹²⁷

We need to get our stories straight and also know what each of us can do, what our strengths and weaknesses are. I do not think we have really done a blueprint of what we bring to the table. You get some communities that already know exactly where they want to go, but government is a bit slow on the uptake.¹²⁸

- 7.76 Departments are not working collaboratively and sharing information and it is important to recognise strengths and weaknesses in community governance.¹²⁹ Ms Deemal-Hall suggested that departments could engage with other areas such as police and customs so that they can access the expertise and skills of other areas. In relation to the culture of engagement, in some situations one partner has more power than the other:

... it is not really a partnership and when we engage we are not really engaging. The same could be said about education and employment. We have people who are part of the work first program but are only passively working or passively getting educated. It is really about nutting out what the culture is that we are going to use in terms of engagement, what we will not use and how we are going to action that.¹³⁰

124 Kaurna Heritage Board, *Submission No. 49*, p. 1.

125 Mr Bruce Harvey, Chief Advisor, Aboriginal and Community Relations, Rio Tinto Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 41.

126 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, pp. 4-5.

127 Ms Eileen Deemal-Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 45.

128 Ms Eileen Deemal-Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 48.

129 Ms Eileen Deemal-Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 49.

130 Ms Eileen Deemal-Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 47.

7.77 This will lead to the next stage which is one of mentoring change and accountability.¹³¹ Mr Leigh Cleghorn would like to see greater accountability of Aboriginal organisations:

... the accountability from federal and state funding bureaucracies is not making people accountable enough when things first start to go wrong and then expecting it to be fixed, is not the answer. The bureaucracy should be having more of a hand in what is going on all the time, perhaps a bit of input before it goes too far, so that people do not get an expectation of, 'That's how things are. That's how we can operate. The money keeps coming.'¹³²

7.78 Dr Patrick Sullivan made the point that Indigenous Coordination Centres have a very difficult job as they need to be responsive to Canberra, have a policy coordination role for government agencies which are not under their control, Indigenous regional politics, regional social relations and community relations in discrete settlements.¹³³ The skills on which senior public servants are recruited may not be the skills set needed to negotiate with communities. The logistics are also difficult because of the large areas involved:

You would either be spending all your time out of the office, and not doing the work that you are supposed to be doing back in the office, or you would be spending all your time in the office and not knowing what is happening on the ground. There are structural constraints, cultural constraints and constraints of knowledge and skills which I think are going to make the job of these ICC managers extremely difficult.¹³⁴

7.79 Indigenous Coordination Centres may be able to utilise organisations to act as an intermediary with the communities or regions.

Those organisations will be able to have more time on the ground and will have the necessary skills – not necessarily in a single individual. Some of those people will be good at communicating with the communities, other people will have skills in putting together plans and other people will be good at negotiating with

131 Ms Eileen Deemal-Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 47.

132 Mr Leigh Cleghorn, Manager, Umoona Aged Care Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 62.

133 Dr Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, p. 10.

134 Dr Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, p. 11.

government. The difficulty for OIPC is how to negotiate the relationship with such NGOs.¹³⁵

- 7.80 The consistent theme of evidence to the Committee was the apparent lack of communication between government agencies. Ganbina Koori Economic Employment and Training Agency summarised the situation as:

A scattergun approach to deal with Indigenous employment – and by that I mean funding a number of agencies to go and do a whole lot of different things, where there is a lot of crossover and similar things – creates a huge amount of confusion both for the individuals within the community and for the employer groups we are dealing with. If we are serious about changing the situation, we need to be more concentrated and defined in how we work forward. The last thing we can afford is for individuals being confused and dropping out of the process. Similarly, we cannot afford to have 15 people all knocking on the door of business and industry saying, ‘Take my person, take my person,’ so they withdraw from the process. That is the very reality that we are tripping over ... It can become a quagmire of service provision...¹³⁶

- 7.81 Kimberley Group Training believes there needs to be an acknowledgement of those working in the field who have the skills, knowledge and ability to progress this.¹³⁷ The Wunan Foundation raised the issue of feedback to the government:

There are not really a lot of formal structures in place to provide feedback to government. Policies tend to come out and we never have an opportunity to discuss those. We have irregular discussions with senior people in the bureaucracy. They tend to be informal rather than formal and not policy focused on what we are doing. There is the regional partnership agreement process ... which may provide a better structure for communication with government and achieve some real coordination of government resourcing into this sort of stuff.¹³⁸

135 Dr Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, p. 11.

136 Mr Adrian Appo, Executive Officer, Ganbina Koori Economic Employment and Training Agency, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, pp. 79- 80.

137 Mr John Gummery, Chief Executive Officer, Kimberley Group Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 22.

138 Mr David Addis, Chief Executive Officer, Wunan Foundation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 18.

Funding arrangements

- 7.82 The South Australian Government would like to see a stock-take of funding available for training and employment at the federal and state levels and the possible broad-banding of funding arrangements for Indigenous training and employment to enable greater flexibility in the use of resources.¹³⁹ A discretionary budget would enable people who live and work and who have a much better understanding of the local requirements to make the decisions.¹⁴⁰ Local decision making and cross-pollination of available funds while maintaining accountability for taxpayer funds would be a better approach which would enable progress beyond the previous silo approach.¹⁴¹ The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder have a 'heads of agency' meeting where a collective view is taken and one agency then coordinates and leads the process for that particular issue.¹⁴²
- 7.83 One off funding grants can establish a program but do not enable it to continue.¹⁴³ There is no quick fix and long-term solutions require long-term funding.¹⁴⁴ It was argued that many people in the current system may need at least 18 months to deal with a multitude of issues and to skill them up.¹⁴⁵
- 7.84 Dubbo City Council has found success with funding arrangements which enable three years of employment. Those demonstrating abilities over that period have been able to win permanent positions with Council.¹⁴⁶
- 7.85 Support from the wider Indigenous community could also enhance the success of the projects.¹⁴⁷

A further challenge for all governments is to ensure that employment programs are developed and funded in ways that permit indigenous people to become, in time, providers of training and employment in their own communities ... It is now well recognised that improved opportunities at the community level

139 South Australian Government, *Submission No. 110*, p. 8.

140 Mr Ian Fletcher, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 8.

141 Mr Ian Fletcher, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, pp. 6-7.

142 Mr Ian Fletcher, Chief Executive Officer, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 8.

143 Bankstown City Council, *Submission No. 55*, p. 1.

144 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 8.

145 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 8.

146 Dubbo City Council, *Submission No. 56*, p. 1.

147 Bankstown City Council, *Submission No. 55*, p. 1.

can be a key driver in generating long-term viable employment outcomes as well as breaking the dependency on government welfare.¹⁴⁸

- 7.86 Mrs Cheryle Taylor argued strongly for a longer funding arrangement for Indigenous specialist employment services dealing with highly disadvantaged clients.¹⁴⁹ In the construction industry, for example, continuity of funding is important because most traineeships and apprenticeships are over several years.¹⁵⁰ The time issue is critical and there is a need to understand and be sensitive to what is required to empower Indigenous people.¹⁵¹

A key thing is that governments give Aboriginal people money for a few years and then just pull it. It is a constant process. There is no organisation that is building, building, building, building career paths and going for the long-term outcome. Three times the rug tried to be pulled from under this organisation and that is the tragedy. The government owns the Aboriginal issue. Surely in this country now we are about getting people working and building the partnerships.¹⁵²

- 7.87 The South Australian Government has made funding available to the Tauondi College for four years and this provides a passage for students.¹⁵³

Flexibility of government programs

- 7.88 Voyagers Hotels and Resorts commented on the flexibility of DEWR programs when they experienced difficulties in finding local Indigenous people to undertake the required Certificate course under the contract for the Structured Training and Employment Program.¹⁵⁴

One of the things that I have identified is flexibility. It has to be flexible. It goes back to work practices – they have to be flexible ...

148 South Australian Government, *Submission No. 110*, p. 8.

149 Mrs Cheryle Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Manguri Employment Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 2.

150 Cullacabardee Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission No. 12*, p. 2.

151 Mrs Cheryle Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Manguri Employment Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 11.

152 Mr Richard Estens, Chairman, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 11.

153 Mr Lou Hutchinson, Director, Employment Programs, Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 5.

154 Ms Simone Haynes, Executive General Manager, Human Resources, Voyagers Hotels and Resorts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 5.

These contracts and any type of funding have to have the flexibility inbuilt. It cannot be rigid, because it is not a matter of one size fits all.¹⁵⁵

- 7.89 There were also a number of suggestions for enhancements to the current STEP program which could provide some up-front payments and thus reduce the financial risk for the employer.¹⁵⁶

Coordination of government approaches

- 7.90 Universities are now required to have an Indigenous Employment strategy and that Indigenous people are involved in the decision making processes of the institution.¹⁵⁷ The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) expressed concern that DEWR and DEST have advised some universities to remove references to their Indigenous employment strategies from their enterprise agreements pursuant to being compliant with the Higher Education Workplace Reforms Requirements.¹⁵⁸ This was explained as allowing flexibility for management to change the resource allocations over time.¹⁵⁹ The NTEU believes that there should be recognition of the circumstances of a particular policy objective in the application of a general principle.¹⁶⁰
- 7.91 The NTEU believes that the binding requirements in the enterprise agreements has been one of the major drivers in the 24 per cent increase in Indigenous employment in the tertiary education sector over a four to five year period.¹⁶¹ The NTEU believes that Indigenous employment in Australian universities is trending in the right direction.¹⁶² The Committee

155 Ms Simone Haynes, Executive General Manager, Human Resources, Voyagers Hotels and Resorts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 5.

156 Mr Murray Coates, General Manager, East Kimberley Job Pathways, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 14.

157 Mr Joel Wright, Indigenous Officer, National Tertiary Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 22.

158 Mr Joel Wright, Indigenous Officer, National Tertiary Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 23.

159 Mr Grahame McCulloch, General Secretary, National Tertiary Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 23.

160 Mr Grahame McCulloch, General Secretary, National Tertiary Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 23.

161 Mr Grahame McCulloch, General Secretary, National Tertiary Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 24.

162 National Tertiary Education Union, *Submission No. 76*, p. 7.

has been told that the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council is aware of this contradiction.¹⁶³

- 7.92 The Committee believes that in situations where there are unintended adverse consequences from recent reforms that the move to greater flexibility should not override essential aspects of existing agreements in a manner that disadvantages a particular group. The Government should enter into genuine discussions with all key stakeholders to identify the implications of the industrial reforms and alter the policies where appropriate.

The Future

*This is my passion. I am employed and I can make a difference.*¹⁶⁴

- 7.93 Reverend Dr Gondarra OAM, Chairman of the Arnhemland Progress Association summarized the current situation as dependency being ‘one of the biggest diseases in Australia’.¹⁶⁵ He stressed that handouts will not help Aboriginal people and that unemployment is now one of the biggest concerns and that his people need to take up the challenge.¹⁶⁶

This is where the government needs to start to think very seriously that unemployment is a disease, it is killing our people. People are dying – in 10 or 20 years time a lot of the people are going to die. It is creating a health problem: they sit and do nothing. I think this is where we need to start to think about it seriously. Dependency is killing people. If we want Aboriginal people to be educated, give them opportunity. There must be an open door where they can find jobs rather than sitting and doing nothing. ALPA has 200 employees. There is a challenge and we always need to see that our people get something to do.¹⁶⁷

- 7.94 Dr Foley commented, however, that:

163 Mr Grahame McCulloch, General Secretary, National Tertiary Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 24.

164 Ms Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 66.

165 Reverend Dr Djiniyini Goondarra, Chairman, Arnhemland Progress Association Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 59.

166 Reverend Dr Djiniyini Goondarra, Chairman, Arnhemland Progress Association Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 59.

167 Reverend Dr Djiniyini Goondarra, Chairman, Arnhemland Progress Association Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 60.

We are entering a new era in Indigenous Australian history. This is characterised by a new structure in Indigenous leadership, a new philosophy of mutual responsibility and a greater awareness of the plight of indigenous people.¹⁶⁸

One size does not fit all

7.95 A collaborative approach is needed as Australia is facing the economic implications of an ageing population, labour shortages and a five per cent unemployment rate of which a significant proportion are Indigenous people.¹⁶⁹ The COAG trials were implemented in different ways at the various locations:

Flexible approaches need to be applied which reflect the individual circumstances of communities, the nature of the issues facing communities, and the developmental status of intergovernmental and cross sectoral relationships. There cannot be a one size fits all approach.¹⁷⁰

7.96 Newmont Australia Ltd told the Committee that Government should:

... 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.¹⁷¹

7.97 Dr Foley emphasised the need for different policies and progressions for different groups of Indigenous people.¹⁷²

... the field of Indigenous affairs is littered with the unintended consequences of people trying to do good things. We must learn from that.¹⁷³

7.98 One policy will not fit everyone and there needs to be put in place different steps for the ladder of progression of economic development for

168 Dr Dennis Foley, *Indigenous Australian Entrepreneurs: Successful and Invisible*, Opening statement to the House of Representative Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 23 May 2005, p. 6, *Exhibit No. 42*.

169 Mr Bernie Carlon, General Manager, Employment and Indigenous Initiatives, Queensland Department of Employment and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 July 2005, p. 17.

170 *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations; Report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination*, Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd, Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, November 2006, p. 7.

171 Mr Lester Davis, Manager, Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 39.

172 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 8.

173 Mr Dennis Bree, Chairman, Northern Territory Government Task Force on Indigenous Economic Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 2.

these groups.¹⁷⁴ For example, policies, resources and legislation appear to be geared to remote Indigenous peoples and the situation in urban areas is very different.¹⁷⁵

7.99 There are also differences at the individual level.

I think one thing is overlooked here, and it is culture. It is a culture of men and boys and women and girls entering the workforce. Men generally are like a football team: they get together and support each other. When you have a contractor like Spotless which can provide manual labour and a blokey environment outdoors, you will have success. I do not know anything about nursing, but you have a group of women with their uniforms on – that type of environment is conducive to good outcomes because the culture bit is there.¹⁷⁶

National approach

7.100 Evidence to the Committee suggested that there could be improvements in taking a longer term national approach. The Queensland Government would like to see a strategic national policy framework developed in consultation with the state and territory governments, local government, Indigenous communities, peak industry bodies and unions to work to achieve enhanced employment outcomes for Indigenous employment.¹⁷⁷ Indigenous Business Australia called for a national reference group to link vocational education and training, employment, professional development, business opportunities, business management, industry strategies and regional strategies.¹⁷⁸ Mr Ian Trust would like to see a 10 to 20 year long-term vision or strategy for Aboriginal people.¹⁷⁹

The domino effect

7.101 Dr Foley's research has shown that:

174 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 8. See also Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 48.

175 Mr Paul Tulloch, Manager, Strategic Planning, City of Onkaparinga, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 39.

176 Mr Mikael Smith, Coordinator, Aboriginal and Multicultural Policy and Programs, City of Port Phillip Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 60.

177 Queensland Government, *Submission No. 105*, p. 12.

178 Indigenous Business Australia, *Submission No. 104*, p. 27.

179 Mr Ian Trust, Executive Director, Wunan Foundation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 July 2006, p. 33.

... if we can invest in even one Indigenous person and allow them to be successful in business, somewhere between 24 and 38 people in their family structure can be affected directly or indirectly.¹⁸⁰

7.102 Dr Foley observed that:

Interestingly, the greatest capital investment is human capital, which is the development of their children. If we understand the Greeks, Italians and the Vietnamese who have come to Australia as migrants, the first generation work hard as labourers, build up their capital and invest it into their children, who go through university. It is exciting to now see second generation Indigenous children from the entrepreneur going through into professional areas or as second generation entrepreneurs. When I started this 14 years ago I did not see any of that.¹⁸¹

7.103 Dr Foley added that:

There is so much negativity in our community ... but there are positives out there, If we do not have a glimmer of hope, we have nothing.¹⁸²

Cultural connect

7.104 The success of a cross-cultural work team requires flexibility, trust and open and honest communication.¹⁸³ The recent review of the COAG trials found that:

Government staff need training in how to engage with respect for the protocols and processes in Indigenous communities; this is particularly true for those staff who are new to Indigenous affairs or to the community.¹⁸⁴

7.105 Some of the issues for government programs are about sensitivity and cultural awareness and 'the road to hell is often paved with good intentions'.¹⁸⁵

180 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 6.

181 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 5.

182 Dr Dennis Foley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p. 14.

183 Alice Springs Desert Park, *Submission No. 84*, p. 1.

184 *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations; Report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination*, Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd, Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, November 2006, p. 7.

185 Mr Lou Hutchinson, Director, Employment Programs, Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 5.

The basis of recognition and respect for indigenous people lies with an understanding and awareness of Indigenous cultures and the issues facing indigenous people today within and outside the workplace.¹⁸⁶

- 7.106 The Minerals Council of Australia believes that working with Indigenous people ‘needs to be founded in mutual respect and in the recognition of Indigenous Australian’s rights in law, interests and special connections to land and waters in Australia’.¹⁸⁷ The *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations* listed as a challenge ‘learning to develop effective respectful relationships and partnerships’:

Some government officers did not have sufficient understanding of Indigenous communities and culture, and some Indigenous leaders did not have enough understanding of government processes and roles and culture.¹⁸⁸

- 7.107 Delivering successful outcomes from employment services for Indigenous communities requires sound preparation, developing trusting relationships and networks and:

Acknowledging and reinforcing the importance of Indigenous culture is a fundamental princip[le] underpinning good practice. Our clients are often dealing with low self-esteem, lack of confidence and, in some cases, limited or no knowledge of their culture and history. Building a strong sense of cultural awareness is an important factor in their personal development.¹⁸⁹

- 7.108 The Committee believes that the Government should openly recognise the damage that past welfare policies have done to the employment incentives for many Indigenous people and that the Government implement more culturally and community appropriate policies which strongly emphasise the value of employment

186 Alice Springs Town Council, *Submission No. 51*, p. 2.

187 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, p. 1.

188 *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations; Report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination*, Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd, Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, November 2006, p. 6.

189 Mission Australia, *Submission No. 90*, p. 4.

Cultural diversity

7.109 A lack of appreciation of cultural diversity within and across Indigenous communities is one of the key cultural impediments.¹⁹⁰ Engaging Indigenous Australian in the workforce may require different systems and support structures.¹⁹¹ Ms Ah Chin from the Office of Commissioner for Public Employment stated that:

Addressing Indigenous employment at a community and whole-of-government level must reflect the diverse range of cultural values, specific or regional issues and the world views of Indigenous people, and these must be integrated into the development and application of policies and strategies.¹⁹²

7.110 One of the biggest challenges is preparing Aboriginal communities and our populations for the challenge. We need to identify the community priorities and expectations as a starting point. Mr David Rathman described the challenge for Aboriginal people as moving from a position of high unemployment to one of working and at the same time not losing their cultural integrity in that process but emphasised that 'That is our business'.¹⁹³

7.111 Mr Ivan Deemal commented that people coming through are accepting that they can retain their culture at home but must acquire the necessary skills to earn a living.¹⁹⁴ Mr Ron Weatherall outlined the basic principles as being:

... about valuing and respecting cultural diversity and difference, working in partnership with Indigenous people and building positive and constructive relationships with Indigenous people as equal partners. If people do that then there is an opportunity to go forward in a meaningful way.¹⁹⁵

190 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 2.

191 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 2.

192 Ms Ah Chin, Principal Advisor Indigenous Policy, Office of Commissioner for Public Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 21.

193 Mr David Rathman, Executive Director, Aboriginal Education, Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology, South Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 February 2006, p. 6.

194 Mr Ivan Deemal, Senior Coordinator, Community Relations, Cairns Region Group Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 58.

195 Mr Ron Weatherall, Executive Director, Employment and Indigenous Initiatives, Queensland Department of Employment and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 July 2005, p. 13.

7.112 The Committee is aware of many other examples where Indigenous people are keen to share their culture. The Committee would argue that employers sometimes do not respect their knowledge and culture and do not bring out the best in Indigenous communities. The Committee would like to congratulate those employers who put more effort into adapting work practices to accommodate local Indigenous cultures rather than requiring Indigenous people to work in a way that is entirely alien to them. Employers have found a number of ways in which this bridge can be built.¹⁹⁶

Private sector employment opportunities

7.113 Given the severe skills shortages facing many industries in Australia, the Committee believes that the private sector is able to provide a broad range of opportunities for Indigenous employment in the future. With the proximity of many minerals industry operations to Indigenous communities and as the largest Indigenous employer in Australia, it has a range of employment opportunities across the professions, skills and services.¹⁹⁷

7.114 There remain, however, areas in which there is a lack of Indigenous employment despite significant local skills shortages.¹⁹⁸ Shepparton was described as a vibrant community where there were plenty of jobs:

But when you thought about it, if you walk into any business in Shepparton and you saw an Indigenous person involved in that business - be it banking, retail or whatever - it would be a surprise.¹⁹⁹

196 For example Mr Lester Davis, Manager, Learning and Development, Newmont Australia Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 October 2005, p. 40; Ms Lisa Giacomelli, Manager, Community Development, Blacktown City Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 29; Miss Jane Lawton, State Operations Manager, Northern Territory, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 44; Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, Mrs Priscilla Collins, Chief Executive Officer, Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 July 2005, p. 13; Flinders University, *Submission No. 70*, p. 2.

197 Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 1.

198 Mayor Fran Kilgariff, Alice Springs Town Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 July 2005, p. 12; Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 3.

199 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 3.

7.115 The point was made that the business leaders in Shepparton are prepared to employ Indigenous people provided they are trained and there is support for the employers in dealing with unfamiliar issues.²⁰⁰

We really don't want subsidies. We want this to be a business deal. We are on about employing people and getting something at the end of it.²⁰¹

7.116 Finding suitably qualified Indigenous jobseekers to fill the positions is one of the challenges facing industries today and this may make it difficult to achieve the employment targets.²⁰² For example, the *Ladders to Success* program run in Shepparton was not continued because of the lack of available work-ready Indigenous people in the area.²⁰³ Those wishing to increase the number of Indigenous employees are competing with others for people who have the skills required.²⁰⁴

Tackling barriers holistically

7.117 A holistic approach is necessary to improve Indigenous employment outcomes as there is a range of contributing factors such as housing, transport, drug and alcohol level compliance, health, self-esteem and social support, which need to be addressed.²⁰⁵ The foundation of the whole-of-government approach is governments and Indigenous people taking responsibility, with all government polices and funds coordinated and used effectively and strategically in cooperation with local communities.²⁰⁶

200 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 3.

201 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 3.

202 For example, see Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission No. 64*, p. 2; Mr Michael Winer, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 38.

203 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 6.

204 Mr Bob Harvey, Group Manager, Indigenous Employment and Business Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 August 2005, p. 12; Ms Debra Dodgson, National Manager, Workforce Diversity, Australia Post, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 21; Ms Colleen Lazenby, Manager, Community Safety and Well Being, City of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 53; Rio Tinto Ltd, *Submission No. 80*, p. 14.

205 Mr Bob Harvey, Group Manager, Indigenous Employment and Business Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 August 2005, p. 7; Mission Australia, *Submission No. 90*, p. 4; Rio Tinto Group, *Submission No. 80*, p. 20; Bloodwood Tree Association Inc, *Exhibit No. 19*, p. 4; New South Wales Government, *Submission No. 111*, p. 5.

206 For information on whole-of-government approach to Indigenous Affairs, see http://www.oipc.gov.au/About_OIPC/Indigenous_Affairs_Arrangements/1ImprovingIndigenousServices.asp.

7.118 Ms Ah Chin stressed the need to look at the role of governments in creating, supporting and maintaining employment, economic development and sustainability for Indigenous people in communities.²⁰⁷

7.119 In recognising the interconnectedness of factors, the Northern Territory Government's approach includes law and justice, housing, education, economic development and employment to develop a 'critical mass' to improve Aboriginal health.²⁰⁸ The CEO of Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships in North Queensland agreed that:

You need a strong health program, a strong youth and child program, a strong leadership program and strong family programs if you are to get strong employment and economic development outcomes.²⁰⁹

7.120 Community groups also acknowledge the necessity of a holistic approach to improving Indigenous employment outcomes. Mr Paul Briggs of the Rumbalara Football and Netball Club in Shepparton, referred to the need to break down the barriers and enhance the level of communication between the Aboriginal people and the community. In Shepparton the dialogue is now happening between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders after 10-15 years of hard work:

It requires a whole of community and a whole of government approach to address the crisis in Indigenous family lives. Indigenous unemployment is not just about statistics; it is not about politics, bureaucracy or programs.²¹⁰

It is a generational issue and the data has not changed over numerous years and over successive governments. It requires a change in culture and practices and that sometimes requires innovation and courage on all parts to create the change that is necessary if we want to enjoy a better outcome. It is about people and about families ... By addressing the issues of unemployment, we are also addressing the issues of health and education and the social and economic standing of Indigenous people.²¹¹

207 Ms Ah Chin, Principal Advisor Indigenous Policy, Office of Commissioner for Public Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 July 2005, p. 21.

208 Northern Territory Government's Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce, *Exhibit No. 125*, p. 7.

209 Mr Michael Winer, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 July 2005, p. 29.

210 Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Inc., *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 1.

211 Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Inc., *Transcript of Evidence*,

- 7.121 While recognising and promoting the involvement of the private sector, government must ensure that it is meeting its own responsibilities. The Minerals Council of Australia, for example, encourages the federal government to recognise the basic social capital and infrastructure that is needed in remote and regional Australia including the need for increased resourcing for programs, including work-readiness, driver education, access to drug and alcohol services and family support services.²¹²
- 7.122 Mr Paul Briggs can see this happening in Shepparton through the alignment of the private sector, the government through the COAG process and civic leaders 'to want to make a change and see this as an issue facing the community rather than isolating it as an Aboriginal issue of Aboriginal unemployment.'²¹³

Governments can't fix these problems, we have to fix it as a town. And I think what happens in Australia is that we tend to sit back a bit and wait for the bureaucrats to deliver for us. That is not really the way to go - you have to build your own fight in the town.²¹⁴

Whole of person approach

- 7.123 Indigenous people seeking employment will often have training needs, accommodation needs, possible drug and alcohol needs and may have mental health issues.²¹⁵ Compartmentalisation is one of our major challenges.²¹⁶ Employment departments deal with employment but a better way to do things is to have funding relating to a person:

The person's needs, diverse and complex as they are, with a set of outcomes being, perhaps, secure accommodation, moving into employment, dealing with drugs and alcohol et cetera.²¹⁷

11 April 2006, p. 2.

212 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission No. 118*, pp. 2-3; Mr Mitchell Hooke, Chief Executive Officer, Minerals Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 February 2006, p. 2.

213 Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Inc, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 2.

214 Mr Richard Estens *Imagine the Future by Learning from the Past - Aboriginal Employment Strategy: Working together*, Speech to the 2005 Communities in Control Conference convened by Our Community and Centacare Catholic Family Services, June 2005, p. 3.

215 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 47.

216 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 47.

217 Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Social Policy, Mission Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 August 2005, p. 47.

Concluding comments

- 7.124 Everyone is now aware of Indigenous employment potential and there are a greater number of positions being offered.²¹⁸ This is reflected in young people being more aware of the opportunities available for them and more are staying at school.²¹⁹
- 7.125 The Committee believes that the reasonable aim of Indigenous people participating in the mainstream Australian economy will be enhanced by more enlightened policies in welfare, education and employment which recognise long-term employment as a key foundation to the above outcome.
- 7.126 While a lot of employment for Indigenous people is with government agencies, most public services employ fewer than their employment targets would suggest is optimal. Further, the skills shortages across Australia have provided a significant incentive to private companies to actively pursue Indigenous employees. The Committee sees much of the potential to increase Indigenous employment opportunities being in the private sector as they address these skills shortages.
- 7.127 The Committee believes that the Government should fully recognise the creative opportunities available in the private sector for Indigenous employment - particularly in the mining industry - and ensure maximum recognition by all areas of government of the success that is being achieved and where government services have clear responsibility to be more adaptive to those positive examples.

Recommendation 12

- 7.128 **The Committee recommends that the best practice models within industries like the mining industry be understood, promoted and encouraged by Government as one of the best models to achieve greater Indigenous participation in the workforce.**
- 7.129 This inquiry has shown that a great deal is being done and there is an improvement across the board on how to achieve success in Indigenous

218 Miss Jenny McGuire, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 37.

219 Miss Jenny McGuire, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 October 2005, p. 37.

employment. More is now known about how to address the barriers that have historically limited Indigenous employment opportunities.

Recommendation 13

- 7.130 **The Committee recommends that the Government promote the Memorandum of Understanding of the Minerals Council of Australia and the Indigenous Land Corporation models as best practice which could be adopted by other sectors.**

Recommendation 14

- 7.131 **The Committee recommends that the Government disseminate innovative strategies with respect to Indigenous employment within and between public and private sectors and the implementation of best practice within the public service where appropriate.**

7.132 While the whole-of-government approach is relatively new and there has been a steep learning curve with a great deal more to be learnt, the Committee believes that there is a genuine attempt by bureaucracies to improve service delivery. The Committee believes that real inroads can only be achieved through partnerships and welcomes the enhanced involvement of the corporate sector and Indigenous communities.

7.133 The issues canvassed in this report are by no means new. In August 2001, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee tabled the *We can do it* report which stated that:

The Committee is optimistic that the right attitudes exist to address the many problems faced by Indigenous people. However, in order to achieve real solutions for all Indigenous people wherever they live in Australia, there needs to be continuing co-operation, collaboration and consultation between all levels of government, Indigenous Australians and the wider community.²²⁰

220 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2001, *We can do it! The needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*, p. 153.

7.134 This Committee also tabled the *Many Ways Forward* report in June 2004 which stated that:

Several key themes dominated the evidence, specifically, the need for greater coordination and integration of service provision, the need for improved governance within Indigenous community organisations and the need for greater individual empowerment in order to enable Indigenous people to play a key role in articulating and achieving better outcomes. Overlaid on these themes are factors of geographic location. Different strategies are needed to address issues in remote, rural, regional and urban areas, and there is no one-size-fits-all model.²²¹

7.135 The Committee's report in 2004 concluded that there has been:

... the need for Indigenous people to be more involved in the design and delivery of services. This functions on many levels of policy advice, to training mainstream providers, to directly providing services, to participating in effective partnerships. The evidence also indicated that in many cases Indigenous people understand the issues and the solutions but are not supported or resourced to implement initiatives in a sustainable way ... The evidence suggested that no one was better placed to understand location - or community-specific issues and to contribute to the design and delivery of targeted services better than Indigenous people themselves.²²²

7.136 The Committee fully appreciates the challenges in moving to the whole-of-government approach. The size of administrative bureaucracies means that they usually take a broad brush approach. The evidence to the Committee, however, repeatedly emphasised the need for an individual approach in encouraging Indigenous people into employment on an ongoing basis. While there has been considerable movement to a more flexible approach and to listen to Indigenous communities, in many areas there remain significant gaps between the regional needs and the provision of services from an employer's and an employee's perspective.

There is a considerable amount of work to be achieved under the whole-of-government framework of the Indigenous Economic

221 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004, *Many Ways Forward: Report of the inquiry into capacity building and service delivery in Indigenous communities*, p. 3.

222 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004, *Many Ways Forward: Report of the inquiry into capacity building and service delivery in Indigenous communities*, p. 237.

Development Strategy, but if the momentum of government agencies matches the political and community aspirations, then we should expect that success will be forthcoming.²²³

- 7.137 There are layers of bureaucracy which are an impediment to service delivery. When decisions are taken at the community or regional level, there need to be decision-making capacity at the coalface. The bureaucracy needs to think more in terms of the clients. Departments have a responsibility to understand their clients and develop programs that can work.
- 7.138 Ms Cathy Duncan believes that 'The answers for Indigenous people are in the communities and the people' and we should be providing programs which allow the people to come forward.²²⁴
- 7.139 The Committee believes that it is time for a reality check and an acknowledgement of how things really are to enable progress to be made. Mr John Corboy stressed the need to know where things are now and to take an 'all-of-problem' approach.²²⁵
- 7.140 The evidence is that it can be done and is happening. The capacity of those who rely on enlightened self interest from all perspectives are doing it with skill, quiet determination and leadership.

BARRY WAKELIN MP

Chairman

223 Indigenous Business Australia, *Submission 104*, p. 28.

224 Ms Cathy Duncan, Director, Culture and Reputation, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 26.

225 Mr John Corboy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 April 2006, p. 8.