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STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Reference: Petrol sniffing and substance abuse in Central Australia

WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2009

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**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
Wednesday, 4 March 2009**

Members: Senator Moore (*Chair*), Senator Siewert (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Adams, Bilyk, Boyce, Carol Brown, Furner and Humphries

Substitute members: Senator Crossin for Senator Carol Brown

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Arbib, Barnett, Bernardi, Birmingham, Mark Bishop, Boswell, Brandis, Bob Brown, Bushby, Cameron, Cash, Colbeck, Jacinta Collins, Coonan, Cormann, Crossin, Eggleston, Farrell, Feeney, Fielding, Fierravanti-Wells, Fifield, Fisher, Forshaw, Hanson-Young, Heffernan, Hurley, Hutchins, Johnston, Joyce, Kroger, Ludlam, Ian Macdonald, McEwen, McGauran, McLucas, Marshall, Mason, Milne, Minchin, Nash, O'Brien, Parry, Payne, Polley, Pratt, Ronaldson, Ryan, Scullion, Stephens, Sterle, Troeth, Trood, Williams, Wortley and Xenophon

Senators in attendance: Senators Bilyk, Boyce, Humphries, Johnston, Moore, Scullion and Siewert

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- a. the ongoing effectiveness of the eight-point plan in combating petrol sniffing in central Australia;
- b. the extent of the roll out of Opal fuel;
- c. the delivery of youth services in affected areas;
- d. the effectiveness and adequacy of resources provided to address petrol sniffing and substance abuse in central Australia; and
- e. what more needs to be done to effectively address petrol sniffing.

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Committee met at 9.25 am**NICHOLLS, Mr Jonathan, Senior Policy Officer, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide****PARK, Ms Sue, Chief Executive Officer, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide**

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Good morning, and thank you for being patient with us. It always happens that we get caught up with people we want to talk to! I have something that I will read out, but I just wanted to thank you first for coming and sharing with us. The Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs and the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous communities are holding this joint public hearing as part of our inquiries into petrol sniffing and substance abuse in Central Australia and regional and remote Indigenous communities. On behalf of the committees, I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and we pay our respect to all elders past and present.

Over the last days, both committees have together visited and talked with community members and organisations in Mutitjulu and Amata. We tried at Uwuma, but the rain defeated us, so we intend to go back there as soon as we can. The community affairs committee are due to table our report on petrol sniffing and substance abuse in Central Australia on 19 March, and the select committee is due to submit its next interim report on 15 June. I will not divide the senators present into who is on which committee, but we are all here because we are all interested.

Before the committee starts taking evidence, I advise that all witnesses before the committee are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to their evidence. Any act that disadvantages a witness as a result of evidence given before the Senate or any of our committees is treated as a breach of privilege. However, I also remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute contempt of the Senate. If you require any further information about all of that, the secretariat can give you chapter and verse. These are public proceedings, although the committee may agree to a request to have evidence heard in camera or may determine that certain evidence should be heard in camera.

We have had requests from the media to attend, and they may bring cameras in. I just want to check whether you are comfortable with that.

Mr Nicholls—That's fine.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Fine. I welcome Ms Sue Park and Mr Jonathan Nicholls from UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide. Do you have any comments on the capacity in which you come before us today?

Mr Nicholls—I am the manager for Indigenous policy and advocacy for UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—We have your submissions. Thank you very much. I invite either or both of you to make an opening statement, and then we will go to questions and try and make this as informal as possible so that we can get the most out of the evidence. Do you have an opening statement?

Ms Park—Yes, we do, thank you. Good morning. Thanks very much for inviting us to appear before you. I would like to also acknowledge that we are meeting on the land of the Kaurna people. UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide is a South Australian community service organisation with over 100 years of experience in working with low-income and disadvantaged people in South Australia. Before talking about the situation in remote Aboriginal communities, we would like to talk to you about some of our involvement with people from remote communities in Adelaide. A lot of Aboriginal people from remote areas, particularly, come and sleep roughly in various parts of Adelaide, often in the park lands, and a lot of those people use our Byron Place Community Centre, which is less than a kilometre away from here. It provides a whole range of different services—a lot of case management and case work services but also some very practical assistance, so people can come and have a shower, wash their clothes and have shelter during the day. It opens at 7.30 in the morning, so people who have been sleeping rough will often come at that time, come in and have a cup of tea or coffee and some breakfast and some shelter for the day. A lot of Anangu who sleep rough around Adelaide will come at that time of the day. We have had more than 30 years of that sort of experience here in Adelaide.

More recently we have been providing support to an Aboriginal Uniting Church organisation which is based in Salisbury. The minister there, the Reverend Dean Whittaker, does a great deal of work with Anangu families, often who have settled in Adelaide and others who are visiting from the Lands. He is very familiar with the challenges that families face when they have a large number of relatives or friends from the Lands who come and stay in their homes. It can be extremely challenging for them, and very unsettling. It can often challenge their tenancy in their housing. As a result of our work in both of those areas I would like to draw your attention to the continuing need for government and non-government agencies to improve delivery of services to those people, including temporary accommodation.

As you may know, the South Australian government has established transitional accommodation centres for transient Aboriginal people at Port Augusta and Ceduna as part of its Safe Tracks program. UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide welcomes the establishment of those centres. At the same time we understand that there have been plans to establish similar centres in Coober Pedy and Adelaide, and that those plans have stalled as the partnership funding from the Commonwealth has not been finalised. We would urge you to consider asking the federal government for a written update on where things are in relation to those additional centres, which we believe are very important to people from remote areas when they come into urban areas.

Turning now to the main focus of our evidence, more direct engagement with remote Aboriginal communities: in 2005 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide was called on to provide some support to a group of traditional owners from the APY Lands who were very concerned at the lack of information that was provided to them as a part of the government review of the land rights act and their lack of ability to have a voice in relation to that. As a result of that experience we became sharply aware of how difficult it can be for Aboriginal people in remote areas to have a voice, to be involved in decision making and to have access to information of critical importance to them. That experience was the catalyst for the creation of Jonathan's position and the establishment of the Anangu Lands Paper Tracker project. I will hand over to Jonathan to talk to you about that.

Mr Nicholls—Good morning. Thanks for inviting us here. The Anangu Lands Paper Tracker project monitors the implementation of state and federal government commitments to Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara peoples across South Australia. In addition to the APY Lands it tracks government activities on the Maralinga Lands, at the Yalata community on the west coast and at the Umoona community in Coober Pedy. As Sue was saying, the main goals of the project are to make it easier for Anangu to talk with governments as equal partners, to make decisions for themselves from a position of knowledge and strength and to participate in broader debates about their future. We believe the project provides an independent forum of accountability.

Since it began in mid-2007 the paper tracker project has tracked progress made against more than 80 government commitments and areas of identified need. Importantly, the project highlights both the good and the bad. As well as posting comprehensive information on our website we distribute an e-newsletter that now goes out to more than 700 subscribers. Last year, in an effort to make it easier for Anangu to access the information we have collected, we produced two radio shows in partnership with PY Media. Portions of each show were broadcast in both English and the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages. We hope to expand that area of our work this year. We also work hard to maintain direct contact with Anangu and their peak organisations by undertaking regular community visits. For example, later this month Sue and I will spend five days visiting communities on the eastern side of the APY Lands. This will be Sue's first visit to those communities. We are hoping to be able to get in, if the rains don't come again!

The goal of each of those visits is three-fold: to provide local community members with an opportunity to put their issues and concerns on our radar, to allow us to check the direction and impact of our work and to confirm the on-the-ground results of government programs. In a nutshell, the paper tracker project finds and follows the paper trails of significant government commitments to remote Anangu communities and tells the story of those paper trails on its website. As far as we know, it is the first time that information about government commitments to Anangu has been consolidated and made available in the one place so that those commitments can be tracked over time.

I do not think I am going to tell you anything you do not know here: information on government commitments to remote communities tends to come not in a steady stream of accountability but rather in reactive bursts at politically charged moments. Governments of the day—state or federal, Labor or Liberal—tend towards crisis management, spending much of their time minimising the political risks generated by a coronial inquest, a commission of inquiry into child sexual abuse, a reader's poll in the *Advertiser* or, indeed, the visit of a parliamentary committee. Certainly in South Australia over the last seven years, inquests, inquiries, polls and visits have been the moments when much has been promised to Anangu and when concerted efforts to address their disadvantage have been launched or, in some cases, relaunched. That noted, as media and public interest wanes, so too does political will and, with it, the effort of governments to deliver on commitments made in a moment of political reaction. The Paper Tracker project works to lesson the pace with which the political will inevitably wanes.

Lest anyone think otherwise, I would like to state that UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide does not claim to have any easy answers to the tough and thorny questions that frequently arise concerning the long-term future of remote Aboriginal communities. We are not in the camp that says it is time to pull the plug on those communities. Nor are we in the camp that says a major

and sustained injection of government resources will turn everything about. Rather, our position and focus are on increasing the capacity of Anangu to make informed decisions for themselves. We believe that that capacity is seriously undermined when Anangu are not given access to critical information or when the information that is available is out of date, hard to access and harder still to understand.

In our submissions to the two inquiries, we drew your attention to a handful of issues, including policing in remote communities, longstanding commitments to provide Anangu with training and employment opportunities in housing construction, and government responses to the Mullighan inquiry into child sexual abuse. I do not propose to repeat any of that information in this opening statement. That said, I do want to highlight a few things, starting with how disappointed UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide is that Opal fuel is still not available in Yalata and that plans to make it available in surrounding centres appear to have been shelved.

When we made our submission to the current inquiry into petrol sniffing and substance abuse back in August last year, we noted that the federal Department of Health and Ageing had advised us that it expected Opal to be available in Yalata by the end of 2008. That time frame has now been pushed back again, this time to June 2009. As for government responses to the Mullighan inquiry, we have serious concerns that those efforts appear to have waned over the last 10 months. When the report of the Mullighan inquiry was tabled in state parliament last May, the Premier announced the establishment of a special task force comprising Commonwealth and state government representatives to ‘drive’ government responses to the report’s recommendations. UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide understands that this task force has not met for some months and that it is no longer clear who is responsible for chairing its meetings. We urge you to consider asking the state government representatives appearing here later today for some detailed information on the status and priorities of the task force, including who chairs it, who is represented on it and the dates of its last and next meetings.

Senator JOHNSTON—What was the name of that task force?

Mr Nicholls—It is just known as the special task force.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Have you asked the state government this?

Mr Nicholls—We wrote to the Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division in December.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—December 2008?

Mr Nicholls—Yes. We asked for a response in January. I do not have the actual date, but I rang a few weeks ago as a follow-up and left a detailed message and have not had a response.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I just wanted to clarify that.

Mr Nicholls—As an aside, one of the challenges that has happened since the Mullighan report was tabled is that, at the time it was released, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation was also the Minister for Families and Communities in South Australia, which matched the federal situation. It is the Minister for Families and Communities who is responsible for the statutory reporting provisions under the Mullighan inquiry acts. At one level, you

probably have AARD driving the response, but the minister who is responsible for making that happen is no longer their minister. That has changed and is the basis for some of the present lack of clarity.

In addition to highlighting that issue, we would encourage you to try and clarify the current status of three key documents. The first of these is the final report of a comprehensive review of secondary education and vocational training on the APY Lands. The report was commissioned by the South Australian government, undertaken by researchers from Charles Sturt University and completed in July 2008. The title of the report is *Excellence or exit: ensuring Anangu futures through education*. Last October the state Department of the Premier and Cabinet reported that the Minister for Education, the Department of Education and Children's Services, the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee, APY Lands school principals and Anangu coordinators were all discussing the report's findings and recommendations in an effort 'to prioritise actions to areas of most urgent need'. Five months later, the report and its recommendations appear to have gone AWOL. We would welcome any efforts you are able to make to clarify the status of that report.

The second document that we would like to put on your radar is the South Australian government's Aboriginal Strategic Plan, mention of which is made on the first page of the government's submission to the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities. Over the last three years, references to the drafting of an Aboriginal Strategic Plan have appeared in a variety of government documents and submissions and yet neither the plan itself nor a draft version has been released. The current state government has now been in office for six years. UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide would welcome the release of this plan as a matter of some priority.

The third document that we want to bring to your attention is the current strategic plan for the APY Lands, just the APY Lands. When, in 2004, the state government began its intervention on the APY Lands it moved very quickly to develop a two-year strategic plan to guide that work. That first strategic plan expired in mid-2006 and was replaced by what is known as the TKP Action Plan. According to the most recent report available on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's website, the TKP Action Plan is assisting the state and federal governments and all of the peak service delivery organisations operating on the lands to create 'sustainable improvements in the living conditions of Anangu'. According to that report, the plan has five priority areas: safety; housing, infrastructure and essential services; health; employment, education and training; and leadership and management. It sounds like a fine document. It may well be one. But our concern, again, is one of transparency and informed decision making. As far as we are aware, the TKP Action Plan has never been made publicly available. Indeed, TKP, the supposed peak consultative body for the APY Lands, the body that formulated the action plan, now rarely meets and has not publicly released any minutes or other documentation for more than 18 months. TKP is a classic example of what can happen, as mentioned earlier, when political pressure fades and government energies move elsewhere.

Just to remind you, a description of TKP appears on the first page of the state government's August 2008 submission to the standing committee's inquiry into petrol sniffing and substance abuse. That description states that TKP 'enables all organisations delivering services in the APY Lands to plan and work together to provide better outcomes in law', and on it goes. One would have thought, given that statement, that TKP would have played a key role in the development of

a coordinated response to the recommendation of the Mullighan inquiry into child sexual abuse on the APY Lands. The development of that report happened last year, over a six-month period, and culminated in the tabling in state parliament of a report outlining how the South Australian government intends to respond to the recommendations. TKP, the peak body for the planning and delivery of services on the APY Lands, did not meet once during that six-month period and therefore provided no input towards the development of what governments suggest is a comprehensive and coordinated response to the inquiry's recommendations.

As an aside, and on a brighter note, the first TKP meeting for 2009 was held last week and a second one has been scheduled for the end of next month. Moreover, Nganampa Health Council, which had previously pulled out of TKP, has, I am told, agreed to join it again. So that is more optimistic news.

I have two final observations. Over the last five years, the state and federal governments have completed a large number of major and minor infrastructure projects on the APY Lands. UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide welcomes that work but is concerned that in too many cases not enough effort went into developing and resourcing the programs and services that were supposed to run out of those buildings and centres. For example—and we mentioned this in our submission to the inquiry into regional and remote communities—a six-bed accommodation facility in Kalka community, on the western side of the APY Lands, has stood all but empty for well over a year because nothing was properly sorted out in advance in terms of who would live in the facility, how it would operate and how it would be funded.

Then there is the situation with the six PY Ku regional transaction centres—supposedly one of two flagship projects of the once much heralded APY Lands COAG trial. All of the PY Ku centres are on the verge of collapse for lack of state and federal government support. More than \$4.5 million has been spent on the establishment of the centres, which were supposed to be up and running by June 2006 and provide ongoing employment for up to 30 Anangu. And yet, as you would know, if you have read PY Media's written submission to the regional and remote inquiry, unless an ongoing funding base for the operation of the centres is identified, it is highly likely all six will cease operations in a few months time.

These are not isolated examples. As we meet, construction of a new childcare centre at Ernabella is nearing completion. The centre would be ready to open its doors later this month but for the small matter of finalising how it will operate. Surely this should have been sorted out before funding for the construction of the centre was hastily allocated.

This brings me to our final point. Last week, the Prime Minister announced that the government will create a coordinator general for remote Indigenous services and that this person, once appointed, will 'cut through bureaucratic blockages' and 'make sure services are delivered' in a coordinated way. As you would know, the creation of the coordinator general position is closely connected to the COAG National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery announced last November. The aim of the COAG partnership is to 'improve the delivery of services in 26 remote Indigenous locations', including two communities on the APY Lands.

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide hopes for the best and wishes the coordinator general well, whoever she or he may be. However, our hope is tempered by what we consider to be the lack of

progress that governments have made over the last four years to sustain a coordinated approach to service delivery across the APY Lands.

More than three and a half years ago, on 29 June 2005, the then federal Indigenous affairs minister and the Premier of South Australia jointly announced the creation of two service coordinator positions to work and live on the APY Lands. A year on from that announcement, in mid-2006, this initiative had grown into three high-level 'trouble shooter' positions, all of which were filled, and all of whom were, so we were told, working hard to 'coordinate and trouble-shoot' across state and federal jurisdictions and APY communities. Last year, two more service coordinator positions were created and filled, thereby increasing to five the number of full-time APY Lands service coordinators employed by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Paper Tracker project has kept a close eye on these service coordinator positions and, to that end, has obtained some information from both the federal and state governments on their work and role. We have copies of that information, if you would like it. At some level, the information that we have secured sits uneasily alongside that which has been released so far about the coordinator general's role and the new COAG partnership. It is not clear in what ways this new position and partnership will intersect with the work of the existing five coordinators or whether the scope of those positions will be reduced. Furthermore, we are particularly concerned that in South Australia the new COAG partnership's focus on just two APY communities could lead to a diminishing of existing efforts, however successful or unsuccessful these may have been. I am sure you will be happy to know that I will stop there. Sue and I are happy to take any questions from what we have said or the material that is covered in either of our submissions.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you, Mr Nicholls. We will go to questions. Inevitably we will run out of time. You know that. So what we will do is encourage you to continue being in contact with the committee through the secretariat. I will put that on the record before we start.

Mr Nicholls—We were delighted with the establishment—and I hope it doesn't sound like we are crawling—with both of these inquiries, because they have the same philosophy as the Paper Tracker. There was a 2006 inquiry; it is continuing in 2009. The regional and remote committee is reporting continuously. We think it is great.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you.

Mr Nicholls—We will continue to feed information into the regional and remote committee.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Good.

Senator SCULLION—Thank you very much and thank you for your comprehensive submission. It was very informative. In your view, what is the principal impediment to Opal fuel being provided at Yalata? It is just fuel. Other fuel gets there, so transport seems to get a tick in the box. What do you think is the principal impediment?

Mr Nicholls—I do not know if you know the whole story of what happened at Yalata, but there was a roadhouse where they used to have petrol and that was condemned, for want of a better word, a few years ago. So, as far as I am aware, petrol or unleaded petrol is not available in the community at this point in time. They are trying to build or convert, as I last heard it, the

kinds of containers that go on the train to Darwin into petrol housing facilities—one for diesel and one for Opal fuel. This is taking a period of time to progress. I think in Yalata's case, because they are not on the APY Lands, their flag does not get flown very often—they are a long way from Adelaide and things have just progressed very slowly. That is probably the most intelligent answer I can give.

Senator SCULLION—Who are we relying on for the action? Is there any private interest involved in this?

Mr Nicholls—When we asked for information either late last year or early this year, the point they had got to was developing a business plan for how the fuel would be purchased and sold in the community, because the idea is that the community will run these outlets. I think in January or February this year—I can confirm—the business plan was in the process of being developed. I do not believe all the infrastructure is there at the moment for it to go. So it has been a very slow, staggered approach. I would suggest that it is not high on the agenda or is not on the radar as much as issues on the APY Lands. Yalata has a very long history of petrol sniffing. It is the first community that is mentioned in the *Hansard* of the South Australian parliament, back in I think 1979, around petrol sniffing. It is not a fleeting mention; it is a serious situation there. It does come and go. There was a coronial inquest out there into a petrol sniffing death last December and there appeared to be no sniffing in the community at that time, but it has gone like this for 30 years.

Senator SCULLION—When do you think, at the rate progress is being made now, Opal will actually appear?

Mr Nicholls—We have been told by 1 June. That is what they are aiming for at the moment. Certainly we would hope that they would meet that time frame. At the same time, as I said, we are concerned that we were originally given information saying, 'We are exploring its rollout into surrounding centres.' That is no longer on the radar. A serious question is: why hasn't it already been provided to Nundroo, which is the closest community, so for the last three years people could have got Opal from that community?

Senator SCULLION—Thank you.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I congratulate you on both your submissions—I think they are very thorough—and your oral evidence. You obviously have a very good understanding of what is going on. Are people sniffing sniffable fuel in Yalata at the moment? If they do not have a roadhouse, where do they get their fuel from and is that creating problems at the moment?

Mr Nicholls—I would believe that people are getting it from the closest communities, which would be Nundroo and Ceduna. Ceduna is the major regional centre. Yalata is around 200 kilometres west of Ceduna.

Senator SIEWERT—So the issue there at the moment is not that you are getting people running in sniffable fuel—

Mr Nicholls—No.

Senator SIEWERT—it is because they cannot actually get access to Opal. Would that be a correct analysis?

Mr Nicholls—Sorry, I am not quite following you.

Senator SIEWERT—The issue that we are seeing in some of the lands and some of the communities is that sniffable fuel is being run into communities in order for people to sniff. But at the moment in Yalata what we are seeing is that they have not got access to Opal?

Mr Nicholls—That is right, they do not have access to Opal. My understanding of how it has worked in terms of the rate of sniffing in Yalata as it comes and goes is that there has normally been a hard-core group of about five petrol sniffers and then that will expand out at times to 15 or so more. There is a lot of movement of people between Yalata and the APY Lands. They are related groups. It was interesting that in the Ceduna regional paper over Christmas they printed reports of who has been arrested—someone from Indulkana, someone from Armata. So there is serious movement, particularly over summer.

Senator SIEWERT—You said that the promise for the surrounding communities has died off. Is that from lack of funding?

Mr Nicholls—I cannot tell you the answer to that question.

Mr JOHNSON—We need to clarify the time frame.

Mr Nicholls—When we went to clarify the time frame that is when the Department of Health and Ageing clarified that it was no longer, at this point in time, looking into those communities—the broader centres.

Senator SIEWERT—The other issue that we were at pains to pursue at previous inquiries and we have been following up in this inquiry is the fact that Opal itself is not the be all and end all—it is part of a coordinated overall approach. Are there commitments for diversionary programs, youth workers et cetera along with the promise to provide Opal into Yalata?

Mr Nicholls—On the very last page of our written submission to the petrol sniffing and substance abuse inquiry we highlighted two statements that the state government had made in 2006 in its submission to the previous inquiry, and suggested that you might want to clarify—have those things happen.

Senator SIEWERT—That is right.

Mr Nicholls—On the APY Lands, Opal has been a fantastic resource but it is certainly not going to fix all the problems. As you know, there are some serious questions around the amount of marijuana use. But also some of the programs that have been funded out there have played a critical role in youth activities and I would not want to suggest they are not an important part of what has been happening.

Senator SIEWERT—I had actually flagged that to ask you about. I want to move to the issue of your Paper Tracker. How many people use it? Do you have a tracker on your tracker? How many people are logging on and using the website?

Mr Nicholls—No, not really. There is data but the principal way people engage with it, I believe, is through the e-newsletter that goes out. It used to go out monthly; it is now bimonthly but we have added a latest updates page. Each of the newsletters has four new commitments that we have tracked. It gives you one sentence and you can click in and get a summary and then you get this long screed about following it through. That goes out to people. I get a lot of responses from people either on the day or over the coming weeks saying thank you for the story about, for example, drivers licences. I believe that is how people are mainly accessing it. At the same time all sorts of people just find it. We never had a launch when we started it because we were not confident we could do it, probably, and we have not publicised it formally; it is a word-of-mouth thing. We are very pleased and proud of the spread it has got to this point in time.

Ms Park—We are also very proud of the project and Jonathan's work on it, and anybody is welcome to subscribe to the e-newsletter. So please do not hesitate.

Senator SIEWERT—That raises a couple of further questions for me. Have you had contact from other organisations doing similar things around Australia? It seems to me a very useful way of tracking promises.

Mr Nicholls—No. As you would be aware, more and more community service organisations, in addition to Aboriginal controlled organisations, are delivering services into remote communities, as well as the government directly. Many of those workers—Relationships Australia, Red Cross, Save the Children Fund—will contact us because they are delivering services in the community and using it. When the Northern Territory intervention began, which was shortly after we launched this, a number of people said, 'You must expand it to the Northern Territory as well.' We are doing as much as we can with the communities we are monitoring; we do not have the capacity to do it beyond that. We are always willing to help another organisation if they want to do it seriously in another region. We will assist them to work out how they can do it.

Senator SIEWERT—I have read all the submissions and I think it was your submission that mentioned the insufficient state funding, particularly the funding for the homemaker centres. We visited one in Amata and they mentioned then that they had to knock off the top-up for the CDEP workers. I think it was in your submission—the \$300,000. That seems a significant shortfall in the funding. Do you have any further information on that?

Mr Nicholls—Probably not; that is more of an update. My understanding is that the funding has not been found. We pointed out that it seems ludicrous to be spending \$25 million on new houses and losing \$300,000 for a homemaker program to give you the skills to live in those houses. I do know that the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has presented evidence around this funding to a state parliamentary committee but that evidence has not become available yet. Unlike the Australian parliament, the South Australian parliament is fairly slow in releasing submissions and transcripts. So there is some information and I will happily forward it on when it becomes available.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Have you heard about whether the top-up has been knocked off the other centres as well, or is it just Amata?

Mr Nicholls—I do not know.

Senator SIEWERT—We will chase that up with the state government.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I would like to clarify something. I was not quite following you when you said that you needed non-sniffable fuel at Yalata. There is no sniffable fuel there at the moment so how would that help reduce petrol sniffing?

Mr Nicholls—There is no sniffable fuel because the existing petrol facilities are closed down. The plan has been to replace them. Prior to that, sniffable fuel was available in the community. So what the state and federal government are working on is in the new infrastructure.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I understand what they are doing. How is that going to help the problem of petrol sniffing if people at Yalata cannot access sniffable fuel at the moment except by importing it from somewhere else? When you build a facility for Opal they will still, presumably, be able to import, won't they?

Mr Nicholls—As you can on the APY Lands and in any remote community if you are driving in from a regional centre.

Senator HUMPHRIES—So how will building an Opal facility help?

Mr Nicholls—I would think that at least half of the times that people buy fuel they will be buying it in their community on the way out rather than just buying fuel in Ceduna or Nundroo and bringing it in.

Senator SIEWERT—That is the point about making sure it is in the neighbouring communities because now the government has said, 'No, you are not getting it in the neighbouring communities.' Isn't that the point as well?

Mr Nicholls—Where it has worked well across Central Australia is to increase options—so if Anangu are in Alice Springs they can elect to buy Opal fuel and when they come into the community they are not bringing in sniffable fuel. That option is not going to be available in Yalata and that is a frustration. It was originally supposed to be but at the moment they are just focused—it may be a very difficult project; I have trouble putting a nail in the wall—on getting new facilities out there. But that is their focus at the moment. But the other one has gone.

Senator SCULLION—There is no sniffable fuel available in Alice. It is just all unleaded fuel. I think that is the reason for some of the success.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You were talking about the leasing arrangements at Mintabie. How will the finalisation of those leasing arrangements prevent fuel being taken onto the APY Lands?

Mr Nicholls—The report the women's council gave in their submission to that inquiry made the observation that fuel was being bought in Mintabie and brought to Amata. I would think that,

under the new conditions, APY would be asking that only Opal fuel is available at Mintabie. My understanding is that it is available there but other petrol is also available. From memory, the other petrols available are used in generators in Mintabie Mining. The argument is that they need a certain fuel type to use in generators.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Can you use Opal in generators?

Mr Nicholls—I do not know. It would be worth asking them about that.

Senator HUMPHRIES—So you think they are going to impose a condition on the people who lease Mintabie that they sell only Opal fuel to motorists?

Mr Nicholls—I would think so. Certainly, there are plans to have much greater scrutiny on how the stores operate more broadly, which gets into issues of book-up and large numbers of key cards and pin numbers being held by those people.

Senator BOYCE—I would like to follow up on that. Can you tell us a bit more about the issues that currently exist at Mintabie?

Mr Nicholls—I do not know how much you know about Mintabie. It was an opal mining town.

Senator BOYCE—This committee has not taken any evidence on the subject.

Mr Nicholls—It was a town that grew enormously in the 1980s and 1990s. There were over 1,000 people living there. It has been declining seriously for about 10 years or more. The population at the last census was about 120 people. Few of them are actually in mining. They are in this remote community, which is about 40 kilometres west of the main highway. There are four stores and it is hard to imagine that four stores would be viable for such a small community. But many Anangu from the APY Lands, from Yalata, from the Northern Territory, travel enormous distances to be able to use those stores. Some of them appreciate the service they get at those stores but it is very unregulated. The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs in South Australia did an audit of those stores in 2007. I can provide you with the detail, but from memory one of them was holding 200 key cards, some of them with pin numbers.

Senator BOYCE—Has that situation improved, to your knowledge?

Mr Nicholls—Not to my knowledge. We wrote to OCBA to get an update on that. There was a state inquiry around financial literacy and other issues and we raised this issue there. We were encouraged by the parliamentary committee to work more closely with OCBA. We wrote to OCBA. They rang us a couple of months later after I followed up with a phone call. They had lost our correspondence. We sent them another copy. I rang them again last week and left a message and that has not been returned at this point time. I spend a fair bit of time nagging. But I am a nicer person at home because I get it out of my system!

Senator BOYCE—How would you characterise the situation at Mintabie? Is it corruption? Is exploitation? Is it simply paternalism?

Mr Nicholls—I would want to clearly say that the vast majority of Mintabie people are not causing problems for the APY Lands. There are 120 people there; 100 people are living lives, doing a bit of opal digging, being involved with the environment or running businesses out into the lands. But there is a small contingent who have been a serious problem for 30 years. When I was researching a piece for the Paper Tracker, an elderly Uniting Church minister gave me a report that the Uniting Church had done in 1979, which had three pages of lists of ‘Sue went to Mintabie, got drunk and rolled the car on the way home.’

Ms Park—Not this Sue.

Mr Nicholls—No, not this Sue. It has been a very long issue. The South Australian police have tried hard to crack down on the alcohol and drugs that they believe are coming out of Mintabie. As I understand it, they had an undercover operation there for an extensive period of time.

Senator BOYCE—Does that continue, to your knowledge?

Mr Nicholls—I do not believe it is happening at the moment. I can provide you with some more information. I can think of anecdotal things but I would rather not put anecdotes on the record. I have quite a bit of information around Mintabie, which I am happy to forward if that would be of interest.

Senator BOYCE—Yes, it has been raised a number of times with this committee, and how the APY people might deal with it has also been raised.

Mr Nicholls—The lease itself expired in October 2002, so that they are operating on an interim arrangement as they try to negotiate the future. That seems to be a very slow process.

Senator BOYCE—Thank you.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am fascinated by your accountability mechanism, the Paper Tracker. Firstly, I would like you to tell me where you got the concept from. I think it is a fascinating model. It is one of the things I think we are all looking to utilise in terms of monitoring and looking at the accountability of the promises that are made to these people. Secondly, I would like to know your contemporary connection. I note that the Uniting Church goes back to Pukatja, back to 1937. You are obviously a person of great standing and this is a very powerful submission of yours, both with respect to petrol sniffing and the remote communities. I would like to corroborate and rather more formalise some of the historical background that you bring to the committee by you telling us how you know what you know and what mechanisms you use for contemporary accuracy. First of all tell us about your Paper Tracker and why you are so interested and so knowledgeable on this particular subject.

Mr Nicholls—There are a few things. As Sue mentioned, in 2005 the APY Land Rights Act as it is now known—it was then the Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act—was reviewed. It was a very contentious review and a group of traditional owners argued that they were not being properly consulted and did not have good access information. They came to Uniting Care Wesley and a number of people who helped them get some independent legal advice travelled to Adelaide to appear before a parliamentary inquiry.

Senator JOHNSTON—So it came to Adelaide to talk to the Uniting Church; or there was something in the lands that the Uniting Church had established?

Mr Nicholls—The Uniting Church nationally has what is called the Uniting Aboriginal and Island Christian Congress and it has a regional ministry across the APY Lands. That has been building up over the last few years. To be frank, the Uniting Church did a fairly poor job after the land rights period in maintaining that relationship. Independence came for communities. It was an era in which missions were not looked at very favourably, and structurally the relationship broke down. In the case of the APY Lands, there is this anomaly: it belongs in what is called the northern synod of the Uniting Church. When the Uniting Church was created it drew a line under the APY Lands and said, ‘That is more connected up there.’ That severed relationships with many people and structures down here. A group of ministers began revisiting the lands twice yearly, from memory, in the early 2000s because they recognised that at one level the church had abandoned them.

Senator JOHNSTON—From Adelaide?

Mr Nicholls—Yes. I went with one of them when I first started with Uniting Care Wesley. There were about 15 clergypersons and their spouses, and other people who were interested, who really went purely for relationship, and I went along on that occasion. Those sorts of things happened together.

Senator JOHNSTON—They went back regularly?

Mr Nicholls—They tried to go every six months. As you would know, it is a huge logistical exercise for everyone involved. Many of them were retired clergy who were not the most flush.

Senator JOHNSTON—So they built a reliable relationship by continuing to go back.

Mr Nicholls—Yes, and it was a revitalising of existing relationships.

Ms Park—In addition to that, Uniting Care Wesley employs a Uniting Church minister. At that stage we employed the Reverend Murray Muirhead, who had worked for Frontier Services, which is another Uniting Church service delivery organisation in those lands, and he had excellent relationships with people in the APY Lands. We employed him partly because of that experience. That was a particular link that developed between the organisation and people in the APY Lands. Jonathan’s work followed on from there.

Mr Nicholls—A number of things came together at the right time for Uniting Care Wesley and its board to say, ‘We think this is worth doing and we will put up the money.’

Senator JOHNSTON—How much money, roughly?

Ms Park—About \$100,000 a year.

Senator JOHNSTON—Good.

Mr Nicholls—That comes out of Uniting Care Wesley's own funds. It is not funded by anybody. My background was that I had been working in research around remote communities for about 10 years, in the previous three to four years with inquiries of the South Austrian parliament into remote Aboriginal communities.

Senator JOHNSTON—What were you doing in your work around Aboriginal communities? Were you teaching?

Mr Nicholls—Sorry. I was working around the issues in relation to remote communities. I have visited communities many times and have stayed for up to a month at a time but I have never lived and worked in those communities. My own personal thing, at one level—I have to be careful here—came out of some of the frustration of working as a research officer for a parliamentary committee. They would receive so many statements about government commitments, and there was no follow-up. There was no way of saying, 'This is what you told us two years ago.' And so, in conversations what came up was: 'Wouldn't it be a great idea if there was a database or something.' We certainly do not track all commitments. As I think I said, we have around 80 up on the website at the moment.

Senator JOHNSTON—You mean South Australian and federal government commitments relating to South Australia?

Mr Nicholls—Yes. And we stretch to keep 80 plates around the year. We have not had an update from them lately. I had better ring them—and they are always delighted to hear from us!

Ms Park—And in terms of our accountability about the accuracy of our information now, our newsletter goes out very widely. I think in 18 months we have only had one occasion when we have needed to clarify some information because there was a department we thought were not entirely clear on one issue. But everybody reads it, I assure you—and I am sure they would be letting us know if it was not accurate.

Senator JOHNSTON—My question about accountability was not about your accountability; it was about the promisor's accountability.

Mr Nicholls—When we go through an issue—for example, the Mullighan inquiry had recommendations around increasing funding for services for children who have been sexually abused—we would go through the report carefully and go through *Hansards*, media releases, old reports—tell the story together.

Senator JOHNSTON—Budget allocations.

Mr Nicholls—Yes, although that is not my strong point. But we would go through those kinds of things, and then we would put the story up. Even prior to putting it up, we might have written to the relevant department or minister and asked: 'Can you give us a bit more information around this?' In most cases, ministers and departments provide us with some information. We have to learn to be better at asking the right questions; otherwise, as you would know, you do not get the information you want—nor terribly useful information. We often have to go back six months later and say, 'You said you had this new framework. What does that mean?' Eventually, if a department does not answer our questions, there are two things we do. One is: we have

occasionally in our newsletter an unanswered questions page on which we say, 'It has been nine months since we first asked—I will not say who in this forum—for information about this and that and we have not got it'—a shaming.

The other thing we agree on is that if we cannot get an answer we will go to a member of the opposition or one of the minor parties and ask, 'Would you consider putting this question on notice?' One of Senator Siewert's assistants subscribes, and there was a situation around funding for the Umuwa community in Coober Pedy which had lost its municipal service funding. We had written to the previous minister. We subsequently wrote to the new minister, Minister Macklin. Neither had answered those questions, so at that point we went to the senator and the questions included, which we very much appreciated, 'Will you explain why you have not answered the letter from UnitingCare Wesley?' and there was a response. But we do not try to be political from the beginning. That is not what we are trying to do.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is very good. Thank you for answering that; I appreciate that.

CHAIR (Senator Scullion)—Mr Nicholls and Ms Park, thank you for providing evidence to the committee today.

[10.15 am]

WILSON, Mr Scott, Director, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council SA

PERRY, Mr Christopher, Project Office, Making Tracks, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council SA

CHAIR (Senator Scullion)—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Perry—I am Chris Perry, also known as Jimmy Perry.

CHAIR (Senator Scullion)—Information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence has been provided to you. I now invite you to make a short opening statement and, at the conclusion of your remarks, I will invite members of the committee to put questions to you. As is evident, there is a great deal of interest in your submission in terms of questions so, if you can, try to keep your opening remarks as short as possible.

Mr Wilson—We are definitely one of the largest Aboriginal community organisations in South Australia. Our membership is made up of community organisations, it is not an individual membership base. Currently, we have 23 Aboriginal community organisation members, ranging from here in Adelaide across Yalata to Tullawon, Cooper Pedy, Port Augusta and a range of other communities. We have been around for 16 years. We were one of the results of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody. The community decided that there needed to be some sort of body that could deal with some of these issues that they could not deal with on the ground. That is why ADAC came into being in 1993. We are still the only funded organisation—I am talking about Aboriginal organisations—of its kind in Australia. You can ask Jimmy questions about his project, Making Tracks. That has been funded under the non-government treatment grant program for the past seven or eight years. They basically have a mobile team that goes from here to Alice Springs and over to Kalgoorlie, servicing all of those different communities in between those areas around substance misuse.

Some of the other things we do do have some sort of background in this area. As you might remember, in the evaluation of the Comgas Scheme, ADAC was the organisation that won the tender for that and that delivered the report to the federal government prior to the introduction of Opal fuel. We have brought along a copy of our petrol manuals and also the evaluation report that goes with that. Unfortunately, things like these sorts of resources that are actually being used in communities tend to come to an end because, as you probably know, governments tend to have a short-term agenda rather than a long-term funding plan, and that has been part of the problem. Part of the problem that we also see in this area is a lack of education and training, in particular of the workforce involved, whether it be petrol sniffing in the Central Australian region or other sorts of substance abuse in some of the regional regions, such as Coober Pedy, Port Augusta and Ceduna.

We will table this copy of the evaluation report into Making Tracks that the National Drug Research Institute has done for the last four years. The team are an all-male team because they

spend over 180 days a year out of Adelaide and in rural and remote communities. Unfortunately, that means that there are limitations when they go into more traditional communities, because they are not female and obviously cannot deal with some of the issues that women in those communities might have. One of the recommendations from the evaluation report is that government look at funding a mobile team that is made up of women. In terms of education and training, it is the same thing. We have a copy of the mid-term evaluation project report that the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing did on that project. As you probably know, it was a COAG cost-shared project. Unfortunately, that project has now come to an end because the federal government changed their approach and basically said that education and training was now a state responsibility. That was wholly funded by the Commonwealth to start off with.

What we see as barriers that might or might not exist are a lack of education and training for the current workforce. There are good programs, such as Making Tracks, out there that do go to a range of these communities, but one of the limitations is that the team is gender based rather than mixed. From our point of view, funding, particularly to community groups like us, tends to be short term rather than long term. One of the issues that we try to raise is that we think there is out there a hidden problem that does not get a lot of attention. That is the abuse of other solvents such as paint and glue. We believe that, although you might be focusing on petrol sniffing, there is an issue around other solvent abuse that will eventually find its way into these communities.

CHAIR (Senator Scullion)—For the record, you mentioned two pieces of resource material and two documents. You have formally tabled one. Are you tabling all of them for the committee's benefit?

Mr Wilson—I am going to leave them all with you guys.

CHAIR (Senator Scullion)—Thank you.

Senator BILYK—Did you want to say anything to start with, Mr Perry?

Mr Perry—I would like to give a quick background about Making Tracks.

Senator BILYK—I am very interested in hearing about how that works.

Mr Perry—It is a small team—two people. If I have two vehicles, most of the time we are travelling together. We will go out and support the communities. In a lot of places—I will use Yalata as an example because I have worked there a lot—if they do have a drug and alcohol worker, my role is to support that person. It might just be a person who has no formal training but wants to help out in the community, while I have a little bit more background in that. We will support that person. We will come round, depending on how much—

Senator BILYK—Is that a person who is from the community, or are you talking about someone coming in?

Mr Perry—There have been both types—community people and people from outside employed by the community. Either way, we will still support that person. It takes a bit of time fitting into a new community, and that person, if they are not from there, will need support. We will also go into the schools, work with the youth services and support those people as well. We

have tended to do a lot of camps in the past couple of years. We get a lot of youth services ringing up, saying, 'Can you come on camp?' We have education that we deliver. Depending on what their issues are, we can make up a program for them and work within it.

There is a lot of travel. I have been there seven years and I have had five workers who think travelling to a remote community is not good fun. When you have got to back it up week after week, living in a swag, it gets pretty long. I have also had a female worker and it became very hard when that person did not want to travel into a community by themselves, so that made it harder if there was more than one issue on because we could not divide to do the work. My other co-worker is over in Perth at the moment working on the national cannabis resources.

Senator BILYK—Can you give us a quick example of a typical way you may might approach people in the community and how you might do it? There is probably not a typical way because it is probably different for every community.

Mr Perry—No, there is no typical way. First off, we need to be invited into a community; we will not just come in. And there have to be certain steps taken if we are invited in. If, let us say, a youth service wants us to come in then we will talk to the health service if they have drug and alcohol workers, so we are not stepping on toes. We will tell them we are invited; we are not just coming in. We will also explain to them: 'We are not here just to fix your problem; we are here to support. I actually cannot fix your problem but I can give a hand and support the community.' We will talk to the elders and find out what they would like to do. If something has been tried in other places I will let them know what has worked and what has not worked. Obviously, leaving it just to see the drug and alcohol worker is not going to work; it is a community problem. From there we will go on to talk to the council and then start supporting their drug and alcohol worker, if they have one. Also, things like diversion come into it, where we were ask to take kids away who have a problem and we go out camping and have a chat to them, and things like that.

Senator BILYK—Thank you. It sounds like a great program.

Senator BOYCE—We have had evidence that in a lot of cases marijuana has replaced petrol as a drug of choice. Can you comment on your experience of that?

Mr Perry—Opal fuel coming in has slowed it down. It has certainly made a huge difference, but it has not fixed everything. In some places cannabis is easier to get. People will bring the cannabis into communities and sell it and then leave the community.

Senator BOYCE—Are these local people or outsiders bringing it in?

Mr Perry—Because the community is so transient they may have lived there prior or they have got family there, they have got reasons to go backwards and forwards in the community. I do not see a lot of non-Indigenous people coming in with brand new Toyotas and saying, 'I'm here to sell drugs.'

Senator BOYCE—With a sign on the back: 'Get your ganga here'!

Mr Perry—Obviously they would have been somehow known to the community at one stage. Yes, cannabis is a big problem.

Senator BOYCE—And increasing?

Mr Perry—Yes. Also, other solvents are increasing, with paint and glue in the communities—and that is not just remote but also regional communities. In places like Port Augusta they are having problems with paint at the moment. Also, people are travelling backwards and forwards from the lands, from the transitional housing.

Senator BOYCE—That would have always happened, wouldn't it, or is it happening more?

Mr Perry—I think it is happening more. I think more people are on the move. People will come down and maybe go to the pokies and win a lot of money and go back, and then other people will try to do the same. In the past people have come down and brought petrol sniffers into the city, thinking that they can fix the problem here and get them away from the community, and the kids have gotten into more trouble and ended up in Magill. It is the same with parents becoming a problem with their own drinking as well and getting into trouble. So bringing them down into Adelaide is not going to solve the problem.

Senator BOYCE—It is finding things for people to do constructively.

Mr Perry—Yes. Outside in the community they need a lot of support. Some of the youth services are more nine to five, and they have to be open longer. We are having a look at those types of things—having good sports and rec as well as having the lights working and maybe turning them off at 10 o'clock at night. At the moment, if they are broken they stay broken for a long time.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I just have one question because Senator Boyce has asked the ones I was otherwise going to ask. What do you think a committee like this should recommend to help make your work more effective in remote committees?

Mr Wilson—From our point of view, what you could recommend is that, when government has funding rounds or buckets of money available for these sorts of initiatives, it does not change the rules or let that bucket of money disappear. I will just give you a quick example—that is what happened with the alcohol and other drug training project. The funding came out of the Indigenous capacity building fund to start off with, which was a small fund that they had within DoHA. So that was actually funded—it was a national type COAG cost-shared project. It had some good results. For example, here in South Australia 11 workers have now graduated with certificate III. Unfortunately, when the next budget cycle came around that funding was taken and put into some other initiative. As it turned out it was tobacco. Therefore, groups like us could not access that money. When we tried to suggest that there was \$20 million, for example, for Aboriginal health workers and asked if we could actually access some of that money, we got told that we are not health workers. Maybe we are not, but we are allied professionals. It comes down to education and training. Government tends to change priorities on an ongoing basis, which makes it very difficult for committee groups such as us and others to keep abreast of the changes and also to be successful when it comes to seeking ongoing funding.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Thank you for that.

Senator SIEWERT—I want to follow up on the issue of education and training. I also want to touch on the fact that you have all male workers. It has been brought up repeatedly, and we have heard it in the NT particularly, that you need both male and female youth workers. In South Australia at the moment, funding really only seems to be available for one youth worker per community. It could be a male and it could be a female, but it seems to me you are missing out on half the population. Is that an ongoing serious issue here, and how do we fix it? I presume the answer is funding.

Mr Wilson—It is an ongoing issue. As I said, the evaluation report that we tabled on Making Tracks recommends that there needs to be some sort of gender balanced team. Katie is one of our staff members, and she is the project leader for one of our other projects called Young Nungas Yarning Together. The same problem arises for her because she is a female worker dealing with young Aboriginal kids both male and female, so there is that issue. When you go into a lot of these rural or remote communities, there tends to be one worker, whether they are the youth worker or the substance abuse worker. Our own chairperson, for example, is the youth worker in one of the remote communities. Being a traditional male he has restrictions on the female side, which obviously restricts the effectiveness of that position. How you go about addressing that is obviously through the funding issue—making sure that in these communities or in projects such as Making Tracks there is that additional funding so that you can employ a male and a female. As Jimmy said, we have had female workers in the project before. You have to make sure the workers who are employed are prepared to spend upwards of 180 days away from their normal base of operations. As you can imagine, in a lot of the communities that they go to there are not hotels, motels and things like that where they can just bunk in.

Jimmy was talking about part of their project where they have a small grant at the moment to get a purpose-built trailer, for example, in which they can have a whole range of swags, generators and things like that. So when they go to a remote community, if the community wants them to take some youth or whoever away on a diversionary type camp, they do not have to come back to Adelaide; they have the gear with them. So there are barriers, and part of what we have tried to do over the years is look at trying to go back to these communities on a quite regular basis so the communities get to know the workers quite well. That is part of the success of Making Tracks. The isolated drug and alcohol or youth worker also gets to know them quite well and knows there is a support base that they can ring up and invite into that community to do a range of things. Whether it is here or over the border, for example, Jimmy and others do go to school carnivals and things like that and spend upwards of eight days, depending on how long the carnival goes for, trying to support the whole community—but, in reality, they are there for the drug and alcohol and youth worker and some of the youth.

Senator SIEWERT—The other issue that has come up, which we touched on a bit before, is the increased potency of ganja and the issues around psychosis and the co-morbidity with alcohol and drug abuse and mental health. Are you seeing an increase in that? It has been reported to us that there has been an increase. Have you seen an increase, and if so how do you deal with it?

Mr Perry—We certainly have seen an increase in that—and also an increase in the price, which means that for people with little money the drugs come first and then will come the food and clothing, so we are finding that the children are missing out more and more. How we have been trying to work at it with the children has not been looking directly at the problem. The

workers out there are trained for counselling and things like that, so there is not a lot being done for the health services. It takes a lot of time to chase people up. The health services are all busy and sitting in their offices rather than out in the community collecting people who need to be talked to. I guess it is only really through the diversion in the courts that people are being picked up, and things like we are doing with small camps and chatting to people.

Mr Wilson—Just picking up on what Jimmy said, there has been that increase. We do run police drug diversion under the illicit drug diversion initiative. What our diversion worker tends to be finding lately is that there is a range of people coming to him who do have mental health problems. Obviously, his problem is that he does not have a mental health background, and you are talking about people who are coming out of psychiatric areas. They tend to contact Byron. By the time people get to us they tend to have gone through all of the other services and have not been able to get any help. So when they come to us, I suppose we should say no as well, at the end of the day. But the thing is that, if we say no, those folk have nowhere else to go. So we have workers who are dealing with people who have severe mental health problems and they are not trained in that area and just do not know what to do in terms of getting that person to move on. At the end of the day I think it puts the worker at risk as well, if something does happen to one of those clients with a mental health problem and they have not documented everything they have done. What seems to be happening is that some of these services are now thinking that because you are Aboriginal—we are talking non-Aboriginal services as well—the way to deal with a mental health issue is to take that person off their mental health medication and try and get them to a ngangkari, an Aboriginal spiritual healer. But unfortunately the person is on mental health medication for a reason. In a couple of incidences where that has happened, by the time the person has got halfway to wherever they were going to take them, they have gone a bit psychotic and have had to be brought back and therefore be put on their medication. So it is not just us. I suppose a lot of services out there, mainstream as well as Aboriginal, really do not know what to do when it comes to mental health issues. Therefore they are all searching for support or answers.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—In our original report on petrol sniffing, which I know that you contributed to, there were a number of recommendations. Certainly we talked about Opal fuel but we also talked about the appropriate rehabilitation services and diversionary programs in communities so that we could work with community. It would be useful if we could have some comments from either or both of you on your view about rehabilitation processes and the diversionary processes in community. You touched before, Mr Perry, on just having things available in community. We saw the new rehabilitation centre at Amata. It is state-of-the-art and new, but that is only one place across the whole of your region. Do you have any comments about that?

Mr Wilson—I will comment on that and Jimmy can perhaps talk on the diversionary things. We were quite excited. At the 2002 drug summit we pushed major recommendations around: having some sort of facility in the Far North for petrol sniffers and also an illicit drug rehabilitation service here in Adelaide for the 20,000-plus Aboriginal folk who live here. When the government decided to go down the track of having something in the north, albeit that it took quite a few years, we were quite excited about that. Our issue is that the Aboriginal workers that I am talking about that would be placed in these sorts of areas need to have some formal training. A couple of workers were enrolled in the nationally accredited course that we were doing. Unfortunately, competing interests—family, business and the fact that they were

employed by state government—meant that those workers in the end had to drop out. That is the only rehabilitation facility north of Gepps Cross, if you want to put it that way. So part of the issue comes back to education and training.

As you probably know, the previous federal government made a \$50 million commitment to rural and remote communities and, as a result of that, in the near future we will have a day centre at Ceduna, Coober Pedy and Port Augusta. We think those are good initiatives. There was state and federal government negotiation on those sorts of things, and perhaps if the NGO sector had been involved in that negotiation then some of the issues that arose could have been addressed. The next \$50 million funding that the new Labor government announced was again for rural and remote communities. We are pleased to say that NGOs such as us were involved in that second lot. There really are not enough services, besides that one on the Pit land. There are not a lot of drug and alcohol or rehabilitative type services outside of Adelaide. Even when you come to Adelaide for Indigenous-specific rehabilitation around, for example, illicit drugs, there is none. It is difficult.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Sure. And there continues to be a need, I would imagine.

Mr Wilson—Yes, from our point of view it is a big need. Jimmy can talk about diversion.

Mr Perry—What I have been involved with are things where a bit of time has elapsed from when they have been caught to when they have gone out on the camp. It could be six or eight weeks when the person thinks, ‘Why am I going out to this camp?’ and things like that. I have also been involved with camps where the police were actually meant to bring the kids out and it never happened. I am not really sure why. It may have been due to the weather because it was a bit cold or it looked like a bit of rain—because rain can really muck you around out there.

Senator BOYCE—We know!

Mr Perry—Yes, it only takes a little bit of rain. But, again, it is about having the skilled workers out there. Again, it is a community person—who may be called a diversionary worker or the drug and alcohol worker—and they might also run the youth service because they have not got a youth worker out in the community at the time. So that person is overworked. It could be a husband and wife who want to help but who end up doing everything, such as driving the buses to all the carnivals or the football on the weekend and things like that. So with the diversions, they are there but they have not happened correctly—in the right manner or time. Certainly, that is what I have seen in some of the communities out there. I think—and I am not sure if this is the case in the city—that we do not get a lot of diversions for petrol sniffing or solvent abuse. And I do not think—

Senator MOORE—That moves into your education comments earlier. I just thought it was important to attach those bases after, if we are leading on from the previous inquiry.

CHAIR (Senator Scullion)—Thank you for the evidence you have provided today. The secretariat may be in touch for the clarification of *Hansard* or, potentially, for questions on notice from the committee.

Proceedings suspended from 10.46 am to 10.59 am

JACKMAN, Mr Gavin, Director, Government Affairs, BP Australia

McKENZIE, Mr Chris, Fuels Marketing Program Manager, BP Australia

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—We welcome witnesses from BP and thank you very much for your submission. You are aware of information on parliament privilege and so on you are aware of. We do value the communication that BP has provided over many years on this issue. They are an integral partner in the whole process. Would either of you like to make an opening statement before we go to questions? We always run out of time so you will probably have some questions on notice as well.

Mr Jackman—We will make a short statement. Thank you for the opportunity to appear. BP is very proud of what we have done to develop, refine and market Opal fuel. We have a long history around the world of working with local communities to try and address problems that are important to them. We saw petrol sniffing as one of those areas where there was a misuse of our product. We started working on this in the early nineties and we had a trial with a low aromatic version of Avgas. That did not seem to be a sustainable solution so, in 2003, with the Australian government we visited local communities and as a result of that started work on developing Opal fuel, which is, as I say, a low aromatic fuel which does not provide the high when sniffed. That was officially launched in February 2005 with the former Health minister, Tony Abbott, and our Australasian president, Gerry Houston. Since then we have been steadily increasing production of that fuel as the government has advised us that demand has increased and as they try and roll it out to more communities. We are really pleased with the result so far and we look forward to continuing to work with the government on anything we can do to assist.

Senator SCULLION—Congratulations; it must be a real delight to look back and be involved in probably the only silver bullet, I believe, we are going to find—certainly in my lifetime—for some of these matters. I am very interested in the costs of production. Unfortunately I missed the invitation to go to Fremantle and have a look at the refinery. The issue is that, wherever we go in a region—we have accomplished this in Central Australia—there will always be recalcitrants, which we hope we are going to deal with in our own little way. As this moves out there is always the issue of bleed from areas that simply have not been covered. The ideal would be to simply say that it is an unleaded fuel and why don't we have it Australia-wide? Does the cost differential only involve R&D and are we really offsetting a huge, which I acknowledge, R&D effort, or is it much more expensive to produce? Perhaps in answering that you can touch on critical mass for producing it. If that were the only thing you produced, what would be the cost differential in that situation?

Mr Jackman—Firstly, it is an open invitation to visit the refinery, Senator, so you are welcome any time. You have posed a fairly complicated question. To try and break down or isolate one barrel of oil and what goes into a refinery, out of that single barrel you would produce some diesel, some petrol in various grades, some jet fuel and some LPG. Essentially Opal being produced in such small volumes is a boutique run so it is not part of the regular process, so that adds cost. Refineries work on the basis of very high volumes and throughput and that is what brings costs down. It does mean that you are not producing some of those other fuels

as well. It is produced differently. As I say, it is a boutique recipe so you are not putting some of the aromatics in that you would put into other fuel.

Senator SCULLION—No savings there?

Mr Jackman—No savings there. You are putting in different blend components. As to what the tipping point would be to make this the equivalent production of unleaded; I am not sure there is an answer to that. I am happy to take that on notice and see, if there were a complete replacement across the entire board, what that would be. Opal actually results in a higher octane fuel. Compared to regular 91 unleaded, Opal is a 94 octane. It does require different blend components. Once we get above certain production capacities I believe we have to start importing those blend components. It interrupts the setup of the refinery kit and it may indeed not be possible to produce large volumes.

Senator SCULLION—Perhaps you can just take that on notice. I am really looking to see whether the answer is in the cost differential in long run. If we went across the board, how much would that cost differential come down—well, hopefully it would. I have another technical issue. Are you looking at a possible boutique replacement for premium fuel? That is the other issue. People with older cars are legitimately saying that Opal does not run as well in their cars, and fair enough. That is probably the only technical problem people have with it. Have you been asked or are you looking at replacement for premium fuel?

Mr Jackman—Our focus so far has been on addressing the 80 per cent of the problem. As I mentioned, Opal itself is a very small production run—we are talking several million litres compared to billions of litres. Premium is even smaller than that again. So it would—because of the small production runs—again, increase the cost exponentially, I would imagine. So we have been focusing our efforts with the department on developing guidelines for retailers on the responsible sale of premium fuel to try and educate them and help them provide service to those communities.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you just go through the volumes that are sold now and where they were previously. Fortunately, I was on the trip that went to Fremantle, and you went through a maximum amount that you can produce with existing facilities. Can we go through how much is produced now, what the maximum amount is and how close we are to date. My other question is: has the cost per litre now come down? The differential used to be around 23c—

Mr Jackman—33c.

Senator SIEWERT—So that has not come down with the increase in the amount of usage?

Mr Jackman—It has come down to 27c.

Senator SIEWERT—From 33c to 27c. Okay, thanks.

Mr Jackman—And when we say that is—

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—It is plummeting.

Mr Jackman—It is plummeting indeed. When we say ‘the differential’, that is the subsidy the government has determined they will pay. To go off topic slightly and provide context: refining margins in Australia are really determined by regional refining margins. They might go up and down, so the differential might go up and down. But that is the sort of subsidy that has been determined by the government.

Senator SIEWERT—I think you said in your submission that at the moment you are selling 27 million litres of Opal in Kwinana?

Mr Jackman—I am glad you raised that, because, in preparing for today’s evidence, I was trying to find the latest figures, and the figure for 2008 is 18 million litres. So I have been trying to source the ‘27 million’ that went into that submission. So I might get back to you with the figures—year on year, if you like.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Could you then tell us what your maximum capacity is in Kwinana. Where do we reach the end of where you can actually produce Opal—I understood there was a maximum limit?

Mr Jackman—That is 40 million litres.

Senator SIEWERT—So we can still double the amount of sales without you reaching your limits?

Mr Jackman—Yes. And production has really just been scaled according to the needs identified by the department of health. That is how we decide how much to produce. So, if there are more communities that want it, we will produce it and ship it to Adelaide, where it is picked up by distributors for passing on to communities.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you just tell some of us and remind some of us where it is actually distributed: it goes to Kwinana, from Kwinana to South Australia—

Mr Jackman—I might get Mr McKenzie to talk about that. We cannot talk about the individual communities, because we do not identify those.

Senator SIEWERT—It is mainly where you take it to. For example, when we were in Lake Nash, we were told that there is an issue around sniffable fuel coming across the border from Queensland—despite the fact that the roadhouse wants to stock Opal, in Queensland they cannot. So we are also interested in how it is being distributed, what the barriers are and if we can overcome them if they are there.

Mr McKenzie—It is a logistical issue. It might be worth reminding everyone how unleaded petrol gets to some of these places now. If it were as simple as saying, ‘We’ll just use the existing infrastructure: truck in tanks of unleaded to replace with Opal,’ that would be the best outcome. In a lot of the northern Australian terminals, unleaded and diesel and all of the other products are actually sourced from Singapore. So, when we think about how Opal gets into a location, it is not as simple as how unleaded gets there. We have to replace unleaded, which is imported from Singapore, with a product that is produced in Perth.

There are two options. One is a ship; the other is a truck. Shipping works best with large quantities. To have those quantities you need large production and a large place to put it, so if we have big tanks and an import facility, that is fantastic and you can use a ship. A lot of these communities do not have either. A lot of them are not coastal, so you are looking at road transport. The only way road transport works is either direct from Kwinana or Adelaide. Nearly 100 per cent of our product is produced in Perth, moved to Adelaide and then it is open to all oil companies and all distributors from that facility. Alice Springs, as a case in point, is in the middle of Australia and it is either serviced with unleaded from Darwin or from Adelaide. It does not really matter; economics in terms of freight are about the same. To replace a litre of unleaded in Darwin with a litre of Opal from Adelaide, the first leg to Alice Springs stays the same. It is just the second leg that is incremental, which is where the department needs to pay those distributors a freight subsidy. Where it is and is not is based on trucking. We have it at a depot in Alice Springs, so there are third parties. BP is a refiner marketer. We effectively wholesale it at a terminal gate price in Adelaide. From that point onwards, we have other oil companies that we sell the product to but that is kind of where our involvement finishes.

Senator SIEWERT—If I understand you correctly, you are basically taking it out of Adelaide.

Mr McKenzie—Correct.

Senator SIEWERT—I thought at one stage there was talk about it going out of Darwin as well. When you were in Darwin for the last inquiry I understood that you were attempting to take it out of Darwin. Did that not happen?

Mr Jackman—It is still under consideration by the department. Again, we will advise on the logistical difficulties and relative costs, but it is up to the government as to whether or not they want to make that investment. I think to put it out of Darwin you would need to increase your volumes to make it more cost-effective.

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate that I may be touching on issues that are still under negotiation but there is some evidence to suggest that petrol sniffing is on the increase in areas like Arnhem Land. Has there been any discussion with government about dealing with that issue?

Mr Jackman—We tend not to talk about individual communities, we tend to talk about regions and supply points with them. They will say: ‘We want to put it into this general region. Where would you supply from? How would we be able to achieve that and can you increase the production lines?’

Senator SIEWERT—So you are still discussing Darwin. I would have thought it would be easier then to deal with the Kimberley for example and north-west Australia from Darwin rather than Kwinana.

Mr McKenzie—We are looking at the areas. The ones I am aware of are out of Kalgoorlie, Laverton, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Tennant Creek and Jabiru.

Senator BOYCE—Is this a list of suppliers?

Mr McKenzie—This is a list of desired locations. These are things that we are in discussions with the department of health.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Could you table that document? Is there anything in that document we should not see?

Mr McKenzie—It is just a map of Australia.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Do you have them marked though? It would be easier than reading them into the record or writing them down.

Mr McKenzie—Sure. To add to that there are some things that are in our control. Darwin is not really one of them. It is a joint venture facility in Darwin. All the oil companies used to operate individual terminals. We now have one joint terminal up there. It is owned and run by a third-party, Vopak. We are a stakeholder in that. We have about a 25 per cent ownership in that JV. Any changes in Darwin rely on the acceptance of all parties. We do not have spare tanks in Darwin, so the issue of supply ex Darwin does make sense. It is a lot closer to the Kimberley than Adelaide and Perth. We do not just do not have a tank for it. So if we want to build a tank we need tenure, we need capital and we need volume to give Vopak what they need in order to have a reasonable rate of return.

Senator SIEWERT—What volume are you talking about?

Mr McKenzie—It is all dollars, I suppose. Hypothetically, if we were to build a five million litre tank that would be almost two years in construction. It would then need at least a five-year tenure and probably throughputs of about 10 million litres a year. Just to remind everyone, the throughputs out of Adelaide are at 17 million litres at the moment. Some of these communities are looking at about 120,000 to 150,000 litres a year, so it is one road train, one truck worth of volume per annum. To move 10 million litres is still a considerable amount of volume in a place where diesel is the majority use fuel. If we are replacing unleaded, it is lots of small links, so to speak.

Senator SIEWERT—I have one more question and it is a WA centred one. You mentioned Laverton. What about Warburton, or is that serviced out of Laverton?

Mr McKenzie—I am not 100 per cent sure. What we have been looking at with the Department of Health is really Darwin as an option. It could be expensive and it could take more time than we would like. We have been looking at some of the other out ports that we own and operate, where we have greater influence, such as Port Hedland, Broome and Weipa. With some of our larger commercial customers, such as BHP and Rio, we operate a number of their terminals on their behalf. So we are looking at where we would have options and what sorts of communities could be serviced from those locations. I do not need to tell you the structure of the roads up there and what can be done by road transport. Most of it is rail into the big mining operations and most of the road transport is diesel. These are diesel locations, not motor spirit locations, so it is not as simple as we would ideally like it to be.

Things are not impossible. In December we introduced Opal into Nhulunbuy, through Gove. You can talk about logistical complications there. We are getting 20,000 litre drops of Opal into

Gove from Adelaide that go through several hands and several containers, including a barge from Darwin. So nothing is impossible; it just takes lots of conversations, lots of willingness.

Mr Jackman—I will clarify that. We are talking about how our role stops at wholesaling ex Adelaide. In the example that Mr McKenzie is talking about, the department had identified that they wanted to put Opal into Gove but that they were coming up against some logistical difficulties. We happen to have a few expert experts in BP on logistics and we have some good relations with fuel distributors, the people who own the tank there and the people who sell it at site. So what we were able to do was to play the broker and assist the department in arranging that by overcoming those logistical difficulties. But that is the role that is normally undertaken by the department. Just on that occasion we stepped in to help out when they ran into a few problems.

Senator JOHNSTON—Mr McKenzie, you said 20,000 litres. That is 20 tonnes, isn't it?

Mr McKenzie—Correct.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is not a terribly large amount. Nevertheless, it must present an enormous logistical problem to you for such a small amount to be moved across such a vast distances. You talk about taking the fuel to Adelaide. How do you get it there?

Mr McKenzie—It is shipped from Kwinana to Adelaide.

Senator JOHNSTON—How many tonnes are you taking to Adelaide? It must be a nightmare for you to break up the various compartments of a ship and put a bit of a Opal in.

Mr McKenzie—Sure. It comes in quantities of about five megalitres, so it is about 5,000 tonnes. From there it goes onto road trains. Maybe it is worth walking through the Nhulunbuy example. It did take three months to solve.

Senator JOHNSTON—Yes, I would be fascinated.

Mr McKenzie—Let me share that with you. I am just talking about physical movements; maybe I will get on to the relationships and who does what as the second part. The physical movements are from Kwinana to Adelaide by ship—a small component of a very large ship—into a reasonably small bulk terminal. From there it goes onto a road train. Road trains run from Adelaide to Darwin; they carry about 140,000 litres of product. There will be a few compartments of Opal; it is mostly diesel with up to, say, 50,000 litres of Opal. The road train would then run to Alice Springs. It would probably put half the Opal into Alice Springs as part of its regular movement. You do not run trucks empty, so it would fill those empty compartments with diesel and take those all on to Darwin. At Darwin it gets discharged into a depot and the Opal gets loaded onto an isotainer, which is a container with a tank inside. A barge operator then picks it up from that Darwin depot, takes it to the wharf and puts it on his barge, which runs weekly into Gove with every other supply for that region. It takes two days to get to Gove, and then at Gove it gets put into the Rio diesel terminal, which is a safe place to store fuel.

Senator JOHNSTON—There is an isolated tank there that is for Opal only?

Mr McKenzie—Correct.

Senator JOHNSTON—It is probably a quarter full?

Mr McKenzie—No, it is full. It is 20,000 litres. Actually, two go at a time. It gets put onto a flat-bed truck, taken into town and discharged straight into the service station at Nhulunbuy. Then the tank is empty and it has to find its way all the way back to Darwin.

Senator JOHNSTON—When you say ‘a flat-bed truck’, do you mean that the discharge is not via a tanker per se? You have to hand-pump it into the ground?

Mr McKenzie—No. This isotainer is a container that just goes onto the back of a truck. It is a cylindrical vessel. It is discharged as a road tanker would normally be; it is gravity fed into a service station’s underground tank. Then you have an empty iso which needs to then get back to the wharf, back onto the barge and, at Darwin, from the barge back to the depot, where it is refilled.

Senator JOHNSTON—So that service station in Nhulunbuy has had to isolate a particular underground tank?

Mr McKenzie—It does not sell unleaded petrol. Its unleaded underground tank, its unleaded pumps and its unleaded bowsers are now all Opal dispensers and Opal storage.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. What trouble did you have to go to—or did you even bother—to clean out and physically rinse out the diesel and whatever else might have been in those underground tanks to put the Opal in?

Mr McKenzie—Those underground tanks were for unleaded petrol. We literally ran those tanks dry.

Mr Jackman—We do not own that service station.

Mr McKenzie—We—collectively ‘we’—

Senator JOHNSTON—So you had to negotiate on a contractual basis with the service station proprietor to proceed.

Mr McKenzie—It was on those grounds. You run those tanks out before you discharge. It is Gove, so when the petrol arrives it does not need to be delivered straight away.

Senator JOHNSTON—Can you tell us if the service station was actually owned by the community?

Mr McKenzie—No, the service station is owned by a private service station operator—

Senator JOHNSTON—A private operator—okay.

Mr McKenzie—who has a BP branded arrangement with the BP distributor in that region, with whom we have a good working relationship. We have had bookends. We had a good relationship with the person who owned and operated that service station through our distributor, and it was just a matter of solving the bits in between.

Senator JOHNSTON—Roughly how many times a year do you have to go through that process at this stage? I am asking approximately; I do not want to know exactly what your output is or anything like that—that is commercial in confidence.

Mr Jackman—This was a particularly unusual circumstance, because the sort of process that Mr McKenzie has described is normally handled entirely by the Department of Health and Ageing. It was just on that occasion that they sought our assistance because we had pre-existing relationships with everyone in the supply chain, but we did not really have a role in doing it on any other occasion.

Senator JOHNSTON—So Health will now do the deliveries, will they?

Mr McKenzie—Hopefully. It is a good product, so the challenges are worth solving. I took it as a little personal challenge. If you tell me you cannot do it—

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—We have a small list here for you, Mr McKenzie.

Mr McKenzie—I did take it on as a bit of a pet project and made sure that the department of health had a methodology and a process. If you can get a product to Gove, you can get it to just about anywhere. It is just a matter of understanding the steps and the economics—

Senator JOHNSTON—And also the time.

Mr McKenzie—Yes. For a price, you can move it anywhere. It is a matter of how economic and sustainable it is. This is very much a short-term solution. The logistics is a nightmare and very inefficient. The medium-term solution is to look at the third party that did supply the unleaded into that region. It was not BP; it was another oil company. We are looking at bringing in shipping quantities of Opal from Perth, and that would save us the isotainer. It is many hands, light work stuff.

Senator SIEWERT—You were talking about needing a tank in Darwin.

Mr McKenzie—No. There is an unleaded tank in Gove. It is supplied ex-Singapore via another oil company. It is a Rio terminal. There is only one place where Opal is produced—in Perth. To get unleaded from Perth rather than from Singapore does affect the other oil companies' economics and shipping. It does affect Rio's operations. It is not a quick solution, but they can eventually work it into shipping patterns. So it is a case of: let's not stop selling Opal in Nhulunbuy; let's look at an interim solution until we solve our economics on shipping.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you mean they would then get all their unleaded and Opal from Perth?

Mr McKenzie—Correct. There would be only Opal at Nhulunbuy in terms of the tankage there.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You said you could take Opal anywhere, providing you could sort out those problems.

Mr McKenzie—Moving it is a challenge.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Obviously, people will not want to take it unless the federal government subsidy comes with it. Are there any places that you know of at the moment who want to sell the Opal commercially but who have not been able to attract the subsidy?

Mr McKenzie—Not in my capacity. As Mr Jackman touched on, we are a wholesaler to Adelaide. I am not aware of anyone who is—

Senator HUMPHRIES—People only come to you once they have their approval for the subsidy.

Mr McKenzie—Yes.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Fair enough. You might have been here earlier when we were told that one of the problems the traditional owners at Mintabie have in renegotiating the lease is that they want to phase out the use of unleaded or sniffable fuels, but some of those fuels are used in generators for opal mining. Are you aware of whether Opal is suitable for those sorts of generators?

Mr Jackman—I am not sure about those generators in particular. I am happy to take that on notice. But certainly Opal is suitable for all applications that would normally take unleaded fuel.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Senator Johnston reminds me that generators would usually use diesel fuel.

Senator JOHNSTON—Ideally. For the 94 octane, it would be better to use Opal, wouldn't it?

Mr McKenzie—Yes. We all have an opinion on quality; but, for the record, BP has a fuels guarantee. I think we are the only oil company to offer that, which means that our products will meet Australian standards or greater, and they will be fit for purpose in their application. In the early days, we did a lot of testing with Toyota in Melbourne. We ran it through Toyota, Holden and Ford engines. We also ran it through a 10-year-old carburettor engine and two- and four-stroke motors. To date, we have not had one claim against our fuels guarantee for Opal fuel where the outcome has been fuel quality. The outcomes in all cases have been poor maintenance of engines in vehicles.

Senator HUMPHRIES—This involves cars rather than other sorts of fuel devices.

Mr McKenzie—Correct. A carburettor engine is a carburettor engine. Whether you are using it for running the lights or running a land cruiser, it burns the same.

Senator HUMPHRIES—In the last page of your submission, you refer to the coroner's report of May 2008 and its recommendation of not trying to create the impression that, merely because Opal is non-sniffable, it is actually safe to sniff. You said that you therefore removed

‘the term “Non-Sniffable” from your website and all marketing and explanatory material’. I do not understand why the description ‘non-sniffable’ would remove the impression that Opal is somehow safe to sniff. What were you trying to achieve by that?

Mr Jackman—It was a concern expressed by the coroner that the use of the term ‘non-sniffable’ was problematic because it might suggest to people that it is okay to sniff. It was identified by the coroner and so we moved to the term ‘low aromatic’. Places out in the community that sell Opal have decals on the pumps so that people know that it is Opal fuel and understand that they do not get a high from it. I think the term used is: ‘good for cars, no good for sniffing’.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I am not sure how the term ‘non-sniffable’ conveys that it is somehow safe to sniff.

Senator JOHNSTON—It is safer that way.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Yes, I suppose if the corner recommended that. We met with a member of the Opal Alliance in Yulara who said that there needs to be a new Opal advertising campaign for motorists. Given what you have been saying about the effectiveness of the fuel in cars, do you think there is a need for a new campaign, or is there a general acceptance by motorists of the capacity of Opal to be used in their vehicles?

Mr Jackman—When Opal is going to be delivered into a community we support the department with technical material, and we send out people to talk to the local auto groups. We have a 1300 consumer help line number. When we go into a community, we provide those supports at the time. We are not aware that there is a call for an ongoing campaign. In the communities where Opal has been delivered, I think there is a pretty good acceptance.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Do you get feedback from motorists expressing any concerns about using it, or do you get any sense of resistance from the retailers about selling it?

Mr Jackman—No.

Mr McKenzie—An endorsement from BP on BP fuels is one thing. A much more powerful endorsement of our fuel would be from the likes of the RACQ or from independent bodies. I am aware of two issues. One is the use of Opal in outboard motors. People who go fishing are concerned about it. They think: ‘I’m going into water. I don’t want a fuel that is questionable. So, if there is a doubt, I’m not prepared to use it.’ Most of the complaints have come from people who use outboard motors.

The other issue is road use service station operators complaining about seals. Without a doubt, Opal has a different impact on rubber gaskets and seals in regular unleaded motors. But with regular maintenance and a change of seals, you get reasonable, like-for-like use out of those seals. The concerns are really with the fishing, and here we have alternatives. You can always use a premium fuel. We have a technical help line for those who want to get into the chemistry, and there is a lot of information about the right fuels for the right engine—which is outside my area. There seem to be a loud few who are doing a bit of PR damage to the credentials of Opal and its suitability for engines.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You do not think there is a need for a government response to that?

Mr Jackman—That is a matter for government.

Mr McKenzie—I am not sure.

Senator BOYCE—Did I hear you correctly when you said earlier that you were not able to provide a list of the individual outlets where Opal is currently available in Australia?

Mr Jackman—That is right. There is a sensitivity, as you might appreciate, with some local communities that they are identified with the stigma of having a problem of petrol sniffing. So the department does not even tell us the individual locations. There are 83 communities, 33 service stations and three pastoral lands; but, beyond that, we do not have the detail. We are aware of a few, obviously, but we are not given that detail by the department.

Senator BOYCE—There are none in Queensland that you are currently aware of?

Mr McKenzie—Not that I am currently aware of.

Senator BOYCE—What is the map you are about to table going to show us—the current and planned depots?

Mr McKenzie—I will do my best to explain it. It is basically a map of where the coastal terminals are, where Opal is currently and where the desired locations are for Opal distribution. At BP we are taking that on to say: ‘We do not know what Shell is doing or what Caltex is doing or what some of the others oil companies are up to in terms of their infrastructure. That is out of our control. What is in our control is our infrastructure, our tanks. Have we got a match with where a desired location is and a facility we own and operate? What is our capacity to make change and introduce Opal into those locations?’ Darwin seems to be the right fit. Also, what you can get access to in dry and wet seasons is quite different.

Senator BOYCE—Apart from the sales of Opal that BP outlets would make, would most of your other sales be to a second-tier distributor, not to the other major players in the market? Can you explain?

Mr McKenzie—As I understand, most of the pick-ups out of Adelaide are from distributors—so non oil company pick-ups—but that does not mean they do not have alliances to oil companies.

Senator BOYCE—They would typically be supplying smaller-turnover stations and the like, would they?

Mr McKenzie—Yes. There is also a lot of commercial business inland. Most of it is diesel. There will be a mixture of independent fuel carriers and independent fuel resellers plus the oil company distributors—Caltex, Shell, Mobil and BP distributorships—that would all pick up out of Largs. There are no oil company owned service stations in Central Australia and through these parts, so the distributorships would be a mixture of independently owned service stations and service stations that they own and operate themselves.

Senator BOYCE—Have you had any negotiations with the Queensland government on supplying Opal into Queensland communities?

Mr Jackman—No, we have not.

Mr McKenzie—No.

Senator SCULLION—Can I just make a brief comment and perhaps give some feedback. I have in fact used Opal in my outboard. There is a great advantage. Most outboards that break in Indigenous communities break because either somebody puts in the incorrect amount of oil or nobody puts any oil in them. The great advantage about Opal is its colour: it does not have a pinky-bluey base, it has a yellow base, so you can tell straightaway whether there is oil in the outboard. It is so easy. I have to say it is a great advantage in checking whether or not you have got oil in your outboard.

Mr McKenzie—Yes, I agree.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Mr Jackman, I think we got this in a previous inquiry but it would not hurt to have this on record again: the capacity for sniffing with diesel, the major fuel used in a lot of these areas. It is good to know on record where people could get access to things that could cause them harm. So, just for the record, could you tell us about diesel, because it has such a big usage. We have already heard about premium in your response to a question from Senator Scullion earlier.

Mr Jackman—In terms of its sniffability—

Senator SCULLION—Have a crack at it, Mr Jackman!

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—A community can have a range of fuels available to them. We have been concentrating on Opal. As I understand—without the technical expertise shared with us today—it is only unleaded that you can replace with Opal.

Mr Jackman—Yes. As to the individual properties of diesel, I am afraid that exceeds my technical expertise.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Can we get something from your chemists about that?

Mr Jackman—Certainly.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I am sure it came up in the last inquiry, but it would be nice to have it on record in this one because consistently the value of Opal, where it has been able to be accessed, has arisen and there has been the subsequent worry about replacement. If you are no longer getting the effect you are after with Opal, what other options are there? It would be nice to have that on record for our inquiry. We would appreciate that.

Mr Jackman—We will provide you with the comparative figures around unleaded, which is about 25 per cent aromatics, and Opal, which is typically less than five per cent, and give you the figure for diesel.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I go back to the map, which we now have in front of us, and clarify: just because it is a BP depot that does not mean that you could necessarily get Opal there?

Mr McKenzie—Correct. It may be a dedicated diesel location.

Senator SIEWERT—So on the map the circles signify areas you have already discussed with the department. Is that correct?

Mr McKenzie—With the benefit of colour—

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, we do not have colour on ours. Maybe you could leave the colour one with the secretariat.

Mr McKenzie—There are six circles: the one close to Kalgoorlie—Laverton—Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Tennant Creek, the one I cannot pronounce up near Darwin—

Senator SIEWERT—Jabiru.

Mr McKenzie—and Weipa are the regions that the department have raised with us as the next phase.

Mr Jackman—The shaded areas near those circles that you can see are the supply regions. The logistical supply points for us are represented by the circles.

Senator SIEWERT—So in northern WA you are looking at both Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek?

Mr McKenzie—Yes. Halls Creek currently is an Opal region—the area shown in grey is currently an Opal area. We have talked about it with the department of health. The department of health are looking at broadened distribution. This is a replacement initiative—there is Opal in certain locations; we then need to start looking at where it is not.

Senator SIEWERT—Moving out from the central location?

Mr McKenzie—Sure. From my understanding, there is evidence that where Opal is introduced and alternatives are not available the sniffing rates are reducing. It is our job to make it tougher to get access to alternatives—us being the department of health and BP.

Mr Jackman—You can see there is a great deal of ownership and pride in the Opal brand.

Senator SIEWERT—We have had quite a lot of evidence to suggest that, where there is one supplier not stocking Opal, sniffable fuel—I will still say sniffable and non-sniffable for the purposes of this discussion—is run out of those specific locations into communities that have non-sniffable fuel. I understand the point completely.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Has BP had any international interest in Opal, considering that the issue of sniffing is an international one and has been identified in a number of other countries? Has there been any international interest in the research you have done?

Mr Jackman—There has been, actually, and we have certainly been promoting it in some of our material. We are talking at the moment to our BP people in Canada to see whether there is any capacity either for them to produce Opal or for us to supply them from here.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you very much. We will continue to be in contact, and I know that Senator Scullion will be getting a visit really soon.

Mr Jackman—Thank you.

[11.46 am]

PETERSEN, Ms Kim Jorja, Director, Remote Communities, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia

SAUNDERS, Ms Nerida, Executive Director, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Welcome. You know about parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses, but if you wish to have further details the secretariat can provide them. The committee has before it your submission. In the session before lunch we are concentrating on petrol sniffing. Then we will come back after lunch to questions about general Indigenous affairs. It will go backwards and forwards, but that is our hope. We invite either or both of you to make an opening statement.

Ms Saunders—Thank you. From a state government point of view, thank you very much for the opportunity to come along and add further information to our written submission. You have in front of you a summary of the South Australian response to petrol sniffing on the APY lands. It reinforces the importance that the state government places on resolving and working with Anangu people in relation to the impacts and effects of petrol sniffing on Aboriginal communities and outlines the response provided by South Australian government agencies, in partnership with both the Commonwealth and committee organisations, in developing appropriate implementation plans to deal with the issue of petrol sniffing. Kim Petersen will now go through the presentation and talk more specifically about those particular programs.

Ms Petersen—As Ms Saunders said, the South Australian government is deeply concerned about substance misuse in Central Australia and has worked very hard both with the Commonwealth and Anangu organisations to reduce petrol sniffing. The APY lands cover roughly 105 square kilometres, so they are a very big piece of land. It ranges from Pipalyatjara on the western side through to Indulkana on the east. The APY lands themselves have almost 3,000 residents, which goes up and down depending on business and other cultural commitments. They have ten major communities and many family homelands. Over recent years Nganampa Health Council have been completing a range of surveys in conjunction with other organisations to look at the rate of petrol sniffing on the APY lands. During that time Nganampa have concluded that petrol sniffing on the lands has decreased by approximately 60 per cent. From a state government point of view and from a Nganampa point of view, it is fantastic news that it has actually gone down by that much.

There is a range of factors that one can look at as having contributed to that drop in petrol sniffing. Certainly when one actually looks at the oral presentation before this one notes the introduction of non-sniffable fuel, Opal fuel, has greatly reduced sniffing in the lands and in other parts of South Australia. The other things that we think have contributed to the fall in petrol sniffing include other activities that have taken place on the lands. As to the eight-point plan, South Australia has made sure that any policies that we have developed within South Australia have been consistent with the eight-point plan. We have developed a range of new policing strategies and have consistently worked with both the Northern Territory and WA

governments in looking at trying to develop similar legislation for the three states. We have developed a range of youth work services and youth services across the lands from a diversionary point of view but also from the point of view that we have got good holiday programs that operate during the school holidays, which clearly reduce the time that young people spend being bored or having very little to do.

The South Australian government, in conjunction with the Commonwealth government, have developed at Amata a substances misuse facility that we got to look at with senators on Monday. That facility has two functions. The facility provides a residential component for up to 10 clients at any given time. The facility actually has an outreach program. The outreach program will visit every one of those communities over a period of time and will see clients in every one of those communities. Once it is established that the client actually needs a longer period of time for rehabilitation, it works with that client and then the client can actually attend a residential program.

So those are some of the activities that we have actually put in from a state point of view. Clearly, the government has spent a long time on trying to develop effective programs on the lands. We are still working with the Commonwealth government and NGOs to further develop programs. We are currently working on developing a youth engagement strategy across the APY Lands which we think will further enhance a coordinated approach not only to petrol sniffing but to substance misuse and also other youth services on the lands. I will stop there and see if there are any questions.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you. Some senators have questions at this stage.

Senator SIEWERT—When we had the first inquiry, the legislation was proposed then and it is still being proposed. Can you tell me what the issues are and why we do not have it yet?

Ms Petersen—There is a draft bill that is currently being worked on now. I think the draft bill will be worked up by August this year. There have been some issues. I would probably take it on notice to actually look at what exactly the issues are in finalising the legislation. But we are pretty confident that by August this year we will actually have that in motion.

Senator SIEWERT—My understanding was that the three police forces are supposed to be working together regardless of whether there is legislation or not.

Ms Petersen—And they do that.

Senator SIEWERT—How effective is that?

Ms Petersen—When you actually look at the amount of policing that has occurred within that region, I think that to a large degree that policing has actually been very effective. When you look at the drop in sniffable fuel that has actually been brought into that region and you look at how much alcohol is actually picked up on the borders by the police, you think a lot of that police activity has actually been quite good. You have also got two specific projects that are operating as well. Operation Midrealm was actually set up by SAPOL to specifically look at cross-border initiatives and to look at how illicit substances are detected. You have a desk, which is in Alice Springs, which looks specifically at substance misuse and picking up offenders. I

think those, in conjunction with the police operating together, have been effective. Certainly, if we have legislation to back up what we are doing it will be more effective again.

Senator SIEWERT—What, specifically, is being provided for in the legislation?

Ms Petersen—Specifically, the legislation will look at the fact that if somebody escapes over the border with an illicit substance or if a person has a mental health issue, the legislation will provide that officers in that particular state can follow up that person even though they are across the border. I think they will be able to prosecute offenders, rehabilitate offenders or take them to a facility where they can get some help. Whether that is a substance misuse facility or a mental health facility I think it will be extremely useful for the individual. And it will be good from a policing point of view, as well. So once that legislation is through it will be far easier for us to do that.

Senator HUMPHRIES—We have a similar problem where I come from. I am from the ACT. It is a small place and crime crosses the border frequently. The problem is dealt with there by simply swearing officers of the Federal Police in as New South Wales special constables and vice versa. That seems to resolve the question of cross-border crime—car chases, and tracking criminals across the border. We do not have legislation of the kind you are talking about. I do not understand why you need legislation when you could, effectively, just have constables of one service become special constables of the other.

Ms Petersen—I would need to take that on notice. I would need to talk to SAPOL and the federal police about that. We can certainly get you an answer, though.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I would appreciate that.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—It think it was part of the eight-point plan, was it not, to have the legislation.

Ms Petersen—It is part of the eight-point plan but I would need to talk to SAPOL about whether or not we can do that.

Senator SIEWERT—That is where I started from. It was part of the eight-point plan, and when we had our hearings at the beginning of 2006 we were told there was a task force and the legislation was just about to be introduced. I am concerned that here we are in 2009, three years later, and we still do not have the legislation through. I wonder whether there has been a breakdown in communications between the governments. What has been the hold up? It sounds from what have been saying that it has not actually played out on the ground. It sounds as if there has been cooperation on the ground, but surely there must be some impact. If you need legislation for each police force to be able to pursue somebody in their state, surely it has not been operating as effectively as it could have been without that legislation. Is that true?

Ms Saunders—I think that is a fair statement. The purpose behind the legislation is to have a legal mandate for jurisdictional police to respond to individuals. The purpose of the legislation is not necessarily about the control of movements in lots of ways but about how you manage individuals in a new jurisdiction, particularly where they are subject to potential restrictions in

other jurisdictions. In reality the need for legislation is that at least it takes away any sense of confusion and any sense of any impairment in responding to an individual.

I think the important and critical part of this is that we remove any potential for the court jurisdictions to create confusion in the way they deal with individuals. Of course, in terms of the timeframe of doing that process the three jurisdictions have different legislative responsibilities and different orders that can be placed. The need to ensure that there is consistency in those orders has required the time for all legal parties to have conversations about it. I think the fact that it has progressed within three years is probably a good sign given that legislative review and changes can take some time. The end product in this process will mean that any individual, regardless of where they originate and regardless of whether there are laws in place or impositions placed on them will be treated equally by all jurisdictions. I think that is the important part of the legislation.

Senator SIEWERT—Before I hand over I just want to go on to one other issue—there are lots of issues and I will hopefully get another go later—and that is the issue of supply. You were here when we were talking to BP. I do not know if you were here when we were talking to UnitingCare in terms of supply into Yalata and issues that they are having with the Commonwealth. What is your relationship with the Department of Health and Ageing? They are the ones, I understand, who are ultimately responsible for deciding who gets Opal. How have you found that relationship in terms of being able to get Opal into communities?

Ms Petersen—I think our relationship with the department is a good one. It is principally why we have Opal fuel in so many areas now. The issue that we are currently dealing with is that we want to roll out Opal fuel along the Eyre Highway and we are currently working with the department for that to happen. Once that happens, we will have Opal in Yalata and up towards Oak Valley.

Senator SIEWERT—The UnitingCare people who were here this morning were saying that the rollout into Yalata has been delayed. That sounds as if it is going to go ahead, but they understand that it is not being rolled out into the neighbouring communities. Is that the case? Is it not being rolled out or is there some sort of misunderstanding there?

Ms Petersen—No, we are currently working with the Department of Health and Ageing around that issue, so we know that it will be rolled out. My understanding is that it will be rolled out into Yalata, which will help the Oak Valley communities. We will need to work with the Commonwealth about rolling it out into neighbouring communities.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay, but you do not have a time line for that now?

Ms Petersen—We do not at the moment.

Senator SIEWERT—I understood previously that there was a time line.

Ms Petersen—Basically, what we are currently doing is working with the department and with the communities around that. Some of that has been slowed down. Some of the communities, I think, have had some reservations, so we are looking at that at the moment—especially with Yalata—and we are hoping that that will be progressed fairly shortly.

Senator SIEWERT—Are you saying that it is actually the communities and not the department, or is it both?

Ms Petersen—No, I think it is basically that we need to do some more consultation with the community. We are certainly working with the department, and we just want to get in some more negotiations with the community around that.

Senator SIEWERT—I am not trying to labour the point, but I am trying to work out—

Ms Saunders—I think it is fair to say that there has been a sense of reservation from, in particular, the Yalata community—and from other communities—around the impact and effects of Opal fuel on vehicle maintenance and vehicle running. That has been part of the conversations around allaying those particular fears. There is obviously also the issue of the previous roadhouse that was located close to that community and about the re-establishment of that roadhouse and the implications that may have for that community in terms of broader fuel supply. The fact that they are located on the Eyre Highway also has other implications for the supply of Opal to communities further west of that area. There is then the potential to mandate those individual communities in relation to Opal fuel as well. Those are the types of conversations that are happening in relation to community concerns about mandated processes for their communities versus other, non-Indigenous communities located along the highway, and they are the negotiations that are happening.

Senator SIEWERT—I have two questions about that. Firstly, are you saying that, once you have that sorted, it is your understanding that the department will okay the fuel going in?

Ms Saunders—We will support the outcome.

Senator SIEWERT—Secondly, we have always said that Opal was just part of the solution. That is why we have the eight-point plan—because there are a whole lot of issues that need to be dealt with. Is it your understanding that additional resources for diversionary programs et cetera will be available along with Opal, or are you just expecting to get the Opal?

Ms Petersen—It is our understanding that there will be other programs put in place, especially in Yalata. There have been a range of youth programs in Yalata so far, but we are expecting that there will be more health programs and youth programs in that community, and we will be working with ICC around that as well from the Commonwealth point of view.

Senator BILYK—To follow on from Senator Siewert's comments in regard to diversionary programs, you mentioned that there are some youth engagement strategies. Could you give us a quick overview of how those are working in regard to people who have already suffered mental health issues and concerns like that as a result of being petrol sniffers?

Ms Petersen—The Department for Families and Communities runs a whole range of different programs up on the lands. For people who have had an acquired brain injury due to petrol sniffing, there are specific programs that the department has in working with those clients. Some of those clients are engaged, depending on their level of brain injury, into ordinary programs and some are provided with specific programs to meet their needs.

Senator BILYK—Are they happy to participate in those programs or have there been issues in getting people to participate?

Ms Petersen—Depending on their level of brain injury, there has probably been a bit of both, I would say.

Senator BILYK—Are people supported from within the community if they have, for example, an acquired brain injury?

Ms Petersen—Within community, if families can get their loved ones involved in a program it not only gives them some respite but they can see it having benefits for their family member as well. Communities are really supportive of having a range of respite or youth programs within their community, because that deals with a whole range of issues for those families.

Senator BILYK—Do the people from the different departments work cooperatively together, to put it quite bluntly?

Ms Petersen—They do. Basically, at the moment we are setting up a youth engagement strategy. There are a whole range of departments sitting on that taskforce to look at developing a better youth engagement strategy for the lands. The departments are being very cooperative. When you specifically look at the lands and how agencies cooperate, the women's council runs programs, the Nganampa Health Council runs programs, the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council runs programs and youth workers run programs. There is a whole range of programs and organisations that will collaborate around a client. It could be that client is picked up by the police for various reasons because they are causing a disturbance within the community. They may be referred to the Nganampa Health Council. If there is a mental health issue involved, rural and remote mental health services could get involved with that client, especially if the issues involve substance misuse. They will automatically get the substance misuse service up there involved, and they will then involve the youth workers as appropriate. Those services collaborate and hold case conferences around clients.

Senator BOYCE—We have heard evidence that while the Opal fuel has had dramatic success in stopping petrol sniffing there has been some substitution of drugs—specifically, a big increase in the use of marijuana and the availability of marijuana. Could you comment on that for us, please.

Ms Petersen—Anecdotal evidence and evidence from the police probably supports the notion that people substitute one drug for another. When they cannot get petrol, they have substituted cannabis. From the local sources of information that we have, we think that cannabis use in some communities has been on the rise. However, SAPOL have been working really hard to stop supply into those communities. That is the benefit of having Operation Midrealm and extra policing on the lands—certainly for Mutitjulu and other communities adjacent to it. They can stop or reduce the supply of cannabis coming into the lands.

Senator BOYCE—In the submission that you put into the inquiry, you gave us some figures on the detection rates. I think that that is just for possession and inhalation charges. I am looking at page 8 at the moment. I am presuming that that is all related to petrol sniffing.

Ms Petersen—It is, yes.

Senator BOYCE—Would you be able to give us similar figures for other drug offences or drug related offences—on notice?

Ms Petersen—Yes, certainly. We could talk to SAPOL and see if they currently have those figures.

Senator BOYCE—It is great that we are succeeding, but we need to broaden our success if need be.

Senator SCULLION—I would like to thank Ms Petersen and Ms Saunders for your assistance in our visit. The information that you provided me was very insightful, so thank you for that. I will make a brief comment in regard to your consultation processes in the roll out of Opal and people's concern with the product. The experience in Alice Springs was clearly that we could still be consulting if we wanted to ameliorate all the concerns. There were unjustified concerns. The concerns only went away when we introduced Opal.

We have had some evidence earlier today from the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council which clearly suggested that, because of the high price of access to drugs—whatever the substances were; they particularly mentioned cannabis—people were left with less and less disposable income for essentials like food and other items. Have the South Australian government considered income quarantine? Have you considered any changes to a policy framework, such as the welfare quarantine that occurred in the Northern Territory?

Ms Saunders—I think it is safe to say at this stage that this government, as with other jurisdictions, is waiting for the ongoing rollout of the intervention in the Northern Territory to see the impacts that are happening, particularly in relation to federal programs such as Centrelink payments and those types of things. At this stage the state government has not indicated any reference to it moving in that line. Obviously, again, it is an ongoing information-gathering process to see what is happening and what the impact is on communities around that area. We obviously do acknowledge that in any family environment or community environment where there is a use of substance in any form, whether it be marijuana, as in this instance, petrol sniffing, gambling or anything else it has major impacts on the usable income and resources of a family unit. The impact that it actually has, particularly in remote communities, is exacerbated by the obvious cost in relation to the purchase of food and maintenance of family units within those environments. It is something we are obviously very conscious of. We are monitoring and looking at the Northern Territory intervention, but at this point this state government has not made a move in relation to welfare quarantine in that area.

Senator SCULLION—I note that the Commonwealth government have already had their own review, so some information is available about the effectiveness or otherwise of a number of initiatives. Is there a particular point in time that the South Australian government is waiting for? Since we have already done a review, I am not sure whether there is a specific date, apart from this committee's inquiry, on which reviews will be made available. What sort of a date would you be looking at?

Ms Saunders—A specific date has not been set. Looking at the rollout of the impact that is happening and, whilst there has been a formal review, as most people would be aware there are issues around the extent of that particular review. The reality is about looking at the ongoing information that sits around the rollout of those particular programs. Anecdotally, obviously the information flow between this jurisdiction and the Northern Territory at different times provides additional information and that all becomes part of the conversation that we then hold with the Commonwealth in relation to our state. They are part of those conversations. A date has not been set, because decisions are still very much a part of those conversations.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Senator, that is a government decision and officers are not able to speak—

Senator SCULLION—I always seek the opinion of officers. They are very helpful.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—But always check.

Senator SCULLION—With regard to the Northern Territory experience, particularly involving cannabis in Indigenous communities, according to the police officers up there—and it has been well publicised—there has been the addition of sniffer dogs which have to be specifically trained because most of the drugs that Customs use, for example, are not vegetable based material and contain other materials. Does the department or the government have access to those sniffer dogs and, if so, in what sorts of numbers? Can you tell us a little bit about that? If you do not know, you can always take it on notice.

Ms Saunders—Obviously, the state police do have access to canine units within their area, but I do not know whether they are used in this particular area.

Senator SCULLION—You are not aware of their use currently in the lands?

Ms Saunders—No.

Senator HUMPHRIES—The first submission you have given us relates to the question of possible corruption and dysfunctional governments in the APY Lands. I note that you have the report of Commissioner Mullighan and, more recently, the report by Mr Thurtell and that you are developing a formal response to that. What can you tell us about the nature of these problems, as you understand them, currently on the APY Lands and how do they play out with respect to issues like petrol sniffing?

Ms Petersen—In relation to the whole area of governance on the lands, the South Australian government is currently looking at doing a process of governance reform on the lands, and there are four different series of governance workshops or programs we are currently running on the lands. The first governance program is one on general governance that we do with any community member to basically teach them about running meetings, running workshops and generally running their community. Once the APY executive actually come into power, they have to undertake governance training within three months, and that is the second lot of governance training we are doing on the lands. In terms of other governance training and governance reform—

Senator HUMPHRIES—Can I interrupt you.

Ms Petersen—Yes.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You are describing to me a process whereby you improve governance arrangements. What I am really asking is: what is the problem with governance on the APY Lands?

Ms Petersen—In some ways the problem with governance—and that is the reason I was talking about what we are doing—is, I think, that there is a lack of knowledge of government processes and how a community council should actually work on the lands. In our experience, running some processes around governance reform—which looks at how elections are run, how families or communities work or how people actually get nominated to be either chairpersons or directly on the community council—affects the running of those communities. So, in terms of what we are doing, the Commonwealth government and the state governments are running governance reform and we are looking at developing some models to develop community councils in a more effective way.

Senator HUMPHRIES—So you are saying that the problem is more ignorance of the process than people exploiting their position in a deliberate or dishonest way?

Ms Petersen—I think some of this is lack of knowledge about how councils work and how their position on council should run. Clearly, to some degree, not everyone is going to play by the rules either. Certainly, I think there is some exploitation by certain people of various positions on the lands. But I think some of it is just because people do not necessarily understand the processes of governance and how one governs a community council. I think there is an element of both, Senator.

Senator HUMPHRIES—So how does that play out with respect to issues like substance abuse? Does it lead to a problem such as the diversion of funds away from the services that need to be provided in those areas, or is it simply a sort of background to what goes on otherwise?

Ms Petersen—One can see it as background, but I think that in some communities where you have very strong leadership substance misuse is not necessarily tolerated. Where the leadership in a community is not so strong, we find that there are potentially more substance, more gambling and other issues in that community. What we are trying to do is develop really strong community councils so that the council can monitor in some ways what happens in that community and say to that community, ‘We have zero tolerance of alcohol,’ or zero tolerance of petrol sniffing. In that way, if we can do a whole lot of governance reform, communities become stronger places and therefore safer places for people.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Okay. You mentioned that there is research going on, through Nganampa Health, into Indigenous petrol-sniffing. What can you tell us about the research?

Ms Petersen—Nganampa Health have been running a petrol-sniffing survey for quite some years now, which is actually funded by the Department of Health. Over the years they have refined their methodology to a point now where I think their way of doing the research is extremely reliable. The way that they conduct their research is that they find three to four people

in one community who they can ask about a particular client who in the past had an issue, and they can ascertain from that whether that person still has an issue with either petrol sniffing or other substance misuse. They also ask a similar group of people about where there are other clients who they have picked up over the last six to 12 months. Originally, that survey was being conducted every 12 months, and Nganampa, probably over the last few years, have been conducting the survey more regularly in order to track where petrol sniffing has been on the rise or fall. Consequently, Nganampa have been able to produce some extremely reliable and good evidence that petrol sniffing has actually reduced by six per cent over the last period of time.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Is that published research?

Ms Petersen—I do not think it is published on the web or anywhere else, but it is available. If you want a copy I can get you one.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I think it would be useful for this inquiry if we could have a look at it, please.

Ms Petersen—We were trying to meet with Nganampa yesterday; I think they were planning to give you a copy.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Thanks very much.

Senator SIEWERT—Ms Petersen, you talked about the Youth Engagement Strategy that is being developed. Who is developing it and what is the time line?

Ms Petersen—The Youth Engagement Strategy is being coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet; however, a range of organisations are involved in that, ranging from the Department for Families and Communities to Commonwealth departments, the Nganampa Health Council and the women's council. So a range of organisations will be involved in developing the Youth Engagement Strategy.

Senator SIEWERT—What is the time line for it?

Ms Petersen—We are hoping that it will be finished within the next month or so, because we want to look at that engagement strategy in developing our funding for the next financial year.

Senator SIEWERT—That leads me on to my next question. When we were talking to people up in Amata—unfortunately, we did not get to the other communities—and to other people, they were saying there is only one youth worker per community. I suppose now it is recognised that the standard should be two youth workers, a male and a female. It looks like in South Australia you only have one per community at this stage. Is that because of funding?

Ms Petersen—There are probably a range of reasons why that has occurred. In some instances it is very hard to attract youth workers to the APY Lands. There is an issue of housing and funding is always an issue in terms of attracting staff from any organisation to the APY Lands. A range of issues play out in any employment of staff. In relation to the youth workers in particular, though, I am more than happy to take that on notice and ask the department responsible.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. One of the issues that we have been following very strongly is making sure that the whole of the plan is rolled out to deal with petrol sniffing. Opal just buys us a gap, basically, because then you have ganja coming in—

Ms Petersen—Substitutions.

Senator SIEWERT—You have substitutions. So I am particularly interested in looking at the resources that have been backing up the implementation of the Opal program.

Ms Petersen—In the past some of those communities have had two youth workers. I would be happy to go back and look at that as an issue.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be much appreciated; thank you. In your most recent submission, from last year, you were saying that there have been no diversions recorded lately in the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative. As I understood it, that initiative had only just been initiated when you wrote the submission. Has any further progress, beyond what we have talked about, been made on that?

Ms Petersen—At the moment police are actually diverting clients with or without that legislation anyway. One can actually have a conversation with a client about the likelihood and probability of going to a rehabilitation service instead of getting a fine or going to jail. So the police are currently doing that now, but in the formal sense we are still looking at that.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you plan to look at a legislative base for that initiative as well?

Ms Petersen—We may be looking at that, so we would need to get back to you. But SAPOL have been referring clients under that initiative.

Senator SIEWERT—We have been talking about ongoing conversations around the new facility in Amata. Will people be diverted, for example, to that facility?

Ms Petersen—Absolutely.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you.

Senator BOYCE—You talk in your written report about changes to commercial practices at Mintabie, hoping that this will lead to reduced travel there by people from the APY Lands. Could you explain what those changes to commercial practices were?

Ms Saunders—Mintabie is a community that is located on the APY Lands and operates under some levels of agreement and restrictions from the APY executive.

Senator BOYCE—It has been mentioned in other submissions that perhaps some of the practices there are contributing to problems, including poverty, I understand.

Ms Saunders—Again, there is an amount of anecdotal information that suggests that the current relationship between commercial groups in Mintabie and the Anangu people in relation to accessing services there creates issues. Mintabie provides a used-car sales yard where people

can access the purchase of vehicles, which at times increases the potential for their level of debt in relation to the repayments that are required. There are allegations in relation to a process called book-up, whereby clients or people that are purchasing goods are then required to produce their key cards and payments are made in that area. Those potential areas restrict the cash flow that is available for families. These areas have been raised and discussed within the Mintabie progress association, the community groups, along with the APY executive in relation to their current agreement on how that community operates as a community on the lands. There are obviously opportunities in those conversations for restrictions on some of those particular sales or enterprises as a result of the impact they have on Anangu people in relation to their financial circumstances. The state government has been involved and engaged in working with both the progress association and the APY executive to allow them to negotiate their agreement as it currently stands. When there are conflicts or unresolved issues, the state government will look at the information in terms of the ongoing operations of Mintabie as a community.

Senator BOYCE—Can you give us any specific examples of commercial practices at Mintabie that have changed?

Ms Saunders—An example would be around the fact that Mintabie has a hotel that is open. There is a requirement or a request, in line with other APY communities, to restrict the sale of alcohol from the hotel and to require that alcohol can only be consumed on the premises as opposed to taking it away, back into homes. So those negotiations are currently restricting the potential for Anangu people and community people to access take-away and to consume those volumes within that community or to return them back to APY communities. Again, that is an example of negotiations that are currently happening around the restrictions that would be required on that particular retail service, if you like.

Senator BOYCE—I understand that negotiations on the agreement between the APY council and Mintabie have been ongoing for four or five years—

Ms Saunders—Over twelve months at this stage, but in terms of their ongoing lease the leases have been extended. In the last 12 months there have been some fairly constructive conversations in relation to the operation of Mintabie community on the APYs. That lease was due to expire at the end of last year. The APY executive have agreed to extend that so the negotiations can continue to allow for resolution.

Senator BOYCE—That would not be the first extension, though, would it?

Ms Saunders—No, it is not. It is a demonstration at this stage in terms of the willingness of both parties to try to come to a resolution. The reality is that you also have two parties that are fairly committed to their potential approaches at different times. That has been part of the dilemma in reaching a resolution in terms of the agreement around the operation of Mintabie as a community.

Senator BOYCE—I just wanted to ask one particular question about the disability coordinators in the APY Lands. You have got two—one east, one west—is that correct? Are both those positions occupied at the present time?

Ms Petersen—We would have to take that on notice. There have been some changes, which is why I am saying that. I would rather take that on notice than give you an incorrect answer.

Senator BOYCE—The disability support program you have got appears to have two offices—one east, one west. How does that provide services to people throughout all the communities? That is what I am particularly interested in.

Ms Petersen—Often they work in a coordination role with other organisations. It may be that they are actually working with the Family Homemakers program, Nganampa Health or the NPY Women's Council. A lot of their role is around providing coordination and support to families.

Senator BOYCE—There would be some people, would there not, with psychosis as a result of petrol sniffing and therefore perhaps it is quite difficult to handle in a family situation?

Ms Petersen—Absolutely. If that were the case, they also actually run a behavioural program. A range of programs is available to work with those particular clients. Rural and Remote Mental Health run a range of counselling programs up there as well, so it may be that those clients are actually referred to a psychiatrist, which is part of that program.

Senator BOYCE—So the coordinators would not be performing any clinical services; they would simply be pulling people together?

Ms Petersen—No. As far as I know, a lot of their role is around case coordination.

Ms Saunders—Could I just add that part of their role involves the inclusion of engaging Nganampa people in training to actually be carers and providing those supports within community to families. That obviously provides for not just the preparation of meals but also respite for family members. Part of that program looks at employment opportunities for Nganampa within communities and within families to provide that additional support role. The coordinator role is predominantly around identifying potential issues, developing the case plans and then engaging the other service providers in relation to what the potential needs of an individual may be under a case management model.

Senator SCULLION—I would like to speak briefly about the rural transaction centres. I understand that Centrelink have perhaps not adopted use of transaction centres as much as they could. We will be speaking to Centrelink about that. In the Northern Territory, for example, there are a number of them that operate. There is a butchery and a baker, and they are businesses that have come up in the community. There are some very exciting discussions about a hairdresser. An apprentice hairdresser from the Tiwi Islands does the apprenticeship and when they come back there is nowhere really to practice. Countrymen love to have their hair done. The rural transaction centre provides an arrangement where you can lease. The opportunity is for 30 Anangu employees, and that must have come from something beyond government. What conversations have you had on the lands about potential businesses, putting in a skills audit and having opportunities within the transaction centres? What work are you doing in that area?

Ms Petersen—The rural transaction centres to date have basically been managed by the Commonwealth and not necessarily the state. The Commonwealth are currently working with PY Media and PY KU to look at how they can actually develop those centres further. From your

visit on the lands you would understand that some are not fully functioning right now. There are probably two centres that are currently open for an extended period of time. I think you are absolutely right, Senator: there is a great deal of opportunity to use those centres for a whole range of purposes, whether that is in developing Anangu employment or getting a whole range of government services happening from those centres. We are currently working with the Commonwealth and PY KU to see how those centres can be better utilised.

Senator SCULLION—Do you have any business incubator type operations within the South Australian government for upskilling small businesses? Do you think there is some scope for engaging people specifically in those sorts of process and to introduce that onto the lands?

Ms Saunders—In addition to the rural transaction centres, the government has also set up what we call the Interministerial Committee on Aboriginal Workforce Development. That committee is basically looking at a whole range of employment opportunities, mapping and doing a skills audit in relation to the level of skills that exist across the Anangu people and individually across the community. It also engages with both the private and the public sector in relation to where the employment opportunities actually rest in service provision across the APY area. Whilst we would like to say we have got to the stage of seeing self-sufficient, if you like, retail services across the lands, we are not at that level, but they are certainly part of the planning around what potential opportunities exist in relation to skills development and the provision of localised services on the APY lands. That could be in areas of hospitality, hairdressing and that type of stuff.

Part of the engagement at this stage has been to look at the Chamber of Commerce and at what opportunities actually exist across the private sector in this state to support particular programs. It is early days in conversation but there is certainly a high level of engagement at this stage by groups in the opportunities that sit across the APY area. As you know, the state is also looking at future mining exploration type opportunities. Obviously, we look at opportunities that sit there for Anangu in particular to access employment as a result of some of these potential future opportunities. More broadly, though, of course, it is in relation to employment opportunities right across the state. As with other jurisdictions, Aboriginal employment figures for this state are quite low. It is a matter of both participation and ensuring that the prevocational skills and training programs are in place to, if you like, prepare individuals so they can actually take up the opportunities as they unfold in other conversations.

Senator SCULLION—Thank you.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—That is the end. We have one question on petrol sniffing but, just so we get it in context, we are going to come back after lunch and look at the wider issues around Indigenous servicing and process. I do not think you were here this morning when our first witnesses were giving evidence. They asked us to follow up on three documents. I will give those names to you now; you may have to check them out. One is the final report on the secondary education and vocational training in the APY Lands of July 2008. That was done by Charles Sturt University. We want to know what the status and public nature of that report is. The second one is information on the South Australian Aboriginal Strategic Plan. The third one is the APY Lands Strategic Plan and the involvement of the TKP group—their status, how often they meet, who is on it and the public nature of their interactions. They were three particular things you may want to follow up on.

I have a general question on petrol sniffing. It is to do with the fact that a lot of the work you have given us on petrol sniffing relates to the APY Lands, and they were definitely mentioned in the eight-point plan when we were doing our original committee. Because we have had evidence about other areas where there are petrol sniffing issues, is there a difference of approach from the state government in dealing with areas that were mentioned in the eight-point plan, such as APY, and other areas where there are issues, like Yalata—there is a community in Queensland with a very similar name—

Ms Saunders—Yatala.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Yes.

Ms Saunders—It is very hard not to say ‘Yatala’, isn’t it?

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I refer to Yalata and also the areas in the city where we know that there are problems. From the South Australian government perspective, is there a different approach dependent on whether it was originally mentioned in the COAG process or not?

Ms Petersen—The eight-point plan is certainly used right across South Australia in developing strategies to deal with any community. Clearly, the problem in the APY Lands has been to such an extent that we want to develop specific strategies and programs and a rehabilitation centre to deal with those communities in particular because they are so remote. We have been working consistently with Yalata and other communities, though, around sniffing, and we will continue to do that.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you very much. We will stand suspended now until after lunch, when we will come back with evidence from the South Australian government.

Proceedings suspended from 12.38 pm to 1.23 pm

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Welcome back. We are turning now to looking at wider questions of Indigenous service in this state. We will start with Senator Johnston.

Senator JOHNSTON—No, I am fine. I just think we should follow up on the three issues that you raised, Chair.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—The three documents, yes. I understand that I have to be more specific. It is the—

Senator SIEWERT—TKP action plan.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—The TKP action plan is the third one.

Senator JOHNSTON—It is the fourth one.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Yes. So how did you go with the other three documents?

Ms Petersen—We have someone chasing those documents as we speak.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Okay. It could come up later. We will start with questions and then go back when they arrive. I realise you had to go back to your office to get those. Senator Siewert.

Senator SIEWERT—Can we start with the homemaker centres. You will have seen the submission and heard about the funding issues that have been raised about the homemaker centres and the shortfall of \$300,000. The issue of the top up came up when we were at Amata. There seemed to be some confusion about whether top up was or was not available. They thought that they had solved that problem. So where are we up to with the homemaker centres?

Ms Petersen—The Department for Families and Communities is currently following up on the top up. We will be able to provide that to you in writing. So we will respond to that, if that is alright with you, at a later date.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Ms Petersen—In regard to the top up for that program, the Department of Premier and Cabinet will be looking at putting an additional \$200,000 into the DFC program. We are negotiating around the other moneys for that program for the top up.

Senator SIEWERT—As I understand it, seven homemaker centres were planned. Is that right?

Ms Petersen—The Department for Families and Communities is actually looking at having a homemakers centre in most of the major communities. I think you are right that it is seven.

Senator SIEWERT—At the moment there are four centres operating at various levels of functionality?

Ms Petersen—That is true.

Senator SIEWERT—What we have all found is that very often either a body or a facility's success depends on the people in the centres. What are some of the issues around the homemaker centres? Is it because you do not have somebody to run them? Is lack of funding at the moment playing a role?

Ms Petersen—No, I do not think it is lack of funding. I think there are a range of issues that make homemaker centres either function or not. You have identified one issue around the employment of staff and trying to find suitable people to run the homemaker centres. When I say 'suitable' I do not mean in terms of educational qualifications, I mean in terms of life experience, willingness to do it and availability. In each community trying to identify a group of people who can actually do that sometimes is quite problematic. Even if one is paying top up, sometimes it is hard to find somebody with those skills.

Again for each of those communities, if you are looking at employing people outside of the community, housing always plays an issue on any service we have in the lands. There is just not enough staff housing. I think that has been recognised right across every government department. In relation to housing we are currently doing a housing audit. We are looking at, from a government and from an NGO point of view, what houses are actually needed to run successful programs, because that affects everything you do on the lands.

Senator SIEWERT—That leads me to another series of questions about housing but I just want to finish on the homemaker centres.

Ms Petersen—In terms of the homemaker centres the ones that are seen as, I suppose, really successful are the homemaker centres where we can employ someone who has a really good relationship with their community and preferably as part of that community, and where we can put a lot of resources and energy into upskilling as well. The Department for Families and Communities has an absolute commitment to the homemaker centres as does the South Australia government. It is a way that we can make sure that, in particular, very young babies can get looked after from a food security point of view. On the lands, as in any other remote community, that is extremely important.

There has been a lot of research done both here and overseas around food security and we know that, between the time that babies get weened and the time that they start walking, there is a gap where they cannot reach for food themselves. The homemaker program provides a way that we can teach young mums and dads about the necessity of providing high-quality food and also increases the availability of food for that section of the community. There has been a fair bit of research done overseas around food security and we are starting to do some research in Yalata with the University of Adelaide. There seems to be a link between young babies and really young people who had an absence of food in their early years and type 2 diabetes. The university is currently doing some work around that and there has been a fair bit of work done overseas as well.

Overseas they have developed a product called 'pumping up biscuit'. It is a product which is very high in fat and very high in a whole range of minerals and vitamins. They have been feeding it to very young babies two or three times a week. What they have found is that the babies' metabolisms stay pretty much the same from when they are weened to when they start walking, which is a great thing as it does not suddenly drop, and their health status remains really stable. In the Yalata community in particular Jill Benson from the University of Adelaide has been working with the Tullawon Health Centre, which is the main health service there, and the homemaker centre to develop a variety of pumping up biscuits. They are seeing quite interesting effects in that community for young people who are putting on or maintaining weight. We are hoping to look at that in the APY Lands as well and the uni is certainly willing to do that with us.

Senator SIEWERT—You would do that in association with the homemaker centre?

Ms Petersen—Nganampa Health are currently doing projects which they call 'the LunchBox', which is literally providing a lunchbox to young mums or young dads—whoever has responsibility for the children, which is usually mums—and getting them to actually put food into it. Because we are finding that sometimes, by the end of the day, there is no food left in the house, for a variety of reasons. So the LunchBox idea is an initiative of Nganampa. We have coordinated meetings between Nganampa, the uni and the doctor working at Yalata to see if we can develop that as a food security program. I think that, if we have the success here that they have overseas, it will be a very beneficial program.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I just go back to funding of the centres. You said that you think the department can find another \$200,000—

Ms Petersen—We have allocated that—

Senator SIEWERT—You have allocated that on top of what the—

Ms Petersen—Yes. We have committed to doing that.

Senator SIEWERT—Does that \$200,000 get allocated against the new centres that are not in place yet or is that going to the existing centres to top them up?

Ms Saunders—Because it has been identified as a gap from the Department for Families and Communities and they have requested an additional amount of funding, we provide the \$200,000 to their organisation and they will then determine what percentage of that money goes into maintaining the existing services and what is required for the ongoing planning of those new centres. That will be their decision in terms of where they are currently situated with their funding.

Senator SCULLION—I just have some questions on the homemaker centre. The one we looked at was not only an excellent centre but also the hub providing leadership for other matters in the community—and I suspect that is also the case in the other community—would that be right? How many employees are at the centre that we looked at? Was it 'Brenda'—who does she work for?

Ms Petersen—The Department for Families and Communities. Then you have a volunteer who belongs to one of the Catholic orders.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I will mention them so that they get on the record here: the Sisters of St Joseph.

Senator SCULLION—They do a fantastic job.

Ms Petersen—She does. Absolutely.

Senator SCULLION—Who else works there? I understand there was some discussion about top up—obviously there are other employees there.

Ms Saunders—Certainly, I think the description from Brenda was that they rely upon other people in the community who are currently receiving CDEP funding to come in and run some of the programs—whether it is assistance with showering and bathing or the childcare services and that type of stuff. That became the issue of the top up—the funding required to maintain the number of people that were coming under the CDEP program to provide those services on the ground there. But I did not get an indication of the number of additional people from the community who are supporting that particular program.

Senator SCULLION—So there is one employee. This is an absolutely fundamental part of these communities and change. I think we all acknowledge that.

Ms Petersen—I think there are actually two employees there currently.

Senator SCULLION—So we have a full-time employee of the Department for Families and Communities—she is a paid full-time employee. And there is another one—is that right?

Ms Petersen—I think—according to someone in the audience—there might actually be three people who are currently employed there.

Senator SCULLION—What I was getting to is that—

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Maybe we should take the actual detail on notice.

Ms Petersen—I think we should maybe take it on notice.

Senator SCULLION—It is just important to—

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—You can make your point, Senator Scullion.

Senator SCULLION—Thank you. Generally speaking, in terms of the CDEP, we think that the Commonwealth have taken over their responsibilities as full-time people, so that the people are not just CDEP, so we worry about the top up and we wring our hands every fortnight. We think they are very important and they should get the full benefits of being full-time employees. I know that the Commonwealth government provided the Northern Territory government with a

great deal of funds to assist them in meeting their responsibilities in terms of CDEP. Were any funds provided to the South Australian government on a similar basis?

Ms Saunders—There are conversations occurring between the state and the Commonwealth in relation to the CDEP program and how many of those CDEP participants would be picked up in full-time employment under both Commonwealth and state government responsibility. Those negotiations are happening, and particularly—in our instance—in terms of what would be the state's responsibility regarding the number of people who would be converted into full-time employment. Those conversations are also occurring in relation to those employees being public servants.

Senator SCULLION—Indeed. Obviously, this is a matter of the highest importance and urgency. We all agree that these are fundamental building blocks of the communities, and the sustainability of these are clearly about whether or not we have employees. Currently, for whatever reasons—I am sure there is no mischief there—the South Australian government appears to be relying on a system that clearly puts the people who work there under some stress. It is interesting to hear, Ms Saunders, about an ongoing negotiation. I am pleased to hear about that. You might, on notice, be able to tell the committee whether or not the Commonwealth government has provided the South Australia government with funds—as it has in the Northern Territory—to assist in meeting the obligations. That would be very useful.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—With respect to staffing issues we know there are four currently in the lands. If we could get the staffing profiles of each of those on notice, that would be useful.

Senator BILYK—Are there any working relationships or links with the homemaker centre and the rehabilitation centre? If so, could you talk us through how they work? The rehabilitation centre is a community centre as well and that is a great achievement.

Ms Petersen—Thank you. When you actually look at any community—but we could look at Amata as an example—any community service relates to others in any way possible because any service in a remote community is extremely valuable. In Amata we are lucky enough to have the Commonwealth provide a lot of money for capital and the state puts in recurrent funds to run the rehabilitation centre. There have been ongoing relationships between all the players in Amata and between the homemaker centre and the rehabilitation centre.

I believe what will happen—it was happening for quite some time and they are about to re-establish that—is that the homemaker centre will actually begin to use the bathroom and other facilities at the rehab centre. You are quite right, the rehab centre is a community centre. Part of the reason why so much money was spent on it was for the community to use it in any way they saw fit. Provided there is not a major residential program there, there is absolutely no reason that the facility cannot be used for a range of other purposes. For example SAPOL runs blue-light discos and the tri-state domestic violence program runs men's violence programs, which is a great idea because if you actually look at domestic violence oftentimes it is linked to some kind of substance misuse. For those men to have that there is a good thing for them in linking them into a rehab service. If one can use the centre as a community centre and involve a whole range of other services, whether it be rehab or working with homemaker or the rehab centre working with DFC, the more programs that run there the better.

Senator BILYK—Getting back to the children, there is often a gap between being weaned and being old enough to reach up and get food for themselves. I come from a background of child care and it is a pretty well-known fact that if you are starved of food, your whole system breaks down and so diabetes is one issue but there are a whole lot of mental health issues with brain development and things such as that. Is the state government looking into that or are they worrying about getting the nutrition sorted first and little steps?

Ms Petersen—Through the homemaker centres, through Nganampa Health and through a whole range of programs that are run through the Department of Health through women's and children's certainly those issues are being addressed. There will be a universal home visiting scheme that will be developed up onto the lands. There are a range of those programs that are being looked at now.

Senator BILYK—That will be run by maternal health services or clinic sisters?

Ms Petersen—That is right but Nganampa Health certainly do a lot of that work now. Mums always go for their antenatal and postnatal checks. They always take their children there. I suppose that is one of the reasons that Nganampa is very keen on developing those programs and developing a lunchbox idea and also working really closely with the school. If you look at when we went to Amata the other day not only is it a school for five-year-olds and up but we know that mums will go there and they will take their kids there. So there is a way to increase the education that we need right across the spectrum to make sure that young kids are getting proper nutrition.

Senator BILYK—Bearing in mind it was my first visit to the area, I got a very strong sense of community in the real sense of the word. The school was for the community to use, as was the rehabilitation community centre and the homemaker centre. That is obviously really important to help to solve some of those other issues too because everybody is networking with everyone else.

Ms Petersen—I think that the workers on the lands generally try really hard to live with each other and to develop that sense of community within each of their own services and develop a sense where it is all right for community to use any of those services and that sense of ownership for community with those services. It is really important. If we want to have an effect on people's lives it is important that people develop that sense of ownership for all those services that are put on the lands.

Senator SIEWERT—We were talking about CDEP before and you said you are negotiating with the Commonwealth and the state around replacement programs. Beyond that, what impact is the winding up of CDEP going to have on the delivery of community services in the lands? Have you looked at that?

Ms Saunders—I think it is fair to say it will have a significant impact on the current functioning within communities and particularly in relation to the current services that are provided by CDEP, from municipal services to rubbish clean-up and maintenance within the community. Once those programs fold, if they are not replaced with some form of community support, we will see a major decline, I think, in the health and wellbeing of a lot of our communities. That is obviously why the conversations are occurring, but they are also occurring

in a way that is able to sustain those particular positions and those individuals in terms of both support and training.

On the issue of CDEP, there has been a broader conversation surrounding the MUNS funding—the municipal services funding from the Commonwealth government. The Commonwealth's decision to revert the funding back to state responsibility is of course a major issue in the COAG negotiations at the moment. Once those issues are resolved it will give states a better indication of the implications for service delivery as well as any implications for employment in communities.

Senator SIEWERT—An issue came up in the NT and I presume it is the same in SA. When they were looking at converting CDEP to real jobs, they identified so-called real jobs—and I am using the definition that is generally used for real jobs, whereas on community they see other jobs as real jobs, not what non-Aboriginal people call real jobs. It was difficult to get a handle on the figures, but between 6½ thousand and 8,000 people were coming off CDEP and they identified around 2,000 real jobs. Have you looked at the figures in South Australia to see the number of people doing community service jobs in communities that are not necessarily classified as real jobs?

Ms Saunders—Yes. Those conversations and audits around that stuff have occurred. That is part of the negotiations of what will be funded by the state and what will be funded by the Commonwealth in relation to the identification of specific jobs, roles and tasks within communities. Part of the negotiation is how many positions that will be funded and become public service positions within state responsibility and what will be funded by the Commonwealth. The work has been done—the identification of positions and numbers of positions—and now the ongoing conversation is around the funding that sits behind that.

Senator SIEWERT—Can we ask what those figures are?

Ms Saunders—I would need to get advice on whether I can give those, because they are part of the state-Commonwealth negotiations at this stage.

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate that. I knew I was stretching it a bit, but I thought I might as well go there! Take it on notice and if you are able to provide them it would be extremely helpful.

Ms Saunders—Yes, okay.

Senator SIEWERT—I would like to move to aged care and the issue around the facility—in which community was it placed?

Ms Petersen—There is an aged-care facility at Kalka.

Senator SIEWERT—That is it. The fact that the facility at Kalka is not being used has been raised both in submissions and when we made a visit. What is the plan to increase the usage of the facility and also the provision of aged services on the lands? We met someone at Amata—what is the lady's name?

Ms Petersen—Probably Marilyn.

Senator SIEWERT—Marilyn, yes. I am aware that she is employed by the department to work on aged-care facilities, but the issue around one facility for the whole of the Lands and how aged-care is being provided has come up as a significant issue as well. Can you tell us what is happening around the facility, first?

Ms Petersen—I would like to take that question on notice, if that is possible. You are right, there have been some issues in developing that centre and having it both fully staffed and fully functional. My information has been that there is a plan currently being developed to staff and get people back into that facility. But any more than that I would like to take on notice.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Is it a federal-state issue?

Ms Petersen—No, it is not.

Ms Saunders—I think the issue relates to the comfortability of community members using that particular facility. I know in terms of the development of that facility through the Department of Families and Communities and the Aboriginal Housing Association at that time, lots of conversations occurred. But, in the development and the building of the facility, community views had changed. So it is now about the conversations that need to occur with the community about the comfortability in using such a facility.

Senator SIEWERT—Do I understand what you have said correctly as that at first the community were comfortable with having one facility and now there are changes around the usage of that?

Ms Saunders—I think there are issues around design and issues in the end, again, of people feeling okay about going into a premises like an aged-care facility. I think there is the cultural divide in relation to responsibility and obligation type stuff as well as them looking at a facility or a centre in this way, providing safety and those things. The Department of Families and Communities is continuing those conversations. A decision may be made that using that facility is not appropriate in the longer term for an aged-care facility but for some kind of community support. Those are the conversations that are currently happening.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Unless there is another question on aged care, we will go to the mentoring program.

Senator BILYK—I was interested in the mentoring program. You have given us a brief outline in the handout. I was wondering whether you could talk us through it and give us a bit more of an insight into it.

Ms Petersen—This program is basically one that FaHCSIA are rolling out at the moment with the community. Where they are currently up to with the program is that they have been having consultations with each of the communities and talking to communities about what this program actually means and how they are going to roll it out. They are currently looking at who will be the NGO provider. The Commonwealth are currently looking at whether they will do a select tender or whether they will do a general tender to find the organisation that will run it. I believe

they have spoken to both the women's council and Nganampa Health Council, and neither of those organisations actually want to be the NGO to run the program. So FaHCSIA will probably go wider now to find the NGO to provide the program. They are currently looking at the details of how the program will be provided, whether it will be a mobile program or whether it will be provided more from one location. Given how big the Lands are I think what they will probably need to do is provide a centre for the program but have an outreach program as well in order to reach the number of people they will need to reach.

Senator BILYK—If they were to go the way of a mobile program, would they have a mobile office, a caravan type thing? Or would they use facilities that are already around?

Ms Petersen—They could. There are some organisations that do have a mobile office on the Lands. They could use a range of community offices in various places. They could actually use the Homemaker centre, the PY KU centres, the schools and Nganampa Health Council. So there is a range of organisations they could use and work with in order to make that program really effective.

Senator BILYK—And presumably the overall intent is to mentor young people. Is that right? Is there an age base?

Ms Petersen—I do not think FaCSIA has provided an age limit.

Senator BILYK—So it is basically open, is it?

Ms Petersen—It is open.

Senator BILYK—So if there is a mum with a few kids who has a need for mentoring and is happy to be mentored, then that is okay.

Ms Petersen—It is more around anyone who needs support from that point of view. Clearly, they will be assessed to see if they are an appropriate person for that particular program, but their criteria are fairly open currently.

Senator BILYK—To clarify things for me, that is bringing people into communities to mentor people or using people who are already in communities to mentor other people in those communities?

Ms Petersen—It could be both. If there are people in community now who can be trained—taking Senator Scullion's point—it is an ideal way to provide more employment for people. It is a matter of either bringing people in if we need to—

Senator BILYK—And that would be much more acceptable to many community members, too, wouldn't it—to have people from within their own—

Ms Saunders—Where it is appropriate and where people can engage in those things, yes.

Senator BOYCE—I have a couple of questions relating to mental health. Firstly, the NT government, the South Australian government and the federal government have all been

focusing on ways to assist children who have been victims of sexual and other abuse. What programs do you have in South Australia for the adult survivors of child abuse who might live on communities or have moved out of communities?

Ms Petersen—From a health point of view, for anyone who is a survivor of sexual abuse, the South Australian government runs a range of services. Some of those programs are run through the department of health. Some are run through the Rape Crisis Centre, which is now called Yarrow Place. There is a range of different organisations. Community health run a whole range of programs as well. In the regional centres, there is always a community health centre with social workers or psychologists who provide counselling services for victims.

Senator BOYCE—I suppose that I was asking this: given that there has been a very strong focus on child abuse, has there been a corresponding increase in focus on adult survivors of child abuse?

Ms Saunders—The answer to that question is yes, simply because of the obvious need to protect children, which means that the adults who provide their primary care must have an understanding of their own personal experiences but also then to be in a position to provide the appropriate level of care. Whether that requires accessing appropriate supports by going to the police, informing or doing other things, people's life experiences will determine what level of action that they will take in order to protect their children. There has been a focus in relation to providing people in communities to assist and support people through their own disclosure processes. A lot of those people are adults.

There are supports available to assist those who chose to go to the police. That is not at a high level. We have a broad understanding of the experience and the historical context of the involvement of police within Aboriginal communities. The support programs that are in place at this stage are predominantly more around information sharing. That allows people to have the conversations in safe environments within their communities. As we know, the topic is not widely discussed within communities because of the nature of the conversations. Appropriate people need to be available to have those conversations with. That has been—

Senator BOYCE—How does that happen? Who instigates it?

Ms Saunders—Like in any circumstance, generally it is instigated by the victim. They will go to a person they trust to have a conversation about their personal experiences. That might happen if they have concerns about other children in their communities. Where those concerns are expressed in a way that alerts people to the potential of that adult or caregiver also being subject to abuse, that activates the supports that they require in terms of being able to deal with their experiences and the role that they take on in terms of the protection of any children in their care or within their community that they may be concerned about. For that conversation to occur, they need to identify the appropriate people in the community that they can go to. Their safety then needs to be ensured.

Senator BOYCE—I would expect that in Adelaide, for instance, there would be survivor support groups where people discuss the issues. What does that look like within the Aboriginal communities?

Ms Saunders—Predominantly at this stage it is about the relationship between the individual and their family networks and the workers in the community. Again, the dilemmas within the family networks are about who people can talk to about the issue of abuse. Predominantly it falls on the workers within the communities and it is about their understanding and their knowledge of how they support that individual. The conversations are not at an open enough level in communities to have support groups within communities. That certainly is not operating at this stage, although obviously the topic is now on the agenda, which allows for more open conversations, with certain restraints on that.

Senator BOYCE—I guess I am just trying to understand how it gets from being a hidden topic and a subject of shame perhaps for the person who experienced it to something that you would be comfortable talking about.

Ms Saunders—Placing it on the agenda in the way that the Mullighan inquiry has done in relation to children then allows people to see it in the context of their responsibilities to children, which allows them to reflect on their own personal experiences in that way and gives a bit more safety around it. The Mullighan process is also about the amount of time required by individuals and communities to have the conversations amongst themselves prior to them becoming conversations that happen with people outside the community. Whilst for the broader community it would be seen as a safety net, the reality for remote community members is that they live within those communities and there is always the issue of safety within those realms. I think that having it on the agenda so that people can actually start the conversation is a major step.

Senator BOYCE—So you think those conversations are starting to be had.

Ms Saunders—They certainly are happening in communities. I think the reality for all of us as government and service providers is how we respond appropriately and quickly when those conversations are opened. We know that in those circumstances the window of opportunity is usually quite small and people reflect the level of responses required at that time of crisis. That is where we certainly are.

Senator BOYCE—It would presumably be coming up as a side issue when there are discussions around children's safety and things like that. You would not put up a notice saying, 'Come and talk about it.'

Ms Saunders—No.

Senator BOYCE—So we are not to that stage.

Ms Saunders—Again, it is about where people see their level of responsibility as caregivers. They can identify a particular issue to do with a child and that then allows the conversations to start. But we also have a long way to go in relation to the responsiveness to disclosures and that type of stuff for children and adults in communities. I think that is a reflection of history. Past policies and procedures and that type of stuff are very clear and very fresh in people's minds. So it is about how you build trust within a system to respond.

Senator BOYCE—Is foetal alcohol syndrome a reportable syndrome in South Australia?

Ms Petersen—Not to my knowledge it is not.

Senator BOYCE—Would you have any figures on the incidence of foetal alcohol syndrome in South Australia?

Ms Petersen—I imagine drug and alcohol services or Health would have that. We could certainly find that out for you.

Senator BOYCE—That would be good. I would like to know if it is increasing.

Ms Petersen—Going back to your previous questions, the NPY Women's Council are doing a lot of work on the lands, especially around child protection, looking after children and working with families where there has been either child sexual abuse or physical abuse. In particular, they are doing a fair bit of work in the Ernabella community. The Department of Health has committed some funds to establish a therapeutic service also at Ernabella. Part of that is to educate key community people and other NGOs about child sexual abuse and disclosure. So it is a start, looking at one community in particular. Hopefully it will grow from there.

Senator JOHNSTON—Has the \$25 million housing and construction package promised in March 2007 begun to roll out?

Ms Petersen—At the moment what has happened is that all the leases have been signed for the land that will be used to build the new houses. Agreements have been reached with APY around what houses will be renovated. We have traditional owner approval for the building of new houses. Just recently we have been told that the \$25 million housing package will be subsumed into the COAG housing and infrastructure package as well. There are more funds available through the housing and infrastructure package. Apparently those two sets of moneys are being put together by the Commonwealth.

Senator JOHNSTON—Right. When are we likely to see the commencement of some construction in the lands?

Ms Petersen—I imagine fairly soon, given that we now have the leases signed.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is good, but we do not know exactly how much money we have, because it is—

Ms Petersen—No, we do. We definitely have the \$25 million, plus extra funds through the new COAG national partnership agreement.

Senator JOHNSTON—How much in extra funds?

Ms Petersen—I will have to take that on notice.

Senator JOHNSTON—Can you tell me how often in the last 12 months the Mullighan special task force has met? Is either of you on it?

Ms Saunders—In what time frame?

Senator JOHNSTON—In the last 12 months.

Ms Saunders—I have been in my position since November, and it has met once and is about to meet again. I think our next meeting is due in the next fortnight. I have a limited understanding of how much it has met before that.

Senator JOHNSTON—You are on the task force?

Ms Saunders—I am on it now in my position, yes.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. Could you take that on notice so I can have a look at how well that is coming along. Coming back to those questions, when is the government's formal response to the secondary and vocational education report *Excellence or exit* likely?

Ms Petersen—We would have to take that on notice.

Senator JOHNSTON—When is the Aboriginal Strategic Plan for South Australia broadly likely to be available—or even the draft?

Ms Saunders—The draft Aboriginal strategic plan has actually been developed, and it has been agreed to and signed off by the CEs of government agencies. It is currently sitting with the minister on hold whilst we await the final outcome of the COAG negotiations on the NPA so that they can be incorporated into that plan as part of its working plan. That will be released—

Senator JOHNSTON—Sorry—the COAG negotiation of the what?

Ms Saunders—Of the Indigenous reform processes. There are a number of strategies that will come from that process. Part of that is ensuring that, when we develop an Aboriginal strategic plan, we have incorporated a range of prior planning documents—for example, the state strategic plan and the strategies and implementation plans that are associated with that particular document, the COAG reform processes and what sits behind them, the Close the Gap strategies and those things that also need to be incorporated into it. Once those negotiations are completed, that will then be incorporated into that document, so we are ensuring that we have a document that is as consistent as possible with all of the major policy developments. It is my understanding that the minister will then be looking at releasing that document as a formal Aboriginal strategic plan.

Senator JOHNSTON—What is the subject of the negotiations between the state and the Commonwealth?

Ms Saunders—They are in relation to the overall service delivery planning types that sit around the reform stuff, whether it is around health and wellbeing, employment, economic development or safety within communities—basically the nine key components that the reform process is currently looking at.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am a little in the dark as to what you would need to discuss with the Commonwealth. Their guidelines are reasonably clear. You have your plan in draft. I am just wondering about what the collision point and the point of disputation might be.

Ms Saunders—I am not clear on the actual detail, but I do note at the moment that the decision has been made that, until those conversations have been clarified, the plan will be on hold; it will be released once we have ensured that our document is consistent with the other objectives of those particular plans.

Senator JOHNSTON—When are there likely to be meetings between the state minister and the Commonwealth minister?

Ms Saunders—I cannot answer that.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. Is the strategic plan for the APY lands in a draft form?

Ms Saunders—That is in draft. My understanding is that it is still being negotiated with the APY executive and other members, and across government as well. As you know, the new elections have meant that that is on hold until the new executive committee is actually in place; those conversations can then continue.

Senator JOHNSTON—All right. When were the elections held?

Ms Saunders—February. The first AGM of the executive committee is occurring today and tomorrow on the lands.

Senator JOHNSTON—Good. When does it look as if we are going to start negotiations with them on the strategic plan?

Ms Saunders—We will be waiting for the direction in terms of their willingness to engage in the conversations once they have elected their office bearers and that type of stuff. The executive are due to come down to Adelaide in two weeks time, and I would assume that at that stage those conversations will take place.

Senator JOHNSTON—Very good. Thank you.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Senator Siewert, you have some questions on housing, and I think that will wrap up our time. There will be a number of questions on notice, and we will send those to you in writing so you are not reliant on the *Hansard* record.

Senator SIEWERT—In terms of the housing, Ms Petersen, you mentioned an audit. Is the audit around the need for housing for contract people who are working on the lands? Is that what you meant by the audit?

Ms Petersen—We have been looking at housing in two ways. One is an audit looking at what housing we need for service providers on the land in order for us to make sure that we have appropriate housing for teachers, social workers, police or whoever else needs to be there. The other audit has been looking at what level of housing we need for people in each community and what level of repairs are needed for existing houses and what additional houses we need. Part of that is our response to the Mullighan inquiry. Some of the recommendations from the Mullighan inquiry were around overcrowding of houses. So our response to that is looking at building

additional properties or making properties that are currently there are more appropriate than they are now.

Senator SIEWERT—You answered part of the question I was going to ask, which was: what about community needs? Is that audit completed?

Ms Petersen—We are currently collecting the figures for the one looking at staff housing. In relation to community housing, the Office of Aboriginal Housing are working on that now. But that has been completed for some communities and so we know numbers for building new houses or renovating existing houses. Those figures are available now. We could give those to you—not today, but we could send them to you.

Senator SIEWERT—They would be appreciated. The second part of that question is: of the new housing that is being provided in the \$25 million plus the additional COAG money, how much of that is going to meet unmet need at the moment? In other words, there is a certain level of overcrowding now—it is very high—what do we expect the outcome to be once those houses are built?

Ms Petersen—I think it will be a good outcome. I cannot give you the actual figures today, but we are expecting that in some communities that will be a substantial housing boost. It certainly will reduce overcrowding for a lot of those communities. I am more than happy to provide you with those figures, but I think the impact on those individual families and communities will be quite great.

Ms Saunders—The existing modelling is about ensuring that we meet the existing demand at this stage. That is the best we can do in terms of modelling present need. Of course, part of that conversation is about looking at future need given the population growth and the projections around communities. But, at this stage, the negotiations have been around how we fund the existing need.

Senator SIEWERT—That additional information would be appreciated. The other issue I would like to ask about is training. We have seen in my home state of Western Australia houses constructed where contractors come in and build the houses and there is no training or employment provided for local communities. In the NT I am aware that they are negotiating the housing contracts and building in a substantial requirement for local employment. Is the same thing happening in South Australia?

Ms Petersen—Yes, it is. Part of the conversation we have had with the Commonwealth is that the Commonwealth will not provide the \$25 million unless there is a training component. That is something the state would want even if it was not something that was a Commonwealth requirement. We are looking at not only the \$25 million package but how else we can do build a good training component into other programs so that Anangu get good training and have the potential to get meaningful work after that either with contractors or in their own right on the lands. Clearly, when things break down on the land, it is hard to get tradespeople in. So if there is a pool of skilled workforce on the lands, whether that be around the building industry on a range of other industries, that would certainly be a way the South Australian government would want to go.

Senator SIEWERT—As I understand it, there have been previous housing packages with training requirements in them and those training requirements have not been met. How do you do it differently this time to make sure it is actually delivered where it has not been delivered in the past? I am not having a go at past attempts, I just want to make sure that it happens this time.

Ms Petersen—I think probably having stronger MOUs and stronger management mean it actually will happen. For us in the department, we are very committed to making that happen. Part of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's role is to work across governments and to work with other government departments to ensure that a range of objectives are actually met. If our objective is increasing training and Anangu employment, that is something the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, through AARD, will certainly be monitoring really closely.

Ms Saunders—As an example, over the last few months a skills audit has been in process across the APY lands to identify people that have qualifications and skills and to match them against potential future projects. As Kim identified, housing money is one area of work opportunities, but we want to broaden that out. In the next 10 years there is potential funding for a range of employment opportunities across the lands, and that audit is about ensuring that we have a mixture of skills and opportunities so that people have choice in employment. Of course CDEP, which the previous conversation was about, is part of that as well. A major component of the skills audit is to identify the gaps in the projected service provision needs of communities across the lands. The audit is about how needs match with existing skills and what training modules need to be developed to ensure that we have a workforce that suits whatever those future service needs are.

Obviously mining is one area of employment. I am probably not the first to say, 'Let's not see mining as the only answer and the panacea to Aboriginal employment,' but there are obviously a range of opportunities that sit within the mining sector as well as subsidiary areas, such as hospitality, laundering, cleaning and others that individuals express some interest in. It is about managing that process. The current conversations with our training providers through DFC, DEEWR and other groups are about what the potential is for a 10-year plan, as opposed to what we need now with a particular bundle of money. I think it is a major step for us to go more into the longer term planning and to provide some real opportunities and real conversations with Anangu people in particular around what their future employment opportunities are, as opposed to just asking: what do you need for this period of time for this particular project?

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you very much. There will be a number of questions put on notice. We are particularly interested in the three documents that came up in previous evidence. I put on record our appreciation for your support in the visit to the lands. The only way you can do that is to work with people who know the area, so thank you very much.

[2.12 pm]

MILLER, Mrs Grace, Aboriginal Women's Community Worker, Women's Legal Service South Australia Inc.

NGOR, Ms Adut Zita Deng, Solicitor, Women's Legal Service South Australia Inc.

WRIGHT, Ms Marilyn, Senior Solicitor and Coordinator, Women's Legal Service South Australia Inc.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Welcome. Information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence has been provided. If you want any more details, the secretariat will get them for you. Thank you very much for your submission. I invite any or all of you to make an opening statement.

Ms Wright—I acknowledge that we are on Kurna land and also acknowledge the Kurna ancestors and the Aboriginal people that walk across these lands. I have been coordinator with the Women's Legal Service for approximately four years. The Women's Legal Service was established in 1996. In 2000 we auspiced the Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service in Port Augusta. Rightly, some six months later that service became incorporated in its own right. We remained collocated for some time, but now we have our own premises and two solicitors in that area. Through that work, we were able to establish that there is a clear gap in the provision of services to Aboriginal women, particularly in the north and north-west of the state. We have attempted to get funding from state government and further funding from the Commonwealth government to work on the lands, but we were not successful in doing that.

We did come to an arrangement with the domestic violence section of the NPY Women's Council, in around May 2007, to provide legal services and community legal education to women on the APY Lands in South Australia. We were not able to secure funding and they were not able to have legal people. As you could well imagine there is a difficulty in getting service providers to work on the lands. We had the will but not the means to do so and now we are being contracted to provide that service. I will hand over to my colleagues now. Zeta is our solicitor in Port Augusta and will discuss what she does.

Ms Ngor—I have been a solicitor in the Port Augusta office on and off for the last five years. I initially commenced work with the Women's Legal Service in the Port August office in 2003 and I was there for about two years. I then came back to the Women's Legal Service in May 2007 after working in Queensland with the Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Services in Roma and Rockhampton and I have been with them since. As a solicitor in the Port August office I am responsible, along with my fellow solicitor, for covering the whole north-west of South Australia. That covers communities such as Cooper Pedy, Oodnadatta, Maree and Nepabunna. I have also worked, together with Marilyn Wright our senior solicitor/coordinator, in doing outreaches to the APY Lands and covering communities such as Pitjantjatjara, Amata, Ernabella, Fregon and Indulkana. We find providing services to the APY Lands and to rural and remote areas of South Australia does present unique challenges that we do not face within our metropolitan office. I will, no doubt, get to tell you a little bit more about the challenges.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—No doubt you will get back to that. Mrs Miller, were you wanting to make an opening statement?

Mrs Miller—Yes. My role within the organisation is to take community legal education with Aboriginal women in the community. That means going out to communities, along with solicitors within the organisation, to give them legal education and also going into the prison and providing legal education with Aboriginal women in the prison. It is bit of a challenge.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Is there just one of you?

Mrs Miller—Just one of me, yes.

Senator BOYCE—No cloning.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—We will now go to questions and will start with Senator Siewert and work forward.

Senator SIEWERT—I think we should start where you left off.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—A particular challenge.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you talk to us about the challenges? I am presuming that touches on resources because, Ms Wright, you commented that you did not get funding from the South Australian government. I am interested in what their excuse was for not funding you. I figure I might as well roll it into one to get the conversation going.

Ms Wright—As a solicitor in the Port Augusta office undoubtedly some of the challenges that we face are in regard to resources. Until January of this year I was the sole solicitor in the office and the only other staff was an administrative officer. Basically there were two of us responsible for running the whole Port Augusta office. Within the Port Augusta office we run a service that allows women to drop in so they do not have to make appointments. They can also phone because we service women who do not live in Port Augusta. They can phone from anywhere, basically, north and west of Port Augusta requesting legal advice. Sometimes the matters can be urgent. For example, in the case of maybe assisting clients with restraining order applications or urgent recovery orders for return of children if they have been taken by a spouse or another family member.

We also provide general legal advice to women on a whole range of different legal areas or referrals—for example, industrial matters, no doubt family law domestic violence issues, care and protection matters and criminal injuries compensation, which is a new area in which we have started doing a lot of work, particularly since we have been up in the Lands, because a lot of women have suffered quite serious injuries and disabilities as a result of violence. Besides the resource issues, and not having adequate resources to cover such a wide geographical area, there are other issues in terms of meeting the legal challenges that our clients face. In small towns such as Port Augusta, which is very well resourced compared to other regional and remote areas, there are a lot of conflict issues, particularly for the clients that we service. Often their partners have been involved with other legal services, for example the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, or have received assistance from the Legal Services Commission of South Australia.

That makes a lot of the women that we assist not able to receive services from those particular agencies. I am pretty sure Marilyn can highlight some of the other challenges.

Ms Wright—Zita assisted with the submission. We did it at the last minute but we really wanted to have it before you today because I think probably the main challenge and the highest area of need is for women who have been assaulted. I think, Senator, you raised the issue of women who have been sexually assaulted on the Lands, and the services available. There is a complete lack of services for women and victims of crime on the Lands in terms of culturally appropriate services and services that have the resources to provide interpreters to ensure that women can get the appropriate advice at the end of the day.

I think the government, since the Mullighan inquiry, has set up a training scheme for interpreters on the Lands, but they are very few and far between. NPY Women's Council has employed an interpreter but that is not necessarily on a full-time basis, and each time we attend on the Lands we cannot be sure that there will be an interpreter there. People attending before the Magistrates Court may not have an interpreter so they are faced with legal issues without understanding. English may be the third or fourth language for people in the Lands, so the issues are extreme. There are issues—it was raised in the previous session—with regard to people having enough food, with regard to the nutrition for children, and there are human rights issues. There are issues where women are losing their lives.

We have also written to the South Australian government recently on the issue of a death review to take place in South Australia, because we are very concerned about the number of horrific injuries to women and deaths that have occurred on the Lands. I think it was in May 2008 that Paul Toohy wrote in the *Australian* that on average 1.3 out of 100,000 Australians die each year as a result of murder, but on the NPY Lands, that cross-border area, it is one in 1,200. Since that time at least four of our clients have been murdered. So we feel quite passionately about this.

There may be four more police officers who have been positioned on the Lands, however, the services are incomplete. Anyone who has been to the Lands knows just how vast the distances are. There may not be access for women to telephones. The workers in the clinics are often very tired or exhausted.

We have not specified communities at all. Even though we go to all the communities on the APY Lands we have not identified those communities, and I do not think we will, but one doctor in the Lands said that he was sick of the smell of burning flesh and the sight of head injuries. So workers on the Lands are often traumatised as well, and are not given the support. We say that it is an urgent situation at the moment and we would like to see a death review in order to be able to save other women's lives.

We say that it is an urgent situation at the moment and we would like to see a death review panel to save other women's lives. Entire communities are affected. They are affected by the grief. Children are orphaned. The perpetrators are often the intimate partner and they may be imprisoned and the mother killed. So we are saying that it is a dire situation and we would like to see something happen.

Senator SIEWERT—In your submission you say that you have written to both the state and federal government's about three things: the death review panel, an inquiry into violence against women on the Lands and a review of the Magistrates Court circuit on the APY lands. Have you heard back from either governments on any of those things?

Ms Wright—We have had a letter from the federal Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, we have had a letter from Jay Weatherall, our minister for Indigenous affairs and we have had a letter from Michael Atkinson, the state Attorney-General. We do not feel satisfied with the responses that we have had to date. You asked the question earlier, Senator, with regard to the reasons we have not received funding. The answer is often a lack of funds or, in one case, because there is not a need to do that review. The Victorian government is doing a review generally into homicides with intimate partners and we would like to see a review take place here in South Australia but specifically, and as a starting point, for women on the Lands. The Mullighan inquiry looked at the issues of sexual assault, but what also has to be looked at is the issue of violence towards women, which affects children and the entire community.

Senator SIEWERT—If I understand correctly, you have had a letter back but it is basically saying 'No'.

Ms Wright—Yes. In terms of a review. We have also written to the Chief Magistrate with regard to the Magistrates Court circuit that my colleague and I attend. She is willing to hear our complaints, so there is some communication happening. However, we think that it needs to go further because, as I said, the situation is dire. Women's and children's lives and the community are extremely precious, and if we do not do something now in the 21st century to redress the issues that we in some sense have created by sitting on our hands and not providing resources to those communities for a very long time, then our children and our grandchildren are going to know that we did nothing to change the situation.

We have so much to learn from the communities themselves: their culture and the most beautiful artworks that come from those communities, the way people live their lives and the languages. We were taught French or German at school but we have not been able to have the extremely precious languages that these people speak so wonderfully taught in our schools as well. It is a two way thing: we have to be open to valuing the wonderful things that are here.

Senator SIEWERT—The issue around representation. You touched on the fact that it is often the perpetrators, the partners, who get legal aid, and therefore the women cannot get representation. If it were not for your services, where would they get legal representation?

Ms Wright—If we are remain talking about the lands—

Senator SIEWERT—Yes; sorry, we are.

Ms Wright—ALRM goes to the lands on the circuit as defence lawyers, as does the Legal Services Commission. They are so busy and they have so many files. If it were possible that they had somebody in another matter, as a victim of crime, could they see them anyway if there was not a conflict with the person who was the defendant before the court? Probably not. Generally they camp out the night before. We camp out if we are attending court circuit or CLE in Pipalyatjara but we are fortunate to be able to stay at Umuwa, at the MPY house, during the

other court circuits. But, no, and some of our matters are out of time. There may have been criminal injuries compensation for terrible injuries back in the 1990s—or in 2000, as with one of our clients that we have at the moment—but it is only since we have been going to the lands a year and a half ago that we have been able to pick up those kinds of matters. So mainly it is family law with regard to children, it is criminal injuries compensation and it is doing the restraining order affidavits. That is a job that police normally do but we are there on the ground so we do those restraining order applications and the police then pick up on them, because it may be hours before they actually get to the woman.

Senator BILYK—Mrs Miller, I wish to go back to your introductory speech. You were talking about going out and training women about their legal rights. Can you expand on that? Can you tell me a bit more about how you actually do it and what you do?

Mrs Miller—Yes. We actually contact the organisations first. We mainly do it within the domestic violence area in the Aboriginal women's shelters. They contact us and ask us to come and do CLE on certain topics, mainly on family law. We get in our civil lawyer. We have a lawyer that does one day a week. She may come out and do compensation claims or anything in the civil law area.

Senator BILYK—Is that out in the communities?

Mrs Miller—That is within Adelaide, because South Australia is such a big state and I cannot cover the whole lot.

Senator BILYK—Sure. I think that is why we asked you if there was only one of you.

Mrs Miller—There is only one of me. We go out and do outreach on request within this part of Adelaide and Zita does the opposite part.

Senator BILYK—I am not sure who I should direct this question to. I wonder if you have got any comments and suggestions to make on the effect of alcohol as a trigger for violence.

Ms Wright—The communities are dry communities but alcohol is often brought in. When that is the case a whole community may erupt and cars get burned and violence happens. I will pass this to Zita.

Ms Ngor—I should probably stress though that alcohol might be a factor but it is not always the main factor for violence against women on the lands or in rural and remote communities. There have been clients that we have worked with who have suffered horrendous injuries. When we talk about horrendous injuries, we are talking about getting hit across the head with a metal bar or broken arms or broken legs or being burned with firesticks. So they are quite substantial injuries that have a permanent lasting effect on the victim. Some of the clients who have been assaulted in such a manner have actually been assaulted by their partner whilst their partner was not on any drugs or on any alcohol.

While alcohol and substance misuse may be a factor for violence, I think that to point to alcohol and substance misuse as being the sole factor is really to narrow what are the causes or underlying causes of violence within rural and remote communities. I think the causes can be

quite complex. Some of the violence obviously is related to the historical disadvantages that Indigenous people have felt as a result of colonisation. I also think some of it can be related to shortcomings within the criminal justice system in responding to victims of violence.

Senator BILYK—Just to help me get this clear in my mind, what you are saying—and I do not want to put words in your mouth—is that if you do something wrong, such as perpetrate violence, and there is no actual response then you are not discouraged, if I can put it that way, from continuing. Is that how you are putting it?

Ms Ngor—This is my personal opinion, not that of the Women’s Legal Service by any means. Particularly when I see cases where the defendant has had a continual history of committing violent crime against his or her intimate partner, I have found on some occasions that the perpetrator would seem to get a more lenient penalty for offences committed against a person than they would for offences committed against property. I had a conversation with somebody who is involved within the judicial system and they said that, in part, that was a response to community perceptions that crimes committed against property should be dealt with harshly. That was the reason given for why crimes against the person are not dealt with in the same manner as crimes against property are dealt with. I personally believe that that feeds into the perception that committing an offence against a person is not as serious as, say, committing an offence against a property such as vandalising a house or torching a car.

Ms Wright—In some ways it is not so different to how it is across the board in the metropolitan area. Often we have to contact the police and say, ‘This person has grounds for a restraining order,’ or ‘Why hasn’t a statement being taken because she has been assaulted?’ But the consequences are often much more harsh in a harsh environment. Aboriginal women in those areas experience domestic violence, if we say domestic violence is abuse by an intimate partner, but they also endure family violence. Family members may pressure them or be violent towards them if they do not act in a certain way or if they want to tell the police. Often there are repercussions for them from telling the police. It is a difficult situation, and there is certainly no easy answer. But, quite clearly, there does need to be a clear indication that beating women or assaulting women is not okay.

We have said in our submission that restorative justice in terms of an approach to the legal system is a good thing. However, if you transfer that to working with people who have been sexually assaulted or have had violence perpetrated against them, then it is not appropriate. I think sometimes the courts may be going down a road of trying to bring in family members, but that can just replicate the abuse that has already occurred, particularly in sexual assault or family violence matters.

Ms Ngor—There was a point I wanted to mention in response to an earlier question. One of the important roles we do play on the APY lands and in rural and remote communities is to provide legal advice to victims, particularly victims of violence, about what their legal options are in pursuing charges or obtaining restraining orders, particularly where the defendant has a legal representative. Sometimes victims can be at a disadvantage because they do not have easy access to talk to the prosecution and explore what their options are, or to get a second opinion if they happen to be confronted by the defence lawyer who puts a proposition to them that they do not feel they have the option to refuse. That is a really important part that we play in giving women access to information and empowering them to use that information.

Senator JOHNSTON—Ladies, thank you for this submission. It is a most powerful one. May I ask who the author was?

Ms Wright—Zita and me.

Senator JOHNSTON—I congratulate you on raising some absolutely vital and crucial issues for the committee. Thank you. Who travelled down from Port Augusta today?

Ms Ngor—I am the Port Augusta solicitor, but I just happened to come back from the APY Lands, doing the court circuit.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is good. I am pleased and thank you for your attendance. I noticed that the figures on page 4 are not footnoted, but I take them as being part of your knowledge and understanding. In 12 years to 2006, 10 NPY women were homicide victims and, in the 17 months since May 2007, a further six women were homicide victims. Regarding five of the six homicides you go on to say there were head injuries. I note that the six are now eight, because in the next paragraph there is a description up to March 2008, and I dare say that that figure is as current as it possibly could be, sadly.

Ms Wright—Since my colleague has come back from the lands, she has informed me that there has been another death, so the number goes up all the time.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is a very stark change. I am interested as to whether you can assist us with what you think the reason behind that sudden change is. It is a dramatic increase over a relatively short time, looking back over the 12 years that you have cited. Am I right in that or am I misreading the figures? There were 10 over 12 years and then there were eight over 17, 18 or 19 months. Can you give me any assistance as to why that would be the case? What has happened?

Ms Wright—It would only be speculation and that is why we have—

Senator JOHNSTON—I am happy for you to speculate. I think you are well qualified to speculate.

Ms Wright—called for a death review. We do not have all the answers.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am not sure that any of us do.

Ms Wright—That is right. I would say there are a number of factors; it is all the factors. Some of them have been raised as queries for this inquiry. It would involve social circumstances, loss of hope, lack of employment, lack of self-determination and lack of police resources. It may be that in some cases alcohol was involved, but that is only speculation.

Senator JOHNSTON—Is there a greater propensity for a different type of drug? These numbers suggest to me that there are possibly amphetamines coming in or something of that nature which has exacerbated the violence.

Senator SIEWERT—Is it also part of now recognising ‘domestic violence’ for what it is, and that is murder—actually naming it? I am not trying to detract from the fact that these figures are awful. People are now actually naming it for what it is more than they used to. Is it part of that as well?

Ms Wright—Some of these figures came from Jane Lloyd, who now works in Alice Springs. She worked with the NPY Women’s Council for 20 years and did a wonderful job while she was working with them in their domestic violence section. She is now with the Australian Crime Commission in Alice Springs. Ten or 20 years ago, the figures would have been collected as they are today. I think it really is a spike in homicide figures on the lands—women who have been killed by intimate partners.

Senator SIEWERT—That is certainly not the case in WA. We are still getting domestic violence labelled as GBH. That is why I asked, because I know for certain that is happening in WA. I was wondering whether they are being more honest now with the way deaths are being reported.

Ms Wright—That is something to look into, I think. It is a good point.

Senator JOHNSTON—Let us go on from there. I note that we have these imperatives, and in your submission you seek an urgent response and you highlight the battle between the need to respect human rights, to be consultative, to have equity and to engage the communities and the need for an urgent response. I note you are critical of the intervention in the Northern Territory. In the context of a lack of police officers, a lack of availability of medical services, a lack of women’s refuges that are properly run and maintained and secure and a lack of protection against family retribution, which all of us who have any interest in this area know is common, how do you reconcile the need to intervene—and I think these figures cry out for some sort of response, as you indeed acknowledge—and the luxury that you seem to want to have to take a lot of time whilst these sorts of horrible things are happening? What is the formula that you think we should apply? I am left confused. We have a horrible situation, it needs a response and it needs something done urgently, but we have to look after human rights and that requires us to go slowly and be careful and respectful. How do we reconcile those two or do we just try and work our way through and hope that nothing happens in the meantime?

Ms Wright—I think life is full of contradictions and paradoxes. It is true that it is some kind of dialectic, I suppose, that I am saying. But, for every decision you make with regard to the lands, there are particular effects. For example, the state governments have increased the number of social workers on the lands since the Mullighan inquiry here in South Australia, but there are particular effects from that and the effects are—and I did speak was one of the social workers—that children are being taken and some are being placed with non-Aboriginal families in Adelaide.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is happening today, is it?

Ms Wright—Yes. So, despite an Aboriginal placement principle that we have for placing the children, often there is a lack of carers. Every time you make a decision—and the intervention was a stark intervention but this applies to smaller decisions too—it is going to have consequences. So you always have to be mindful of how it is affecting the communities. I think

we said at the end of our submission that the answer lies within the communities themselves. I have spoken to an older woman there and she talked about marijuana and drugs coming into the communities and her worries about the effects on the young people. The people in the community, I think, can tell us what needs to happen, but we live in a hierarchical society and if we come in in a paternalistic or patronising way and say, 'This is what needs to happen,' then I do not think you are going to get the results, when clearly, particularly for women and children, there needs to be empowerment and that is taking it away. Whatever the answer is, it must be done in consultation with the community.

Senator JOHNSTON—I think that is very helpful. I note that the Family Court has sought to resolve a lot of these types of imperatives by falling back to the best interests of the child. Do we add to that the best interests of the mother and the child in this instance?

Ms Wright—Perhaps those interests do not necessarily have to be diametrically opposed.

Senator JOHNSTON—I am not suggesting that.

Ms Wright—In some ways women need access to those kinds of things, such as the Family Court—and we have made applications to the court—that the rest of us just take for granted because we live here. In the communities people cannot just access legal advice easily. We have a free call number for anyone to ring us from the community but they may not have access to a phone if the PY KU is closed down. Likewise, they cannot call the police. It is a difficult one.

Senator JOHNSTON—In a lot of the case studies you have mentioned—you might be surprised to know that I used to work for the Aboriginal Legal Service in Western Australia maybe 30 years ago now—the thing that strikes me is that a lot of these males are spending a lot of time in jail and that time is virtually wasted. There is no education or propaganda—if you want to call it that; I think that is what it distils down to—about respecting women and children. And when they get out of jail on parole there is absolutely no improvement from the offence that put them there. You are on the coalface: do you want to make some comment on that?

Ms Wright—I think it is critical that people in jail get access to services—counselling services or whatever is required.

Senator JOHNSTON—In a language they can understand and in simple terms that they can relate to, whilst they are sober and coherent.

Ms Wright—That is exactly right. During that time when the man is not in the community it is critical for the woman, particularly if she has had years and years of beatings, to talk with PY KU women's council and talk with the women's legal service and other services to start to become empowered. That time is time out for her, and is critical. One of our clients was murdered within a week of the man being released from jail. That is a very volatile time as well. She is often blamed.

Senator JOHNSTON—The penal system has failed everybody on that basis—mostly her.

Ms Wright—That is right.

Ms Ngor—Sometimes perpetrators are held in remand so making those programs available to them in remand would be good. Sometimes they can spend considerable time in remand and that time is normally taken into account in sentencing. Sometimes they are out before they even go in—so to speak. It is good to try to catch them as soon as possible. One of the things that we have highlighted in the paper is that there is a danger in overreliance on ‘behavioural modification’ courses, particularly when you have people who have been in jail three or four or even five or six times doing the same anger management courses. There comes a point where you have to say that obviously this person does not want to change or is not capable of change.

Senator BOYCE—This is fascinating stuff. Firstly, you are proposing a death review. You talk also about the horrific injuries that women suffer. Are disability figures just simply not collected or do you see that being encapsulated in your death review?

Ms Wright—That is a good point. Clinics on the lands may have access to those figures. Women are sometimes airlifted to hospitals in Alice Springs, Port Augusta or Adelaide. It would not be impossible to get those figures.

Senator BOYCE—There would be a big psychological cost but there would also be an economic cost to that family of losing the mother for that time. You have the case study of Jenny who was raped by two men—case study No. 3. You make the point that she is doubly punished for being raped because she is taken out of her community and she is not sure whether she can ever go back. What is your proposal on how that situation should be handled? What should our system have in it that improves that?

Ms Wright—The system needs to work in such a way—and probably across Australia—that the perpetrator is removed. When I worked in the ACT the Magistrates Court there would do ‘kick-out’ orders so the man had to leave the house or the man who has perpetrated the violence had to leave the community. It does not happen here in South Australia. Sometimes it can also be members of her own family that put pressure on her so that she cannot return to the community. It makes it very hard.

Senator BOYCE—It needs a whole education process.

Ms Wright—We do community legal education and a former solicitor with us, who has taken 12 months leave without pay, attends on the lands and works with young women in the communities. We do education programs, particularly around sexual assault, and we have held a young women’s camp just north Port Augusta. We have made a DVD to use in community legal education. That works well if we have a translator present. We are beginning to bring in other people, for example, there is a domestic violence worker with the South Australian police who has been positioned in Amala on the lands. She has been involved in those community sessions as well. Ideally, there would also be programs run by men’s groups that could work with the young boys in the schools and in the communities. I know in Port Augusta there is a group that does work with men and boys, and takes the young kids out on camps and talks about all those issues. If the resources can be put into the right place we could work with them. I know that works well in schools where you have a worker who goes in to talk to the young women, and a worker who goes in and takes the young men off. It is so difficult to run those programs in a combined class. There are ways to get more community education happening.

Ms Ngor—I can give you a real-life example of one of the ways we have dealt with situations similar to the case study. In this particular situation we talked to police officers who removed the perpetrators. With the consent of the victim we provided names of some of the people in the community who were causing trouble for the victim and her family. The police officer was quite willing to talk to those people and explain what the court process was and why that particular individual was being removed. The people in the community were clear as to what the steps were that led to the removal of that particular individual. It was not really the action of the victim that had caused the removal of the perpetrator. Hopefully, that will be enough to at least calm that particular situation down. There are avenues for different agencies to work together in a coordinated manner to ensure that victims are protected within their communities. It does require some education so that people in the communities are aware of how the process actually works and why certain decisions are taken in relation to some cases.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Is that at the time of allegation or at the time of conviction.

Ms Ngor—It should occur right from the time of arrest. That is what I would recommend.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you. The committee will break for a few minutes.

Proceedings suspended from 3.00 pm to 3.11 pm

ROCHE, Professor Ann Marie, Director, National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, Flinders University

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I welcome Professor Ann Roche from the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction. Professor, you have information on parliamentary privilege and protection of witnesses and more detail can be provided if you seek that. We have your submission. Thank you very much; it was very useful. I am happy for you to make an opening statement if you care to do so and then we will go to questions.

Prof. Roche—Thank you very much. There are a couple of additional things in the written submission that we made that we would like to underscore. There are three key areas that we would highlight as being particularly relevant to this inquiry. One is the role that schools can play around Indigenous alcohol and drug use, and there are a series of issues, problems and resolutions and interventions associated with that, so I will come back to the role of schools. The second one is the role for Indigenous alcohol and drug workers and generic health workers. There is often a vague distinction between those two. Since putting in our submission, some of our ongoing work in this area has yielded some data. We have a large study underway, so we have a bit of data that we can now bring to life. But, again, it is still preliminary. Certainly, talking more about the role of Indigenous alcohol and drug workers is quite important. The third area is one that we did not really highlight so much in our submission but that we would like to draw attention to and that is the workforce development issues for mainstream health workers and alcohol and drug workers in general. So there are a raft of issues that we think are quite important to underscore. There are three areas that I would really like to talk to in a bit more detail but I can do that in the course of questions if you like.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Those are very key points. If you care to make some comments on those, we can jump in with questions. I think that keeps us on track and you get your information across.

Prof. Roche—If I take those three issues in turn, the first is the role of schools. One of the things that becomes increasingly evident for those who work in health in general but also in the alcohol and drug area is that the data is very clear that school retention is a very strong protective factor—not just retention but engagement of young people in their school environment. We know that, for Indigenous young people, strategies that will facilitate retention in the school environment and also engagement are preventative in terms of the development of alcohol and drug problems, for a whole raft of issues.

As our data shows, Indigenous students are likely to use illicit drugs at a rate about 30 per cent higher than non-Indigenous students. But that rate varies according to the substances involved and may be up to two to three times higher. So they are at substantial risk for illicit drug use. We know that there is a very close relationship between academic performance—the data is very clear about this. The children that do not perform so well academically in the school environment are also the ones who are more inclined to get involved with alcohol and drug use. So there is this quite important, complex relationship between the role of the school, engagement in the school, a positive experience in the school environment and illicit drug use. Similarly

retention in the school setting has all sorts of implications for not only short-term problems but also long-term life prospects.

One of our take-home messages would be to look at the data much more closely. We are quite aware that the data around illicit drug use amongst Indigenous versus non-Indigenous students is something that has not been looked at very closely at all. Mostly our data has come from the ASSSADS, the Australian secondary school survey data. When we looked at that more closely as part of another study we did a year ago, it became very evident what the patterns were like both in terms of academic performance for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and illicit drug use and also the quite different pattern of use amongst Indigenous students.

What this then does is highlight the need for targeted interventions in the school environment for Indigenous students around these drug using issues. It also highlights a need for schools to take on board programs. We have done a lot of work about the evidence based effective roles that schools can play around the alcohol and drug area, and they are often nothing to do with classroom based or curriculum based activities; they are really to do with the nature of the school environment, inclusion and engagement in the school environment. One of the things we would say is that for the immediate health and wellbeing of young people there is an underutilised role within the school environment of helping to prevent and minimise illicit drug use, and of maximising engagement and retention at school.

That segues into the next issue, which is about employment and engagement of the slightly older Indigenous young person who is moving from the school environment into the workplace. Where we have looked at a particular segment of the workforce, here we have looked at Indigenous alcohol and drug workers. There are a number of important things that we have identified there. They tend to be substantially younger than their parallels in the mainstream alcohol and drug workforce. We have also found from our very recent data—we have just surveyed a couple of hundred workers and have just recently analysed this data—that the retention in alcohol and drug roles amongst this professional group is incredibly short. The turnover rate is around one to two years. So we are not retaining those workers.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—So it is different from non-Indigenous workers?

Prof. Roche—It is.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—So that is clearly shown?

Prof. Roche—Absolutely; the average duration in the workforce for the mainstream alcohol and drug workers is around five to seven years. Indigenous workers are younger and their turnover rate is substantially higher. A range of issues have arisen in the interviews that we have been conducting across the country with Indigenous workers in this area, such as the issue of their need for improved education and training in their role and issues around salaries and awards. If they are working in a mainstream service—or, even if they are not, in their interactions and interface with mainstream services—cultural safety is an important issue. There is also the need for mentoring and support and the need, as part of their training, to be introduced to what most professionals are thoroughly drilled in: issues around establishing professional boundaries and parameters. One of the comments frequently made by Indigenous workers is that they are on 24/7—they are expected to be available 24/7. So they already work in areas that are

particularly emotionally demanding, and they usually live and work in the same community. Not to be able to put parameters and boundaries around your working life and the rest of your life within the community creates quite a range of stresses. So there are a range of things that we believe are contributing to that high rate of turnover. We are just starting to investigate that now more closely, but these are some of the things that have been bubbling to the surface already. Some of these, we think, are amenable to remediation without too much difficulty at all. Some of them we do not think are particularly costly or expensive, particularly the notion of introducing ongoing mentoring.

We are taking relatively young and very inexperienced workers and expecting them to perform in emotionally demanding and taxing roles in the alcohol and drug health and human services areas, but we are giving them very little support. I have worked in the alcohol and drug area now for over 20 years, and when I first started I was at Sydney university. One of the projects instigated there was for medical practitioners—trying to get more medical practitioners involved with alcohol and drug problems. Doctors would often say to us: ‘Look, we’re not going to open a Pandora’s box. We’re not going to start dealing with things that we’re not trained to deal with and we’re not comfortable with because we think we’d get out of our depth very quickly.’ So what was introduced there, and is now in place across Australia, is a 24 hours a day, seven days a week telephone advisory service for professionals. A similar support service for Aboriginal alcohol and drug workers, we believe, would go a long way to help in retaining them in the roles that we have been training them up for—we have been investing in them—and in making their working life substantially easier and more manageable. These are things that we have been doing quite successfully across the board in mainstream services for some years now. It is the sort of thing that could be rolled out relatively easily.

Similarly, where people go off to do training of different sorts, we know that the translation of training into practice is always a challenge—no matter who you are and what you are doing—but having ongoing mentoring and support is important, particularly if you are working in a rural and remote area. We know that emotional wellbeing issues are a much greater concern for Indigenous workers in rural and remote areas. Those workers need much more support than those in metropolitan areas, where it is a little bit easier to tap into support networks. They are some of the workforce development issues that we would highlight for Indigenous workers.

One of the other issues that I think is particularly relevant to this inquiry is the type of services that are probably remiss within many of the Indigenous alcohol and drug services or for Indigenous alcohol and drug workers in mainstream services. That is around parent centred programs and parent centred orientations of those services. I say that with some degree of confidence because we know we are only just beginning to introduce that into mainstream services now. There have been a number of quite important studies on illicit drug use in clients, particularly those who now have children, that have found that those people have often had fairly chequered careers and upbringings. They have often not been well socialised. They have often got into using drugs at a very early point in their social development and so they lack many social skills and many basic functioning skills. They do not make good parents as a result of that. They often do not have good parenting skills.

This has been overlooked until very recently, so a colleague of ours, Sharon Dawe at Griffith University, has run a very successful program called PUP—Parenting Under Pressure. This is within mainstream services. There is a high need a parenting skills for some of the more

vulnerable clients that we see. The introduction of parenting programs with parent centred approaches within some of the Indigenous alcohol and drug services is sorely needed as well. So we are looking to see an extension of the sort of work that Sharon Dawe has developed in mainstream services into Indigenous services as well. That is one of the key issues that we would highlight. As I say, this project that we have running is probably in its final third, so a lot of our data is very new and is just coming to light now. Some of the data that I am describing is material that we have only been analysing in the last week or two.

The third area I would highlight is in relation to the mainstream health and welfare and alcohol and drug workforce. One of the issues that we would underscore here is the need for better training—and I use that word advisedly—upskilling and sensitising on culturally appropriate ways of interaction. There is something of a debate that we have been having with our colleagues about how you can achieve this. Traditional notions of cultural sensitivity training is that there is a view and that is not a successful and appropriate way of going about it. But I think it is timely to have a closer investigation about the better ways and the range of options that are available to ensure that mainstream services are more culturally appropriate in the way they do their business. That has been a pretty much overlooked area, we would suggest, up until now.

Again, I would underscore the need for rural and remote workers in mainstream services. Part of the work that we have done has worked on the basis of a degree of reciprocity. We have waited to be invited into Indigenous services and communities to interview people. In doing that, we have also taken materials that we thought might be of use to them. We have taken along materials that have come from the rural and remote nurses group. These are small resources that have been developed by rural and remote nurses about how you survive as a health worker in these kinds of areas. Certainly more support of rural and remote workers in general is something that we would identify as an important issue.

I talked about culturally appropriate practices in general for workers, but it is true for organisations as well. That big shift is needed. To date there has been some degree of discussion about it but not in-depth examination of what that actually means. We would argue that that is something that really does need to be brought to the fore and that there needs to be an increased understanding of the knowledge and methods that it might be used to go about doing this.

The final issue is mainstream workers, because for many of the mainstream workers who are seeing Indigenous clients with alcohol and drug problems—and this is our narrow slice on this issue—there are huge recruitment and retention issues in this area. It is, as I mentioned, a very sensitive, very complex and emotionally-taxing area for workers. When you overlay that with the difficulties of working in a rural and remote areas, the issues compound themselves even further.

We argue, from a workforce development perspective, that there are techniques around recruitment and retention that need to be applied more comprehensively in the alcohol and drug area. But in the rural and remote setting there are a range of other issues that have been identified as being relevant, and these extend well beyond what a job description might be or what the position descriptor is about. These are issues like how well suited individuals are to dealing with and working in quite complex and challenging working environments. So it is about looking at alternative recruitment strategies, particularly for mainstream workers, and supporting

them in ways that you do not normally support your workers if they are working in a metropolitan area. So they are the three areas that we wanted to give you bit of a snapshot of.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—On top of the stuff that you put in the submission.

Prof. Roche—Yes.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—It is a good submission as well. Senator Siewert.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. In your submission, table 4 shows the distribution of Indigenous specific courses by location and institution. South Australia has the smallest proportion of the courses, but that is—

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Victoria does not have any.

Senator SIEWERT—No, Victoria does not have any. That is a percentage of the courses that are available across those states. What is that as a percentage of all the courses? Do you see what I mean? So that table shows the number of courses, but it is the percentage of the total of Indigenous specific courses. I am interested in finding out, of the courses that are available, what percentage are Indigenous specific?

Prof. Roche—Of all those courses—all those alcohol and drug, mental health and comorbidity courses—that are available across Australia, what proportion, by state, are Indigenous specific?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Prof. Roche—That is a question we could answer, but I could not tell you from this data here. I could tell you—

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. I am interested because two courses in South Australia does not sound very much, but if it is two out of two it is an issue across the board rather than just with Indigenous specific workers. Do you see what I mean?

Prof. Roche—I do see what you mean. I think it is also a reflection of need. We have got both accredited and non-accredited courses in this table. The data on the non-accredited courses is highly unreliable because they are like shifting sands; as the wind blows, they all just change. The accredited courses, on the other hand, are quite different. One of the things that surprised us as we were putting this database together—it was an exercise to look at what was available in comorbidity, mental health and alcohol and drug comorbidity—was to find so many courses that either were designed specifically for Indigenous students or had some Indigenous content. I am fairly confident that if we had done this exercise three or five years ago we would not have identified as many. We finished collecting data for that database about the middle of last year and, to my knowledge, there are further courses that are being developed or underway. So what is there is still provisional in that sense.

When we went through the data we had that might be relevant to this committee, we saw that this was probably some of the most positive and encouraging data that we could bring forward—

that, from an educational perspective and a workforce development perspective, there are many more training opportunities available for Indigenous workers than has ever been the case previously in these areas.

I can go back and look in more detail for you, if you like, at what that regional representation looks like across though these courses. It gets a little bit more complex as well because you really then want to drill down and ask, 'Okay, with the ones that are available, what areas are they tapping into and catering for and at what level?'

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. Yes.

Prof. Roche—So it is a rich question and an important question.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, because obviously one of the issues you have highlighted is rural and remote areas. Certainly, from our experience—not just our limited experience in South Australia but also in other states—the issue you raised in terms of first getting staff and then actually retaining staff is one of the big issues. So then it is about how you specifically train people to be able to deal with those sorts of pressures.

Prof. Roche—Absolutely.

Senator SIEWERT—Are you making recommendations as to how you deal with those pressures? Do you provide that support to trainers?

Prof. Roche—We provide a variety of support to trainers in terms of resource materials and recommendations. Because much of what happens at the training level happens at the jurisdictional level, not nationally—so it is very much a chequered quilt in that regard—it is up to them to make determinations about whether they feel that clinical supervision is something they want to take on. Most states are now doing that, and that took a bit of prodding.

Mentoring, that ongoing support beyond training, is pretty much the next cab off the rank. It is the area where people are saying, 'Yes, we now see the importance of that.' We keep pushing the notion that training in itself is not going to achieve what you want. It is about the training transfer and being able to operationalise what new skills you may have acquired and new knowledge you have taken on board. You have to be able to take that back into your workplace and integrate it on a day-to-day basis. Several things need to happen to make that possible. One is that the novice learner has to be guided through how to do that. The organisation in which they work has to be receptive to the ways of the individual worker changing as well. We keep arguing that it is not just about training; it is also about the organisations being much more supple and receptive to those changes. That is happening increasingly. The young—and the sometimes not chronologically young but still junior—Indigenous workers are saying to us very clearly that they want more support and guidance as they learn new knowledge and skills. They want to learn how to embed that in their day-to-day practice and they want to get feedback on that, particularly where it is a clinical role that is involved.

Senator SIEWERT—The other issue that many of us have picked up on is that a lot of the success of particular programs is specifically due to one person. The person goes in with exceptional skills and they motivate people. When that person goes, it all falls apart. I could not

tell you how many times I have heard that. It is not just in this area. It is in a whole lot of other areas but particularly this area. How do you make sure that in the future that is not going to occur? Otherwise you just get a vicious cycle.

Prof. Roche—You do. I do not think there is an easy or simple answer to it. I think we need to make people aware of that and resource accordingly and look at a succession planning strategy. It is almost non-PC to say this, but you really do need to have hierarchical structures. You need very experienced workers, then people who are somewhat less experienced and then junior people. It is the only way for people to learn the ropes, as it were. They learn by being guided, by having appropriate behaviours modelled for them and new skills taught to them in situ, so you have to have that layering in place. Layering of your staff structures usually comes at an expense, so there has to be resourcing around that. Where you have so many of your programs pivoting around an individual they are always very vulnerable, very fragile and fall over rapidly if those one or two individuals leave. You are right: we see that happen a lot. As for how you get around it, I do not think there is an easy solution to it, but that layering process is incredibly important. Doing whatever you can to upskill those slightly more junior layers that sit underneath it is the only strategy that we are aware of—and then trying to embed that within your organisation.

Senator SIEWERT—Senator Johnston might remember which inquiry we were dealing with where there was a recommendation about regional staff development and worker support at a regional level so that organisations combine and do regional training and provide regional support. I think that came up a couple of inquiries ago. I am trying to remember which one. It could have been the native title inquiry that we were doing. Has there been any work around some sort of regionally coordinated approach to staff training and support?

Prof. Roche—A number of models like that have been tried. I think it works quite well. It also works in terms of creating networks. The ADAN group in New South Wales, for instance—the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Network—is quite a good example of that. They do a lot of their training on a regional basis and bring people together. They create a network so that when people go away from those one, two or three days of training experience they have got colleagues to contact. So creating networks on a regional basis works really well.

There have been some other models that have been tried. In New South Wales they have tried staff exchanges—not successfully, I have to say. The idea was that people would do a shadow program, so you would swap people over from the NGO sector to the government sector to improve the way those two sectors would interrelate. Logistically it is quite difficult because of awards and all sorts of things like that. That program has been tried over the last 18 months and has not worked very well, but they have gone back to the drawing board to see if there are different strategies that might be applied. So people are looking at new models all the time for how you can facilitate staff development and workforce development in a range of innovative ways.

Senator BOYCE—I would like to have a quick look at your Indigenous secondary school students drug use table, which was produced—the data was collected, anyway—in 2005. Is that the most recent data you have?

Prof. Roche—Yes, it is.

Senator BOYCE—Because they are from mainstream secondary schools, presumably these would primarily be children in capitals and major regional towns. Is that correct?

Prof. Roche—It is the ASSAD data, which is national data. It is a weighted sampling system, so they try to get representation from capital cities, regional areas and country areas.

Senator BOYCE—There would be very little remote area data, obviously, because there are no mainstream secondary schools in remote areas. Am I right in thinking that?

Prof. Roche—True. That is exactly right.

Senator BOYCE—We have already had evidence that the level of petrol sniffing in remote areas has improved, but there is anecdotal evidence that it has been replaced by cannabis in some cases. Your figures would suggest that there is already a very high usage of cannabis in rural areas, at least—not necessarily remote. Am I correct in saying that?

Prof. Roche—Our figures would suggest that there is certainly a higher level of cannabis use among Indigenous students than among non-Indigenous students. The level of cannabis use amongst Australian school-age students over the last 12 to 15 years has dropped very dramatically; it is one of the big success stories. We have not yet looked at the data that parallels the pattern of use by Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students over that period of time. I do not know quite to what extent it is dropping at the same rate, so it would be useful to have a look at that. It would be quite illuminating.

Senator BOYCE—I presume that petrol comes in under inhalants rather than hallucinogens. Would that be correct?

Prof. Roche—It probably does, but because most of the petrol sniffing occurs in quite remote areas you are not going to be picking it up for great value.

Senator BOYCE—So your ‘inhalants’ there would primarily be paint and glue.

Prof. Roche—Absolutely. That is right.

Senator BOYCE—The stuff that you can get at the local hardware shop.

Prof. Roche—That is the one.

Senator BOYCE—Do you know if there is any intention of repeating this study in the near future?

Prof. Roche—Yes. This is the ASSAD survey that is conducted every three years nationally and has been for the last 15 years.

Senator BOYCE—All right. So the next one would be due out—

Prof. Roche—Just on that point, one of the things that have surprised us is the extent to which it has been an underutilised data set in terms of identifying what that pattern of use is like.

Senator BOYCE—Exactly.

Prof. Roche—So, when we came across it, we thought, ‘We must have a look at this more closely.’

Senator BOYCE—I thought: ‘Wow! Why haven’t we known this from the start?’ That was my first reaction to seeing those figures.

Prof. Roche—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—When would the next one be out?

Prof. Roche—The next one was conducted last year, so the data will probably come out, I think, around October—something like that. There is usually about a 12-month lead time.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—On that table, I was surprised by some of these figures on Indigenous students, particularly with amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine. To have 7.4 per cent of Indigenous students having access to cocaine genuinely surprised me, particularly in terms of cost. I knew about the cannabis and I had an idea about, possibly, ecstasy and tranquilisers, because they are available, but, knowing the cost of coke, I did find that surprising. It is always the fact with these figures that it is a survey. How many people are absolutely truthful in responding to surveys is always a worry, and you cannot filter for that.

Prof. Roche—That is right.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—It is just interesting. It seemed to me that in every category Indigenous students were more highly represented than non-Indigenous, and that does surprise me. I thought I would put that on record.

Senator BOYCE—If people were not going to be truthful, you would expect them to say no rather than yes.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Not with schoolchildren.

Prof. Roche—Not with schoolchildren; you are quite right about that.

Senator BOYCE—Not with schoolchildren.

Prof. Roche—There has always been a concern about the survey. In fact, over the years it has been conducted, a number of techniques have been used—double sets of questions asking for basically the same information but in different ways for exactly that reason. The veracity of the data is always something that is looked at very carefully because of the propensity to lie, cheat, brag et cetera—all of those sorts of things that you get a bit more of with that age group than with the general population. It is the consistency of the pattern. The other thing about it is the verification that you get in a clinical setting. If you look at clients who present for treatment and compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, there would also be a consistent pattern as well.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—What about coke?

Prof. Roche—I think coke is an anomalous one. Firstly, we do not have a lot of cocaine in Australia.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—No, we do not—not at that age.

Prof. Roche—That is right. You will get it in Sydney and Melbourne primarily and it comes in peaks and troughs. For the 25 years I have worked in this field, people have been saying, ‘We’re waiting for the cocaine epidemic that’s never come,’ but it does come in fits and starts, particularly through Sydney. I would treat the cocaine component as not a terribly major issue. It is the consistency of the pattern that is important.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—With amphetamines, it is three times as much.

Prof. Roche—I think that would be absolutely solid.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Three times?

Prof. Roche—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—The other thing on cocaine, given that, as you said, there is fairly small usage in that age group anyway, is that it would presumably only need to be popular in one or two large schools for that to—

Prof. Roche—One of the more common areas that you may get around that, in terms of misinterpretation of questions, is confusion around cocaine and amphetamines, because amphetamine use is very high. That is another possible interpretation. That is also another advantage of looking at the trend data over time: it gives you a better sense of whether or not you just have a little blip for one of the data sets.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Regarding the high turnover of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, is there any data about where they go? Certainly one of the issues is people moving in and out and there is no—

Prof. Roche—There is not. We have been doing these surveys for the last five or six years without the mainstream alcohol and drug work. Exactly the same question is asked. Where we have turnover, you have a kind of churn effect. Are they really being lost to the alcohol and drug field or health and human services—

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Or they go into mental health.

Prof. Roche—That is exactly right, and do they then take that skill set with them? Because we have not been mapping the mainstream workforce very well—again it is the chequered-quilt effect—we do not know the answer to it. We have an anecdotal sense. I can think of a couple of cases in New South Wales that have just come up. They have moved to DOCS and are running very good programs in DOCS in New South Wales. Regarding Indigenous workers, because we are just starting to scratch the surface of it we do not know the answer to it. You could assume,

though, that once you have had some degree of training in this area, some degree of experience, you are more likely to move into a role that might be related to it. The skill set is not necessarily lost in the career pathway and is not necessarily truncated for the individual worker, but we do not know.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I wanted to see if that were true. As soon as funding allocations are made in one particular area, departments or states advertise and take the workers. It has been a tragedy over the years—not that people are getting experience but in terms of the way we shamelessly keep poaching a very small pool instead of getting a bigger pool.

Prof. Roche—That is absolutely true. But in Australia we have a shortage of health and human services workers in general, we have an ageing population, we have a shortage of nurses, there is the international phenomenon to some extent and there is going to be growing demand for those types of workers. That is a common phenomenon. It is across the board.

Senator SIEWERT—The issue that you mentioned around awards and conditions is very important.

Prof. Roche—The awards and conditions issue is absolutely crucial. A study has just come out of Western Australia where they looked at workers in the mental health area, women's health and children's services in the alcohol and drug area. They pool them all together. They did a little case scenario. Two workers, both females, started working in similar services in 2002, in similar kinds of roles, and their salaries and awards were comparable. These are real scenarios, real figures. They traced them over a five-year period, and the salary difference at this point in time is about \$20,000, between the NGO sector and the government sector. The awards and conditions issue, particularly for community controlled organisations, NGO organisations and a number of other vulnerable groups is going to become a very hot issue.

Senator SIEWERT—It is getting worse.

Senator BOYCE—There certainly has been some data in Queensland—I cannot remember what the study was—demonstrating exactly the same thing.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you tell us where we can find that study you just quoted from?

Prof. Roche—It is called *Workforce in crisis*. I am not sure who the overarching—

Senator BILYK—That was not the Australian Services Union one, was it?

Prof. Roche—It may well have been, and that would explain why it was the amalgam of those different groups, but we can pass those details on to you.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be extremely useful because this is coming out repeatedly in a number of areas.

Prof. Roche—It is a very nice, very digestible and very accessible report that they have produced.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could take that on notice, it would be really appreciated.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—You have all these wonderful graphs and things—and I have to admit to a weakness for a graph. In terms of gender distribution in the health workforce, there is one on page 9 which is about Indigenous employment by occupation. I am interested in this work you have done with the health workforce, particularly the addiction workforce, because we have had evidence today, and we have had it in other places, that a lot of the workers in this area are male and that automatically creates, in many Aboriginal communities—and I think in most communities, when you are talking about personal health, but particularly in Aboriginal communities—the feeling that it is not a balanced process going into a community. Do you have data that looks specifically at the D&A workforce?

Prof. Roche—We have not started to look at that issue just yet, and that is something that we will be looking at with our data. For mainstream services in the alcohol and drug field, that is not the case. About 65 per cent of our workers are female. If it is the government services, the vast majority of them are nurses, so there is a gender issue there and a whole range of implications, and it is the flip side of that that we think is going to be the case for the Indigenous alcohol and drug workers. In either instance, you either need to be able to balance it out somewhere or you need to be able to take it into consideration, particularly where there are some gender-sensitive issues around service delivery and client needs. It is a real issue.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you very much for giving us your submission and your time. We will be in contact. This is going to go on.

Prof. Roche—Thanks so much for your time. I will make sure to send that resource through to you.

[3.47 pm]

McDERMOTT, Associate Professor Dennis Roy, Indigenous Health, School of Medicine, Flinders University

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Welcome. Information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses is available to you. We have your submission. Thank you very much. I invite you to make some opening comments, after which we will go to questions. I have to apologise because a number of our senators have had to leave. It does not reflect the interest in your evidence. It is to do with the timetables of flights out. But your evidence, of course, is public and everyone will get to see it and study it. If there are any follow-up questions, we will be in contact with you.

Prof. McDermott—Terrific. My statement is going to be very brief. I will just briefly introduce myself and tie that to my submission. I am not here in a private capacity. I was asked to collate a response on behalf of the School of Medicine at Flinders University. I freely admit that I am not a person who has spent any time on the ground in the Northern Territory. That is not in contention. My job was to collate the experiences and the evidence of a range of our staff, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who have long experience in the Territory. That is what I have done in the submission, on behalf of the school. Having said that, I also should note that I am an Aboriginal man and an academic with a strong emotional and strong academic interest in this particular area. I am a psychologist of over 30 years standing.

The fields of expertise I do lay claim to are in social and emotional wellbeing and mental health, particularly around such things as alcohol, tobacco and other drugs—I have worked for a long time in that field; in transgenerational trauma and the effects of past policies and current policies, I should say, on health outcomes; and the stolen generations and the impacts of that on current health outcomes. I also do a lot of work in terms of cross-cultural service delivery and training of health professionals to better deliver services to Aboriginal people in communities. As part of that I do a lot of work around training of the Indigenous health workforce, including the non-Indigenous component, and in trying to recruit and retain more Indigenous students through all fields of health. Those are the areas I guess I have some expertise in.

I should just say very briefly that the School of Medicine, given the short time frames before the chance to put in a submission to this particular Senate select committee, decided not to go for a fully-fledged stand-alone submission because that would have been impertinent, I guess. We did not have the time to do a full research program of our own, but we did have people on the ground to make informed comment from the field. And we had perused the document provided by AIDA at the review of the NTER and concurred that that document was incredibly pertinent and worthy of our full support, so our submission should be read as a companion piece to that particular submission, commenting over the top of some of the things they have brought out. That is probably all I want to say at this stage. I am very happy to take questions and answer them as best I can.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I go to where you just left off in terms of the submission from AIDA, who have also made public comments around their concerns about health checks. What

do you consider should be the way we go about dealing with child health issues, if you reaffirm their comment that they believe a lot of the checks were duplicating existing services? I must admit I have heard that from health workers in the NT who are already working in Aboriginal health. What do you consider is the way it should have been done?

Prof. McDermott—A number of our staff on the ground, academics and clinicians, said that very thing. They said child health checks were duplicating the processes already in place and sometimes people were referred to specialists, on too cautious a basis, for conditions that were already known. The local health workforce felt passed by; it felt there was an unnecessary bringing in of extra people to do the checks. In terms of turning it around into a positive statement of what should be done, I think AIDA and the School of Medicine concur that it is about sustainable solutions, not about emergency interventions or ‘surgical blitzes’. The term is entirely inappropriate in dealing with an entrenched problem. The solutions that are going to be genuine are solutions that build sustainable platforms that deliver services better. So we need to look at why the workforce shortfall occurs and to look at ways to make sure the workforce shortfall is made up in terms of absolute numbers but also improves in terms of its cultural competence, cultural safety and suchlike things so that it is properly prepared to deliver services in a way that is actually going to the effective in terms of outcomes.

Senator BOYCE—You are saying that the health check system proved known problems in individuals—

Prof. McDermott—This is the reports I have had from our people on the ground there.

Senator BOYCE—Yes—and yet you are also saying there is a big shortfall in the number of medicos operating. How do the two go together?

Prof. McDermott—I take your point, Senator. It goes together in the sense that it is not about the identification of the problems, it is about the follow-up of delivery of services to do something about those problems that people are complaining about. Certainly there may be some instances where problems were identified that were not originally picked up, but the common complaint I kept hearing was: it is about sustainable resources and a well-trained workforce to deliver the things that are needed to deal with what has been discovered. Does that distinction make sense to you?

Senator BOYCE—Yes, but I still do not see how you have got good case management and a shortfall in numbers at the same time.

Prof. McDermott—I did not necessarily mean good case management in the sense of having the resources to follow through with a full program for someone or to see them in a reasonable amount of time. You can identify the situation, but do you have the resources on the ground? Do you have the specialists? In my field, in psychology, there are very few on the ground in the Northern Territory. So ‘where are the human resources to deal with the identified problems?’ becomes the question.

Senator SIEWERT—Professor, we were at estimates just last week and the department reported that they had done over 12,000 health checks on children. Is the point that you are

making that most of those children would have been seen at some stage and it is really about the follow-up treatment?

Prof. McDermott—That is the major point that is being made, yes.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—And there is systemic follow-up treatment. It has got to be clearly into the future, so if you identify a hearing issue there needs to be over the next five or 10 years hearing follow-ups to make sure that it is working.

Prof. McDermott—That particular issue, hearing, is such a crucial issue. As we all know, it is not just about hearing; it is about educational success or failure as well. It is about possibly having an angry child. It is about having a child whose economic future is compromised because they cannot hear. That is an incredibly important one. There is actually a non-Indigenous psychologist in the Northern Territory, Damien Howard, who has written extensively on how hearing loss actually affects a whole range of other services being delivered appropriately because people have difficulty in making themselves understood, especially across language barriers, when there is a hearing impairment. It affects the way they are treated, according to his research, and a whole host of other service delivery situations.

Senator SIEWERT—I am interested in all this but particularly in the issue around intergenerational trauma and how that is and is not taken into account in decision making. Can you articulate a little bit further the issues involved and also about how we should be delivering services differently in order to deal with intergenerational trauma?

Prof. McDermott—Have you got a bit of time? It is a huge issue. I will take one point about how it can play out in terms of service delivery or health outcomes or presentation at services. I used to work with medical students in my previous job at the University of New South Wales. We would set them a task. We would say, ‘Okay, you are looking at a situation of pregnancy. One of the key factors to a good pregnancy outcome is getting along to the doctor early for the first antenatal presentation.’ Of course we know that across the country Aboriginal women present later than non-Aboriginal women for their first antenatal visit. That raises all sorts of questions about alcohol and drug use, advice about giving up tobacco, and nutrition as well as picking up a whole range of problems. So we set the students a task by asking: what is the connection between the stolen generations and late presentation for the first antenatal visit? They all scratch their heads and think, ‘What is it?’ They go away and do the research and come back and say, ‘We get it now. We know that people are afraid of services. People mistrust services.’

A lot of women still feel today that if something goes wrong their children are going to be taken away. It plays out in incredible ways. You could take a New South Wales example like Wagga Wagga, where I used to do workshops with the local Aboriginal health workers, and they would say to me, ‘It’s still quite common.’ I am from Tamworth originally. In some streets in some communities in country towns like Tamworth or Wagga Wagga or Dubbo, if a shiny looking car pulls up—if perhaps a flash looking government car pulls up—people still tell their kids to run and hide. That is unacceptable in 2009. But that is the state of play from where we have been left by past policies. So intergenerational trauma plays out in many ways. There is a study in Canada. The experience of the Canadian first nations people, Aboriginal people, parallels our experience very strongly in terms of their residential schools movement. There are still 85,000 survivors of the residential schools movement in Canada, the difference being of

course that they have got some compensation and we have not. But they will say that there are plenty of papers to show the effects of being a member of the residential schools movement are still playing out in increased rates of foetal alcohol syndrome. So the effects are incredible.

Senator SIEWERT—I will leave Senator Boyce to ask a question about foetal alcohol syndrome as she usually asks that question. The other issue that I have looked into, and I must admit I have looked into this only a little bit, is the effect of intergenerational trauma on men's health. Have you looked at that much? Are there specific issues that we should be taking up from that?

Prof. McDermott—I happened to do a study with a number of colleagues at the University of New South Wales. It has not been released yet because it has to have permission to be released, but I can tell you the broad principles behind it. It was to do with a group of men who were stationed in a particular home in New South Wales—I will not name it because it has not been released yet, but the findings transfer across the state. These were men who were taken away at very early ages and placed in a particular home. I guess we should distinguish two separate things going on. One is the act of removal itself. It is damaging enough to be removed from your family and your community. The second is what goes on in those homes or foster placements, which often involve physical violence, abuse—sexual abuse, sometimes—and a range of other dehumanising things, such as being called by a number and never being known by your name for 15 years and beatings. These men almost to a man reported difficulties with relationships. We recorded that half of them were divorced or had problems with their relationships. They almost to a man said that their children had been affected by their trauma. I note that the Department of Veterans' Affairs in the last five or 10 years has set up services for the children of Vietnam veterans suffering from PTSD—post traumatic stress disorder. There is no such recognition on a wider national scale of the transgenerational effects of the stolen generations.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. I will come back to this if I get time.

Senator JOHNSTON—I note that on page 9 of your submission you talk about the Dwyer, Silburn and Wilson report of 2004 that identified three principal and critical areas. I see from your submission, which I think is a very good one, a very broad range of reports dating back probably 10 years into a whole host of inadequacies. The first point you draw our attention to is:

- “The low capacity of mainstream agencies to provide culturally appropriate and evidence based care to Indigenous people who often have comorbidities and complex care needs.”

That is applicable, I think, to Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, parts of South Australia and maybe even parts of New South Wales. Then you say:

- “The limited number of appropriately skilled personnel in rural and remote areas.”

So we have broad-ranging problems, limited skilled personnel on the ground and:

- “The limited number of Indigenous health care professionals.”

So we really had a problem that could not get much worse, I think, come 2006-07.

We have heard today of the massive increase in the number of homicides on the APY lands. We have also heard about STDs in young children and all of the usual things that bring ordinary people to a level of concern, even revulsion, at what has gone on in the breakdown of civil society. I see that you have a plan. I think it is a good plan—that is, to engage, to encourage

some capacity and to bring forward some skilled and trained medicos through your institution and others. My question is: do we really have the time for that in what we are confronting? I think we should be doing that now, but the intervention is about trying to make a huge catch-up. Obviously we are treading on toes and we are causing alienation and there is a negative flowing from that, but on doing the things that you have quite rightly pointed to whilst we intervene is there not some capacity to say that we will be in a better position in a short time in the future to come back to do what we should have done a long time ago? It is not an easy question; I am sorry.

Prof. McDermott—I am not sure of the best way to answer your question. I will draw your attention to the fact that the emergency response was based on child abuse figures in the Northern Territory that were believed to be not comparable to anywhere else. Yet, if you look at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures from a few years ago—the 2004-05 figures, if my memory serves me correctly—you will see that they point to other jurisdictions with higher figures.

Senator JOHNSTON—I think that is a given. I really do.

Prof. McDermott—So why aren't the army in Queensland or Canberra?

Senator JOHNSTON—I can answer that question. To interact with you on a proper basis, the constitutional requirements of a territory mean that the Commonwealth can intervene. But because of state sovereignty, we have to have cooperation and participation from the states.

Prof. McDermott—What about the Australian Capital Territory?

Senator JOHNSTON—I am not sure that they have the problems.

Prof. McDermott—I have the figures. We can have a look at that. It is the AIHW report.

Senator JOHNSTON—It is not on the scale that we have in the Northern Territory.

Prof. McDermott—Okay. We are talking about the reality, though, of child abuse.

Senator JOHNSTON—It may be that we require an intervention there, too. But the fact is that the Northern Territory intervention was in response to the report *Little children are sacred*.

Prof. McDermott—Was it a correct response? Were the other measures recommended by the *Little children are sacred* report implemented?

Senator JOHNSTON—That is what we have to look at and come to a determination on. I come back to my question to you. The fact is that there may have been a broader problem right across traditional tribal lands—if I can use that hackneyed and probably inaccurate phrase. The intervention has been in the Northern Territory. That does not mean that an intervention is not necessary in parts of Western Australia and Queensland and maybe even South Australia. From your experience, you have created a model that is very proper, fair and equitable—as have some other witnesses. All I am interested in is the answer to this question: do we have time to bring forward the training and the cultural sensitivities that are needed in police, health workers, even

the local store proprietor and educators? Some of them have it already, but there is a big shortfall across the whole gamut of what is on the ground.

Prof. McDermott—That is a fair question, and I will try to give it a reasonable response. My response is that we have no alternative. This is the only working model that the evidence that we have shows us will work and that is sustainable. All the evidence shows us that a blitz—in the German sense—is not something that will bring about the result that we want. The AIDA submission and other evidence says that in fact it has the opposite effect in terms of Indigenous mistrust. All the work that we do in health is around building up trust between the care recipient and the professional delivering the care. The information coming from the field is very strong: there are increased levels of mistrust, hostility, fear and a range of other negative emotions. It cannot be helpful.

Putting my Aboriginal man's hat on, I would say that this is the pretext under which the emergency response was initiated. But in terms of a sound, well-thought out way to go to bring about change on the ground, it just cannot work. So we must have the time.

I would also say that we can cherry-pick figures. Most of the figures show that in fact Indigenous health is improving where primary health care has been rolled out. In particular areas, we have made some good strides. So it is about more consistently applying what we know works and sustainably funding those initiatives. If we do that, we will see a response. I take your point very strongly that we need to be urgent about that. I fail to see why we were not urgent about this 10 years.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is a very legitimate criticism.

Prof. McDermott—Having made that point, we have to sustainably fund the things that we know will work.

Senator JOHNSTON—That is a very good answer, and I thank you for it. Is that pertinent largely to health? I want to talk about domestic violence and sexual offences and sexual abuse. That is more what lies behind the emergency aspect.

Prof. McDermott—How does revoking the permit system—one of the emergency response measures—relate to changing rates of sexual abuse in the Northern Territory? We know, in fact, that you can protect your community from the blow-in—not from the people inside, but from the blow-ins—with permits. I guess what I am saying is that there is not necessary a connection between the stated aim of reducing the rates of sexual abuse and many of the measures rolled out in the emergency response.

Senator JOHNSTON—Do you think that the permit system prevails to protect a woman from a man recently released after serving a long sentence for domestic or other violence in the community? The permit system does isolate people from liquor and drug runners and all sorts of bad people, but I think that what has been going on in the communities has been a little behind closed doors, if you like, and maybe the permit system was not the best way of trying to open those things up. But I think it was, ostensibly, argued that it was part of the problem. That may, in hindsight, be completely wrong. But I come back your health analogy, which I think is entirely accurate: with the breakdown of civility in terms of children and domestic violence—

and, more broadly, violence and drug abuse and pornography—it strikes me that there is a distinction to be made in terms of health, and you are right to say that just doing a health check is not going to give you anything that you do not already know or suspect, and a practical outcome is what we want. But surely an intervention has to be undertaken when we apply, for instance, the rights of the child as a treaty and we see children being abused in an area where there are no police officers because they are miles and miles away, there is no health facility and sometimes no chance of getting to one if the runway is not usable, and so on.

Prof. McDermott—I have got some thoughts on that. Thank you for putting it clearly like that. I would love to engage you on that.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—This could be a very long session!

Prof. McDermott—I will try to keep it short.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—No, I understand.

Prof. McDermott—There are two issues I believe arise from what you have raised here. One is: what do we do to protect people on the ground now? I think there are a range of measures we can use, such as safe houses, such as what Professor Judy Atkinson proposed a year or two ago—that we actually resource and support the people on the ground in communities who can make a difference: the grannies and the aunties. We provide them with funds and safe houses, whatever they need, to actually protect those children. They are the ones on the ground doing it, but we ignore them. We should also properly resource the Aboriginal health workers on the ground who are trying to do a job there. So we should be looking at those kinds of measures that we can take in the communities.

Secondly, you quite rightly gave the example of someone recently released from incarceration. I had an article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* a few years ago which described as an incident like that in my own family—so I know only too well of what you speak—which resulted in a fatality. So I know the stuff you are talking about. Even given that, my response is that we can put in place measures, very necessary measures, to protect people, but we need to be rooting out why men are incarcerated in the first place. Our rates of incarceration are unsustainable, they are over the top, and they in themselves are feeding into the problem. We must address incarceration.

One of our researchers on a project at Flinders University has been looking at things such as drivers licences in rural areas of the South Australia and making the link between the lack of a drivers licence and incarceration—

Senator JOHNSTON—Yes, for driving under suspension or driving under disqualification.

Prof. McDermott—Yes. So how do you get a drivers licence in circumstances where there is no other person in the community to—

Senator JOHNSTON—Or when you are 500 miles away from the tester.

Prof. McDermott—Exactly. That is an issue in itself. My point is that the unintended consequence of not having a licence is that someone ends up in incarceration with consequences down the track of being brutalised. I have done a lot of work in men's health and, almost to a man, Aboriginal men say they feel absolutely disempowered, their roles have been taken away, and they feel like they are flailing around with no way to actually move forward. So I think we need to seriously address where Aboriginal men are at and what resources they need to change things if we are going to change this problem in the longer term.

Senator JOHNSTON—Okay. Thank you for that.

Senator BOYCE—I have a couple of questions. In your submission under the heading 'What isn't working?' you talk about substance substitution, and you are talking here particularly about alcohol consumption, I think. But we have also had evidence about petrol sniffing—

Prof. McDermott—Yes, I heard that bit.

Senator BOYCE—and substance substitution. The general thinking of the reports has been that you need activities, youth programs, engagement and other attempts to make people feel useful and needed as the way to stop substance substitution. Do you support that view; and what else needs to be done? The problem of course is that a lot of these programs have not actually been delivered; the theory has but not the practice.

Prof. McDermott—Those programs are incredibly important. I would also say that we do not do child therapy very well. We do not treat child traumatisation very well. We need to do much more research around how we deal with a child who has been severely traumatised in one way or another and has turned to substance misuse as a way of dealing with that. That is an area we could certainly do some more work in. I will probably leave it at that—but I tie it together with Senator Johnston's previous comment, if he does not mind.

Senator BOYCE—We'll see! Keep going.

Prof. McDermott—You can stop me if you think it is not pertinent. He was asking what other things we can do. It goes to the point you are talking about—what we can do with children in that situation. At the end of my submission I give an example in which the Wood report into the New South Wales Department of Community Services is referred to. A journalist commenting on one aspect of that—an initiative on the Queensland-New South Wales border at the old Toomelah mission—was quoted. He was talking about a softly softly approach in contradistinction to the Northern Territory intervention. I have some personal information—or should I say, in laying my cards on the table, I have some conflict of interest here—because my sister heads up that program. She is a long-time worker with the New South Wales Department of Community Services, and they have taken a softly softly approach. They have taken an approach that engages the whole community. They have put about four workers into the community over a number of years to engage with the real social determinants of why those kids are behaving the way they are and to deal with sexual abuse at its root on a comprehensive community level. Why that could not have been rolled out across the Northern Territory, in contradistinction to this particular response, is beyond me.

Senator BOYCE—The question I was looking for an answer to—I am not sure I have understood you correctly—was: in your view, does substituting activity for substance abuse work?

Prof. McDermott—The short answer to that question, in my view, is that it is part of a raft of measures that could be helpful. There is evidence—more from a North American perspective but certainly from Victoria here—around a notion called cultural resilience. We hear a lot about individual resilience, but some of this evidence says that, where a child from an indigenous background is actively connected or reconnected to their culture, their community, their language and their country, those kids are not just more resilient in terms of seeming to be stronger but are also, in a range of outcomes, better off—educationally, as well. There is an emerging body of evidence that says that, if you use that activity in a way that engages that child more with who they are, their identity, their culture and their locality, it will pay off in terms of their cultural resilience. Again, it is part of a raft of measures. A child would need to be assessed on their individual circumstances, and we do that badly. We do that badly in assessing Indigenous adults, particularly around traumatising, and we do it badly with children.

Senator BOYCE—Is that partly because we do not have the tools or enough trust to assess in some cases?

Prof. McDermott—I think you are right. When I talk about cultural competence and cultural safety, they are not just buzzwords. They are saying that if you take the time to engage properly with a person you will get a very different assessment than if you come at it from a different way. And it is not just about time; it is about the way you go about things. There is some evidence to show that people assessed out of their normal country or comfort zone actually show up much higher on a range of scales of social and emotional wellbeing or mental health indicators. There is some good evidence we have around that.

Senator BOYCE—They show up higher if they are out of context?

Prof. McDermott—They show higher levels of distress out of context.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry; I thought you were saying the opposite, which was not what I intuitively expected. Are you able to talk about trends in incidents of foetal alcohol syndrome, which Senator Siewert mentioned?

Prof. McDermott—I am not; I have not got the latest data. I might refer to my colleague here, who is much more up with the data on actual trends, but I will say it is an incredibly complex problem. As I said, in the Canadian circumstances they have found links between removal, brutalisation, traumatising and a range of things that have happened and later intergenerational aspects of foetal alcohol disorder. I guess what they are talking about there is that there are a range of things happening that change the life circumstances of the next generations such that they, from drinking through pregnancy et cetera, are more at risk of having a child with that disorder.

Senator BOYCE—You are talking about the two- or three-generation issue there?

Prof. McDermott—Yes, exactly.

Senator BOYCE—So you would anticipate that if there were a reduction in substance misuse, including alcohol, by the current generation then we should be seeing trends towards—

Prof. McDermott—Can I give you a brief example using tobacco. We know that when a woman is pregnant she is at her greatest motivation to give up smoking. I used to work in quit campaigns for a number of years. Most non-Indigenous Australian women give up by the second trimester, yet over half of Aboriginal women are still smoking in their second trimester. Are they bad potential mothers or are they stressed out of their heads and there is something else going on for them that we need to address if we want to prevent—

Senator BOYCE—Or do they perhaps not even know that they should have?

Prof. McDermott—That may be part of it. Giving up smoking is incredibly hard, full stop. But if a woman is ever going to be motivated, it is when she is pregnant. Yet something is preventing many Aboriginal women from stopping smoking. When you do the surveys with them and say, ‘What are your biggest health concerns?’ they say, ‘Low self-esteem and stress,’ time after time. They are the two biggest health concerns. We know that Western Australian Aboriginal kids are carrying intolerable burdens of life-event stress. If we address that stress level we change health outcomes.

Senator SIEWERT—And education outcomes.

Prof. McDermott—And education systems.

Senator SIEWERT—I presume you were referring to the WA child health survey, and that is what that indicated, as I understand it—you are the expert. Was it that those stress levels were affecting educational outcomes, not just health outcomes?

Prof. McDermott—If you can’t sleep at night, and a range of other factors too, such as if you are not getting breakfast in the morning—very practical things as well as the stress levels. Absolutely.

Senator SIEWERT—You were talking about the social determinants of health. Your sister is running that program. This touches on another question that I was going to ask you about social determinants of health and linking that to closing the gap. I am interested in looking at what issues your sister deals with. I realise I am now entering into area you might not want to talk about or that you feel is inappropriate. If you can answer, what are some of the issues that have been dealt with in the ‘softly, softly’ program?

Prof. McDermott—I guess it is what was referred to earlier. Senator Johnston was talking about the difficulty in breaching silence around abuse. That is one thing that my sister’s team is working at—building up enough trust and continuity of presence in the community so that people actually come forward.

Senator BOYCE—How long has that program been operating?

Prof. McDermott—I think it has at least been operating for 18 months to two years. It has recently been extended.

Senator SIEWERT—About the length of time of the intervention, by the sounds of it.

Senator BOYCE—So there would not be any data out of that yet?

Prof. McDermott—There is a referral in the Wood report to Department of Community Services in New South Wales which should give you some indication of what it is about. I think they devote about six pages to it as an exemplar, so there would be some information in that report, which is available online.

Senator SIEWERT—I also asked a question last week at estimates about the intervention task force. They reported that so far only 37 people have been charged. They were not able to break that down for me. They have taken on notice a question about the number of under-age people that related to. It seems to me that the urgent intervention has not dealt with the issue in terms of the underlying causes and the social determinants.

Prof. McDermott—Exactly. Just to take one—housing. Housing is one of the single biggest things. If we could get that right it would change so much. We talked about an ear, nose and throat surgical blitz. We know that so many of the physical health problems to do with middle ear infections are exacerbated or brought on by poor housing. Most non-Aboriginal kids get sick with middle ear problems at some stage, but that goes away. It does not affect their hearing. In the Aboriginal situation, where there is overcrowding, it just keeps going round and round and they are reinfected, and reinfected; sometimes there are mutations. Basically, the Aboriginal kid has a great chance of developing serious problems than a non-Aboriginal kid simply because of lack of proper housing and overcrowding. That could be multiplied in terms of interpersonal violence—if you have 15 or more people living in a house where there is drug and alcohol use—and in terms of child safety. If you could fix up housing, aren't kids going to be safer? Isn't it easier than sending the Army in? Isn't there a cost-balance somewhere?

I am being frivolous here, but I am being frivolous for a very serious purpose. It is not hard. Professor Ian Ring and Ngaire Brown in an article in the MJA in 2002 said, 'We know what to do in Aboriginal health. It is not rocket science.' I think at the time they were saying that to fix most of the problems in terms of service delivery in Aboriginal health would cost about \$400 million or \$500 million. Last time I looked—and please correct me if I am wrong—the intervention was around \$1.2 billion with the extra funding made available at the end of last year. Is that incorrect?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, that is about right.

Prof. McDermott—We could be well on the way to what the senator was talking about in terms of meeting an urgent need if we had invested \$400 or \$500 million. Now we have \$1.2 billion it is still not going to be effective. When you sit down and think about the social terms of health and how we actually address them is my contention. Someone was also talking about whether it is just a health related problem. Of course it is not. Here in South Australia there is a thing called 'Health in all policies'. It is a matter of trying to make sure that all government departments are actually working on the problem to have better health outcomes.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I think, Professor, in the issues you raised in your submission you touched upon the shared behaviours of all the people who are providing services. If we could only get that right, it would be useful. Do you have any examples of where that has worked?

Prof. McDermott—Could you just refresh me on that when you say, ‘shared behaviours’?

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Under the heading, ‘What actions, policies and realities are under-recognised in their negative contribution?’ on page 11 it says:

Whilst collaboration is mandated at a policy level, it is not always realised at the practical level.

In terms of all the people who have service provision responsibilities effectively working cooperatively—which seems to be something we talk about over and over again—I am just wondering whether in your experience you have seen effective examples of where there has been cooperation between service deliverers and the resultant outcomes? Or is it just purely a negative where we can name example after example where it has not worked?

Prof. McDermott—That is very good question and I wish I could actually point to a very specific example where I can tell you how it has gone on a broader level. I do know that in New South Wales at the moment there are memorandums of understanding between the community controlled sector and the government sector, and various parts are doing better than other parts. I am afraid I will have to give you a negative example to press my case again. I will not name the area but in the last two days I have been in conversation with a particular health area where the collaboration has been mandated in terms of the position description and in terms of policy across the area, and it has been stymied at every level.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—If we could talk about this as an exercise, it might be useful. We get that now. In fact one of the processes that has been put in place is interdepartmental committees, IDCs, which are looking at these issues. Duty statements have been written that talk about coordination. We recently had the decision of the government to have a coordinator-general or something of that nature—the titles always astound me—which is a national position that is going to be in charge of coordination. We have these systemic things put in place. Can you tell me how, even with that systemic stuff, it still has not worked?

Prof. McDermott—Sure, I will attempt to. I think one of the reasons is our own history in Australia. In some of my writings I have described it as having ‘clayton’s apartheid’ in this country. It was not apartheid in the South African format. If we are talking about New Zealand, I use the example of clayton’s, so you look at clayton’s in New Zealand as well. It is the apartheid you have when you are not having apartheid. That is the difficulty because then it is hard to point the finger at it and say, ‘These consequences are the result of a long period of this going on.’ There is a huge denial in this country. When you work with services where there are people who are racist and when you work with services that are discriminatory it is very hard to name it as the obstacle or barrier to getting something done because it is denied. It is denied because we are seen as a country that is tolerant. My thesis is that we are both a tolerant and a racist country. We do not have to obviate one to accept our racist aspects. If we accept that racism in all its forms is a difficult barrier to get across then we can start to get somewhere. It actually pulls the rug out from under good enterprise no matter how well set up and coordinated it may be.

I will turn it round now and give you a success story, if you like. For a couple of years I resigned from my university post. My partner was in New Zealand and I was living there and coming back and doing various professional development workshops. I remember running a professional development workshop around Indigenous mental health in a country Victorian town. The non-Indigenous health workers in that town had never met the Indigenous health workers in that town. There was entrenched racism in that town. Over a period of a couple of years and two separate workshops we saw them working together. One reason we saw them working together was that enough time had been spent in the professional development process for people to actually get it—to understand our shared history in this country and how we could do things differently. That is a lot in one sentence or two, but does what I am saying make sense?

Antiracism training will never work in this country, will never fly, because we are not racists—that is, we are but we are also tolerant. So we have to think differently. We have to think about where we have come from in terms of denial of our own shared history. Once we get our head around that and start acting like adults we can go ahead together. So we need workshops and processes such as really good training in cultural competency and cultural safety that go beyond cultural awareness; that actually deal with how you work across cultural divides to train a workforce that can work in this way. Then you get results.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—The labels are so important, though.

Prof. McDermott—It is a work in progress. I am going to a conference of the Australian Psychological Society in Darwin in August. That is going to have workshops on cultural competency. I am a member of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association. We have given ourselves the task of trying to find out what it looks like from, if you like, an industry perspective—what the basic principles are that are necessary for training. One thing that might make a difference would be moving towards mandatory requirements around cultural competence in health professionals. In New Zealand—again, the example of New Zealand—in nursing, mental health training and psychology you cannot be registered unless you are deemed to be culturally competent and culturally safe. We are not there yet in Australia; I suggest we should be moving there.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you have to do that in medicine.

Prof. McDermott—They do not do it in medicine, to my knowledge.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you know anywhere where they do do it?

Prof. McDermott—No, I do not. I think it would be an excellent thing. Certainly, without even making it mandatory, one thing that is happening is that curricula around the country are moving towards various graduate attributes. So we need to embed this kind of stuff in the graduate attributes of our graduating doctors. Suddenly there are some mechanisms for that where the universities are cooperating on that.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Some of the newer schools are embracing that more quickly I think. I am from Queensland—

Senator SIEWERT—That explains a lot.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—It does. Certainly some of the newer schools are embracing this quite proactively in their courses and training. Some of the older, more established schools are not as far advanced. That could be something for the process.

Prof. McDermott—There is a thing called LIME, Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education, which all the medical deans have signed off on. Gradually, as that process filters through, you will find a similar set of attributes.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—One of the other specific things you mentioned is about well-planned, well-funded and long-term programs. Within that, do you have any idea about the length of time programs should be funded to make them effective? We have had the ongoing argument that single-year funding fails no matter which program you are talking about. People have been talking about three-year funding. When you talk about the strategic funding of programs, do you have any idea?

Prof. McDermott—I could not give you an exact number of years but I would say that even with a three-year program people commonly report that they just get the thing established, start reporting and it is wrapped up and gone.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—And they are being evaluated almost by the end of the first year and—

Prof. McDermott—and there is the burden of evaluation and reporting. I think we need to bite the bullet and say these things are going to take time but it took time to develop them, to arrive at where they are. Aboriginal people are patient if there is some progress being made. It is more about getting it right. I will give you an example. When I was at the University of New South Wales in south-western Sydney there was an initiative around Aboriginal children and maternal health outcomes. It took years of negotiation and consultation to get off the ground. Finally, it got going about four or five years ago. But the community was on board. That particular project, a research project as well as a service project, is having great success in terms of community engagement and the process of changing health information and evaluating how the kids are doing. Things happen quickly after a slow build-up, if you like.

Senator BOYCE—How long did you say that took to get going?

Prof. McDermott—My colleagues in the organisation, called CHETRE, which also provided input to the AIDA submission, said they had been working in the field for, I think, at least five or six years before they started to make headway. It has been funded and rolled out over the last four years—

Senator BOYCE—Was that with government funding the whole time?

Prof. McDermott—No. They do a presentation called ‘What the chicken money bought’, because Inghams, which owned processing plants in that area of Sydney, actually funded the original work. There was no government money. Gradually over the years they started to get more government support, and again it is because of this way of doing things that is non-traditional.

Can I throw an observation in here. I did some work in Sydney a bit further out near Campbelltown. I remember I was describing to an unnamed head of the division of general practice how different approaches to diabetes had paid off in other parts of New South Wales. I said, 'One of the successes they have had was to halve the end-stage complications of diabetes in five years'—a massive achievement. He said, 'How did they do it?' I said, 'With proper consultation, education and proper ways of doing things, including home visiting—going out to the people rather than expecting them with no transport to come to you. The results are phenomenal.' He said, 'Home visiting? Isn't that encouraging welfare dependency?' This is the head of a division of general practice. I said, 'No, it's called population health. You tailor your intervention to the population in front of you and then—surprise, surprise—you save the government millions of dollars because someone does not have a renal failure or their legs cut off or whatever.' I was astounded. That is the level of mistrust of doing innovative things which we know work. Sorry, I am on a soapbox, but this gets me going.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—Thank you so much for your submission and your time. We could genuinely talk for hours and hours because it is the kind of issue that lends itself to that, particularly with the experience that you bring. We could well put some supplementary questions on notice to you as we think of them. If there is any other information you think we should have, particularly for the Indigenous inquiry, please pass that on. We think this inquiry will continue for the term of this government, so please contact our secretariat with any information you have or with any suggestions around what you think our committee should consider. That would be very useful.

Senator SIEWERT—You mentioned a paper that has not been published yet. Once it is published could you provide us with a copy?

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—We need that for our community affairs inquiry into the forgotten Australians, particularly on the issues that you have spoken about, which continue to haunt us, I think.

Prof. McDermott—Certainly, I will get that done. Thank you.

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—I thank Hansard, the secretariat and all the witnesses who came forward in South Australia.

Committee adjourned at 4.38 pm