



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
11th Assembly
Select Committee on Youth Suicides in the NT

Youth Forum Transcript
1.35 pm, Friday 2 December 2011
Headspace, Palmerston

Members: Ms Marion Scrymgour, MLA Chair, Member for Arafura
Ms Lynne Walker, MLA, Member for Nhulunbuy
Ms Kezia Purick, MLA, Member for Goyder

Witnesses: 6 names not included in transcript
Emily Osbourne, Youth Ministers Round Table
Sally Weir, headspace, Top End Anglicare NT
Lauren Moss, headspace, Youth National Ref Group

Madam CHAIR: I thank you, and I thank headspace but, more importantly, the young people who have come to talk to us today. My name is Marion Scrymgour, I'm the member for Arafura, so my electorate covers the Tiwi Islands, all of western Arnhem Land - Kakadu, Maningrida and many coastal island communities.

Ms PURICK: Kezia.

Madam CHAIR: Kezia Purick, is the member for Goyder. Her seat is ...

Ms PURICK: Virginia, Bees Creek, Humpty Doo, down to Lambells Lagoon and down to Noonamah. It is not Howard Springs, that is Gerry Wood, but I am the next bushy area down. I live over the highway, behind Tom Finlay's joint. There is a road down there, Wallaby Holtze Road. As a kid, I grew up there when there was no Palmerston and we used to play in the creeks and rivers just over there and used to wag school. I still live here, but I am ...

Madam CHAIR: Kezia and I still reminisce about what Darwin was like ...

Ms PURICK: At St Mary's, yes, before Palmerston.

Madam CHAIR: That is right.

Ms PURICK: Talking on young people, my parents came out here in 1966 when I was 10 and there was no Palmerston, pretty much no – I lived in Howard Springs and six kids - we were taken out to the bush and we did not do any extracurricular activity like footy. My parents only had one car. So, there are different issues. Marion was the same; she had a big mob in her family. We had different pressures, but you have different things today that you have to deal with.

Ms WALKER: Lynne Walker; I am the member for Nhulunbuy, so I come from the same place as Emily; I have known Emily since she was a little girl. And I knew Palmerston back in 1987; it was my first teaching job here at Driver High School then, and the place has really changed, and it is so good to be here.

Madam CHAIR: I have to give my apologies for two other members: Michael Gunner, who is the baby of our party, and he is the member for Fannie Bay, so he holds an inner Darwin seat; and Peter Styles, who is the member for Sanderson, and Peter used to be a school-based constable.

There are five of us on this committee with huge commitments to look at the issue of youth suicide and the issues affecting youth. We do not just want to talk about suicides – we have come to listen and to hear from you about what do we need to do as part of this report, because we have to put a report, not to the government, this is not a government report, this is a report that will go back to the parliament of the Northern Territory, and that is a big difference.

The government will pick up that report, but the report will be debated and tabled in the parliament. This is a formal procedure, and I have to let you know that it is being recorded, and if at any time during that discussion you do not want what you say to be recorded, please let me know as the Chair, and say: 'I do not want that on the public record.' Because what will happen when we leave here, your comments will become part of the transcript and, with your permission and once you have had a look at it, that transcript will be uploaded to our website. But if you do not want that to happen, you can let us know and we will certainly be able to take your evidence in private, which means no one else will hear what you say, apart from committee members. It will be there just for us to have a look at and for us to make some decisions about.

So, I thank you very much for giving us this opportunity because we have heard from many providers, we have heard from many people in the course of our travel, and it is probably the first time we have been privileged, and I say it is a privilege to be able to hear from young people because that is what we often miss in these deliberations, we do not have an opportunity to interact with our young people on a very important subject. So we could go around and introduce ourselves, if you like.

MS OSBOURNE: I am Emily [name provided] I am from the Youth Ministers Round Table of Young Territorians. I am from Nhulunbuy, as Lynne said. I am here for the Round Table meeting, but she said come on to the meeting. I already attended the one you guys held in Gove, but, yeah, I am here again.

A WITNESS: [name provided]. I am from up here, I am with the YMCA family and doing my traineeship and, yeah, basically I am trying to -----1:38:52

A WITNESS: [name provided]. I am from Darwin, Northern Territory. I work for Northern Territory government, but also do volunteer work for the YMCA, I am just here as part of the job.

A WITNESS: [name provided]. I work for the YMCA drop-in centre, and I am doing Cert III in youth and communities and, yeah, I just came here to join in as well.

A WITNESS: [name provided]. Same, same, I am from the YMCA, youth worker at the drop-in centre. I guess I just want to see the other side and hear what you have to say, and put in a word if I can.

A WITNESS: [name provided]. I represent myself with my dance company called Break Dance NT. This year I am putting together an activity to promote the importance of proper mental health in young teenagers, and I come here today to give my input.

A WITNESS: [name provided]. I work at the City of Palmerston. I was born in Alice Springs, but lived in Darwin for a little while now, and I am just representing myself, not the City of Palmerston.

MS WEIR: Hi, I am Sally and I work at headspace Top End. So, welcome, and thanks for the opportunity to host this event.

I just wanted to do a couple of housekeeping things if that is okay, because there are few people who have not been here. The bathrooms are up the back. We have tea and coffee and water up the back and we will have food for afternoon tea.

I also wanted to say that sometimes talking about this issue can be a bit tough and sometimes you do not expect that it might be a bit upsetting, so more than welcome to catch up with Jakara. We have Jakara who works here. She is seeing someone at the moment, but if you want to have a chat with her after, she is available to talk with people, if you just want to have a chat with her about today, that is okay.

There is a seat right over there – entering by the left door is - Lauren, did you want to introduce yourself?

MS MOSS: Sorry.

MS WEIR: Sorry, we have just gone around the room and just beginning proceedings.

MS MOSS: Okay. I am Lauren. I note here different people in different capacities, but I actually represent headspace Top End on the National Youth Reference Group, so that is why I am here today.

Ms PURICK: So before – if I ask you a question just to start things. Sally explained what headspace does, but is your main engagement with young people in Palmerston or do you do rural, or is there a thing like this in the Darwin area or ...

MS WEIR: Yes, there is not, and I think that has been one of the benefits being out at Palmy is that we have been able to get some strong connections with people a little bit further down the track in Humpty Doo and we have got some really good connections with Taminmin out there and strong connections with Palmerston residents as well, but saying that, we do see young people from Darwin and, if they cannot make the long trip all the way out here, which is sometimes difficult, as we know, we can organise to see them at Anglicare in Darwin.

We also do outreach to schools. That is the only place we do outreach to and Jakara goes to Kormilda once a fortnight and sees young people there on a regular basis. As well, we have some really good relationships with school counsellors and we will go to all schools, which we do, to see young people individually at schools.

Madam CHAIR: Just let us know at any time during our proceedings because committee members, what we have been doing – well we are not experts in this field - so what we are going to do is we will proceed to start questioning and asking questions. If you do not feel comfortable with the questions or you do not understand the question, please let us know, and we will try to elaborate further.

Lynne, have you got any questions?

Ms WALKER: I was just going to add to that, that this does not have to be a question and answer thing; just chat.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, just talking.

Ms WALKER: We will find that a conversation will start to flow and if anybody wants to chip in with their ten cents worth and share a view, that is really what this is all about.

Madam CHAIR: I have a question and maybe it is something that we would all like to talk about to our young people; social media. How many of you have used social media, Facebook and the different sites? Talk to us about it.

Ms PURICK: Does it work? Is it good or is it bad? And there are lots of good things about technology, but maybe we hear some, maybe the media blows it up and gets not all the right information, but it is used inappropriately or something.

A WITNESS: Sometimes, like it is good to get around, like so you meet new people and friends and stuff, but sometimes it can just like escaping to a whole different thing.

A WITNESS: I think for the better part, it is good, but you have always got like cyber bullying or use it to start rumours or people use Facebook to publicly humiliate people or stuff like that. Yes, it has got its ups and it has got its downs.

Ms PURICK: When that happens, do you sort of – I mean you would sort of know who is doing it, but is there a bit of peer pressure, like someone goes up and says: 'Hang on, cut that out. It is not quite right. You should not do that'.

A WITNESS: Yes.

Ms PURICK: Does that happen?

A WITNESS: Yeah, like people do seem to say, you know, like it's not right what they are doing, but they still keep doing it, because they put it up as a new page, like it's, you know ...

Ms PURICK: Go somewhere else.

A WITNESS: No it's -----1:44:37.

A WITNESS: No, it's not specific to anything it's like Darwin Goss or something like that, that they're ...

Ms PURICK: Or Palmo Goss.

A WITNESS: That they're – Palmo Goss, yeah.

MS OSBOURNE: It is all over Australia, everywhere, and only Facebook can shut it down. There are so many safety things out there. Like you can report things, you can flag things, you can do all that type of stuff, but there's always going to be those people who are just going to push their boundaries until they get found out.

Ms PURICK: So how do you get to Facebook to say: 'Shut that down'?

PERSON UNKNOWN: Someone has to report it.

MS OSBOURNE: Yeah, report it.

Ms PURICK: Online?

MS MOSS: Yes. You can just get on the button that says report and it goes in. You have to say why you have to report it and ...

Ms WALKER: Do you get responses back, Lauren?

MS MOSS: I have not reported anything before, but I certainly clicked it a couple of times and it gives you a lot options of why you need to report it and stuff like that. But, I would say you would get an immediate response.

Ms WALKER: Has anyone here ever reported something on Facebook that they thought was a bit rough?

A WITNESS: [name provided]. I have.

Ms WALKER: And what sort of response did you get?

A WITNESS: It did get shut down. It was a big case in Alice Springs where a man there set up a website. He had two guns and was talking about Indigenous people in Alice Springs ...

Madam CHAIR: I remember this.

Ms PURICK: I remember that, yes.

A WITNESS: ... very racist. I responded and reported it.

Ms PURICK: And they shut it down.

A WITNESS: Yes.

Ms WALKER: How immediate was the response that you got? Whether that be a 'Yes, we are looking into it. Thanks for reporting it'?

A WITNESS: I did not get a direct response but the website did get shut down.

Ms PURICK: Within days?

A WITNESS: I think it took a few weeks.

Ms WALKER: I could imagine something like that which is out there and quite offensive. But, it is that lower-level stuff, person-to-person basis, I would be interested to know.

A WITNESS: Sometimes you have to remind Facebook and/or Facebook users of their legal liability of self-censoring. A cousin of mine admitted that she has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and all of her friends are saying: 'No, you are right, you are fine'. I had to remind them that they are not professionals to diagnose and, if something happens, then they have to consider that. It does have its strong moderating capacity as well.

Ms PURICK: That raises another issue too. It has happened I think in Australia or New Zealand, where people have put things on Facebook that have been defamatory. They do not realise that if you say something bad such as 'You are a crook, a liar, and a cheat', then you could be taken to court because you are defaming a good name. The people can understand that, but they have not quite worked out that 'I know I have done things on Facebook like that', and they think it is okay because it is in cyberspace. But, it is actually not, you can still go to court as well. Do they know that, they do you reckon? Do people know that is against the law as well?

A WITNESS: Yes, if it is like using someone's name you know like, yeah. There are a few cases around where a couple people print the page ...

A WITNESS: Print screen.

A WITNESS: ... print the page and that is evidence there, you know...

MS OSBOURNE: Once it is out there, it is out there. Whether you delete it or not, someone – it says anyone could have saved it, so ...

Madam CHAIR: Do people actually use their real names, or do they use an alias? I remember getting onto the Palmo Goss and the Darwin Goss, and we had to become a friend to try on things to go on. You see some of the names that are on it ...

MS OSBOURNE: Did they accept you?

Madam CHAIR: Well, they did, surprisingly. That did surprise me. I was not using an alias so they just accept you. Yes, it is surprising that they accepted a politician ...

Ms PURICK: Perhaps they thought they could get some news...

Madam CHAIR: That is true, too, Kezia.

Ms PURICK: -----1:48:33 was in the way.

Madam CHAIR: It was an interesting exercise because it gave you an insight into what was happening out there. I was looking at some of the names. I was thinking surely, these must be aliases.

MS OSBOURNE: Yeah, some people have like Harry Potter and that type of stuff. Those are aliases and they are the people who say the worst stuff so ...

A WITNESS: Another thing too, because there is also the people that – like some people influence and promote it because they say inbox some GOSS and it is actually their best friend. In boxes, you know, that sort of stuff.

MS OSBOURNE: Yeah. The idea around those cover pages is the person who runs it, so the person actually makes a Facebook name saying Palmo Goss, Darwin Goss whatever, then the other people who spread the goss, they Inbox. So, they private message the dumb Goss, and then they - whoever it is - posts it up on their wall. So, nobody ever finds out who said what and it is just making it ridiculous.

MS WEIR: headspace has a Facebook page, but we do not have many friends so we are poor ...

Witnesses interjecting.

MS WEIR: Jakara runs our Facebook page and puts information on there and updates the daily events and, yes, just general mental health information.

Ms PURICK: You are the first one. I went back into my notes, because I made a note myself. Some of the people we have heard from earlier in the peace - I do not know whether it was headspace or the MindMatters - a couple of other groups - health positive groups - have said they have a Facebook page.

Madam CHAIR: Brothers in Arms. How many have heard of Brothers in Arms?

Witnesses: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: I am a friend of Brothers in Arms. I will join up with headspace as well.

A WITNESS: Also DRISDEN, Darwin Region ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes, we have all become friends with them.

A WITNESS: Because I'm on that sort of committee ...

Madam CHAIR: Okay.

A WITNESS: ... every Monday of every month.

Ms PURICK: Yes, DRISDEN, was one of them.

A WITNESS: Which is ...

Ms PURICK: Which is positive, because if people are not sure if they want to talk to a real person, they might still want to talk to people through Facebook or something.

MS WEIR: One of the things we have found in Facebook too has been sometimes young people put up messages they might be at risk or they are feeling suicidal or – and then their friends will read that, or they

are feeling really down and that can be pretty challenging for their friends to know what to do with that information, like who they need to talk to or what they can do. We have had experiences of that.

MS MOSS: I just wanted to add to that, because that has been my experience. I actually had my first personal experience with suicide very recently and that was certainly the case. I had spoken to her that day because she had written lots on different places on her Facebook that had indicated that she was feeling not okay. It is something that I have dealt with since that time as well, and I think we have to understand that that is a space where young people are saying: 'This is how I'm feeling' and lots of other young people do not know how to respond to that. I think young people want to know how to respond to that and how to help their friends, but a lot of people will read those messages – 'you're feeling shit but I don't know what to say to you so I won't say anything' or 'I'll tell you 'cheer up, things aren't that bad'. But they do not know what to do beyond that. So, it is really important services are online.

A WITNESS: So, this is for young – are you saying young or just all age groups?

MS MOSS: I think everyone could get a bit prepared of knowing what to do and say if somebody tells you they are not okay. Facebook opens that other avenue for people to try to reach out and say: 'I need a hand, I'm not feeling good'. I do not know how other young people in the room feel about that, but like I did not know how to deal with that and ...

Ms WALKER: Lauren, how did you work through that first time of having to deal with that?

MS MOSS: I reached out to her and said I was around if she needed to have a chat. I had messaged her, but she lived interstate so I did not have that personal contact with her, which is another aspect of being online and online networks is sometimes we are talking to people interstate and we do not have other contacts to get hold of those people.

Unfortunately, she did take her own life. Since then, in my follow-up conversations with another young person about that, I have been able to use things like the ASIST handbooks to help me guide the conversation, but without that I would have been lost. I was just very lucky that I have a family member who has done ASIST that could say: 'Here's some stuff that will help you'.

I went to a youth health conference a couple of weeks ago and what young people were saying is: 'We want to reach out and help our friends. We don't know how. Equip us with skills and knowledge so we can say the right thing or link our friends up with a service'.

Madam CHAIR: This is certainly a good opportunity for you to tell us what needs to be put together, from a youth perspective, in trying to deal with these issues.

A WITNESS: Okay, can I go for a few seconds. Now, I will be honest with you. With her, I went through the same thing except I was the one who was suicidal and I was just going through a lot and experiencing stuff without help. I have put together a few things in my own recommendation to deal with youth suicide.

The NT is a very blessed state. We are getting INPEX coming here and a few marines and stuff like that, so the city is growing. Another thing that we should realise is that there will be people who will be left out to benefit from this amazing opportunity that the NT is experiencing. It is known, and it has been like this for a while, that the NT has the highest suicide rate in Australia per capita, and that is something we should be ashamed of.

This statistic was brought up by the ABS, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, from 2002 and 2006. One of my worst fears before realising that I became suicidal was asking myself which one of my friends am I going to lose next. Now, I will just keep things short, I prepared only three of my recommendations because I never actually got helped at this stage, but I did manage to have a few good friends that actually helped me.

First one for my recommendation is like more funding should be given to local organisations which specialise in that as well, particularly this organisation here, headspace Top End, because if I knew about them, or if I had access to their services, it could have helped me a lot and, even though I am better now, when I come here and I am working with them to promote positive mental health, because that is part of my passion, I realise that they are heavily under-funded and short-staffed.

Another thing, organisations around in the Top End should be encouraged to promote the benefits of positive mental health in youth. For example, I am organising what could be the largest hip hop festival in Darwin, and our first mission objective is to promote the benefits of positive mental health with teenagers.

Grant money should be given out to organisations that are willing to promote the benefits of proper mental health among teenagers. That is the first one.

The next one, another one of my recommendations, I will keep it short, is the compulsory education of mental health at school. Mental health should be part of schoolwork. When I was in Year 9 I did health, and this would probably be the best opportunity for students to learn about mental health. Mental illness, as such as schizophrenia, usually starts to develop in a person's teenage years; therefore Year 9 is an excellent chance to prepare themselves what could happen to them.

Another thing is, most people do not realise they have a mental illness before they turn 25, usually being diagnosed by a psychiatrist.

Another one, it is commonly known that before someone commits suicide most of them are likely to give out warning signs. The first line of defence is not really teachers, doctors, or social workers, but their best friends. Therefore, it is important that friends know what to do when they are experiencing someone with a mental health, and probably the biggest solution is to encourage them to get help.

When I was going through depression I was told to brush it off and it will go away. People did not understand it. I asked a few friends when a person commits suicide, what does that mean. And they told me that person is weak, and that now tells me that people are uneducated in mental health.

And the last one is: once people find out that you suffer from a mental illness, there is an associated stigma. Being diagnosed with a mental illness is hard in itself; however, the stigma that people experience is emotionally stressful, and very unfair. Poor education in mental health and Hollywood's false representation of mental health makes people scared of mentally ill people.

This has not happened to me, but if someone is mentally ill and they get discriminated against, that leads them to isolation, and with this isolation they have no friends, they have no hope, and then a second attempt at suicide may occur due to lack of belief.

Another thing is, when I was in high school seeking help from a counsellor is often a sign of weakness from peers. If you see a counsellor, and if you need it, if you suffer from mental health, many people automatically see that as a sign of weakness, which acts as a deterrent for young people to get help. This is wrong and very counter-productive. Being diagnosed with a mental illness is like a gaol sentence. In my experience it feels like the world wants you to fail.

And that is all I have.

Ms PURICK: I have a question.

A WITNESS: Yes.

Ms PURICK: You went to the Bush Baptist Church and did a hip-hop demonstration?

A WITNESS: That was me.

Ms PURICK: I remember. Yes, you had some other people with you?

A WITNESS: Yes.

Ms PURICK: Was it this year or last year; I cannot remember.

A WITNESS: 2009, probably ...

Ms PURICK: It was great.

A WITNESS: ... sometime this year ...

Ms PURICK: When you said that, I thought: 'I remember you'. That was good. It was good to go out there.

Madam CHAIR: We have this other one coming up in Malak.

Ms PURICK: Yes, that is great.

A WITNESS: That time, that was 2009, and I got to work with a lot of people, which was good; a lot of kids.

Ms PURICK: We have heard from other people that involving arts and theatre and music just gets people going, like that young Alison, the art lady, theatre lady ...

Madam CHAIR: From the Darwin Community Arts.

Ms PURICK: Darwin Community Arts.

A WITNESS: Yes, I work with them a lot to ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes, they have put a submission to us about using – to look at performing arts and theatre as a means of helping to facilitate wellbeing amongst youth.

A WITNESS: It is very important that youth are given a lot to do here because if they are bored they will probably just result to crime or get into trouble and these, mostly kids, are actually good people. They just need a bit of guidance and support in their lives.

Ms PURICK: So how do we get around – when you mentioned, I saw a couple of them were nodding – when you say, you know, the young kid at school or whatever goes to see the counsellor, then everyone will go: 'Well, that kid is a bit weak and' – how do we get around that, that the counsellor-type person or the wellbeing team; it is okay to go and talk to them.

A WITNESS: I am actually not too sure, but I do know that one thing about education with mental health, is that people should be encouraged to see someone if they need help and the best way is probably making flyers and pamphlets, just have to overturn the counterproductiveness of thinking like that, because back when I was in school, when I saw a counsellor due to stress-related things, one my friends said: 'Don't do that, that's a sign of weakness, man. You don't need to go there'. But, that is kind of counterproductive.

Madam CHAIR: So it is that pressure that you get from your own peers that ...

A WITNESS: Yes, if you want to seek help and all that.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, so we have talked to – a lot of the forums that we have had discussions about and one of the ...

A WITNESS: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: ... people have put forward that maybe with high schools – I do not know if you have heard of a program called MindMatters?

A WITNESS: No.

Madam CHAIR: That it should be in all the schools. They have got KidsMatter which is the same program, but dealing with primary school-aged kids and MindMatters for seniors, because it is that same thing, it is about destigmatising, removing the bad things, to how people see mental health or how we – you know, wellbeing is a major issue.

MS OSBOURNE: I thought that was a really good point, when you said that health is mainly about your body, it is not about your mind. You said that the MindMatters program should be incorporated in that health class. It is part of your health; it is your mental health.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

MS OSBOURNE: It is not just your physical health.

A WITNESS: The other important point about that, if I can continue on that, is firstly, as a bloke, as a young male going to see somebody about not feeling the best; that is really difficult. It is really difficult to say to another male friend, especially if they are all very sporty and muscly types: 'You know, I'm actually struggling in life and I'm not coping with this situation' and then when you go to a school and they have a counsellor building, with counsellor written on it, and right there in the open; it is not the best place for it. So I actually agree, I think, if it is incorporated into the classroom that, hey, it is just like every other element of the body that can be treated.

Ms WALKER: I think as well - it is just a personal view - and someone has already mentioned it, that it is about equipping your peers to be resilient and for others to be resilient as well, because you have said that people tend to go to their friends and friends do not know how to respond or they may say, and it is such an overused phrase: 'You'll be right'.

A WITNESS: 'Hard enough' is the other one.

Ms PURICK: Yes, 'toughen up, princess'.

Ms WALKER: 'You will be right. Cheer up. Have a good sleep'. Pat on the back. 'You will be right'. That, then, must send you back to thinking: 'Am I imaging all this?'

Ms PURICK: So I can't be sick.

Ms WALKER: What experiences have people had around that sort of resilience training?

A WITNESS: I think my most personal - like it started when I was in primary school. Stuff happened with mum and dad and they said go see a counsellor. I brought in that culture perspective, you know, for being shamed - being too shamed to go and see someone, rather than talk about it. I am 19 now, and it took me like six months actually I talked to someone, that I had some concerns. So, like it is because I was not aware of what avenues were there to actually talk to someone.

Madam CHAIR: Help you?

A WITNESS: Yeah, because I just – like, you know, I would just always leave it, I thought, you know, like I...

Madam CHAIR: What forced you to go and talk? You were saying that there were issues with your mum and dad ...

A WITNESS: Yeah.

Madam CHAIR: ... that it must have got to a point where you needed to go and talk to somebody.

A WITNESS: I didn't talk to – like, this is – like it's still – I can't explain it sorry ...

Madam CHAIR: No, you are all right, do not rush.

A WITNESS: Yeah, like it just took, you know, just with more problems, they kept building up, building up. I thought 'You really need to talk to someone even if it is a friend'.

Ms PURICK: Because, obviously, you were unhappy and you wanted to talk about ...

A WITNESS: Yeah, because I found, you know, like I was a bit criticised in school. That is why I left school pretty early and, you know, because I could not really talk to anyone back then, but ...

Ms WALKER: Can I ask where you did choose to go to, if you can tell us? You said it took you six months before you made an approach to ...

A WITNESS: Because, after I just finished an Indigenous Employment Program. I just found avenues, you know, what you could do, like how you could go and speak to a mentor or something.

Ms WALKER: Yes.

A WITNESS: And even the people on the group that I was with, they really helped out because we were all there helping each other out.

MS OSBOURNE: Just about those lists. I can go back to the log books. Sorry, what Lauren was saying is that the friends do not know how to deal with it. In Gove, we had two non-Indigenous males aged 17 and 21 commit suicide. That was the first real youth that I had witnessed and experienced – not witnessed, sorry – experienced with suicide. It happens with every suicide, everyone blames themselves – I missed this sign, missed that sign. As roundtable with Lauren, I decided that my project would be on creating an information night within the community for everyone – where anyone could turn up - mainly aimed at parents, teachers, friends, and friends of, and obviously youth, to come along and just get your mental health workers. We had Miwatj, which is the Aboriginal Health Corporation in Gove - get those people along, get Anglicare along, school counsellors, everyone - and talk about what signs and symptoms to look out for. That was what I found we have really needed because everyone went, you know - they said this at this time and they obviously had made their decision. Like, a lot of people say that when someone has decided to commit suicide they are happy; they are content within themselves. They know that is what they want to do. Everyone said that they had seen that in these kids. There were little signs that led up to the events that occurred.

So that was what I really focused on. That is my opinion of what I think will really help in situations where people do not know what to do. That would also be an opportunity where service providers could come - you know, like Beyond Blue and all the mental health, headspace - everyone get their stuff there and the phone numbers, the e-mail addresses, everything, because there are 24-hour services available, but people just do not know about them.

MS MOSS: And that it is not reactionary, as well. Like, we will go and talk to a community because a suicide has happened, or we will go and talk to a class at school because something has happened ...

MS OSBOURNE: After the event.

MS MOSS: It is after the event, and it needs to be ...

Madam CHAIR: Working proactively before that?

MS MOSS: Yes. It is about these guys, like, there needs to be schools, but not – I mean quite often with these sorts of topics and other things like binge drinking and things like that, you will get like a one session a semester or a year. It needs to be consistent, and it needs to be built into – we should be delivering messages about good wellbeing all the time.

Madam CHAIR: How do we capture those young people who are not in the school system? Many kids are not in the school system. Young people that are not in school and there are real problems out in the community – how do we capture them?

MS MOSS: R U OK? Day is a really good – which a lot of work places get on board and have those conversations - bring together their employees and have those conversations in the office about what is available and looking after yourselves. We should be having more of those. We should be encouraging it.

Madam CHAIR: Ask for an R U OK? every day.

MS MOSS: Well, we should be encouraging or providing incentives for employers - thinking about apprentices as well, something I know has affected - the trade community had a suicide earlier in the year and they are under a lot of pressure, they are under a lot of money pressures and things like that. You could do it in trade school. You can encourage and provide incentives for employers to get on board to do wellbeing activities once a week.

JAKARA: Just on that, Lauren, there is nationally an organisation called AusHelp who I go out with when they do what they call general learners trainings. They only have two workers up here to - in the entire NT to do that kind of stuff - go in to see apprentices when they are at school, do a session with them about, you know who, do you call, all that stuff and they have worked really hard to build them into the curriculum at CDU and have that as a compulsory thing with OH&S. Then that goes back to the two workers for the whole of the NT based in Darwin, underfunded, all that kind of stuff. That is really effective and I normally just talk about a referral pathway with them. They got right on board with R U Okay? Day as well and all that kind of stuff.

But that stuff is really minimal and you can see how effective it is. And yet, building that up so we can reach more people and go through the apprentices and whatever - the kind of - whatever young people who are not at school but do have connections somewhere in the community.

A WITNESS: Another place where probably youths would hang out is events organised for them for example, not just my dance competition, but *Bassinthegrass*, any activities designed for youths. Specifically, the NT government should really take the opportunity to probably hand out flyers or to make speeches about this because like *Bassinthegrass*, that is definitely one. There will be other events, certainly that you guys would be able to reach out to youths.

MS OSBOURNE: They had that Urban Quest event that was run by Mission Australia and we attended that as the others Round Table, and it was you know something that had gone on for weeks and weeks and you know people had turned up to every audition and all that. Like it was attracting all the attention and then at the final they had slide shows and the MC was a Mission Australia representative and he had you know, he was telling us about drugs and it was really informative. I did not know how much they really did and how much it impacted, so those little things ...

Madam CHAIR: What is it called?

MS OSBOURNE: Urban Quest event.

MS MOSS: It is held in National Youth Week - it is the first weekend. It was a sold out event at DFC???:14:24

A WITNESS: That is happening again next year, isn't it?

Ms WALKER: Can I ask a broad-based question? You may either have direct experience of , or a view on, I know the rate of suicide is much higher in the Northern Territory, what are the triggers? What is it that is impacting on young people's lives that things seem so hopeless that is what they are thinking about?

A WITNESS: Lack of communication, not enough programs to teach them about how to talk to people because they are too shy or they would be too scared to say.

Ms PURICK: What is going on in young people lives while it is happening? Why they are doing it? They did not do it when we were kids.

A WITNESS: You get a young ...

A WITNESS: It could be all problems really, drinking related, drugs, all the youth stuff that is happening, there is always a recall to it and they can always trigger it that way.

A WITNESS: What I have found, too, is that Indigenous men - when they break up with their missus ... Indigenous men, when they break up with their missus. That is what I have sort of ...

Madam CHAIR: They get a lack of coping, or feeling sad?

A WITNESS: Yeah.

MS OSBOURNE: This is a huge one, and the girls – not only the girls, but the guys as well. Lauren?

MS MOSS: It is a huge one and research has come out that says that women self-harm by depriving themselves of necessities, rather than any other method. It does not always have to be cutting or ...

Ms PURICK: What do you mean by necessities, just not eating, like food or ...

MS MOSS: Like food and, yes, things like that.

Ms PURICK: Not drinking enough water and they get dehydrated and things go wrong.

MS MOSS: And eating disorders are a way of self-harm.

Ms PURICK: Anorexia and bulimia?

MS MOSS: Yeah, some types of self-harm.

A WITNESS: Would isolation be one major cause, being separated from other people, feeling loneliness and, due to isolation, they have no reason to live?

A WITNESS: Withdrawals and all that ...

A WITNESS: Like people who are physically isolated as well.

Ms PURICK: Do not answer this question if you do not feel comfortable but, what about families, how many do you have in your families, your parents have separated?

PERSON UNKNOWN: Perhaps 30%, nearly 40%.

Madam CHAIR: So how do you cope? Where do you go?

Ms PURICK: That means your families are all over the place, and sometimes you have lost a family, a partner. I will give you an example. I am 53. When I went to boarding school ...

Madam CHAIR: You fooled me!

Ms PURICK: I went to boarding school, so my parents sent us all away, which had its own issues, going away from your brothers and sisters and your mum and dad. But, I was in class of, I do not know, 50 girls, and I was a boarder. There was one girl in my whole year who came from a divorced family. So all the parents – they might not have liked each other – but all the parents, when the girls went home, had mum and dad in the house, except this one girl.

Now, well, if you look at this room, like you have two adults, whether it is the same. Obviously, something has happened out there in the big wide world where it is easier – both parents work these days make a little time, because of the cost of living so that puts pressures on relationships. So, do you think that is something that has contributed, the families being different?

A WITNESS: When I was at school for the better part I had my mum and dad together, eventually they left, but it never really bothered me, most of my friends over here, you know, stayed with one parent or an uncle or ...

Ms PURICK: Yes.

A WITNESS: If it did bother them, they didn't really show it so much; it never seemed to anyway, so I'm not sure about that one.

A WITNESS: Other thing that could trigger it, because I just come back from a community down in Western Australia, Derby, one of the main things, because it was actually a fairly prevalent thing I heard down there was this – they had nothing down there. They had nothing to do; they had no one to talk to and, basically, the only thing that was there was a pool.

Ms PURICK: A pool?

A WITNESS: And the only things they really had to do were walk around the streets and do nothing at all, and it pretty much pushed them because of the family violence on top of that, like alcohol related abuse.

A WITNESS: Drugs and alcohol often play a huge part in that and it's like drug and alcohol related violence and like there would have to be depression that comes from that, you know. Like if you come just from an overwhelming violent background where there is drugs, violence and alcohol, it would have to play a huge part. You know, you couldn't really be happy every day having stuff like that going on all the time.

A WITNESS: I think they have done research and they've found it's not just one thing, but when everything is put together the amount of stress and the pain that causes when you are dealing with probably your family violence, doing bad in school, relationship break-up, and when that all comes together some people just want it to stop, and the only solution they can find is to end their lives.

MS OSBOURNE: It is very rarely a single cause.

A WITNESS: On top of that, another thing that I see is like a lot of the kids with all that going on will also be caught up in the legal system and stuff, and going in and out of Don Dale or getting ready to go to court and face Berrimah or something, and they are all added stresses that just aren't good.

MS OSBOURNE: One thing that was said at the Nhulunbuy meeting that we had was that in Gove especially and I have noticed myself is that, in the Indigenous community, suicide is something that is a threat now to get what you want.

In the community, what they are saying is that when the kids want alcohol and they want their drugs and they want their money, whatever it is; they blackmail, you know.

If you don't give me this, I am going to go suicide, and that is how they get what they want, and it is those things and when their parents go: 'No'; you know, they do not have the money, they do not have that for their kids, then that is when the things are happening, so that is what one of the Indigenous Elders in Gove said. I noticed it, but I had not actually found the root cause for what it was, and that is what she was saying as being out there with what is happening.

Madam CHAIR: You really should not send those things this way; they need to go ...

A WITNESS: I would like to respond to your question about what are some of those triggers and from a personal experience. A few years ago, I attempted suicide myself and, as you have raised, it was not just one event or one singular cause. I grew up and started in a nuclear family, the very typical one, but I also grew up with a lot of family around me who abused alcohol. I had a lot of violent incidents inside my household and that is the situation I grew up with from a very early age. When my mum and dad did break up, that was really traumatic for me, but the schools did not respond to any of those classic signs.

I came to school drunk, I came to school stoned, I was smoking, I was rebelling, the school did nothing except suspend me and get me to talk to the church person which - I look back and think: 'Wow, that was just totally inadequate and borderline criminal' and I really hope that the school system is not like that anymore.

That was very difficult for me to go through but as I grew into that early adult stage, the triggers were different because in society now it is expected that once you are out of school, get a job, and you are happy. Just be an adult and you can do whatever you want.

I had a hard time grasping that because I was still struggling but I was expected to just suck it up, get a job, earn money, contribute to society, so there is a little bit of a sickness in society too, I think, when there is so much expectation for you to look a certain way.

Ms PURICK: Do you think that comes from the society or is it through the school system where it says you know - I know I did when I was at school - what are you going to do when you leave school? So, you think it is a bit of the school system and your families?

A WITNESS: Absolutely.

A WITNESS: A bit of everyone.

A WITNESS: I mean that is the saying for schools now, is learn to earn, learn and earn, or earn which is a little bit black and white and does not take into account all the complexities of life.

Ms PURICK: Because it might be that you do not – I mean, how can you know at 16 that you want to be something when you are 35 so perhaps that is where the pressure starts, like you must decide, you must decide.

A WITNESS: That is right.

Ms PURICK: So you can get the right subject, but if you get the wrong subjects to study at Year 12 or 11, then you probably think: 'Oh well, if I get the wrong subjects, I have mucked up and then I will be useless'.

Madam CHAIR: I think VET is a pathway for young people to look at what they – have any of you been through the VET system or used VET as a means to – tell us what has been your experiences?

A WITNESS: VET was good and I expected the same outcomes. I was the highest achiever for the Northern Territory in VET but it did not lead to practical career opportunities for me; it was just kind of something I could chuck on my resume.

MS OSBOURNE: I found in Gove that we have a fantastic VET system at the school but a lot of the kids go: 'Oh, you know, I need maths and English for this, but I do not know what other subjects to do, so I will just do VET' and they think – because it is a very self-motivated thing; it is all up to you whether you finish your Certs or not. I think that is when it is sort of starts being...so, it really depends on what you want to do. There goes the pressures again, you know. Either you want to do it, or you do not really care. Not that you do not really care but, you know, you do not know, so you just sort of go 'Oh yeah, I will just chuck myself in here', and that is when the system sort of falls down.

A WITNESS: That pretty well helped me decide what I wanted to do, as well as it gave me more opportunities and opened up more ways. But, it pretty much lacked guidance on, if you were able to get something out of school or not. You need actually pretty much more help like. Mainly one of the things that did help me was program called Clontarf. They actually, even in Year 12, they help you finish Year 12, as well as continue it on. If you ever needed to talk to someone or need help with something, they will always be there to help the students. They need more programs like that to go into more communities -----
2:26:13 to push Aboriginals as well as other people through school, as well as to help them get a job after school.

MS MOSS: I just wanted to add one thing. These guys raised a really good point in terms of just rewinding a little about how many young people we have who have parents who regularly abuse alcohol, who are not really around and are quite absent. A lot of parents do not have those career aspirations for their children, unfortunately - they do not. They do not have high expectations for their children, they want their children to be there to look after their other children. That is more important than going to school; that they are there to help them in the house. Their expectation is that they are a family member and one day they will look after the family, and school is not valued.

I think we have a lot of young people like that. We have a lot of young people who do not go to school or, when they go to school, that act out. Their parents are largely absent, so the schools have low expectations of them because they are acting out all the time. They have low expectations of them at home. I do not know. I have always thought this thing where, you know, a lot of young people live up to the expectations people have for them. So, if you constantly telling somebody that they are a bad kid at school and they are constantly been told at home that they are a bad kid because they are not, you know – I do not know how to put it into words. Lots of young people have that: low expectations thrown on them from all different angles. They do not have somebody in their life that is telling them: 'You know what? I think you are fantastic and I think you can go places'. Lots of young people - all they need is that one adult that thinks they can make something of themselves, and so many do not have it.

Madam CHAIR: Believe in them.

MS MOSS: Yes.

A WITNESS: Belief and support. They would also be some good things for some schools too. They find someone who is troubled in school, or mucks up, try and target something they are good at, and keep supporting them in that, and it will get their confidence up and they will improve it more during school to try and prove other subjects support in that one, and keep their confidence and make them want to go to school and they will try and learn more just to improve it more.

Madam CHAIR: You talked about how Clontarf helped you, or greatly assisted. Has anyone else been through – have you been through the Clontarf system?

A WITNESS: No.

MS MOSS: Can I just ask what that is, sorry?

Madam CHAIR: Clontarf it is ...

A WITNESS: Clontarf Foundation is, basically, a football academy ...

Madam CHAIR: You have to play football, it is a football academy

A WITNESS: It is not, basically, just for football no more; it is for pretty much most kids in schools which will help them study in school. If they need a hand with homework etcetera, they can always go there. They try and keep them out of trouble at recess and lunch. They give them a room where they can eat, have breakfast, pretty much hang out, make friends. Pretty much they will try and stop any discrimination and if they are mucking up in class and all that, they will go into the class physically and actually try and get them to stop mucking up, and help them with what they are having problems with. With the kids that are actually regularly behaving and all that, they reward them, take them to camps etcetera. Yeah, I finished Year 12 last year with them. If I was not with Clontarf or anything, I probably would have dropped out in Year 11.

Madam CHAIR: Fantastic.

A WITNESS: That is the sort of thing I wish they had back when I went to school. I left school pretty early because in school I was, like you know, socially, you know – you could not get boo out of me. Then, like, I was suffering socially, did not talk to no one, like, and I felt, you know, as I did not belong in school so I left school early. Then I look at it now and I just think I wish I, you know, look at what's gone on here now, you know, and I even say to my little brothers and sisters: 'You've got so much more opportunity' like PGA and Clontarf and all that for young girls and young boys. There is so much more now that I wish I had that opportunity.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, I did not been to say that Clontarf was just for football, I am sorry.

A WITNESS: Yes, I understand.

Madam CHAIR: It did start off with football ...

A WITNESS: It was basically mainly footy.

Madam CHAIR: ... but it does so much more, that is true.

A WITNESS: That is what I mean; they still are following me up from today ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

A WITNESS: ... even after one year almost. They follow you up after school is finished to check if you are going well with the job you are doing and if you like it still.

A WITNESS: That is really good.

A WITNESS: And if you don't want to stay in that line they can help you get another job in the line what you prefer or like. They will actually help you try and find it.

Madam CHAIR: I notice you are all with the YMCA. Do you try to get Clontarf and others involved in the various programs to be part of the YMCA and target young men?

A WITNESS: We haven't had anything to do with ...

A WITNESS: One of the old people who used to run YMCA up at the youth centre is running Clontarf now.

A WITNESS: Michael McLean.

Madam CHAIR: Michael McLean.

A WITNESS: Yes.

A WITNESS: Yes.

A WITNESS: Michael, and John's brother is working at the YMCA as well, but most kids who go to Clontarf in Palmerston do know about the YMCA and half of them do come up to hang out as another spot to keep them out of trouble and to hang out with friends. Basically, yes, Clontarf is probably one of the best programs what would have happened to NT.

Ms PURICK: What was your contribution? What did you have to do as a young fellow that – you have told us what they did - they looked after you and made sure you had tucker and if you did not get to school - but what was the commitment that you had to give to them?

A WITNESS: Rocking up to school and showing interest in the school.

Ms PURICK: Yes.

A WITNESS: That is excellent. When I went to school, in high school I ended just dropping out because I was caught up with stupid stuff. You know, I got drunk and into a lot of fights and they just sort of accepted it, you know, just went: 'That's what he does. We'll suspend him. He'll come back. He'll get suspended again'. You know, and eventually I just dropped out. If there was something to keep me generally interested, you know. I know they've got it in Palmerston, I think they have it at Sanderson. I went to CSC. I don't know if there's something like that there.

PERSON UNKNOWN: There is now.

A WITNESS: CSC has now got it.

A WITNESS: There is, yes.

A WITNESS: So does Kormilda.

A WITNESS: Yeah, that is excellent.

A WITNESS: And Nightcliff.

Madam CHAIR: It is in most of the senior colleges now and through most of the regions, I believe.

PERSON UNKNOWN: Clontarf.

Madam CHAIR: Clontarf.

Ms WALKER: It started at Yirrkala this year.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, and now we are pushing it out to remote communities. Gunbalanya has it. We have got Clontarf in Jabiru, Gunbalanya and Maningrida. We are getting that program with those role models. John and Michael McLean, and you wish you could clone some of these blokes and put them into the regions.

A WITNESS: That's probably another thing what would help, more male role models or female role models ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

A WITNESS: ... to put a good example out to people or kids having trouble to follow that path.

Madam CHAIR: How do we keep supporting you guys, because you are role models in yourselves?

A WITNESS: Yeah.

Madam CHAIR: Do not underestimate what you, as young people, are doing. The courage to come through that door, sit down and talk to us, and go through these issues - do not underestimate your role as a role model. You have achieved, and you might not think that you have achieved but you have achieved this much.

How do we support you mob to continue doing that work so you are the mentor for your friend or the support person for your friend? How do we capture that?

Ms PURICK: If you had to ask for one thing that would help you do what you do ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PURICK: ... if you could ask for one thing ...

Madam CHAIR: What would it be ...

Ms PURICK: ... do you want money or do you want ...

PERSON UNKNOWN: ASIST training.

Ms PURICK: Pardon?

PERSON UNKNOWN: Sally and I have discussed this, ASIST training. I went to headspace National and asked if the national reference group could do ASIST training after a conversation with Sally. I think that if you can equip young leaders with those skills and knowledge that we can tell other people and we can share those messages with our peers, I think that would be the most powerful thing.

MS OSBOURNE: What is the go with ASIST training? Like how do you get trained?

MS WEIR: Yes, so Anglicare runs ASIST.

MS OSBOURNE: Yes.

MS WEIR: It is a two day suicide intervention workshop which gives you some real clear skills as to what to do. It does not mean that you have to intervene, but it is more like you know to recognise the signs and where to get some help from.

MS OSBOURNE: Yes.

MS WEIR: So, Anglicare runs it and I think Catholic Care run it as well and they run regular workshops here and in communities out remote as well, yeah.

A WITNESS: How often are they because I just missed out on the last one, I was ...

MS WEIR: I think Sandy is in there no doubt hiding because I make her busier, but I think it is February next year. So they try and run them about every three months in town, but we need to build up our stock of trainers.

Madam CHAIR: That is what we need to do, train-the-trainer, and get more people skilled in that.

MS MOSS: And get a lot of young people skilled so you have your educators.

MS OSBOURNE: And that was the thing with the school counsellors that we were talking about before; I am not trying to be mean here, guys, but as an ex-student now ...

Ms WALKER: Only just.

MS OSBOURNE: ... this year, but the thing about school counsellors, like Crystal who is at Nhulunbuy High, she is quite old now, not offending anyone...

Madam CHAIR: No offence taken!

MS OSBOURNE: ... but, you know, it is like a young person that we want to talk to, you know, that we can sort of relate to as such. So I think peer training in that youth training would be awesome for – even if it is just – it does not have to be you know, like um, have a young person at the school, trained, even if it is not the school counsellor, that you can go, oh, this person has this training if you want to go and see them at anytime there you go. So it does not have to be a certified school counsellor that has it, it can be someone within the school system.

Ms PURICK: Like SRC people.

MS OSBOURNE: Yeah, exactly.

MS MOSS: I think there is a school that does that somewhere. I thought I heard, because you know how you have sexual harassment officers in a workplace or whatever, that they had a couple of designated students who, you know, you can come chat to at lunchtimes or whatever about.

MS WEIR: It is a really good model because we know that young people go to their friends first to get some advice, and it does not mean that that person is trained to help them, they just need to know how to link that young person up to services. Whenever we go into schools we have a whole peer, train the peers, and then they go and talk about headspace.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, that is a really good model.

MS MOSS: But that was a really good point about the SRC, even if it is just those two days off school SRS's do it.

Ms PURICK: Because they are already keen, they are baby leaders, they have already said I want to be a school counsellor so they obviously want to help others and help the school.

MS MOSS: No that is awesome, that is a good idea.

Madam CHAIR: So we get ASSIST. What else do we need?

A WITNESS: I would mention Danila Dilba's cultural mental health training, as well. I have not done it myself but I did get the flyer and I think that is an area that gets overlooked just a little bit to the cultural aspect but, more importantly, the cultural aspect and the male perspective as well. [Name], you mentioned it earlier, the shame attitude but then the next level of that is, culturally, where we have to be the strong dudes, the strong men, and mental health is an area that can be viewed as a little bit weakening. So, training and possibly the development of training to assist young Aboriginal men, as well as older Aboriginal men, I think is important.

MS MOSS: Don't be afraid of social media.

Madam CHAIR: I am not afraid of it.

MS MOSS: There are just lots of services that are not on there and there is lots of people who do not get on there because – I don't know – it's going to be damaging to their organisational brand or whatever but I think you just need to remember that young people are going to have conversations using those mediums, and they are going to have negative conversations and we need to have those positive messages in that space because it is not going to go anywhere.

Madam CHAIR: You are right Lauren. I was telling people, the number of times I log onto Facebook and the discussions I could have with my young nephews and stuff who post up there: 'Oh, I am feeling suicidal at the moment', and to be able to talk to them through that medium, but then to get someone and that is why Brothers in Arms, I just believe the work that Julie and many others that work behind the scenes of that have been assisting and helping.

Because you can say to young people: 'Talk to them', and they do follow-on. That is what a lot of our young people need to understand, there is help, there are people who care out there. I mean, headspace, we have been hearing so many positive things ...

Ms PURICK: That you have a long waiting list.

Madam CHAIR: ... people are saying, you know, but the more demand, the demand is certainly growing and it is impacting on your ability to ...

Ms PURICK: But they did say - when they said there was a long waiting list - they did say, though, that if there is something that is a crisis, you will accommodate and help the family.

Ms WALKER: Can I ask a question; given the stigma that people might feel in approaching the school counsellor or a service provider, what is your understanding of how useful something like Lifeline or one of these phone lines that are 1800 numbers?

MS MOSS: E-headspace. I have used e-headspace, which is headspace's new 24-hour service. I have used the online component, not the phone line.

Ms WALKER: Yes.

MS MOSS: But I have heard from lots of young people who have rung Kids Helpline and they use it on an ongoing basis, but the online help is amazing because you do not have to see anybody.

Ms WALKER: So how does it work?

MS MOSS: You register, you just put in your e-mail address, you do not have to put your name if you do not want to, and your location, and then you get into sort of like a chat room with one of their clinical staff.

Ms WALKER: Yes.

MS MOSS: And they will talk to you and, yes, you do not have to give them your name and it is just like a soft entry point. You do not have to physically go anywhere; be in your own home.

A WITNESS: I actually rang Lifeline just before I tried committing suicide and the counsellor was good, but either they hung up on me or the phone cut out. I would like to think the latter, but that was my experience with them.

JAKARA: As a professional and working with a lot of young people, you hear various responses about the phone stuff. Some young people, I could not put numbers on it, but some young people think: 'Yeah, no worries, I've got through straight away. I can talk to them and I feel good about that'. Other young people wouldn't go near it with a 10-foot pole kind of thing because they have tried it once and had a bad experience. So, it is really kind of a bit hit and miss just from my experience with young people, but I would like to – once e-headspace gets up and running, because it is that chat room and that immediate kind of online stuff that young people are so used to now, I think that will be a really good medium for young people to access professionals.

Ms WALKER: I think those entry points are really important. When I was looking at this place and just thinking how welcoming it is and with the sign out the front that says 'Mental Health Centre, walk in here' and yet that is the reality of some mental health service providers. I do not know, Emily, if you have ever been to the mental health offices in Nhulunbuy.

MS OSBOURNE: No.

Ms WALKER: Well, if you did not go in there feeling depressed, you would probably come out feeling depressed. It is dark, dingy, it is just awful, so I think the actual physical environment you are sitting in, walking into, is so incredibly important.

MS OSBOURNE: Even the Anglicare office isn't that inviting. We need something like this, but even if it was just mental health over there and because they are, you know, like a big centre with everyone in it at the same time, we need something because it is just ...

A WITNESS: Something that I would applaud – just a little bit off topic, but back to Lifeline – something that I applaud is now, on news and on radio, whenever they are talking about suicide, they say if you are suicidal, because it is a big trigger, talking about it, they refer. I am wondering if that is possible with our Facebook because you do have to put your age in. I wonder if they can just have a permanent number there for headspace or a Lifeline.

MS MOSS: Are there any regulations around media in terms of that sort of thing?

Madam CHAIR: There are. I mean ...

MS MOSS: Just because I have noticed, more so lately, I have not noticed before, but I just noticed in the *NT News*, there was a couple of stories, positive stories, about a guy who came through a mental illness and talked about his experience with seeking help, but there was no links to actual ...

Ms PURICK: And say: 'If you need help, contact Beyond Blue'.

MS MOSS: Yes.

Ms PURICK: There are no rules about that, but I know the print media, newspaper people, they try to have their own codes. That is why in newspapers you never see suicides being reported. You will work it out when you see the death notices, but there is never really a story about someone has - just that someone died whatever – sometimes. That is a code that print media people have.

Madam CHAIR: A lot of the time they will not. That is right.

Ms PURICK: So, there is some respect amongst their group - not a lot but they should link it.

MS MOSS: It is kind of like: 'Oh, here is this great story about this guy who has got through it. But, you know, you might be feeling shit, but we will not tell you. So, help yourself'.

Madam CHAIR: We did a fair bit of exposure - normal media we have done on the committee and going around throughout the Territory ...

Ms PURICK: We have done that.

Madam CHAIR: The media have actually been quite good in promoting *beyondblue*, and if you need this ...

Ms PURICK: And the Brothers in Arms.

Madam CHAIR: So, the media has certainly come in leaps and bounds around this issue. It is the same with child protection; they have certainly come around a lot better in their reporting and promoting. They will not do it unless you pay for it, but they are a lot better in promoting mental illness.

Ms PURICK: Yes. That is something we could just take up, just as a small thing, even in just the Territory. There is only half a dozen newspapers and, if they do have a good stories about something, ask them if they can just put a footnote, such as 'if you need help, contact headspace da, da Palmerston, da, da, da *beyondblue*'.

MS MOSS: It is responsible, I think.

Ms PURICK: Yes, they have a responsibility to do that.

Madam CHAIR: We might do that.

Ms PURICK: It is just something that we can do. That could just be a letter from – once this is all finished, it could be a task that comes out, that someone - do not ask me who - writes to the companies that own the newspapers and say: 'Could you do this? And this is why'.

Madam CHAIR: Well, we could put a recommendation in writing.

A WITNESS: Just a question. To come headspace, does it cost anything here?

MS WEIR: Totally free. All services are free.

A WITNESS: Totally free? Like, all adults and all that as well.

MS WEIR: That is right. From 12 to 25, so everything is free given.

A WITNESS: Oh, that is all right.

Ms PURICK: Yes, that is very important because, if a young person wanted to slip in the door and pretend they are going to the pizza shop - they might not have money in their pocket but they want to get some help.

Ms WALKER: And it is Monday to Friday, Sally – normal office hours?

MS WEIR: It is, yes.

Ms WALKER: That is one of the issues that has been raised; that all of the services are Monday to Friday 8 am to 4.21 pm or whatever. When people are actually contemplating suicide it is not during those

hours – it seems to be at night or on weekends when all of those services are closed, which is why, I guess, a helpline or an online service in this case.

A WITNESS: That is true.

MS OSBOURNE: I think what someone mentioned here before about having that something permanent on Facebook and those types of sites, where those, you know, in the advertise bar down the side, you know, have the helpline numbers. I know a lot of people use social media to express, you know. As you said. All this status is about how are they feeling and everything like that can be very negative so, you know, having that positive – here is a number to call if you need help.

Ms WALKER: Can I go back to education. I was listening to, obviously, what you had to say about when you were in school you wished what was there is what you see now - with other members of the family going through school. It came up in a discussion we had this morning out at Howard Springs, about what is on offer in schools. Marion and I have a parliamentary colleague who is an ex-teacher who says schools need to be the most exciting place in a kid's life. I am an ex-schoolteacher and I taught English for years. For a lot of kids it was the most boring subject that you could ever asked them to do. I do not actually miss teaching at all, particularly the subject with English where kids had to read novels. They could be strong readers and writers but 'Sorry, miss, I do not want to read this book, I reckon it is crap'.

What I am getting at is offering a curriculum which can still meet literacy and numeracy requirements that everybody needs - they are the core things that you need to get through school and, eventually, get a job, but looking at other opportunities for people to succeed in. You talked about Clontarf is one avenue. We have talked throughout our hearings about dance, music, art, things that people can do, because everyone needs to find something they are good at.

When you are a person who is depressed, you are, I imagine, feeling pretty hopeless and there is nothing you are good at. So, tell me about your views about what schools need to be doing in meeting that need. Do you share that view?

A WITNESS: I reckon that teachers - back then, teachers did not listen, really listen. That is what I found back then and that's why I didn't really - like I just could not cope with it, you know, like because you say something to them and nothing will be done about it.

Ms WALKER: Say something to them in regard to ...

A WITNESS: Just like problems in school and you know, like the mentor, you know with the PGA and Clontarf and all that, they get mentored there, mentors and all that.

Ms WALKER: I would like to think that is changing.

A WITNESS: Yes.

Ms WALKER: We had a wellbeing team from Taminmin College meet with us this morning and teachers are doing much more than teaching these days. They are resourced to help young people with all types of things, including emotional and social wellbeing.

A WITNESS: And actually talking, you know, for the teachers to actually talk to their students what they want to do, you know. Like it is sort of, you know, like a parent/teacher interview but student interview or something like that, like what they want to do for their future. I had no idea what I wanted to do when I left school. Like I was, you know - and when I look at it now, I just, you know, that is why I try to tell my little brothers and sisters, you know, they have so much opportunity there.

When I took my little sister to a school meeting, like I just said: 'I wish this was sort of me in your position, trying get back into school', but more I would like to really deal with the students too, like get them to sort of do it themselves.

Ms WALKER: More of a focus on students not individuals.

A WITNESS: Yes, and putting them into things that they don't like - subjects they don't like.

Ms WALKER: Yes, it is very easy for an individual to get lost in a class if you are not being recognising the individual.

MS MOSS: Also sharing opportunities. My experience of school was like I was never the highest achieving academically student in the class, and the same kids got all the opportunities to do all of the sort of extracurricular stuff or to go off and represent the school at this, that and the other. We never got those opportunities because teachers would talk one-on-one with like the highest achieving kids and they always do the other stuff. That was my experience and there were things that I – you know, you find out when students come back they've gone and done awesome things you would have loved to have been part of it, but you just never get the opportunity. I don't know that still happens.

Madam CHAIR: Do we stereotype youth too much into a certain - do we say this is what youth - in regard to drugs, alcohol, in terms of ...

MS MOSS: I think it just drives young people to think – and like, I didn't get involved in Youth Round Table and things like that until a couple of years ago because I had always been in this mindset that things like that and certain opportunities were for certain types of kids.

Ms PURICK: For the smart kids.

MS MOSS: Smart kids, and I was never one of those kids. So you do not even think about certain types of opportunities because you already feel like that's not meant for someone like me.

Ms PURICK: Did you guys think that when you were at school?

A WITNESS: I got opportunities to get around and things when I was in school. Like I got sent on basketball trips and sports trips and you know, do things like that because I made teams for it. I am not sure what - I am sitting here trying to just sort of think what happened to me. I think when I started to straighten myself out a bit, growing up, was through counselling and stuff. I was never suicidal or anything, but I had sort of a lot of my own issues happening and stuff that sort of held me back. It was probably some of the main reasons I dropped out of school and had a lot of problems there and, yes, just the fact that it was accepted, you know, like I could do what I wanted. There wasn't really anyone who wanted to help me change or anything, you know. It seemed like if I had a fight at school it was, yeah, go away for three days and you come back.

If I was drunk at school or missed a few days, you know what I mean, like I wasn't there and I ended up getting in big trouble and got a court order to do counselling. It was surprisingly helpful just to sort of straighten your head out a bit.

Madam CHAIR: It took that to say: 'Listen, you need to go to counselling?'

A WITNESS: Yeah, it was a court order and it took me a while to sort of listen. You know, like at first - and I always had no interest anyway, like I sort of looked at it like: 'That's rubbish, I don't need to sit here and talk to someone about what is going on. I don't want that'. So, eventually I sort of opened up a bit and had a bit of a yarn and it was helpful and thinking about it, maybe if it happened earlier, but it would have had to have been something to make me willing to do it or open up. I could have walked in and thought: 'I'll give it a try' but the fact is if I had done it off my own back I would have walked in, listened to them talk, walked out and never come in again.

Madam CHAIR: So, do you think the system does that too much - it just sits back and lets kids, a lot of kids, fall through the system?

A WITNESS: I feel like I could guess it is too much, you know, like bad kids are the bad kids, and I am not sure if it is still as bad as that in the school, but like I came back from down south not long ago, like to have a holiday here, and it is just amazing how different, just generally, things are looked upon, you know what I mean? Like my sister is going to school there and I was just comparing it to, like, the same time at school in Darwin, you know, like there are hardly any kids dropping out or anything, and it is really looked badly upon when it happens. Like when I was going to school and dropped out, all my mates, well, not all my mates, a lot of my mates done the same thing, and it was just that is all it was. No one really looked down on you for it, no one thought it was bad; you know, it was just accepted.

A WITNESS: I know changing the acceptance would be hard to do, but it would probably make a big difference.

Ms PURICK: Maybe sometimes the school is so overloaded, that if a kid drops out they probably go: 'Beauty, one less to worry about', maybe, you know it is like ...

Madam CHAIR: Is it just the school or is it as a community we have just become indifferent to that, rather than the school?

A WITNESS: I think a bit of that, too.

MS OSBOURNE: It is really interesting though because like I hate going down south, it is fine for a couple of days, but I cannot walk down the street and go: 'Hey, how are you going?' and get a response, I just get that 'why are you talking to me' look.

So, to think that down there they care more about the people around them and keeping in school is weird, seeing as though they do not want to talk to anyone, you know. Whereas up here we are so friendly and so, you know, accepting of everyone and talking and whatever, but that is the social norm, so it is a very weird solution

A WITNESS: A lot of other things like drugs and alcohol there. But I am from here, you know, same, same I could not stay there for a long time. I do not mind for a holiday because that is where my family stays, that is cool. There too you don't see kids getting around drinking and stuff like, well, at least when I was there, you know. I wasn't there for long enough to make a good judgement to call on this, but you know you do not see it. Even like if I heard my sister or her friends talking about it, they seemed almost like: well, what are you doing, you know? Whereas if I was to say to a mate in school like I am ditching, man, I'm going to go and get drunk, they would be like: I will come with you, or can I come over? There is a big difference.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, so it is an acceptance that it is part of the culture.

A WITNESS: There was no sort of: 'Oh, no, you shouldn't do that man, or you are going to get into trouble'. It's like: 'Yeah, well let's go, and I'll come too; see if I can get money off the parents' or you know ...

MS OSBOURNE: Lots of people's parents are uptown as well.

Madam CHAIR: There is no value in valuing education.

A WITNESS: And working out a value on education, there is none there.

MS OSBOURNE: Just talking the other day with a couple of my friends and pretty much it was something like 70% of my class would be the first graduates of their family like for the past four generations or something like that. You know, they just don't – it was not as socially accepted - it sort of seems like a necessity these days, like: 'Oh, you have to finish Year 12.' You know, you get that bit of a look about you and they go, you know: 'That is great future for you.' So things are a lot different to what they were back then, even with you guys now, so...

A WITNESS: I come from the flipside where both my parents were very high achieving, went through school and everything; and even through school while I had a really terrible experience there for a period of time; I managed to get it together, not through the help of counsellors or whatever, but through friends. But the experience for me that was difficult was finishing school. Because the expectation was there because I had achieved well and the expectation was he is free to go into the world and can handle the world, whereas something like Clontarf is really good because it has that follow-up mentoring, it has a follow through. Schools just as a standalone do not really seem to have that.

MS MOSS: It is really great that you can use the virtual classrooms and things now, though. Like I think it is our education world is changing completely, like even when I finished school about eight years ago or something now, and the amount of subjects that the students can do now and they do not even have to have a teacher present, like they get on a big screen and the teachers are somewhere else teaching kids across the country. It is really cool, and I think we should be exploring more of those new ways of reaching the students.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, and that is certainly something we talk about all the time because, in our bush electorates, we are not going to get a science teacher or any of these teachers out in the bush, but we talk about caring for country, ranger programs, and environment programs, but to beam a science teacher from

Darwin High or Nightcliff High to a remote Aboriginal community to conduct that is a pretty amazing tool that we can do.

I am conscious of your time and we have taken up substantial hours of your time. I do thank you. It is really important. We still have a number of meetings, but it is always good to have that interaction with young people. We are not all that old. We do get to a point; I am a mother and a grandmother and I certainly have a son where there has been major problems and I look at him today and he has come through that system and he is now working and feeling good about himself and I have got two daughters as well, and Lynne has children.

We have all got nieces, nephews, grandchildren, but it is great to hear - and I think sometimes we do not put enough value on our youth and the contribution that our young people make in society. It is always a good thing to see in the media; this party happened and these kids were running amok or these youths doing this. I think sometimes we allow society to get too bogged down in that stuff without looking at the vital and positive contributions our young people make.

So, I do thank you sincerely for making your time available. We will make available that transcript. So, if you want to go through and make sure we are not putting anything in there or adding anything and if you want us to pull anything out, you can do that; that is negotiated with the Secretariat. This is Russell, Julia, and Maria.

Mr KEITH: I was also going to say if - you people have spoken about some personal things - if you want that to go up but not to be identified, just let us know, and we can not have your name ...

Madam CHAIR: We can take the names out. So, there are a number of things we can do and the Secretariat can talk to headspace and ...

PERSON UNKNOWN: Yes, because when you say if that goes up, what does that actually mean? So people are clear about that.

Mr KEITH: You get the transcript – all the hearings that the committee is doing, it goes up on parliament's website, so if you leave your name there and people Google your name; it could come up, so if ...

Madam CHAIR: We can remove your names. We can have your names – we can de-identify you.

PERSON UNKNOWN: Just the 'young person says'.

Madam CHAIR: And it could be a meeting of use and it does not have to have any names.

Mr KEITH: I just think if we send in the transcript out here and you think: 'No, I do not want that bit public', just let us know, and we can just cut it out of the transcript.

Ms PURICK: But you are right, that is a good comment because you can, if you just Google your name, you would be surprised what shows up. There are people around the world with exactly the same name as everyone and sometimes you find out about that, but it does, it can zero straight into 'you said it'.

Madam CHAIR: But that is where young people fall into the mistake that they do not realise that joining on Facebook and making comments on Facebook, they Google those comments, and it is there for life. It is there in cyber-space for life. So, we can remove any identification.

Ms PURICK: Yes, it just makes it a bit better sometimes; bit more security then.

MS WEIR: That would be good, yeah, with people's stories and stuff. That is just me saying that, people might have different thoughts...

Madam CHAIR: No, look it is ...

MS WEIR: ... but it would be good if it could just be young person or ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

MS WEIR: ... because it is still of good value.

Ms PURICK: Yes, and then you talked about - like [name] was talking about a bit of a shame job, so if someone just through Facebook or Google found your name and then started to spread rumours or something; but it takes courage to come here today to talk about it. We want to try to make more positives come over, no negatives.

Madam CHAIR: And I would like to thank headspace for helping to facilitate this. It has been great.
