



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

Public Forum Transcript
1.00 pm, Monday, 6 February 2012
Katherine Town Council Chambers

Members: Ms Marion Scrymgour, MLA Chair, Member for Arafura
Ms Lynne Walker, MLA, Member for Nhulunbuy
Mr Peter Styles, MLA, Member for Sanderson

Witnesses: Kane Ganley, Secretary Katherine Youth Interagency Coordination & Tasking Group
Catherine Harris, Regional Youth Engagement Coordinator, Victoria Daly Shire
Jayde Preston, Youth Engagement Officer, Victoria Daly Shire
Cheryl Morris, Catholic Care NT
Sylvia Clottu, Catholic Care NT
David Laughler, CEO Katherine Town Council
Anne Shepherd, Mayor Katherine Town Council
Geoffrey Lohmeyer, Sunrise Health Service
Douglas Reilly, NT Department of Children & Families
David Forde, Somerville Katherine
Sheree Smellin, Somerville Katherine

Madam CHAIR: Thank you for coming to the committee's public forum today. We appreciate you taking the time to speak to the committee and look forward to hearing from you.

To date, the committee has received over 40 written submissions and has heard from a wide range of organisations and individuals affected by suicide. We have had public hearings and forums in Darwin, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, Bees Creek and Palmerston. Our purpose this afternoon is to ask what you see as being the current and emerging issues regarding youth suicide in rural and regional areas and to hear your stories. Also, we want to hear your ideas on what can be done.

While this is a formal meeting of the committee, I propose we have an open discussion. A transcript will be made available for each of you, and the committee, and may be put on the committee's website. If you would like to see the transcript before it is published to make any corrections, could you please provide your contact details to the committee's Secretariat and they will send the transcript to you.

If at any time you are concerned what you will say should not be made public, you may ask that the committee take your evidence in private or not include what you say on the public record.

For the record, I am going to ask each of you to state your name and the capacity in which you appear. I will start by introducing committee members.

Peter Styles, member for Sanderson, holds a seat in the northern suburbs of Darwin.

Ms WALKER: Lynne Walker, member for Nhulunbuy.

Madam CHAIR: My name is Marion Scrymgour, member for Arafura, and Chair of the committee. We also have two other members of the committee - Kezia Purick, who is Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Goyder. Unfortunately, Kezia could not make it today and has asked me to give her apologies. Michael Gunner is the member for Fannie Bay, an inner seat in Darwin, and he has also given his apologies. However, you have three very keen members of the committee who have come to take evidence from organisations and individuals.

We will go through separately, and if you could state your name and the capacity in which you appear - if you are representing an organisation or are here as an individual. Thank you.

Ms COTTU: Sylvia Cottu, a counsellor/educator at CatholicCare NT.

Ms MORRIS: Cheryl Morris, a family relationship services counsellor/educator at CatholicCare NT.

Ms HARRIS: Katherine Harris, Regional Youth Engagement Program Coordinator, Victoria Daly shire.

Ms PRESTON: Jo Preston, Youth Engagement Officer for Victoria Daly shire.

Ms GANLEY: Kate Ganley, Youth ITCG Secretary.

Mr LAUGHER: David Laughher, CEO of Katherine Town Council.

Ms SHEPHERD: Anne Shepherd, Mayor of Katherine.

Madam CHAIR: Would anyone like to start? I could target one person, or I could ask local government, from both the Katherine Town Council and also the Victoria Daly shire, to outline for us what programs you have that are youth specific and aimed at youth. For Victoria Daly, the shire region in which it delivers services, and Anne, what is your Katherine boundary?

Ms SHEPHERD: Our Katherine boundary is about 40 km surrounding Katherine. I do not really have any specific programs for youth. We get involved in Youth Week and have a member on the Youth ITCG. Other than that, David, there is much else we do, is there?

Mr LAUGHER: Not directly through council, no.

Ms HARRIS: The Victoria Daly shire spreads from Kalkarindji all the way up to Wadeye region. We are covering eight major service centre areas plus the outstations associated with those service centres. The Youth Engagement Program is new to the Victoria Daly shire. We have been running it since I came on board in November and are slowly getting youth officers out into the communities, obviously with

qualifications and that type of thing. Our Youth Engagement Program focuses on nine key areas: health and hygiene, alcohol and other drugs, sexual health, gambling, mental health, employment, nutrition and healthy lifestyles and - I have forgotten the other two.

Ms PRESTON: I read them all too.

Ms HARRIS: Small business enterprises is another one because we, obviously, want the youth to become strong leaders of the community and self-sufficient as well. Yes, it is brand new and each community is getting a youth officer where they can tailor the program to suit the community they are in, to address the issues that the community and the youth themselves identify within the community settings.

Madam CHAIR: So, you have not recruited to any of those positions yet or ...

Ms HARRIS: Yes, we have an officer in Kalkarindji, Yarralin, and Daly River. Jade has just started today and she is heading out to Timber Creek.

Mr STYLES: When do you guys sleep?

Ms HARRIS: Never – at all.

Mr STYLES: It is a big list.

Ms HARRIS: Yes, it is an absolutely huge list, but we are just taking it step by step and listening to what the community wants and putting that in place as soon as we can. We are really keen to work with other stakeholders such as Katherine West Health Board, CatholicCare - anyone who travels out to the community as well who can assist us in delivering what we hope to deliver within the community.

Ms SHEPHERD: Have you engaged the Smith Family's communities for children?

Ms HARRIS: We are just working on operational manuals and strategic plans at this stage and, then, we are slowly starting to branch out into the other areas.

Ms SHEPHERD: At Katherine Town Council, we found it extremely difficult to engage youth. We have had youth meetings here, building up, for example, for Youth Week - no youth at the table. It has been very difficult to get the youth in. I think, Kate, you have found that as well, haven't you?

Ms GANLEY: I was not specifically targeting - when I was doing the youth engagement, I just went to the school and met with their youth leadership group. That worked well. But, then, local members of the Minister's Round Table took over the youth engagement process and have not had much success in engaging with youth - several failed attempts of engaging with youth.

Madam CHAIR: Why is that? Is it just people just do not want – they feel meted out, or they just do not want to meet?

Ms GANLEY: I do not know/ As I said, I did not have much trouble engaging with youth but, then, when we handed that over to other people, they have not had any success. You try – he was a YMCA employee and also Youth Minister's Round Table. He had pizzas and kept changing the meeting times to suit people who said they would come. Then, they just did not come. So, I do not know why and what more I can add to that.

Ms HARRIS: We are relying quite heavily on our trainees we have in the communities, because they know the youth of the community. So, we rely on them to bring the youth in for the initial committee meetings.

Madam CHAIR: When you say trainees, trainees ...

Ms HARRIS: We have youth engagement officers and youth engagement trainees, who are local community members. We have one of those per community we are in, and they assist us greatly with just getting to know the youth in general, where to start, that sort of thing. They also help with translating as well.

We have found language to be quite a bit of a barrier. The youth are a bit shy or have shame about their English skills, and they do not want to talk, so the trainee will have a chat in language and, then, will

get the information to us that way that we need. Knowing a friendly face when they come to the youth meetings also helps a lot as well. Instead of the youth officers just saying 'Turn up at time we are going to sit down and have a talk', instead they are: 'Oh, you know this person. How about we all sit down under the tree over there and have a bit of a chat?'. We try to keep it not quite as formal to begin with, until we get the youth to start coming. Then, later down the track, once we have engaged with them, we can start formalising the processes and that sort of thing.

Ms WALKER: Katherine, the Victoria Daly Shire is it not listed as being part of the youth coordination group that Kate is the Secretary for. Is that simply because you have recently established the youth ...

Ms HARRIS: I would say that is probably it, yes. I started late November and the officers started a week after me. So, it has pretty much just been since then, plus with the Christmas break in between as well, it has not been the best time of the year to start anything.

Ms GANLEY: I also sit on the Northern Territory Youth Affairs Network. Blair McFarland is on that ...

Madam CHAIR: From CAYLUS?

Ms GANLEY: Yes. He was putting together a submission. Has he spoken to this committee?

Ms WALKER: Yes, last week.

Ms GANLEY: Last year he was talking about putting together a submission about consistent funding for youth services through local government agencies. Basically, the line he wanted to take was youth services should be considered the same as an essential service and, basically, there should be per capita funding for youth services the same as what we do for sewerage and everything else so that way you can get a consistent level of funding for youth services in local government agencies.

Was that something that he raised in his submission?

Madam CHAIR: He did, and he certainly pushes funding for youth as an essential service. Was it last week he gave evidence or was it ...

Ms WALKER: Monday or Tuesday, and NTCOSS very much mirrored the CAYLUS submission.

Ms GANLEY: Tess Rudge or Jonathon Pilbra?

Madam CHAIR: I am not sure who. NTCOSS provided a submission and their representatives ...

Ms WALKER: Their submission will be on our website.

Madam CHAIR: They were reinforcing what Blair and CAYLUS were saying.

Madam CHAIR: With the Victoria Daly Shire, where does your youth funding come from? Are you able to provide that information or should you take that on notice?

Ms HARRIS: Can I have a copy of the transcript before it goes out to be checked by the CEO? We are funded as an extension of the CCDEP program. We fall under their funding and through ICC and FaHCSIA is where our money comes from.

Madam CHAIR: Given CDEP will cease on 30 June this year, what are you going to do?

Ms HARRIS: We are hoping to get an extension in the funding or find funding from other areas. That is all in the planning stage.

Mr STYLES: We have heard some evidence this morning about how well the inter-department agency is working with Kate as the Executive Officer. Are you guys considering joining that group in the near future?

Ms HARRIS: Definitely, we would be more than happy to be part of any groups or organisations.

Mr STYLES: They seem to be having success because everyone is involved and it sounds like it is a natural progression, given the recruitment officer is probably sitting next to you – it might be an opportunity. That is good news.

Ms WALKER: Sylvia and Cheryl, you are both from CatholicCare. I would be interested to hear what youth services you are engaged in or delivering in this region?

Ms MORRIS: We do not have specific services. We provide counselling for all people, from children to mature adults. We have a school counsellor who we have contracted with to attend St Joseph's; however, she has left for Darwin. We have a new counsellor starting this week. She is doing orientation in Darwin so she will be in town and will commence duties.

I am aware our previous school counsellor went to MacFarlane and Casuarina on a couple of occasions; however, we - that is my area as well; there is no provision of funding. Many years ago we were doing counselling with MacFarlane Primary; however, their funding was only for six months. We endeavoured to provide counselling but get them to bring the children. It is more effective sometimes to be able to go to the children in the school and do it.

Ms WALKER: MacFarlane is a government primary school near the high school? How did that service work where your sector was providing to the government sector? Was it a school-based counsellor?

Ms MORRIS: Yes.

Ms WALKER: Yes, okay.

Ms MORRIS: It was just ordinary counsellors going over too.

Ms WALKER: Yes.

Ms MORRIS: They would provide so much funding, and we had a contract drawn up that we were going to provide the counselling for them.

Ms WALKER: Yes.

Ms MORRIS: And we still can, but the difficulty is trying to meet our own funding requirements, as well as fit everything else in.

Ms WALKER: Sure.

Ms MORRIS: To my mind, I do not believe there is enough funding for the schools to arrange for their own counselling or, if there is, I know there is a counsellor available. We are talking about - well, there is Katherine South, MacFarlane, Casuarina, Clyde Fenton. You are looking at about four or five different schools.

Madam CHAIR: And Katherine High is the only high school? That is the only senior that is here?

Ms MORRIS: Apart from St Joseph's which does ...

Madam CHAIR: Oh, St Joey's.

Ms GANLEY: St Josephs go to 9 or 10.

Ms MORRIS: It goes to Year 10. You have St Joseph's that goes to Year 10, so with St Joseph's they are covered. We actually have the contract with them ...

Madam CHAIR: Okay.

Ms MORRIS: ... to provide counselling. But, as far as the other schools, no.

Madam CHAIR: So, none at Katherine High?

Ms MORRIS: To my knowledge there is a counsellor at Katherine High School ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Ms MORRIS: ... but I am not sure of what they are expected to do. I have heard from a counsellor that was previously there that they were not only expected to provide counselling within that school, they were expected to attend other primary schools and provide counselling as well. One person really is not effective.

Ms GANLEY: I know they had real trouble recruiting to that position. I am not sure if it has been filled, but it was vacate for a very long time.

Madam CHAIR: Okay. We travel and, regarding the services, we hear and we know the statistics of Indigenous, both attempted and completed suicides. What is the problem in Katherine amongst the non-Indigenous population? You would have access to that population of youth people, do you?

Ms MORRIS: Your biggest problem is getting them to actually come to counselling, because a lot of them – the ones who have been caught are generally because teachers have reported it. Otherwise, a lot of the youth do not seem to come forward. Then, if they have told their friends, generally they try to work it out with their friends. It is getting the stigma, I am assuming, or them getting the belief that they are not going to be told what and how to do things. It is changing those belief systems.

Ms SHEPHERD: Over the years, there have certainly been incidents of non-Indigenous youth suicides in this town - but over a long period. I have been here a long time, Marion.

Madam CHAIR: One of the things the committee has heard is, if you look at ratio and data - and we were talking about data earlier on. Other members of the committee can correct me if I am wrong here, in New South Wales one every per 100 000, Queensland is three every per 100 000, the Northern Territory it is 18 per 100 000, but if you look at Indigenous it is 30 per 100 000. Even if you look at the non-Indigenous statistics, it is quite high.

When you break down those, and you look at male versus female, what has emerged through those numbers is that it is more young women than young men - which is that more young men have been killing themselves, but the trend that is emerging in the Northern Territory is that it is young women. It has become quite a startling ...

Ms MORRIS: In that regard, much self-harming goes on. It is not specific suicide attempts, but it is self-harming and it does seem to be more related to young women.

Ms SHEPHERD: It really breeds in the school community.

Madam CHAIR: We have access to quite a high level very confidential report on some of this. They have had access to the Coroner's record so the self-harming stuff is - no one has done any research or looked at a young person self-harming or a young women self-harming - what would attract that young person to - what has happened to that young women and what services did she - is she okay now or did she complete suicide.

The data is not consistent and one of the things Menzies has told the committee is that the Northern Territory is a jurisdiction unlike every other state. You mentioned it, Kate, the national Coroner's Office and having a register so organisations working in this area have access to that register for research; everyone has access to this register to move forward. That is certainly something the committee is looking at in its recommendations - getting that register going.

Ms MORRIS: Self-harming is such a hidden thing because youth are now realising that if somebody sees cuts up their arms or down their legs it will draw attention. Much of it is their way of expressing how they are feeling, and being able to express it. They may be in a family where there is domestic violence occurring and they are not allowed to talk so they are doing it where it cannot be seen. They might cut their upper legs or cut their shoulders where their clothes - it will be covered up.

Madam CHAIR: How about in relation to body image? How much does that play?

Ms MORRIS: I do not know if that plays as big a part as it used to years ago. Years ago that was a huge thing. The ones I have seen and know of have not been around body image; it has been around being able to express how they are feeling.

Ms HARRIS: We really saw that.

Ms MORRIS: Yes.

Ms HARRIS: It is more the action of it than anything else.

Ms MORRIS: Yes and it is a release. It is being able to feel pain.

Ms HARRIS: Feeling something within yourself. They inflict pain to then feel it.

Madam CHAIR: They call them cutters, do they not? The four other people, would you like to come in closer. This is more an open forum to talk. If you want to introduce yourselves come forward.

Ms WALKER: If you would like to introduce yourself.

Ms SMELLIN: I am Sheree, I work at Somerville Community Services, and I am youth support.

Mr KELLY: Doug Kelly. I work with Department of Children and Family Services, ACW, Aboriginal Community Worker, and I deal with many of these youth.

Ms VICKY: My name is Vicky and I am a Senior Aboriginal Community Worker with the department of Children and Families. I work with families and just come in to ...

Madam CHAIR: That young man that went up to make a cup of tea?

Mr FORDE: My name is David Forde, the coordinator of Somerville in Katherine. This is interesting to us because we get referrals from FACS and other organisations to help with kids; not a lot who are actually looking at suicide but, as you said before, they are coming from dysfunctional families and everything like that. Yes, we work with a lot of those kids.

Madam CHAIR: Well, it would be good to hear you talk. Usually that dysfunction or those issues can often lead to young people with self-harm, or attempting and, then, completing. So, it will be good to – sorry.

Mr LOHMEYER: I am Geoff Lohmeyer, I am the Youth Preventative Programs Coordinator for Sunrise Health. I work across the 10 communities that Sunrise deals with in Alcohol and Other Drugs, with petrol sniffers, some mental health, and substance abuse.

Madam CHAIR: Well, we have come to hear. We will throw in questions every now and then, but this is your opportunity to tell us.

Mr FORDE: Sorry, I missed the whole start, so where are you ...

Madam CHAIR: My name is Marion Scrymgour, I am the Chair of the Youth Suicide Select Committee that was established by parliament last year.

Mr FORDE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: It is bipartisan. It is not government, but a parliamentary committee.

Mr FORDE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The inquiry commenced in October last year and it is made up of five members. There is me, Lynne ...

Ms WALKER: I am Lynne Walker, member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr FORDE: Yes.

Mr STYLES: Peter Styles, member for Sanderson.

Madam CHAIR: And there is Kezia Purick, who is the member for Goyder, and Michael Gunner, who is the member for Fannie Bay. So, there are five of us and we have been travelling around. We have done

most regions. We have gone out to remote communities. We have had a number of public and closed sessions with organisations and government agencies and many NGOs working and dealing with this issue throughout the Northern Territory. We have been up and down the track from border to border. We have tried to capture as much of the community and people.

We have also had quite critical evidence from young men. We have been able to, and fortunate, get young men to speak to us. Young women are a lot more open to talking about this issue and coming forward. It is young men who do not have that confidence, so it was good to have a session with them.

We have to report to parliament at the end of March, so we do not have much time. We are trying to get as many views. Whilst we look at what some of the problems are - and I think all of us know what some of those problems are - it is also an opportunity to hear from the community, but look at what are some of the solutions moving forward, and how do we plug those gaps, or are the silos still there and how do we get people ...

Mr FORDE: One of the problems we have is – I do not know how the others feel about it - but we are three hours from Darwin, so we do not get a lot of the services in Katherine that Darwin gets. The main excuse from mental health and all those, and people who could come down and help with these issues that we have in Katherine with kids who are suiciding, or thinking about it, or get flagged by us – you have two ladies here from CatholicCare, two counsellors, are run off their feet half the time.

We have one school counsellor for all the schools in Katherine. So, for us, we are not counsellors, we are mentors, but we get pretty well hammered by all the primary schools because there is nobody to service the primary schools here in Katherine. It seems to be the same with a lot of issues: we are three hours from Darwin, we can be serviced from Darwin. They come down once every two weeks and they are that snowed. Why have we not got the services here in Katherine?

Ms HARRIS: It is even worse in remote communities that we work in. The mental health teams come out once a month, once two months, and that is not ongoing care that is required, so ...

Mr LOHMEYER: If you are lucky.

Ms HARRIS: Yes, exactly. If you can even get in to see them. Then, it is also the gender issues as well. You only send out a male worker, so the females cannot go there and have the talk. Also, even just having appropriate rooms to have these conversations in, because they turn up at the clinic and everyone knows they are going to see this person because of this reason. You could be going there for any reason to see anyone. Even when we are trying to run programs, trying to get people in to talk down in remote communities - the amount of funds it takes to fly someone in, drive someone down, accommodation, then where do we house them once they are out there? It is an ongoing, huge ...

Madam CHAIR: What discussions happened with Victoria Daly and Katherine West health board?

Ms HARRIS: At the moment that is for people on the ground to have a chat to the Katherine West health board and see where we can work in with each other. If they have a mental health worker coming down we can identify which youth may need the services as well and try to work together. Because the youth engagement program in our area is so new it is mainly getting the information out there and back to Katherine West health board that we are here to ...

Madam CHAIR: Is regular dialogue happening now?

Ms MORRIS: Yes, it has just started. The Christmas break put things back a little but there are regular meetings happening. Because this is the first time for the Victoria Daly shire it is hard for us to get the trust of the youth to start off. Mental health is not something we can really tackle at the moment because we do not have that trust. We can tackle things like nutrition and diet; not the simpler things, but the less personal things and we then start moving on to the mental health side of things.

Ms WALKER: You can deal with the physical wellbeing but it is the emotional wellbeing that is wanted.

Ms MORRIS: Yes, and the emotional one is a really hard one to gain trust?

Mr FORDE: We get members like yourself come here, we have this discussion - it is the same with housing and accommodation and many other issues in Katherine. It goes back to Darwin and that is it. Six months later you come down and ask exactly the same questions and it goes to Darwin and that is it.

Madam CHAIR: I have not been down here for some time to ask those questions.

Mr FORDE: No, not yourself, but other government organisations come down and ask - I do not know how you feel but we get to the stage where you have asked us and we have told you what we need. We are three hours from Darwin so many of the services provided out of Darwin come to Katherine but we need them in Katherine. Also, with the intervention, there are many young people moving into the towns like Katherine, moving out of the communities and moving into bigger places. You have Borroloola as a growth town as well. The government seriously has to look at the problems that have arisen from people moving out of communities into towns and bringing many problems in with them.

Ms HARRIS: Mainly alcohol and ...

Madam CHAIR: In defence of government, David, I can tell you we have had discussions with the federal government to say there needs to be temporary accommodation in places like Katherine because people are coming in from the regions. It needs to happen. It is not a Berrimah Line thing; it becomes a Territory line thing to places like Canberra where we depend on much funding. There has been much discussion with the government to get it to fund places like Katherine.

Mr FORDE: The problem with Canberra is it has no idea what the Territory is like. They do not come here and work in the Victoria Daly shire. These ladies are going out and working all over the - that is a huge job. In the job I was doing before, we were travelling all the way to Borroloola, out to Timber Creek and all through those communities. It is such a big area. Get them up here!

Mr KELLY: We also have the same problem with sniffers. Sniffing has been very quiet around here the last few years. Now, all of a sudden, it is breaking out. Every community I work with has sniffers and they are all coming to Katherine and there is nothing here for them. They get here and they go sniffing. Even the police sees them sniffing and do not book them or take them.

Madam CHAIR: Well, let me tell you, under the legislation, they are able to. All right?

Mr KELLY: They are able to, but they are not doing it. That is the big problem.

Ms VICKY: There is nowhere to put them.

Mr KELLY: That is exactly right. There is nothing in Katherine to send these kids anywhere. Most of them are kids, and I am talking about from here to 18. I have one at the moment who I reckon will die within a couple of years, hey?

Ms VICKY: Been working with him for three years.

Mr KELLY: I have been working with him for nearly four years - three or four years - and we are still where we started. That is just ongoing. Today, I went out to see him on my normal turn, and I just said to him, 'Look, I cannot keep doing this anymore. I have gone as far as I can. No institute will take you anymore because you have been through every one of them'.

Madam CHAIR: Have you talked to CAYLUS, Doug, in Alice Springs?

Mr KELLY: Who?

Madam CHAIR: CAYLUS, they deal with a lot of volatile substance abuse ...

Mr KELLY: I talked to Darwin volatile substance abuse. I talked to them mob down there.

Madam CHAIR: Yes. CAYLUS has probably got more – I think Blair McFarland and his team have probably had more success than anyone else.

Mr KELLY: But I should not have to go to those places. That is what this meeting is about: keeping things here in Katherine. It is not just sniffing, it is everything else. You get young people coming into town because they have run away from their homelands, come from their mother and father who do not care about those kids, and they are dumped on our doorsteps. We are not caretakers. We are not babysitters. We have a job, we have a responsibility. Our responsibility is to make sure that children are in a safe spot and well looked after.

We cannot do that if we have not got the back up here. Nobody can. I do not care where you come from in the Northern Territory or Australia. If you have not got the system in place – this bloke will back me up on the (inaudible). He is just unbelievable. And these people here, they get our referrals all the time with young children looking for somewhere to stay.

Ms SMELLIN: I had a case on Friday. I have a young girl I am working with, she is 14 – I hope I did not interrupt you, Douglas?

Mr KELLY: No.

Ms SMELLIN: Mum had to go and do sorry business out at Ngukurr or somewhere, and she said to her daughter: 'You can stay with uncle tonight'. Daughter has gone: 'Yes, okay, in the morning'. I have just got her back to school. She has got a nine-month-old baby. So, we have slowly worked with her and got her back to school.

She was taking the nine-month-old baby and the other sibling out to Ngukurr for the sorry business and, I think, over the day the young girl has thought about it and does not want to stay with uncle because she is in fear because something has happened to her earlier on in her life - she has been played with. She come to me and said: 'I need somewhere to stay for four days because mum is not home and I am too frightened to stay at the house'.

There are things for youth and there is this and that, but there was no accommodation for this young girl that I could put her in. I went to FaHCSIA and it was like, if we get her in the system then – but it was not a case where - nothing had happened yet, but ...

Mr FORDE: She just needed a safe place to live for four days.

Ms SMELLIN: Just for four days.

Mr FORDE: Yes.

Ms SMELLIN: Without getting wound up in all the system. Mum is good. Mum has baby while she goes to school, but there was nothing. I thought the Anglicare house could help us out, but they could not because it had to go through FAHCSIA and ...

Ms GANLEY: Because they can only take a referral through DCF.

Ms SMELLIN: Yes.

Mr FORDE: Yes.

Ms SMELLIN: So here I am with a 14 year old, it is Friday afternoon ...

A Witness: So what did you do with her?

Ms SMELLIN: I went and got some tucker - we went to Woolworths - and then took her to her house. Mum had not gone, but I was just going to lock her up in the house and check on her over the weekend. It is out of my job jurisdiction, but ...

Madam CHAIR: How old was she?

Ms SMELLIN: 15.

Madam CHAIR: 15.

Ms GANLEY: Actually, that comes up a little bit as well - referral processes into inter-services. So, another one is where we targeted family support service, which is a great service, but you can only access it with a referral directly from the Department of Children and Families. So, you have to go through that whole rigmarole - and no detraction from DCF ...

Ms SMELLIN: No.

Ms GANLEY: Why, if you are concerned about the welfare of a family or a child or anything, not refer them to a targeted family support service who can – and Sylvia knows about the service very well – provide very intensive service and support to families without having to book them into DCF and, then, DCF making the assessment of whether they need that family support or not?

And the same thing, then, with the Anglicare supported accommodation. Anglicare has supported accommodation services through the Department of Children and Families. It is a brand new service, but again, the referral can only come through the Department of Children and Families. That is very different to services that operate in Alice Springs. Congress started off only accepting referrals through the Department of Children and Families, but managed to get it changed. You can self-refer, a family member can refer, another agency can refer and it makes services more accessible rather than ...

Madam CHAIR: So why does Wurli, or some of the organisations here, not put in place that process?

Ms CLOTTY: Congress received federal funding to be able to pick up referrals...

Madam CHAIR: Yes, they received quite substantial funding, because they provided - they had quite a big submission on the family support services and were funded to provide it. I am unsure whether that is here on this Katherine ...

Ms SHEPHERD: There are not enough places; there is not enough. Anglicare has some, and you have some, have you not?

Mr FORDE: No we got rid of it ages ago.

Ms SHEPHERD: There are not enough. If their system did work better and there were less referrals, there is still nowhere to put them.

Ms HARRIS: There is not enough accommodation for youth.

Ms GANLEY: There is now with Anglicare.

Ms SHEPHERD: But not enough; there is not enough.

Madam CHAIR: When you say there are some places, how many places? Even if it is not enough, how many?

Ms GANLEY: There is about six or eight beds at Anglicare.

Mr FORDE: Yes, but it is an interesting system. Go around there and have a chat to them.

Ms GANLEY: The guy who was manager has left now, but he ...

Ms SMELLIN: Did Richard leave?

Ms GANLEY: Yes. Richard, to get around the Department of Children and Families, was hiring a couple of motel rooms – I found out on Friday - for youth not in the system which would give them somewhere to stay for a few nights.

Mr FORDE: There is a gap with kids that are not in trouble that could get into trouble. That is the biggest gap we have.

Madam CHAIR: They are at risk because they are on the street.

Mr FORDE: Yes, if they have not come in front of FACS, police, or one of those major agencies, and need somewhere to stay for two weeks because mum and dad are - if we have a family and they go into the Women's Crisis Centre, what do they do if they have a 16-year old son. Where does he go? There is nowhere for him. He cannot stay at the Women's Crisis Centre; you cannot put him in Auburn House, he is not old enough. Those kids really need a couple of weeks and they are good kids and have to really stuff up to get accommodation.

Ms WALKER: Are these kids escaping some sort of threat environment?

Ms SMELLIN: Of course they are. They would rather be with mum and dad. Obviously, there are issues there.

Mr LOHMEYER: The other thing is I am finding - I have been working in the communities and town now for some years - across the communities and in many areas there is an underlying level of depression that is whole-of-community. It is intergenerational, which means when we start to look at crisis occurring, they are already at a point where the hopelessness is beginning to show and it is a small step to move from that to finishing it all. In here, they are already broken.

When we look in the communities, I am finding with petrol sniffing in Wugularr and Jilkminggan - I have done some at Ngukurr recently, but I cover all the communities and I am finding the majority of those young people who are sniffing, in here, are shattered and are lacking support within their own family situation. They are lacking support, and we do not have mental health workers on the ground in communities at all. Getting access to them is a long process. They attempt suicide, they talk suicide and contact mental health and: 'Yes, we are going to be out there in two months'.

I am fairly passionate in another way. One of the young men I worked with for the last five years on his petrol sniffing suicided just before Christmas. There is another one at Jilkminggan who went to suicide only a couple of weeks ago. Those things are coming, and it is that underlying sense of hopelessness that is coming out of that whole being torn apart, not living culture, or not in culture, and the brokenness that is coming in all of that. I think that is one of the great issues that covers - and it is the underlying, underpinning issue for the Northern Territory in the level of suicides we have.

Ms WALKER: Absolutely, Geoff. That has come through at so many public hearings. When you look back at statistics in the 1980s about suicide, the Northern Territory was no worse off than any other jurisdiction. Obviously, over the years, there are just cumulative things that are happening in people's lives that are at the core of people feeling so desolate, helpless, and despairing.

Mr LOHMEYER: Our program works on building the self. We are federally funded for Wugularr and Jilkminggan, and that is it. The movement of young people between those communities is just so huge. It does not take much, when young people are feeling already disenfranchised, for someone from another community to come into - we had two years, three years of no sniffing at all and then someone came into the community from another one a bit over 12 months ago and he was a chronic sniffer. He was also older; he was in his later 20s. He kicked it off, and we are battling with up to 40 on one community of less than 500 people.

When you think you have that happening, and turning and turning and turning, the community tries to do something about it, so they send kids to another community, then they are missing out. It just spreads it even further. There needs to be a holistic approach, and the holistic approach is an approach that is physical, mental, social wellbeing that builds people rather than just throwing dollars at things.

Throwing the money - there is not the staff. I have two staff in the office with me who work - one is mental health, the other is a youth worker who is purely for Wugularr. We have four part-time in Wugularr. We have two part-time workers in Jilkminggan. That is all we have across the whole of the 10 communities.

Madam CHAIR: So, Geoff, in those communities where you have hot spots, how many of those communities have VSA plans in place?

Mr LOHMEYER: The VSA plans have got to a certain point and then stalled.

Madam CHAIR: By who - government or the community?

Mr LOHMEYER: By the lack of - they have got it to a point, but there is no Opal. Katherine does not have Opal and it will not be until October, at the best, that we are going to have Opal at our service stations. Which means that we can say you must have Opal to come into the community but, if there is no Opal, then they come in anyway.

Mr KELLY: They just mix that with Styrofoam anyway, and it still serves all right?

Mr LOHMEYER: That is a myth.

Mr KELLY: Is it?

Mr LOHMEYER: A total myth.

Madam CHAIR: What is that?

Mr LOHMEYER: Mixing it with Styrofoam and it releases ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LOHMEYER: No, that is a total myth.

Ms GANLEY: But, if you do talk about Opal or whatever, as Jill Pettigrew said before, if you are a desperate sort of person ...

Mr LOHMEYER: You find something else.

A Witness: That is right.

Ms GANLEY: If you are not going to sniff petrol, I will engage in self-asphyxiation or something. So, there is no – I question the value of the plan ...

Mr LOHMEYER: As far as suicide goes, having a volatile substance plan does not take away – we may be able to stop the sniffing, but it has not taken away the brokenness here.

A Witness: Exactly.

Ms GANLEY: No, that is right.

Madam SPEAKER: That is true. I look at communities in my electorate, and a community which shall remain nameless of less than 500 people has had six youth suicide because of petrol. If they waited for government to do something, nothing would be done. You all work with these communities; we need to build the capacity of communities and have people start driving some of this.

Mr LOHMEYER: This is where, again ..

Mr KELLY: I know, but where do you start? We are coming back to what Geoff was talking about. We should all get on our high horses, but we say somebody out there will do this, this and this. Somebody else out there says: 'No, that is not right'. Someone over here well say: 'Well, mmmm'. It is sad when you sit with someone who has sniffed for the last four years - I have worked with - and you watch this kid and his ways, you feel like saying: 'Jesus, what am I going to do to help this kid?' He is lost. As Geoff said, once you are broken here, it is finished. That kid does not want to do no more. How do we stop that? That is what the question is here. Not talking about this, that and the other. How do we stop these kids? You can talk about Opal. What about hairspray? Women and girls go for hairspray - they sniff hairspray.

Madam CHAIR: We have seen it all.

Mr KELLY: It is worse now.

Madam CHAIR: Doug, I was listening to ...

Mr KELLY: Marion, I am a little voice in a government department.

Madam CHAIR: If you can let me finish please, Doug. Like David said, people have come to Katherine many times, asked for your story, gone away and nothing happens. This is your opportunity. What is the way forward? If we talk about young people - I do not believe for a minute that a young person is so broken in spirit that - there is a thing called post-traumatic stress and we do not deal enough with post-traumatic stress in our communities. It is a major issue because that is where the broken spirits come from.

Pretend I do not know this and tell me how we move forward. If you had an opportunity to say to the parliament - not to government - to the parliament what is it you want us to take forward and it will be put on the floor of parliament and will be debated.

Mr LOHMEYER: We have started. We have 12 people from communities going into Darwin to do the Certificate III in Alcohol and Other Drugs. We need to be able to skill; we need to be able to build the

capacity within the communities of people to handle it themselves. That is us giving them full support in training, in backup and in those areas of being able to nurture the community. A person in Wugularr - the ladies of the Christian group have been onto me today because they want more money to feed the kids because the majority of them do not have any food.

They are going hungry and are basically starving. These ladies have taken it from their own pockets and giving as volunteers to support, nurture and feed these young people who are sniffing. It has to come from many different areas, but there needs to be training for workers, workers need to be local workers based within the community, and that has to happen on all the communities.

It is no good coming in and going out, coming in and going out, because one of the things we find - we have seen over the years how many people come in for a year and go. How many come for six months and go, or two years or three years and go, and there is nothing permanent left. To skill, equip and give the infrastructure so the community can begin to have the positive outlook to handle some of these issues themselves. We need to be saying, 'You are capable', and recognising that capability and supporting them in the capability. Being only one person, I cannot be an expert in all the communities. My role I see as being one of being able to support the communities to build themselves.

Ms SHEPHERD: Can I just ask something? We have lots of government and non-government agencies working out of Katherine or surrounding Katherine. Is there enough cooperation between those agencies? Are you working together? Are you talking to all the other agencies so that you can face these things together? I have found over the years in Katherine that has not happened. When we talk about being in pathways and, for about four years, Healing Pathways has been on a bit of paper. Is it actually happening? I do not think it is. It has to happen and there has to be more cooperation between the agencies to work together.

I am very concerned at the moment that we have 30 petrol sniffers in this town, because I know what is going to happen. In a couple of months time, there will be 80 petrol sniffers in the town, and it is just going to go on and on. Okay, they are mostly from one community, but something has to be done to concentrate on that community and concentrate on those kids who are in Katherine. Years ago, they were just sent back. If there was an outbreak of petrol sniffing, it was jumped on straightaway and the kids were sent back to their communities - no questions asked, they had to go back. I understand today that the particular community concerned does not want a lot of these kids back and they are happy for them to be in Katherine - happy for them to be in Katherine causing trouble and getting other kids to sniff. For God sake!

I agree with Kate. I do not think Opal fuel is the answer at all. It is much deeper and much broader than Opal fuel. There is one thing of Opal fuel in Katherine, it is at the BP.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, but under the ..

Ms SMELLIN: Yes, but don't we need to get to the core of the issue? Why do they do it?

Ms HARRIS: Correct me if I am wrong, but we seem to be very reactive and not proactive in what we do. We keep giving these bandaid solutions instead of getting down to the core of the issue and start fixing these cores instead of just chucking money here, chucking money there. Let us get to the real issue ...

Ms SHEPHERD: Piecemeal, too - just bits and pieces everywhere and programs starting and finishing in 12 months time and no continuation.

Ms HARRIS: Yes, let us get to the real issues and then the funding runs out and ...

Mr LOHMEYER: And funding being only for 12 months.

Ms HARRIS: Exactly, funding runs out ...

Ms GANLEY: Yes, six months, 12 months ...

Mr LOHMEYER: We started this program five years ago. We got funding for 12 months. At the end of 12 months, the federal government said, 'Well, no need there', so they cut the funding. There was nothing left. The youth centre we built got trashed. The whole thing began to flare up again because there is not the ongoing funding, and seeing that as part of the core business of building people.

Ms HARRIS: Like a rehabilitation ...

Ms GANLEY: So that comes back to that youth services as a core service, rather than everybody applying on a piecemeal basis and then thinking: 'We need it for petrol sniffing because there is a petrol sniffing problem'. If we took a step back and just actually ...

Mr LOHMEYER: And said this is a holistic problem ...

Ms HARRIS: Like at Vendale. They have a Vendale here ...

A Witness: Like building on Vendale.

Ms SMELLIN: Have youth Vendale.

A Witness: Yes, so they can transition from Vendale to the flats too, for the young fellows.

Ms SMELLIN: Yes.

Ms GANLEY: So they go and stay there, but where do they go after?

Mr LOHMEYER: What happens after?

A Witness: The transitioning flats they have ...

Mr LOHMEYER: When they go back to their community nothing has changed.

Ms SMELLIN: Yes, but if they have changed as a person, and they have gone to the holistic and their brokenness has been – they have dealt with those issues - won't they be a changed person?

A Witness: Yes, but they can still call ...

A Witness: I have to stay optimistic ...

Ms GANLEY: I think housing comes into it. I know I am from the Department of Housing and there has been a significant investment in housing, but I do not think that there is enough.

Mr KELLY: Of 25 houses built in the Northern Territory, 24 are for teachers and nurses.

Ms GANLEY: It has not quite met the need and we need to continue to flag on the accommodation. I have not heard anyone say it. I have not heard anyone say that accommodation is an underlying issue.

Mr LOHMEYER: There is a whole underlying issue for not only young people and mental health and suicide, it affects the whole of the social and emotional wellbeing and the physical wellbeing of whole communities. The whole thing - the social determinants, lack of housing, lack of adequate schooling, lack of services - that are happening anywhere on the communities means it is not going to improve until we can get that baseline. We need to be working at getting the baseline and dealing with all the social determinants that have occurred.

Ms SHEPHERD: We have to throw back some responsibility too on the communities. The people in the communities have to step up and believe in themselves a little more, look after their youth and show some leadership. That is not happening in many communities. Perhaps that is a harsh thing to say; however, there has to be a groundswell; it has to come up. We can do all we like.

Mr LOHMEYER: I was living in Beswick and working in the program when the intervention occurred. It coincided, unfortunately, with the shire system happening and those who had been pushing to come up. When the intervention occurred, they believed the Army would come in and all of these things and they dropped their bundle. What is the point? What is the point was their thing.

Ms SMELLIN: Media has to take a fair bit of responsibility.

Mr KELLY: From my past experience working with sniffers - you are talking about how people should stand up and do this and that - forget about that because no one really wants to know about it. Nobody in the community wants to know about it. Nobody in the community wants to know, I am telling you right now. You talk to people and they say: 'That is not our problem, it is yours'. It is not my problem, but I am here trying to assist these kids. No one has the backbone to stand up and help these poor young kids, girls and

boys. Geoff will tell you the same story. He has been working long enough with sniffers. I have only been working there for four years and it is ...

Ms VICKY: (Inaudible).

Mr KELLY: You feel like: 'What the hell am I doing here?' I sometimes query what I am doing with these sniffers in Katherine. I do it because no one else will do it; I am stuck with it. I could have walked away from this young boy, his sister and a couple of others. I took one back to the Tiwi Islands because I was sick of him running around here getting picked up by the police doing this and doing that. I took him back to the (inaudible) family - Old Rita. I took him back there and said: 'That is your mother; you stay here with your mother'. I cannot do that to the other ones because their parents do not want them. Their uncles and aunties all say: 'I will help you. I will do this, I will make sure of that' but go out there in a week's time: 'Oh, he is sniffing; we can't do anything with him, he gets agro'. 'Grab the fuel and throw it away. You mob are family, you can do that'. I cannot do that; I cannot tip the fuel out. I do not have that power or a piece of paper to say I am a volatile substance worker.

Madam CHAIR: You do not have to be. You can be an authorised officer under the act.

Mr LOHMEYER: Only three have been authorised.

Mr KELLY: That is right.

Madam CHAIR: It is the Department of Families and Children. There are processes within the department, and I will follow-up on some of this because if there is a sniffing outbreak in this town because it is coming from outlying communities, under that act you can grab that kid and do something with that young person.

Mr KELLY: I do that.

Madam CHAIR: No, I am talking about ...

Mr KELLY: Where do they send them? To these places where you have to pay - when I send them up to volatile substances in Darwin they send them to Brahminy at \$3700 a week.

Mr FULLER: We had to send a bus ticket for a bloke to get back to Darwin to go to the rehabilitation centre so he could get off alcohol, because there is no funding whatsoever to send them there.

Mr LOHMEYER: PATS will not provide funding for transport for people who have addiction problems to go to rehab.

Mr FULLER: We paid for a bus ticket to get back up there - the bloke could get up there for treatment.

Mr LOHMEYER: And to get them from a community to town, and to get them from town to wherever they are going ...

Ms HARRIS: Then you have to deal with the fact they have left the community as well and their friends and their family support network, if they have that, in the community as well. From my view, you need more services in the communities. You need the accommodation to house these services as well and wages that are going to attract the right people in the right positions instead of people who cannot get a job down south coming here because they can get a job. You really need to start tackling it at a grassroots community-based level

Ms SMELLIN: And have a program that goes forever.

Ms HARRIS: Yes, and not say: 'Oh, your funding runs out in one year's time. You have to find funding elsewhere' when you have just started to link those...

Madam CHAIR: Everyone would want funding forever. No government will ever cut it off after ...

Ms SMELLIN: No, but like a program - like a rehabilitation or something like that, like Vendale. They have a rehabilitation program.

Mr FORDE: I do not understand why, in the Northern Territory at this stage, we do not have – like there is the boot camp one. What is it? The ...

A Witness: Down Alice Springs way?

Mr FORDE: Yes, and there is the one they had on the TV that time. They had the kids who went into that ...

Mr LOHMEYER: That is Brahminy.

Madam CHAIR: Brahminy.

Mr FORDE: Brahminy. Why do we not have more of those sorts of things set up?

Mr LOHMEYER: Well ...

Mr FORDE: We have one, I think, and it is a nightmare to get one of the kids in there, nearly. Do you know what I mean?

A Witness: Is that in Darwin, though?

Mr LOHMEYER: But even with your volatile substance, you have six beds at CAAPS.

A Witness: Okay.

Mr LOHMEYER: You have a couple who can go to Nhulunbuy if they are over 16. That is all there really is in the Top End. You have Mt Theo down in the desert, which is fairly Warlpiri specific. You have the BushMob within Alice Springs. Ilpurla has ceased to function because of the allegations of the way young people were treated. Sometimes they got hit because they did not do what they were told to do. You have, as you were saying, with CAYLUS – isn't it? - in Alice ...

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LOHMEYER: But, that is about all there is. On all of those communities you have Opal and they are finding that the Opal has dropped the number sniffing, and it has dropped a lot of the antisocial-type behaviour because there is none. Those who really want to sniff will go to the petrol, go to the cans, and the volatile substance.

Ms HARRIS: When I was working out in Wadeye, it is not the petrol out there, it is the paint that the builders are leaving behind. They just walk around the street and tie their tops around their necks, and that is their quick high for a few seconds, to have a blood rush to the head. So, petrol is not the only issue, it is deeper than what substances are actually there.

Madam CHAIR: It is any volatile substance, whether it is chroming, whether it is the spray cans, glue ...

Ms HARRIS: Exactly.

A Witness: Slashing.

Madam CHAIR: Some of these kids have been so innovative, I can tell you - some of things they have come up with you think: 'Oh, my God, I would not have even thought of it'.

Ms HARRIS: If only they put it in a different context.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr FORDE: One of the things is I do not think that, as we have discussed here, one of the problems is the money is not put in the right spot. You hit the nail on the head before, when you said these kids really have nothing else to live for. That is one of the problems.

Mr LOHMEYER: That is exactly right.

Mr FORDE: One of the things is - and we have discussed this with communities, about working with the communities - you go to different communities and some communities just do not have any pride in their community. They just do not have it, because they are so used to us going in there: 'We will help you with this. We will help you with that. We will help you with this. We will help you with that'. You have to build up the pride and the will of the people in the community to take ownership of a lot of these problems.

We have a community just out of Katherine that the government has thrown a lot of money into, and it is just totally dysfunctional. The reason why it is not ...

Madam CHAIR: I bet you I could name that community, too.

Mr FORDE: What?

Madam CHAIR: I bet you I could name that community.

Mr FORDE: One of the reasons why it is totally dysfunctional is because there is no strong traditional owners in that community ...

Madam CHAIR: Leaders.

Mr FORDE: Leaders in that community to organise it. All it is, is people from here, here, here, and all around Territory have been chucked in there. Why do you keep putting money into it?

Madam CHAIR: David, you are not going to get any – one of the things was three of us - there was the five of us - met with a number of organisations and had a forum like this in Alice Springs. If we were to look at what was just around in that forum, if we were to get access to all of those organisations and what funding was amongst all of those organisations to deal with the issues, it was quite substantial - both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory funding that was going into all of these organisations. Having more is not necessarily the answer. It is what we are doing with the money we have now. Why are we not getting the outcomes? Let us have a look at some of this stuff.

It is not just in the NGO sector, it is looking across our government sector. Everyone is saying we have policy frameworks. What are those policy frameworks? Why are we not getting those outcomes? We are going to be analysing and looking at all the evidence because government wants the answers. I hold a huge bush electorate, so does Lynne, and the money that goes into those electorates - you bang your head, as a member of parliament, at the amount of money that is thrown at these communities, yet I can go to a community where a 10-year old child kills himself.

It is the first time I have sat in that community, and the first time ever I have cried. For me, to witness a 10-year old kid taking their own life is absolutely devastating. We talk about helplessness. You think: 'My God, why is this 10-year old child ...

A Witness: You take away the ownership of the people in the community.

Madam CHAIR: I rang my grandchild in Darwin, who is the same age, and that kid was as happy as Larry. Kids in our communities are not. We have to look across housing, across education, across policing, but it is a bit more than we can do. We know it has all been said before. I take your point, Doug; however, sometimes we have to keep saying it and hopefully someone will listen.

I was saying to Anne at the outset, you cannot stop. You have to remain optimistic that, hopefully, we can break through some of this and get some answers.

Mr FORDE: Anne said before she did not know how the organisations in Katherine all know what is happening and are networking. We have to, to be honest with you. Most of the organisations in Katherine need to know what other organisations are doing. If the organisation is run properly and has the right drive - we have to know what the other ones are doing because we need the support. We have to know what CatholicCare is doing and what they can provide because I have kids to see and I am not a counsellor; I am really a mentor for these kids in the primary schools. I have to have a good relationship with CatholicCare so I can move these kids onto those people.

We all have to work together. Kate tries to get us to all work together, and with Dallas too. Where is the support for that? As you were saying before, we have a high turnover of staff in many of the organisations because they become burnt-out.

The people in the communities say: 'Here comes someone else. I just got to know that person, built up a relationship with them then burn out. Oh, here comes someone else'. We have problems when we work with kids who know exactly what every organisation in Katherine can provide and they just skip from each one. Burn us out, go to another; burn us out, go to another one.

Ms VICKY: The problem we had with one young fellow is he went to BushMob, he went to Purla. He finished his program but then they put him back in community because there is nowhere else to put him - he is 17 now. There is no transitioning for him. There is nowhere for him to stay so he could do stock work. We tried that but the stock work mob are not open until April. He is just sitting in town but has got himself in trouble again because we said: 'Look, you have to wait until April and then you can probably go out and do some stock work with Northern Land Council mob'. This transitioning from the program back in the community, or give them opportunities to do courses, or someone do courses, or look after him and show him the ropes or something.

Madam CHAIR: Is he from the Katherine region?

Ms VICKY: Yes, he is from a big family. As Doug said, everyone has wiped their hands.

Madam CHAIR: He does not have family support?

Ms VICKY: The thing with petrol sniffers is they live with – we say: 'Okay, you have family at Beswick, go and live there'. They say: No, we do not want that young fella here. He came here before sniffing and started everyone up'. When he has finished the program - no we just ...

Mr KELLY: Even in town certain communities will not let him ...

Ms VICKY: No one will have him.

Mr LOHMEYER: Many young people - we have one young man who nearly sniffed himself to death last week. I have known him since he was one and he is now about 16. His background is he had foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. His father was imprisoned for murder. His mother took up with a white person who went over to Queensland. So, for all of his life he has been around family - from this family to that family to that family - and no one is really owning him. So, in here, you have a young man who has never known what it is to be really loved. I have worked with him and because I cannot be in the community all the time - he is a young man who was going really well, he was going back to school, he was making progress - with the upsurge that has happened in the last couple of months in Beswick he has collapsed again.

The young man who suicided was originally from Barunga. Family in Barunga did not want him, so for the last – as long as I have known him and – again, for the number of years, he has been floating: Barunga, Beswick, Weemol, Beswick, Barunga, Weemol, Beswick. No one wants him. So, inside there is nothing. There is the PTSD. They have experienced - young people and whole families, the whole communities - such a high rate of violence and brokenness and the things that young people should never see that it scars. There is not the infrastructure or the support, to be able to get in and even work with one or two, quite often, because you are just so hamstrung with staff in those areas to try to train and support people to see where things are. This Certificate III is a great start.

Madam CHAIR: So, Geoff, in each of these communities that you work with - and I suppose both the Katherine Eastside and the Katherine Westside and, surely, from the shire and Sunrise, in each of these communities - there are government business managers, engagement officers? Surely there must be coordination? I always am constantly amazed because the Aboriginal population in the Northern Territory is 50 000 or less. Yet, the money that goes into this industry is like - you know. So what are we doing? Where is this money? What is happening? What is there there?

Organisations say they do not have enough but, then, when you look at it - how is this? I know with Sunrise and Katherine West, they were cashed out four times the national average in NBS PBS. What is that money doing in that region? What is the money doing in that region? What is the way forward here? That is what I am asking all of you mob.

Mr LOHMEYER: The focus for Sunrise, for instance, has been very much on healthcare as far as dealing with crises - acute healthcare.

Madam CHAIR: Well acute care in the clinic, yes.

Mr LOHMEYER: Up until the year before last, I was the only worker in the Alcohol and Other Drug sector within the whole of Sunrise, because it has not been seen as a priority. We are building that. It will not ...

Madam CHAIR: What, the preventative has not been ...

Mr LOHMEYER: The preventative stuff. One of the things we have in our latest submission to federal government for Alcohol and Other Drugs for my programs is we want to be able to put four workers, because we have to cover male, female and both (inaudible) in each of the communities. But, we want them to be local people. The first stage is train them to Certificate III. The second stage, then, is to do some preventative and early intervention. Second stage to do Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs and mental health areas, and to bring them up so we can do non-residential rehab within the communities because that is where people live.

Madam CHAIR: Do you get any support from government agencies to look at that training and assist get training happening?

Mr LOHMEYER: The Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Department of Health have a program which is a Certificate III in Alcohol and Other Drugs which is Indigenous specific. I have 12 going on next week and it costs nothing.

Madam CHAIR: They provide that to Sunrise to deliver.

Mr LOHMEYER: That is provided. They will go to Darwin to do that.

Ms VICKY: How long does that run for?

Mr LOHMEYER: That runs for 12 months.

Madam CHAIR: There is that level of support for training to build some capacity?

Mr LOHMEYER: There is that level of support. It is getting it on further. For the Certificate IV, I am not sure how we are going to do that yet; however, in Katherine we have been able to negotiate with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University to on the ground in Katherine deliver a Diploma in Dual Diagnosis.

It is going to cost \$6500 per person to do and we have to get 20. That is a little in balance at the moment.

Mr FORDE: If you have to have four people out of each community, what sort of interest do you have from the community to get four people?

Mr LOHMEYER: That is another hard part. I have been able to get four people in three communities at present who are working with me. It has been almost impossible to even get one in Ngukurr, and similar in Barunga, but it is building. If I can begin to build with the ones and twos and threes and fours, we can then build. We take the people we have.

Mr FORDE: Is it because it is new you have been able to get people interested and have more pride in their community?

Mr LOHMEYER: No, it is because I have been around the communities for 17-plus years and they know me. I have a very strong relationship with each of communities.

Madam CHAIR: Geoff, how much work goes on between Sunrise and Roper Gulf?

Mr LOHMEYER: It varies because the person who was doing the youth area at Roper Gulf, who has left now, had a very silo mentality and because Roper Gulf was funded for growth towns only - that was Borroloola, Ngukurr and Numbulwar. The towns in this area have some sport and rec and have difficulty keeping sport and rec people occupied. We are working to develop a program of sport and rec at Beswick, but there is not the cooperation.

Madam CHAIR: Someone from Roper Gulf was supposed to have attended the forum this afternoon. One of the things we need to look at is what programs are delivered by the shire, what is delivered by the health services and look at what funding goes in there. If it does not happen out there it is going to impact in the town. We then have to look at what services are being delivered within this town and what capacity is here.

Ms GANLEY: Roper Gulf has been really good at advising what their youth services have been doing in their communities. As Geoff said, they are mainly the 20 growth towns - Ngukurr, Numbulwar and Borroloola – and they have significant federal government funding; however, over the last 18 months they have trained dozens of community people to Certificate II and III level. I went to a graduation last year where 16 youths from Ngukurr received their Certificate II in Youth Services and Alcohol and Other Drugs which achieved within 12 months of the program starting. They did kick a few goals, but cooperation between the services needs to happen.

Mr LOHMEYER: We are not funded?

Mr KELLY: Who funds the positions you are going for, Geoff, for the workers in those communities?

Mr LOHMEYER: That I look after?

Mr KELLY: Yes. Or who is going to fund it?

Mr LOHMEYER: Well, that is in our submission to OATSIH.

Ms GANLEY: Geoff, I find it interesting that, at one time, you say it is not about petrol sniffing it is about brokenness and that sort of thing but, then, to reprioritise to get AOD funding for Sunrise. I thought Sunrise was quite well resourced in other ways, like in healthy lifestyle positions and that sort of thing. Is that not really the case?

Mr LOHMEYER: Again, it is piecemeal.

Ms GANLEY: Yes.

Mr LOHMEYER: And the healthy lifestyle issues - we have two coordinators. Well, we have two dieticians – nutritionists, rather.

Ms GANLEY: So, not really holistic approach?

Mr LOHMEYER: It is not a holistic approach.

Ms GANLEY: Yes. The other thing I thought was really interesting that you were saying - and you said it a few times. You gave an example of a young man who may have had alcohol foetal syndrome and seemed to get off to the wrong start in life. Then, you said 'and nobody wanted him'. At what point do you think nobody wanted him? Do you think he was not wanted from the beginning, or was it a gradual process?

Mr LOHMEYER: It has been a gradual process. It has gradually – while he is small and not getting into a lot of trouble, then it is all right, he will be accepted when he moves from family to family. But, as he gets bigger and wants to eat more ...

Ms GANLEY: So, he was not being cared for immediately by his mother from the very beginning?

Mr LOHMEYER: No.

Ms GANLEY: So, would that be an argument ...

Mr LOHMEYER: Not from the time that he was one.

Ms GANLEY: So, would that suggest then that maybe he was not wanted from then?

Mr LOHMEYER: Yes.

Ms GANLEY: Would that be a similar case for many of ...

Mr LOHMEYER: A number, quite a number. Quite a number you will find on the communities. Once the young people have started walking, and mum and dad are in town drinking, and drinking, and drinking, it becomes – they are lost, they are just [inaudible].

Ms GANLEY: So, were these women actually wanting to have children, do you think?

Mr LOHMEYER: Who knows.

Ms GANLEY: Do they have available – are they aware ...

Mr LOHMEYER: I ...

Ms HARRIS: My experience is ...

Ms WALKER: The Baby Bonus is quite an attractive incentive to many young women.

Ms GANLEY: Yes.

Ms HARRIS: Further to that, some of the young girls – again, for example, they were getting the implanon put in, and the guys were coming up to them and just ripping them out of their arms: ‘You are not allowed to have that in’ - or that associates them as being the sluts of the community as well. So, there is a big range of ...

Mr LOHMEYER: It is a whole complex issue.

Ms HARRIS: Yes, it is not just ...

Mr LOHMEYER: It really is.

Ms HARRIS: ... ‘We do not want to have babies and we are going to do something about it.’ It is like you are not allowed to.

Madam CHAIR: And that is not a new thing, either.

Mr LOHMEYER: No.

Mr KELLY: That is right. When you are doing mandatory reporting, everybody has to report things. Not on communities.

Ms HARRIS: But I could get you - you go back ...

Mr KELLY: You might get a few, but a lot of them do not.

Ms GANLEY: But we are not saying there are generations of unwanted babies that were just had because of the Baby Bonus, are we?

Mr LOHMEYER: No.

Madam CHAIR: No, not all communities are like that. There are some fantastic communities that are actually really taken - and it goes down to leadership, as David mentioned. I see some fantastic leaders in some of these communities who have, without any government support or government funding, managed to change and eradicate petrol sniffing and cannabis misuse in the community - without any government support, but by strong community leadership and having that authority to be able to deal with it. There is a huge difference in that: having that authority to be able to stand up and lead by example.

There are many that Lynne has, that I have. Gunbalanya in my electorate, took all the kids back to school straight after the new year because kids are bored in communities during the Wet Season. So, that community - not the Department of Education or the government - made that decision: ‘We are not going to have our kids bored because they break in into all the Balanda houses when they are bored’. They do not break into the blackfella houses, they break into all the Balanda houses, because that is where all the food is.

A Witness: Yes, that is right.

Madam CHAIR: Let us stop our kids from being bored because we all know idle hands - it is not just a black thing, it is all of us. Idle hands, idle mind. .

A Witness: It is not just a kid's thing either, it is everybody.

Madam CHAIR: That is right; you are going to get into trouble. That community said it was going to do it differently, it got the support of the department - we are going to take these kids – and the fantastic non-Aboriginal teachers who gave up their holidays with their family on the eastern seaboard said they were going to do this because they wanted to see better outcomes for kids. First day enrolments in that community would be around 320; they had about 280 kids turn up on the first day. Those numbers are sustaining and are building. The Aboriginal principal has been a real driver, but she has had a fantastic deputy principal, a non-Aboriginal woman, and the two of them together - it is not one without the other; they walk together and they work with the broader community. It did not need a great deal of government funding; it needed the community to take ownership and to drive it. You often see, where there are huge problems in communities, there is a lack of leadership.

I was working in the Katherine region when the baby bonus came out and I was horrified at the number of unwanted pregnancies and kids that were born because they just wanted the money. Those kids were then left with grandparents and the mums and dads were in Katherine.

Ms GANLEY: Perhaps for the Northern Territory, rather than have an unrestricted baby bonus, have a participation bonus. If you have a kid you get \$5000 if you go to playgroup or school or something.

Madam CHAIR: No, that is what happened with the intervention.

Ms GANLEY: For everybody, not just Aboriginal people. There are plenty of people everywhere.

Madam CHAIR: In remote communities they changed it so the baby bonus was not paid out in a lump sum.

Mr FORDE: It goes on their basic card. A basic card is not racist.

Madam CHAIR: But it has not changed anything.

Mr FORDE: Why is the basic card not Australia-wide? That is my argument.

Ms VICKY: Like them mob on Centrelink payments have to do courses, and the courses you see are like hospitality. Countrymen come to us and say: 'Vicky, I have to go to this course'. 'What course?' Hospitality is part of their agreement. What are the chances of them doing short courses in community services like suicide - little workshops, because I see hospitality - I cannot imagine them mob walking around with a tray in a restaurant. What are they going to do with that certificate?

Ms HARRIS: How is that appropriate in the communities? Are they going to start a palace in their community?

Ms VICKY: Empower them to empower their communities while they are in town, and then take them back to their communities with tools.

Ms SMELLIN: Then become a mentor and they are looking up to ...

Ms VICKY: Something they are going to get out of it. Do not do it because they have to. Why not get them to do something that is going to empower them to empower their communities and, when they are sitting around talking, talk about what you did at work or at training.

Mr FORDE: I had an interesting conversation. I used to live in the Kimberleys and I was chatting to a lady out there one day who was out from the Tanami - at the communities out there. We were friends with the whole family. They have a TAFE out there and she said: 'They teach me how to sew and they teach me computers. Why don't they teach me to speak proper English? That would empower me more than teaching how to sew and do all this stuff'. I went ...

Madam CHAIR: Do not tell me. I get into big trouble for saying that. I got into huge trouble telling Aboriginal kids they had to speak English.

Mr FORDE: I said: 'Well, you are probably right there'.

Ms SHEPHERD: However, those other skills are good too are they not, Dave, the sewing ...

Madam CHAIR: One should not work without the other. Language is a valuable tool and that tool should be used for kids to build a better education. We should be able to make them more literate than they are. Lynne is the education person here, she should know. I got into that debate with many people, I can tell you - a lot of academics who wanted to lynch me, both black and white ...

Ms WALKER: Absolutely!

Madam CHAIR: I have a firm belief, unless we – and all of us, we all know that if we do not educate our kids what future do they have ?

Mr LOHMEYER: It is interesting to work with different people. Some of those older people who grew up in the mission days with the mission schools, where they had to go to school and they learnt to read and write in English ...

Mr KELLY: Most of them have died.

Mr LOHMEYER: A lot of them have died. But, their writing and their literacy skills are absolutely superb.

Madam CHAIR: There has been a 20-year gap.

Mr LOHMEYER: Yes, and then there was the drop and ...

Ms SHEPHERD: Their grandchildren are illiterate.

Mr LOHMEYER: Yes.

Ms SHEPHERD: A lot of their grandchildren. I can remember when I first came here, Aboriginal people had that script - that beautiful writing that would put me to shame, it was so lovely, so literate. That seems to have disappeared.

Ms WALKER: And in northeast Arnhem Land where I am from, they are the leaders in our community.

Mr LOHMEYER: That is right.

Ms WALKER: They are in their 50s and 60s. We get leadership fatigue with those people trying to deal with the issues in their community. At least there is leadership there.

Mr LOHMEYER: Yes, and then there is the next level down where the leadership is not there, quite often.

Ms SHEPHERD: I want to say something optimistic and, then, I have to go. We are talking about the worst end of it here, are we not? We are talking about hopelessness and grief, and all those terrible things and the worst of it. But, we must not forget ever that there are many, many Indigenous people leading very good lives, looking after their families. I am sure they are in the majority who are doing the best they can with what they have to lead good, decent lives and to look after their children.

Ms WALKER: Absolutely. We have listened to so many stories as we have travelled around the Northern Territory. Katherine - I think you are right, Geoff, you are right - is about going to grassroots level. It is about recognising that suicide is a symptom of something much, much deeper at a personal, family, and even a community level. From what we have seen where there are those pockets of success where communities are grappling with their issues, they work because they do not necessarily have any government funding, but they deal with it themselves, not waiting for someone who can fly in for two days a month. I saw it. It has been turned around at a little place called Ski Beach, which is about 15 km outside of Nhulunbuy, where they had a really high rate of suicide, particularly males.

The last suicide in that community was the day the Prime Minister visited in 2008. A young fellow, who danced that day for the Prime Minister - wonderful young man - somehow, got hold of grog, got drunk, had a fight with his wife, stabbed her - did not kill her – and, in a great sense of shame and realisation about what he had done, killed himself. That became a turning point for that community in dealing with what they were facing. It was about stopping the blame game, stopping the blame on gulka, facing up to the fact that people could actually take their own lives and were doing so for all sorts of reasons under the influence of alcohol or whatever. It is that group out there called – it is quite a mouthful – Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Group. It is mainly women – mothers, grandmothers, and aunties - who are talking about this.

They managed to get in touch, just through a chance conversation with Wesley Mission when Gayili Marika was in Darwin. They provided support to that community because they wanted it, and trained people up about what to look for, what sort of system they would have in place so there was always a family member - someone could always be called on if they were watching a young one who they thought was at risk. They have learnt to recognise what the 'at risk' signs were.

At the same time, it is about that community recognising that alcohol is a big issue in people's lives, that it is about getting kids to school as well, to keep as much normality in life as possible and about getting kids involved in sport.

We heard from CAYLUS in Central Australia and we have heard from other people who provided evidence to us about the importance that sport gives for kids who do not have family who look after them, but having that collectiveness that comes with sport, achieving, building self-esteem, making them feel like they have done something. There is just a whole heap of factors that come together

Ms GANLEY: There is also the physical high.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, the release of endorphins.

Mr LOHMEYER: What we have done with our program at times is grab a group of young people and go out to Emu Springs and camp there for a week or two. They hunt, fish, do small group activities, team building activities and then when we return we will continue to work with them, abseiling, rock climbing fishing and getting onto the ground and it really works; it really does. It is grounding. It gives them that initial grounding.

Mr KELLY: Marion, in relation to you question earlier of what I wanted to say or what I would like to do, one thing I would say is get a backbone Australia. In your backyard you have a big problem with Indigenous people. Like Katherine said, you need people on the ground in the communities developing, working and getting things done. Second, you need to find where all the dollars that have been given to Aboriginal places and organisations - be audited. Has the money been spent in the correct and right way and right places? Third, these communities must have a 10-year plan in place so ongoing funding can be there. Whether the government likes it or not, the parliament or whatever - that is the only way we are going to survive - to get people in there. If it works, then they can set up another 10-year program and keep it going, 10 years and 10 years. If we do not do that, we are wasting our time here. That is what I would say to these guys.

Mr FORDE: Much money spent in the wrong areas.

Madam CHAIR: That is good, Doug.

Mr KELLY: We sit here and we can come up with every little excuse for things that go on. I have worked with all of it - alcohol, drugs, sniffing, domestic violence, alcohol problems, the lot. We are still going around and we do not know how much has been given to certain areas. I do not. Is it being spent in the correct way? How much is going to certain other things like housing and education? Is all that money going into the right place or is it going somewhere else?

The man here has tried his butt off to support the workers – on the ground. Katherine is probably trying to do the same thing as well, and we are trying to do the same thing. We need to ensure the communities with GBMs do this type of thing - put those plans into place and say right, 10 years.

Alcohol, like a justice program. I put an application in and have not heard anything about it, but a job was coming up and people - I will give you an example, Kalkarindji has a beautiful clubhouse, nice little place where you can have a quiet beer blah, blah, blah, blah. The problem is the kids are outside the fence. 'Mum, buy me this, buy me a drink, buy me food, buy me this and buy me that'. Those kids should

not be there, those kids should be home with their family not sitting there asking people for drinks. When they finish they run up to the hill, on the jump-up, somebody goes down and buys all the grog, brings it all back and they sit there. The next day you read in the paper someone was run over. It is not only happening there; that is an example.

They are talking about putting a small shed further back off the road. Come on! There has to be other solutions. Work something out with the people in the community. Give them ownership of the program and say: 'You are in charge of this so start doing something to stop all these deaths, alcohol problems, domestic violence and sniffing problems and all that stuff that goes with it'.

We are caught out all the time being suckers because that is what we are. We are being sucked in and are not getting the support that should be out there. We had millions of dollars with the intervention, where is it going? The shires and everyone else ...

Madam CHAIR: The last financial year, Doug, \$1bn.

Mr KELLY: The received a lot of money, where did it go? Where has it gone?

Madam CHAIR: \$1bn was spent in remote Indigenous communities. It is huge money.

Mr KELLY: I am sorry. It should be used for setting up people who are going to be there for life.

Ms VICKY L: Marion, what are the chances of building an agenda - it is actually there – and, then, actually putting something ...

Madam CHAIR: Vicky, I will go back and check. We can ask the department for some ... My recollection - and do not quote me on this, I will go back and check on this - I remember when the VSA legislation was going through. There were VSA places allocated to each of the regions. I will go back and I will check on that. Vendale or Kalano should have got some VSA places. But I will check on that.

The hospital as well was given detox beds, because we know with any substance abuse, any addictions, you have to have detox. You can have rehab facilities but, unless you have the detox facilities in place, forget about it.

Ms VICKY L: Also, too, another thing. You know how Geoff was saying there is violence, there is drinking. What are the chances of us building on Vendale to have our own CAAPS here? Because we are forever sending our families to Darwin to keep them together, so we do not have to remove their children - so they are together as a family going to rehab. They get lonely. What is the chance of us having our own here, one-stop shop?

Ms GANLEY: Vendale has an application in with the Aboriginal Benefits Account. It went in, in June last year.

Ms VICKY L: Yes.

Ms GANLEY: The Northern Territory Department of Health has said they will provide program funding, but Vendale needs to find the capital - the actual place to build. So NTG – this is what Casey has told me ...

Ms VICKY L: Yes.

Ms GANLEY: ... is that NTG has said: 'Yes, we will provide the program funding, but you need to find the ...

Ms VICKY L: But hasn't Vendale got a big – that is all their property or they just own that bit?

Ms GANLEY: Yes, they have the property.

Ms VICKY L: They have the property.

Ms GANLEY: They just need to build.

Madam CHAIR: But it is the infrastructure.

Mr LOHMEYER: It is the infrastructure, and they have not heard anything since.

Madam CHAIR: It is the infrastructure that is needed in place. I said to – what was that young lady that came ...

Mr KELLY: The two guys from Kalano – where were the dollars for Kalano that they all got?

Ms VICKY L: It is just sitting there doing nothing.

Madam CHAIR: What was that young lady – she was with ...

Ms GANLEY: Jeanette Callaghan?

Madam CHAIR: Jeanette. Jeanette is going to get us the submission they have put in with the ...

Ms GALEY: Kasey sent over.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, that they put in.

Ms SHEPHERD: The detox beds in Katherine Hospital are not operational, are they?

Madam CHAIR: No, but I will find that out because there were detox beds and ...

A Witness: Two beds.

Madam CHAIR: That is right, two beds. That was based on the numbers that were going through those Rock Hole rehab and - what was the other facility down on Giles Street?

A Witness: KADA.

Madam CHAIR: Yes. So, looking at all those numbers, it was seen ...

Mr KELLY: The sobering-up shelter.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, the sobering-up shelter, that is it.

Mr KELLY: Yes, the spin dry.

Madam CHAIR: So, looking at all of those, they decided that there were two detox beds. But, the rehab facility was Vendale, because that was the settlement of the native title in this one.

Mr LOHMEYER: And Vendale's application is for 30 youth beds. So, it is building an area - I think it was 15 for VSA, a number for alcohol, and a number for others. Yes. But, that is youth specific. What Vicky is asking is, is there an area for building a family area for rehab.

Ms VICKY L: For children to go to there with their parents.

Mr LOHMEYER: So that mum, dad, and the kids - the whole lot - can go together. That is a really important issue, I think.

Ms VICKY L: Yes, because ...

Ms GANLEY: I thought Banatjarl were looking at that?

Ms VICKY L: It is a women's ...

Mr LOHMEYER: Banatjarl is a women's area. We make use of Banatjarl at times for taking the kids camping. Again, it is ...

Ms VICKY L: Yes, it is the ...

Ms SHEPHERD: But that is where the families can stay together, you are talking about?

Ms VICKY L: Yes, mate. What we are finding is we send all the families together to CAAPS and they do get lonely. So, either over a Christmas break but, more importantly, they have to go back for ceremony, for funeral and all that. So, they have to come all the way back here and, then, they go all the way back, so we get something here. Also, with Vendale, they want to stay here but, then, they cannot have their children in there. So, the children come into care and it puts more pressure on them. We would rather them deal with it as a family.

Ms WALKER: It is really disruptive for the family.

Madam CHAIR: Did you know CAAPS has that model?

Ms VICKY L: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: CAAPS has that model, so there should not be a barrier to Vendale doing that.

Ms VICKY L: No.

Mr KELLY: You have that first six or seven weeks where you cannot take your children there.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, but if there is a need to extend it, Doug, they will. I met with the management there because there were some people coming from my electorate who wanted to bring their kids and they needed a longer time frame in which to do it. Sometimes they will waiver it if you ...

Mr KELLY: When I ring them they normally say to me: 'No, we do not like children with them for the first six weeks because that is the hardest part for them to stay there. They do not want any distractions, so after six weeks, yes.

Mr FORDE: You are basically saying we need supported accommodation for the people that are sent there - for families. Even if they are not with them for six weeks, they still have somewhere where they are not sitting there worrying about them.

Ms VICKY: They get on the bus, go out there and come back. They do not have to drive three-and-a-half hours.

Madam CHAIR: Years ago that is what Corroboree Hostel, and other hostels were for.

A Witness: Corroboree is full all the time.

Madam CHAIR: Pressure was put on Corroboree and it turned into medical beds.

Mr FORDE: The problem here is they have made it difficult for people to drink in the communities so they come into town. Kununurra and Broome have huge, huge problems because they have stopped the drinking in Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek. The same thing is happening here. Then they bring in rules like if you get done – when I was working somewhere else I had an old lady come into the office and said: 'I went to the police and got locked up last night' - lovely lady, long-grasser, not an aggressive lady at all just likes to drink. She said: 'I got this paper'. I said: 'You have been put on a three month drinking ban' because she has been there three times within three months.

Mr LOHMEYER: Then if she breaches that it will be six months.

Mr FORDE: And then 12 months, but there was no support for her whatsoever. She had no idea why she was given this piece of paper.

Alcohol is a big problem here and it is one of the reasons - what is going on about that. It is harder for us to buy alcohol in town. They have tried pretty well everything, but everybody who wants to drink is coming in from the communities and there is nowhere for them to stay. The people who genuinely want to come into town to make a better life for their families - we cannot find anywhere for them.

As you said, Corroboree is full. Get people back into the communities, that is the biggest problem. Give them ownership of their Country; give them ownership of their community.

Ms SMELLIN: Nine times out of 10 we will send them back to their community because there is nowhere for them to stay.

Mr FORDE: They do not want to go there.

Ms SMELLIN: They do not want to be there and now they are out on the road drinking and getting hit by cars.

Mr KELLY: They do not want to give up so we say: 'You have to go back to your community', racism.

Madam CHAIR: What?

Mr LOHMEYER: Racism. Balanda says you have to go back to your community - racism.

Mr KELLY: 'Get back to your community. You mob out of here', that is racist. I had to walk up: 'Get out, do not come back', no problem.

Madam CHAIR: How is that racist?

Mr KELLY: That is what they will tell you. 'You been racist to me'.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, it is a no win situation. I do not advocate drinking in communities at all.

Mr FORDE: No, I am not saying drinking in communities but perhaps making safe - there is no reason why there cannot be responsible drinking. I come into communities ...

Ms SMELLIN: If you told an alcoholic to just drink one a night ...

Mr FORDE: No, but there is community in the Top End where they work and they go ...

Madam CHAIR: That is the myth. I am from the Tiwi Islands and the Tiwi people have always had wet canteens in each of their communities. It is open slather. They have always had their own clubs and have always been in control of their clubs. The majority of Tiwi people are in Darwin.

Mr FORDE: Are they back in their community?

Madam CHAIR: No, they are not in their community; they are in Darwin getting drunk.

Mr FORDE: Have they shut the canteens?

Madam CHAIR: No, their clubs have always operated. The myth is people move from these communities, they do not. They move for various reasons, and some of it is they get in trouble because they do things in communities. If we had better policing services, if we had better health services, if there was infrastructure that supported expanding those clubs it may work differently. I had one community that used to trade at lunchtime. Nobody worked after lunch. You could not get one person to work.

Mr LOHMEYER: And, of course, the other issue ...

Madam CHAIR: There are pros and cons.

Mr LOHMEYER: ... in that is the underlying reason that the drinking is occurring. Until we can address those issues ...

Mr FORDE: Like Borroloola has taken on the ownership of the drinking problem and they brought in a lot of rules. But, that was brought in by the community, it was not brought in by me or by the government or anything like that – 12 cans.

Ms WALKER: You are right, Geoff.

Mr KELLY: That is just like I was telling you about in Kalkarindji one night. People go there, they have a drink. While they are having a drink they get their wives to go and get the grog from Top Springs, which is an hour-and-a-half, two-hour drive from it - loaded with kids. They drive all the way back. As soon as they

come out of the thing at 8 o'clock, the wives are there with a boot full of grog - rum, whatever it is. Then, they go back up on the hill and they drink it.

Madam CHAIR: I also know the background, though ...

Mr KELLY: So what about the kids? The kids do not get a feed ...

Madam CHAIR: But, Doug, I also know that ATSIC provided funding to a certain council in that region to buy that licence off Top Springs, which they did ...

Mr KELLY: And they sold it.

Madam CHAIR: ... to try to deal with that, and they sold it back to a ...

Mr KELLY: Because they wrecked it.

Madam CHAIR: ... white hotelier who just went back to the same practice.

Mr KELLY: But, it is under questioning now, because what they are doing is they are going to put back in that little permit system where you go there and you have to show your permit.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr KELLY: Now, that only entitles you to whatever amount they want to put on the this thing. That is what they are going to try to trial.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr KELLY: Right, now ...

Madam CHAIR: Who is the new manager of Topy?

Ms SMELLIN: A woman named – isn't it Marlene or ...

Mr KELLY: A blonde sheila, isn't it?

Ms VICKY L: Doesn't Milton own it.

Mr KELLY: Milton Jones run it or owns it.

Ms VICKY L: Milton Jones owns that.

A Witness: Yes.

Mr KELLY: He does not own it, does he? He (inaudible) from the cattle (inaudible)?

Ms SMELLIN: The O&H isn't it? Sorry, the helicopter company.

Madam CHAIR: I just could not believe Top Springs when I came to this region and I went out there. It was just ...

Mr KELLY: Well, I went off my head and said: 'You mob should have spoken to me about that'.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr KELLY: But, anyway, that is what they do. Right? Now, if you get caught – say, for instance, you have a permit to drink in the community and I have not, and I give you the money to buy me a carton and you get caught - that means you will lose your licence for 12 months as well as me.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr KELLY: And I think it is one way of going, but I do not know if it will work.

Mr LOHMEYER: The other thing the person can do, if you do not want to buy the alcohol - and it is happening - is that a person can apply to the Alcohol Tribunal and say: 'I want to go on the banned drinking register because I want to stop humbugging'.

Ms GANLEY: And a lot of people are doing that.

Mr LOHMEYER: There has only been one person who has done it in Katherine.

Ms GANLEY: Apparently, it is a phenomenon - I have heard of it being a thing that ...

Madam CHAIR: Around Darwin there are a lot of people doing that ...

Mr LOHMEYER: They are starting to do it.

Madam CHAIR: ... because they are just sick of being humbugged.

Mr LOHMEYER: Yes, because I am on the tribunal.

Mr FORDE: I put my wife on it because I was sick of being humbugged.

Madam CHAIR: Well, you can put yourself on it.

Mr LOHMEYER: Being on the tribunal ...

A Witness: It did not work.

Ms VICKY L: Marion, in regard to – it has nothing to do with this, but – overcrowding house. I cannot believe - when I was growing up as a kid in Alice Springs, houses were built for families. Here they have about 20 people in one house and the housing mob come: 'Do not worry, we are going to build you another big house'. So, they build a five-bedroom house and the problem shifts from that house to that house.

When I was growing up as a kid, they made them 20 people - they split them up. So, they made a two-bedroom unit, they made just a shelter with a concrete toilet, shower, big sink for the men. There might have been four men out of that 20 people. So, that was theirs.

There is another one there where they did not want a house, they just wanted the shelter to pull the thing down when it rains, and just a toilet. So, there was no tiles, they said: 'No, we do not want tiles. We do not want that kind, we just want this kind so we can put the hose through it'. A \$120 000 house - why do they not split it to fit the needs of those 20 people ...

Ms SHEPHERD: Because someone said it is discrimination.

Ms VICKY L: ... instead of 20 people moving into the next house? Do you know what I mean? Shifting the problem from one – and you know that young fellow, that 17 year old, that 16 year old who is having problems? Why not put him with the old people. Say: 'Okay, this is your area over here, not in the one five-bedroom house'.

See, that is where the problem starts because they do not care about that 17 year old, what he wants, or what he wants to do. What are his chances of living on his own or trying to get out ...

Madam CHAIR: Vicky, are you talking about Kalano and housing around these camps?

Ms VICKY L: On the camps, yes.

Madam CHAIR: There have been some good changes in Alice Springs. In my electorate, where many new houses have gone in, communities are doing cluster homes. They are doing things like that so they accommodate their young people, their elders, and young husbands and wives ...

Ms VICKY: But living separately, not all in one house.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, but you could have three dongas on one area and keep the family unit together.

Ms VICKY: It is still not good enough. In the olden days old men used to live long way. They had their shelter and that old man said: 'I am sick of this mob, they are stealing. There is nowhere to lock food'. My uncle just parked a car there. It could not go anywhere, but it was lockable and all his stuff was in there. When the man and woman would fight they would go to that old man. They would send that young fella over there and he would be in the men's, (inaudible) we call it, the men's area. He would go there for a cooling down period and then he would come back. You do not see that anymore. It is just shifting the problem. They have taken the grog away from the community and that are coming here now.

Madam CHAIR: In defence of the Northern Territory government, we did not put the restrictions on these remote Aboriginal communities. That restriction came in with the intervention.

Ms VICKY: It is all about re-educating around alcohol. Say they can have a permit now.

Madam CHAIR: It is, but it is going to take a lifetime. There has also been research, Vicky, that shows - I am always called a racist, and I find that hard, but research has shown for Indigenous people throughout the world, substances are not in our genetic makeup.

Ms VICKY: Yes, because we have not been taught how to drink around the table.

Madam CHAIR: .When you look at chronic illnesses, research shows our bodies are not equipped for it. That is the reality. It is not about being racist. Do you say because I am black I have this genetic makeup? Yes. Our bodies do not deal with substances and much research has gone into that showing Aboriginal people's bodies will never adjust to substance abuse.

Ms SMELLIN: The generations have not grown into it. It is in our blood.

Ms GANLEY: Even rehabs in the cities have a success rate is 3% and they are 12 step programs. Rehab is not going to fix the problem.

Ms VICKY: If we empower our people to take up positions on Vendale - that is what they want to see. They do not want to see Balanda mob coming in saying they have to do this and that. An Aboriginal person will say: 'Do not tell me what to do because you have not seen what I have seen. You do not know how I live. It is all right, you are going back to town'. Straightaway you have lost them.

If you have Indigenous people and educate them - they do not know. They just do a hospitality course.

Madam CHAIR: That is true, Vicky, but I have also seen in this town the politics amongst the Aboriginal organisations themselves ...

Ms VICKY: Exactly, they are fighting for that funding.

Madam CHAIR: We talk about tall poppy in mainstream; tall poppy amongst blackfellas! That is where some reality checks ...

Mr KELLY: We get that every day of our working life.

Madam CHAIR: ... that honest discussion amongst Aboriginal people. We can blame governments, we can blame organisations ...

Ms VICKY: No, we have to take it on ourself.

Madam CHAIR: What are we not doing to fix these problems? We blame everybody else; we push it on everybody else but do not look at ourselves. Too often it is easier to push it away and blame everybody and not take responsibility for it.

On that note, I am conscious of time. I thank you all for this interesting discussion. Do not worry about the discussion between Doug and me, we are old friends and we always have this ...

Mr KELLY: I just like to get you worked up.

Madam CHAIR: I have not changed.

Ms VICKY: Cannot help himself no matter where I take him.

Mr KELLY: That is life.

Madam CHAIR: At least we can laugh about it, Doug.

Mr KELLY: That is right.

Madam CHAIR: I thank you all. There will be a transcript available. If anyone would like what they said to be kept out of the public arena there are details where you can notify the Secretariat – if you do not want your comments to go up.

A Witness: Just do not use my name.

Madam CHAIR: Ned Kelly I will say. Thank you very much.

The committee concluded.
