



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY

Substance Abuse  
in Remote Communities:  
Confronting the Confusion and Disconnection

*Volume Two:*  
*Transcripts of Hearings and Official Briefings*  
*29 November 2005 - 26 July 2007*

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Appointed 17 August 2005  
Elected Chair 23 August 2005  
Australian Labor Party  
Member for MacDonnell. First elected 18 June 2005  
Other Committees: Subordinate Legislation and Publications

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### **Cover taken from a painting by Ms Alison Anderson, MLA**

*Kuyawana Putukulini - 'Confusion and Disconnection'*

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination - Racing, Gaming and Licensing**

*Tuesday 29 November 2005*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary to the Committee  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Dr Ian Crundall, Director Racing, Gaming and Licensing Policy  
Ms Elizabeth Morris, Executive Director Racing, Gaming and Licensing Policy

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of the proceedings*

The Committee convened at 10.52am.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I would like to say thanks to my colleagues on the other side and please don't vote against me on anything. (laughter)

**Dr Crundall:** Thank you for inviting us along, when we were asked to come along it was to sort of give a bit of an update I think, on where government's response to alcohol issues are and the Minister made a statement in October that outline where things had gotten to since the alcohol framework document was put to Cabinet late last year, and we have been told we have got a very short time, so it is really to give you a 'thumb-nail' sketch of what is happening, what is going to happen. I am quite happy to answer questions along the way, or answer at the end.

Just quickly, the history of where government has got to is based on the Minister's '5 point plan' that he talked about in 2003. Then there was the alcohol framework exercise which canvassed the whole Territory and with every submission that has been written to the Licensing Commission for the last 20 years. It produced a report with some 64 recommendations. Government has been through those and endorsed some, rejected a few and is looking at further work on others. Then just more recently, there were a couple of election promises made and those have really culminated today with the Anti-Social Behaviour Act and changes to the Liquor Act, we can talk about those.

Just very briefly, the approach that has been taken now is really about whole of government or whole of community and the idea is to get better integration and coordination across what various departments are doing. There is a lot of resources already invested in dealing with alcohol issues, but in many respects their functioning without linking to each other, and so part of this is to try to find some efficiencies and make sure things are better targeted. So that is great efficiency and effectiveness to remove duplication wherever possible so we can divert resources and to have greater consistency in the sort of approaches that different departments are actually taking.

A number of initiatives are put in place to achieve this, and one is this new Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination that has been established within Racing, Gaming and Licensing of Treasury, it really has, as I see it 2 major focuses. One is to have that oversight of what is happening in government and be a single port of call, if you like, to say what's happening, where's it happening and who is doing what and who's not doing what. And the other is to bring government closer to local communities in developing their management plans and it reports to the Minister and then the Cabinet.

There is to be a sub-committee of the CEO coordination group set up and they are to ensure that different departments work closer together and actually agree on what other priorities and making sure that there achieved every year, and they will be supported by senior officers from each department who will actually do the 'nitty gritty' negotiation of what we are going to be doing or not doing.

Every department is expected to sign off on particulars on an annual basis, a lot of them will be things that they currently do but we may identify new things for them and to try and get that by accountability. There will be sections in each departmental annual report which has to detail which departments have contributed and within the Treasury annual report there will be a section from the Office of Alcohol Policy which talks about any whole of government or community based initiatives. There will also

be reports to the Assembly through the Minister and we are more than happy to come and talk to the select committee.

A second feature of the government's approach is to extend the participation or input of community and industry particular. At the moment it is fairly ad hoc how it operates, but we are actually putting in some formal advisory structures so industry can tell us what they think might work or won't work and we can use them as a sounding board. Also to have a couple of representative committees of community, at the moment there is thoughts of having one from the central area and one from the Top End and they will be supported by the Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination. There is also a very strong push to work on the community development model, which is local communities identifying their priorities and the sort of activities that they want to engage in to try and address those.

An allowance has been made for the development of local management plans and supply plans. I suppose the Tennant Creek trial, the Alice Springs Liquor trial earlier in 2000 is sort of an example of what that might be, where communities say 'we want something done' but it is about communities identifying how much access they want to liquor and also any other sort of supporting strategies that might go around it in terms of education or treatment or enforcement any of those sorts of things.

There will be local management committees set up, we still have to look very carefully at who is going to be on them and how they are going to operate but we certainly want committees that are strong in the local community, and I should point out that these are probably the large urban centres that will clearly have these plans, but it is also allowable for the smaller Aboriginal communities.

Groote Eylandt is looking at some now on the Tiwi Islands and we expect as communities want them, will spend more time working for them. There will be a look at the legislation and certain to make sure that what communities want in their plans are actually doable and that the resources can actually be made available for it to happen, so to try and remove any impediments that communities might find and try to get their wishes sort of put into place as much as possible.

The Office of Alcohol Policy will try and make sure that communities have access to the right departmental resources, often it's a case of people just don't know where to go in the government or one hand is not talking to the other, so the office has a key role in keeping that sort of communication going.

We want to make sure that local communities have access to information and data about what is occurring so they can make some informed choices and there are some limited funds for developing these plans. The funds that have been made available are top-up to whatever is already available through different departments. And there will be some effort put into looking at partnerships, particularly with industry or other funding bodies to try and bring money into the system.

**Ms Morris:** Just with the local management committees, a lot of communities have a quite active committee whether it is the community home structure committee or the crime prevention committee, it seems as though for whatever reasons a particular area of that committee is strong in the area.

So it is not intended that we create a whole new committee, but if there is, for example in Gove there is a really strong community home link, committee in Katherine is a strong committee. To use those structures in committees rather than

creating a whole new system, because it is the same people who go to those meetings all the time.

**Dr Crundall:** And I am off to see the Katherine group straight after this. But as much as possible you are working within the structure that already exists because there is such a multitude of them already.

There is some attention being given to treatment interventions and the Department of Health and Community Services just completed a review of the sort of services that are already out there and now they are taking their results to look at where can they 're-jig' what's available where they can invest or re-invest their resources, that may take some negotiation. I think there is also to be a review of looking at early intervention as much as possible, so opening up the sort of sights where people can get assessed and where they can be referred to. All that will be determined by what resources are available I guess, and people adopting different practices.

One of the clear recommendations from the Alcohol Framework was to start looking at strategies that provide some protection for families, not necessarily people who drink within families but those who have particularly their finances used up by drinkers. There are a couple of programs that are currently running in different parts of the Territory, but we want to look at something that probably can be utilised right across the Territory, so hopefully that will provide families with more of a tool to look after themselves.

This major initiative is the alcohol courts and anti-social behaviour, no doubt you have heard a lot about that today and Elizabeth might want to talk about what has actually happened there.

**Ms Morris:** Has everybody seen the media releases today?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** We haven't seen anything yet either.

**Ms Morris:** I guess the part that concerns our area is in relation to the setting up of an alcohol court, which can grant alcohol intervention orders or prohibition orders. However, both of those need to be precluded by some kind of criminal offending alcohol intervention orders of serious offending. Prohibition orders show that we are not looking at a gaol sentence, so it is more the puppet nuisance, puppet disorder kind of offences.

One of the other major parts is the dry areas for private premises, either private premises or private premises that are open to be used by the public, like for example, a church or something like that, and people will be able to make applications to have their house declared a dry area and if the Licensing Commission grants that application, after a short amount of consultation with the people who live there and the people who own the property then signs go up and nobody can possess or take alcohol into that property otherwise there is a fine of up to \$500 and the alcohol gets taken away.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Why not Sunday, how do you do that?

**Ms Morris:** Except there is a religious clause. Alcohol is permitted for the purpose of religious use in ceremonies.

There is also a provision for it if you are taking alcohol through an area, for example, at the shopping centre applies to become a dry area, you go into Coles and you buy

your grog and you take it out, you are not committing an offence there because you are taking it through, but if you sat in the foyer and drank it then that would be unlawful.

There is another raft of legislation in relation to residential tenancies and public tenancies, but all of that will come in, in the next couple of days.

**Mrs MILLER:** I bet there will be some people talking on this Bill.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** There will be some people saying 'Wow', it is a good one.

**Ms Morris:** The Alcohol courts will be a bit like the drug court or the formal name of the drug court is the 'credit court' and they will only have clinicians in Alice Springs and Darwin.

**Dr Crundall:** Initially.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I was just going to say are there plans to have them in other areas as well, eventually?

**Ms Morris:** I guess it would depend on the success of the system. But the dry areas stuff, anybody from anywhere can apply for that.

**Dr Crundall:** Another major initiative which is well under way is to actually re-write the Liquor Act from scratch. It has been in existence for over 20 odd years and has been amended and agreed on an ad hoc basis over that time, so now we are looking at it in a more consistent framework, to bring it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a project team working to a Steering Committee and it's due to be finished by the end of next year because there is a fair bit of new material that will need to be included plus the consultation that inevitably goes with it.

Some of the elements that are scheduled to be looked at in the new legislation are, making sure that these liquor supply plans can work as they are developed by regional committees in regional areas. The introduction of Ministerial guidelines, to set some sort of policy parameters that the commission must take into account when reaching its decisions. It is looking at who makes the decisions in terms of licensing and it wants to free up the Licensing Commission to take on more of the more complicated and sensitive issues and delegate to the Director of Licensing on the more routine matters. So that will allow the commission to concentrate more fully on the more complicated matters.

There will be the introduction of community impact statements that people have to submit when getting a licence and allow other interested parties to make comment on whether they think it is appropriate or not.

There is some consideration being given to the actual term of licences, whether they're fixed periods or they can be renewed and looking at defining consistent licence conditions. At the moment there is only, I think, two categories of licences and you can't tell, two places might be in the same street but they operate very differently, so it will bring some consistencies to that so people know exactly what should be going on there.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So Ian, there's no fixed term at the moment is there? It is not like, forever!

**Dr Crundall:** Forever, it is all fixed.

**Mrs MILLER:** Will you be having a lot of consultation with communities, in relation to fixed term licences?

**Dr Crundall:** I think the process at the moment, is that there will be a position paper put out with a number of the arguments for and against I think, and just to stand out exactly who is interested in what outcomes, it is obviously not going to please everybody the whole act, but it is certainly going to try and address the major things that people have been talking about for years.

**Mrs MILLER:** Because it is quite a serious issue, and an important one for businesses. For instance, I am a former licensee of a takeaway and it would affect the dollar value that it would have on the business. We weren't a big grog place but we still sold it to holiday makers, so I mean it has a huge impact on businesses and the price you ask for your business.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well this is where I think you take the opportunity to say do you put up with anti-social behaviour versus your bottom line, whether you have a business and if you are a Territorian, you should be more concerned about anti-social behaviour problem to encourage other Australians and other tourists to visit the Territory and become Territorians rather than, just for the sake of the bottom line, creating more pubs to cause more anti social behaviour.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am not suggesting create more pubs at all, but what I am saying is that present businesses, you have to very careful about how you do this because...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Oh yes absolutely.

**Mr MILLS:** Can I just make a point of order, I think we will be having this debate.

**Mrs MILLER:** Sorry.

**Mr MILLS:** This is a briefing.

**Dr Crundall:** The other side of it is to look at how easily people lose their licence, these are the sort of features to look at but there is not the definitive answer yet. The introduction of harm minimisation audits on licensed premises, so it's not just serving, it is how you serve, the sort of environment you create, the sort of services you provide to people in terms of transport and support whatever, they will be part of the inspection regime. The notion of 3<sup>rd</sup> party supplies to intoxicated people, you can't supply to a person who is drunk but it's the case now that someone else will get it and then give it to them.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Sober Bob does it all the time.

**Dr Crundall:** There is a review of the penalties and sort of grading them to the extent of the breach and to actually increase the penalty margins at the moment and more stringent application processes, the Minister is very keen to not see any unchecked proliferation of licences, as he said.

**Mr MILLS:** I am just unclear about the third party supply, if I supply to you...

**Mrs MILLER:** No, if you come into my shop and you are drunk, I am not going to serve you drunk, in comes a nice sober person, sober person buys the grog goes out and gives it to the other person.

**Mr MILLS:** Ok, I understand, I have seen it happen actually...

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, many times.

**Dr Crundall:** There has been quite a focus on the Licensing Commission over the last couple of months, and the attempt has been to streamline its processes and make it more transparent in the decision making processes and the decision that it actually comes to. Already there has been a bit of a restructure of the commission, a reduced number of members and as I say, a review of what sort of issues they will focus on compared to the Director of Licensing.

There has also been a bit of a restructure of Racing, Gaming and Licensing as a support to the commission, to provide it with timely and comprehensive information and to do the investigations that are required. The Commission has to look more at mediation and conciliation between parties wherever possible, rather than having people have to confront each other all the time and to be less legalistic in it's process, so it is more user friendly for people that aren't used to courtrooms, and I guess that would engage the community much more on being able to take part and whether the licences are granted or not. But some of that work has already happened and will go on for a little bit longer. Do you want to say anything to this?

And of course, liquor outlets themselves will be a focus of what is going to be happening over the next little while, and it's really about getting rid of the irresponsible supply of alcohol, and there will be a requirement to have house management plans, codes and conduct for most places. One of the problematic areas I guess, is this notion of alcohol from mixed businesses, we all know that nearly on every street corner shop you can get alcohol and some places rely more heavily on that than others. Part of government's response is to look at how can we reduce that dependence on some outlets on alcohol, so they really do become alcohol as a sideline to there groceries or other business and not giving everybody alcohol when they require it, and of course that leads into the anti-social behaviour that goes on in urban centres etc.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You are looking at the fact that, only drive-in bottle shops can actually sell take-away grog on Sundays?

**Dr Crundall:** government made its decision very early on that it's going to maintain the system that is currently there, that only hotels can provide alcohol on Sundays. They were reluctant to open it up further to anyone else.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** No, I was thinking of closing it down, the take-away grog on Sundays. I mean the pub can still be open but having the drive-through bottle shop creates problems.

**Dr Crundall:** That could be possible.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Anything is possible?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, we want the best outcomes, and at the moment there is only a code of practice for the sale of alcohol on premises, so that is to be expanded to look at the actually promotion and advertising, particularly of take-away alcohol which is

becoming an issue because there is so many bargains that are put out there. And to provide a base for all this there is a commitment to ongoing evaluation and research, there will be a number of monitoring surveys done every few years. The first one is planned for late February, early March next year and it will be a household survey to give us a benchmark of what are people's current drinking patterns and some of their attitudes.

It is also recommended that we do one for youth as a particular group and a separate one for Aboriginal people for remote communities, because they will be quite distinct. So I think that is the first time that will be done in the Territory but they're to be regular so we can look at what is happening over the time. There is a commitment to evaluating any major policy or strategies that come into place. There is the maintenance of alcohol indicators, there is about 12 of them that range from consumption through to health measures, law enforcement, those sort of things and they will be publicly available and regularly updated and we hope that they will be available at a regional level too, so everyone knows exactly what is going on in their community.

And the other part is one of the roles of the Office of Alcohol Policy to keep an eye on where developments are going and the literature and best practice etcetera, and get that out to people and make sure they try and follow it. So that in a nutshell is where things are heading, some of it is already happening in place, a lot of it needs the ground work done and then quite a bit of thinking about exactly how we go about doing it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you Ian, any questions?

**Mrs MILLER:** Ian, are we able to have a copy of the presentation?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, I was about to ask that.

**Dr Crundall:** I don't know if that is pre-empting the bill being presented, isn't it?

**Mrs MILLER:** I don't think so, this is just very 'dot points'.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Well perhaps you should give it to us on Thursday.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I am not worried if you don't give it to me until Friday. I think we need it to be part of our paperwork...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I was saying to Ian, in regards to presentation. And the committee has to be independent as well...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And it is also confidential...you can't go and talk to the press...

**Mr KNIGHT:** The linkages, do you have any linkages so there would be linkages to the Anti-Discrimination Commission?

**Dr Crundall:** There may be avenues there, depending on what local communities come up with as far as plans. But certainly, we would be pursuing those whenever we needed and we would be finding out exactly what is required, if the community wants to make application, and see how the Commission sits with it these days, but clearly we have to get across what is available within the Northern Territory government as well as what the Australian government can provide as well as what

the community sector can provide and that it is sort of the job of trying to keep track of it all and making sure people get the right information.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I just have one other comment about the local Management Plans, there is a tendency, because of the way governments are structured that they follow the buckets of money, and they push those initiatives, the structure in a bucket of money, and then they say 'the committee is operating with buckets of money and then they funnel it in a community and say 'you have got to mirror what we are doing here', they are saying 'we are looking at alcohol, you have got to set up a committee to look at alcohol', rather than the community saying 'we have got a lifestyle issue here, we have got people all over the place which is linked to housing, it might be that the teenage blokes are out running amuck when we want them to settle down. So that is when we move into education, substance abuse, sport and recreation to housing to things like that.

They look at a theme and alcohol plugs into part of that, so it is easy for communities to understand a theme because it is all linked together and agencies come in on that theme, rather than force the community to break itself up and be overloaded with single committee meetings on everything. So there has to be an approach that is taken on the ground, rather than, because I just know that with most communities, like Katherine or Palumpa, they get tired they get absolutely strung out by these meetings after meeting, rather than having one that looks at something that they totally understand.

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, I would say that alcohol is a theme in some communities. I take the point and go back to what I said before, that we are actually looking at all these committees that exist, like the safe communities and the harmony groups etcetera, and try to see what we can do along there because alcohol is part of the problem and there are so many things that will address it, and the financial support that is being made available at this stage is really to support these committees to operate, but it is still looked at for communities themselves and each government department within existing resources should be working better together to get things done, so I do take your point. Yes, communities do get very, very tired and part of it will be when communities are ready, that is when we can respond to help, we are not going to go out there and say 'you have to have a committee', we will say 'when you are ready, we will do what we can to support you'.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks very much Ian, and on behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you Ian, Elizabeth and Brian for the presentation to this committee and we will make sure that we get copies of the presentation distributed to members of this committee, thanks very much. Have a safe Christmas.

Witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 1.41pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Papunya Community Meeting**

*Monday 20 March 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Mr Chris Natt MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary to the Committee  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Mr Brian Perry, Chief Executive Officer, Council  
Mr Lance McDonald, President, Council  
Ms Linda Anderson, Vice President, Council  
Mr Dalton McDonald, Councillor  
Mr Hughie Ward  
Mr Reggie Lankin  
Mr Sammie Butcher  
Mr Michael Nelson, AM  
Mr Matthew McHugh, Outside School Hours Carer  
Mr Dennis Manor  
Constable Deanna Collins  
Constable Rob de Vos  
Mr Syd Anderson  
Mr John Parkinson  
Ms Punata Stockman  
Ms Betty Brown

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 11:30am.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives of the Papunya community.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the Committee and remind you that evidence given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the Hansard record, I would ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear today. *[language]* I'm just translating what I said in English. You can start.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You want me to start?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Okay. We're interested in hearing about things at Papunya. I want you to be very frank with us. Tell us as it is at the moment and the sort of things, problems you have and the sort of solutions you think that will help you.

We want to know some of the good things, we want to know some of the bad things so we want you to tell us because we don't know and that is why we have come here. So whoever wants to start, please start. Lance, do you want to go?

**Mr McDonald:** Yes. My name is Lance McDonald. I am a local fellow from here and Council President, and on behalf of the people, we have difficult problem with petrol so we made some changes like the fuel AvGas, but still petrol is coming in from somewhere, and what worries us is some younger boys are leading to suicides. They are some problems that I am worried about.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Lance, about how many young people?

**Mr McDonald:** During the time that we had when the petrol was normal, there was more sniffers around here - - -

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So it has reduced down, the numbers?

**Mr McDonald:** Reduced, but still it worries us that they are still doing it. Sometimes, we as the council, talk to the parents. We try to tell them, but sometimes the parents don't talk to us much and we don't get along well with the parents. So they lead to reforms so that we could get together and work with the committee how we can develop this place better.

**Mr MILLS:** So, Lance, when the petrol was normal, about how many people would be sniffing, just roughly?

**Mr McDonald:** Roughly around about – I don't know - 30 or 20.

**Mr MILLS:** And now there's Opal, the number is smaller?

**Mr McDonald:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** So those ones that were sniffing before, are they still here or have they gone somewhere else?

**Mr McDonald:** Some of those that have been sniffing before, some of them quit, but we keep worrying about the main boys that have been sniffing for a long time. They are still doing it.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They've come into town.

**Mr McDonald:** What confuses us is, we've got AvGas fuel here and we don't know where the fuel is coming from. We know there's a roadhouse, *[inaudible]* roadhouse past our community. I don't know. Maybe somebody has gone to collect fuel from there. That is why we need to work together with the police here in Papunya so that we can have a strong leadership and show the kids the proper way of living.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So when cars come back from town, they would have unleaded fuel. Is that part of the problem?

**Mr McDonald:** Yes, some of the cars that maybe kids come in, they go there and camp and go and sleep, but there around the back, it gets ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Pinched there.

**Mr McDonald:** Pinched, yes. It is mainly the people with the vehicles, they don't really act to protect people and really be strong with the kids as well, tell them not to do it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Is there anybody selling fuel to the kids when they come back from Alice Springs with a car full of fuel, or are the kids just stealing the fuel from the cars?

**Ms Patterson:** My name is Linda Patterson. I am the Vice-President here. There are rumours going around like people are selling to play cards. People who have come in and sell petrol. Because we are not working together, we don't have the information whether it's true or not true.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Lance, why do you personally think they're sniffing for? What do you think?

**Mr McDonald:** They might be needing something, I don't know. What worries me is those kids are destroying themselves and sometimes, they push over their parents, especially the mothers or fathers. Some kids act really bad, some act really good, but I don't know what is the problem with them. We've tried to do something activities like take them down to the football, put disco for them, but for them, there is still not enough.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes. What do you think Linda?

**Ms Patterson:** I think they've still got a family problem, like the parents know. They have got to see that they are to do things that may help them get better, I don't know. I go around and ask some of the parents who haven't got *[inaudible]* cars, and I *[inaudible]* get more of what they think and what they might, you know, try and get help for them.

**Mr NATT:** Lance, what age span are they? What age do they start and what age do they go to? I know there is a bit of variation, but about what would it be? What age would they start at?

**Mr McDonald:** What worries me are those kids about 12 to 16. I don't worry about the older kids, but younger kids, it's a big problem for the Council.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Are there adults doing it too, sniffing petrol?

**Mr McDonald:** Yes, adults, and what we want to do is to tell people that are over 18, they should be punished for teaching the young kids.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And who are the ring leaders? Is it female ring leaders or male ring leaders?

**Ms Patterson:** A bit of both. Female and male.

**Mr NATT:** Are there many females sniffing? Less females than males?

**Mr McDonald:** It used to be more females, but now ...

**Mr KNIGHT:** So why do those ring-leaders want other people to sniff?

**Mr McDonald:** Sniffing is - people get petrol, they want to sniff, they feel bored, they tell other kids to do it, but that is the wrong thing.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So why do they tell other kids to do it for, do you know?

**Mr McDonald:** No. [*inaudible*] for them.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Matt, do you do the after school programs?

**Mr McHugh:** Yes. My name is Matt McHugh. I do the outside of school hours care, so I guess I am the Youth Activities Officer out here. The sniffing is a bit better than it has been in the past. It was a lot worse when I first got here.

Now a few people have stopped and a few people have gone from being heavy users to, I guess, occasional users of petrol. Like Lance said, Opal did have a bit of an impact on that. I guess one of the problems would be: is there a place to get Opal from in town?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One.

**Mr McHugh:** One place, so that is an issue. Another thing is they are bored, I guess. There's not - I mean, we can do things with them; we can play football, softball, do art in the afternoons, but they have got a real nocturnal lifestyle, I guess. They are out at night wandering around. There is not too much for them to do at night.

We can open up the hall - I don't want to have too much impact on school. We have young kids over there and then they will be there until late and won't be at school the next morning.

I see, if there was a place, maybe a building where there were some computers or some recreational activities where they could come in and we could close that place to have only the older ages in there, it might have an effect.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Are you just taking students, or are you taking anybody?

**Mr McHugh:** Anybody.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So the sniffers primarily don't go to school?

**Mr McHugh:** Well, I think the school has undergone a bit of a change now, where they're only doing middle school, which only goes up to about 15, I think, 15 to 16. So anywhere above that, the majority of the sniffer group is above that.

**Mr KNIGHT:** 15 and 16 and 17?

**Mr McHugh:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So that's a good idea to have a centre that they can go to and do things, like you say, computers and watch a screen, movies and pool tables and that sort of thing, get little competitions going. That is something that we need to put into communities to give people that social life that they are probably looking for. I mean, they like to get together.

**Mr MILLS:** I would just like to go back to the beginning. As a community, you know all the families here. Can you tell when a young one, who is very young, is likely to become a petrol sniffer? Can you see the warnings that there is someone who looks like if you don't get in early, they will go down the wrong track? Can you see it early? If you know the family, you know the history, you might be able to tell that this one could be at risk of becoming a petrol sniffer. Can you tell that?

**Ms Patterson:** We can tell things, you know. Like, if they are not at school, if they're hanging around all day with those gang of, you know, sniffers, they can get to that pattern where they can be, you know, start pushing at them.

**Mr MILLS:** So, Linda, do you think one way of telling is, if they are young, they don't go to school? If they don't go to school, they are young and they've got more time to wander around and go with the wrong group, right from the beginning?

**Mr Butcher:** I mean it's the ones that have been left behind by their families. Because parents, when they're young, drinking and *[inaudible]*. They want to grow up, think, I got *[inaudible]*. We got to go to them and ask them: 'Look, we are here to help you. You could be using us. You know, we're here to help you' because he has parents, role models. We don't want to let them think: 'Oh, we've been left here'. We're here to help them. All they got to do is ask because we will take care of them.

**Ms Patterson:** Things that they, you know, are missing out on. They sort of ask themselves questions, like 'I'm not getting those things that I need to get', you know, because they are not my exact parents.

**Mr MILLS:** Sure.

**Mr Butcher:** Because when you got children going bad, you need to get them before they get bad, get them and talk to them.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can more employment be generated - perhaps I could ask the CEO - to get the kids more involved in work programs so they are not so bored?

*[inaudible]*

**Mr Perry:** Brian Perry, Chief Executive Officer of Papunya Community Council. I have quite an extensive background in community development, therapeutic counselling, background studies in alcohol and other drugs and Aboriginal Studies. I have been here for 8 months now I have been the CEO since August 2005 and through the lens of a social scientist, everything being recorded here, thus far, is very accurate and to answer your question more specifically. One of the initiatives taken on in our application this year, through the ICC funding application is focusing on just that. We come here, we have no capacity to generate income and we're 100% reliant on funding and if we don't have funding to run any programs, than we cannot raise funding and therefore we cannot generate positions that you feel comfortable with the local people.

Having said that, since I've been here, I'm quite sick in the guts that the lack of quality services in this region to respond to this enormous issue of alcohol and other drugs and substance abuse. I have pursued avenues, through a community development approach, to link into services that can respond to issues here in Papunya in a meaningful, gainful way and I am very, very disheartened to find that no real services apparently exist in this region. So we can attempt to create diversionary activities for the population of all people here in Papunya. You have heard it reported that boredom is an issue and I will think that was one of the most important areas that need to be alleviated. The other one, referred to here is home life and they're two crucial areas I believe we need to focus on. The overall alternatives for the young people, give them some hope for the future. I don't want to sound too critical of everyone here, but we really need to ask questions of the Education Department as well, in so far as, in my experience we have no firm rock up here, we haven't got the capacity, and you ask the question why is it so? For me the answer is very obvious.

So I would think that, in my perspective, a social scientist perspective, to get on top of this situation, this is normal and I can't see a lot of change happening in the short term, but I am very optimistic within the long term, given various support from various levels of our government and community sector service providers, that we will address a lot of these issues in Papunya internally if you like, through creative rather than alternatives and we need government support, non-government support in helping us here in Papunya to achieve my vision which is actually a collective vision of the council whom I consider that I have close relationship with.

**Ms Patterson:** Can you just interpret what Brian just said.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Mr MILLS:** Brian is it? Can I ask you Brian, you describe that quality services must be delivered to address the problem, can you be more specific about what do you mean by 'quality services' that need to be delivered to address the problems we are describing?

**Mr Perry:** It's been my experience in creating the networks out here in this region, that a lot of the services seem to lack quality education for what they are doing themselves. It seems to me, that one of the services to come out here for and have failed, part of it is because they are trying to make a short term intervention, sort of

like a knee-jerk reaction situation. Now we are starting to really question those service providers, who they are, and what have they got to offer, and I am now telling them when they come here and want to do something, I turn them away with instructions 'Go away, seriously develop your plan or your proposal and then come back to me'.

**Mr MILLS:** The problem you describe, is not unique to Papunya.

**Mr Perry:** Beg your pardon?

**Mr MILLS:** The problem you describe I would say is not unique to Papunya.

**Mr Perry:** What they all say. All I can recall, is that in my experience being here in Papunya, we talk ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So when we are talking about getting government assistance, it should be long term you're saying, not short term? Not just a one off to get something going, but having a plan to make it work for a longer period?

**Mr Perry:** Well they ...

**Mr NATT:** You're saying you haven't had a focus over a long period of time, so that this particular problem what you're saying is; the agency is coming in fixing that problem for the time being but it just keeps recurring. So what you are saying is that you need something in there to focus so it covers a long period of time?

**Mr Perry:** Yes. Because the adverse effects with someone coming in for the short term and not going that far, disempowers this population further, it cripples them and takes away any further hope for a future. So their experience has been that it's great while it's happening, it was magnificent when it was happening don't get me wrong. Then when that's been withdrawn from this region, people have fallen further down in what I call the 'land of hopelessness'.

**Constable Devos:** Constable Robert DEVOS from Papunya Police. Just going back there regards to the sniffing and stuff. I have been here a short period of time but from what I have seen the actual community needs to take on a stronger role, there are sniffers blatantly walking around the streets under adults noses pretty much and nothing is said or done to stop these kids from walking around with an empty Coke bottle full of petrol. Just last month, the police compound probably 3 weeks out of 4 weeks we get sniffers breaking into the compound syphoning fuel out of cars, which we drain when we seize the vehicles, but also to the point of getting onto the ride-on lawn mover that we have there, taking fuel out of that.

Since then we've removed any petrol and obviously the break ins to the police compound have now reduced, but once again, we've heard whispers that people are bringing fuel in, from Alice Springs possibly, and selling the fuel off. But I think, as far as the community's concerned, people need to be willing to stand up and say look this person here is bringing the fuel in, are you willing to make a statement. Obviously police powers allow us to prosecute those people who are actually bringing in fuel and substances and selling it to other people.

But, as a starting point, people need to be willing to stand up and say 'look this is what's happening' and to also be strong enough to say to the kids if they are sniffing in the house or in the streets, to take the fuel off them instead of walking past and not really doing too much at all.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And do you get much reporting by members of the community about the children getting fuel from vehicles that come in from wherever they come in...

**Constable Devos:** Not really, it's more our experience dealing with the kids as we seize the fuel etcetera, there has been community members we have spoken to on the side, who have said things are happening ... people bringing fuel in. But to date, no one has come forward and said look this is the person who is doing it...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about the problem of Marijuana and alcohol?

**Constable Devos:** Alcohol is a problem. We do get information from various members saying when grog is coming in. I would say that it is pretty common knowledge that most of the members of the community know when police are working and when they aren't working. Grog tends to come in, in the early hours of the morning when they know we are not working. There are various bush tracks that people are using, that give them a back way through 5 mile, 3 mile, unfortunately through Haasts Bluff there, it is a non-restricted area, so they come through Hermannsburg up the back road.

Where we can, we do sit out, but sometimes we will sit there for 3 hours and not see a single vehicle. It is really in the lap of the Gods whether we get a vehicle or not. We have got a reasonable idea who is bringing the grog in, but unfortunately unless we have sound proof or evidence that the fellas are bringing it in, we can't do too much.

As far as Marijuana, once again whispers are that more has come into the community of late. We seized a vehicle just recently with Marijuana in it. Sniffers got into the compound that night, apparently the Marijuana was taken from the vehicle it was hidden in the seats. But once again, it is only hearsay, we have no strong evidence to say that it did happen. But it's up to the members of the community to say look this is what is happening and be willing to make that statement.

**Mr Parkinson:** My name is John Parkinson, I run the store. I have come from a couple of other communities and really, this is like 'Shangri-La', they are aggressive in other communities, as far as substance abuse goes, so it is a pleasure to be here but unfortunately I don't want this to go from what we have got now and in the end, to a community that no one wants to live at.

I run the store which is community owned, owned by obviously the people of Papunya. I have a problem running that business in that, we are continually broken into. At Christmas time we were broken into seven times in a 10 day period. We receive no funding for our store and obviously the profits derived from the store go back into the running and operational content of the store and any benefits or any profit that the store gets, we then give to the community such as we have men's business and we're the first ones to say we will help you out.

When the sniffers break in, firstly they steal the products and they wreck the shop but last time they broke in, they came and opened the compressors, the fridges and freezers. That was an \$8000 exercise just to fix the compressors from the damage that was caused there, as well as obviously it happens on a Saturday night, so by the time I get here on the Monday morning, I then had to throw out probably about another \$6000 worth of food. So that one incident cost the community in real terms, \$14 000. We don't get any funding for that and it's impossible to try and make that

up. I have no problems at all, thank goodness, with any sniffers coming into the store in an aggressive behaviour, but I have had problems.

I am liked by the community I would like to think, and I will have say, a lady will come to me saying my son's going crazy John, call the police please, he's trying to commit suicide. I will ring the police, big Bob and my mate were driving a prisoner down to Alice which left poor Dee by herself, now there is no way in the world anyone here would expect poor old Dee to go and take action against a young man, who's sniffing, who is obviously not right at that time. So I have actually gone with Dee and we drove around looking for this person and it was good, we had family members out looking for him, but he won't try and stop I think we've got to try and stop it before it gets to that stage. Now no one wants to see anybody get hurt and this is what is going to go on. We don't seem to have as many girl sniffers in town at the moment, because apparently a lot were taken out by, I am not sure which department, but about 6 weeks ago, I don't know if that is correct but, some ladies came into town and I think they were the drug arm of the Health Department. It's great, you do notice the difference.

Matt was right, it's a nocturnal problem, we don't really see many of them during the day and at night it is very hard to see anybody, but they seem to be up all hours roaming the streets and creating havoc, breaking into the shop, breaking into the police station, causing trouble at home, kids can't go to sleep so kids then are obviously too tired to go to school the following day. So unfortunately it is just like a big rolling stone, all these problems just put an effect on everybody on the community.

The decision has got to be made, it has to come obviously from the community, but it is a problem but unfortunately some hard decisions have to be made and they are not going to be made any easier, making the decisions down the track that is the worst part.

**Mr Butcher:** We live in the community here and we are not talking to each other. We are all part of the community and we need to be worrying about the whole community here. *[language]*

**Ms Patterson:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What Linda was saying is that, Aboriginal people have got to help those children. Not non-Indigenous people all the time, it's their children. We have to be at the forefront of this problem, helping the actual people.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But you need support as well. It has got to be 2 ways.

**Mr Minor:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Denis Minor. He was just saying that Sammy is the only one that tries to help the children and hunts the children away from the built up area, like the shop and the school, so that they are not breaking into government property.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I have lived in Tennant Creek, but I haven't lived around Alice Springs, but I understand that there is a lot of sniffing on this western side and on the eastern side there is no sniffing. Why is it, what is it about those communities on the eastern side that are different from the communities on the western side. What is different about the children or the families...?

**Mr Butcher:** They listen to their parents more.

**Ms Patterson:** They support each other.

**Mr KNIGHT:** In trying to understand substance abuse, it's not just Aboriginal communities, it's in the cities and the substance abuse in the cities maybe it's not petrol, maybe it's the drugs you get from the hospital, maybe it's these drugs that you can get from laboratories that people take when they go to nightclubs and stuff, it's the same thing. Substance abuse, I kind of describe it as, like somebody who is sick, a person is like a community and you get a community that can be sick and the person can be sick and what you see are sores, and those sores can be alcohol, they can be drugs, they can be petrol and when we are talking about programs and stuff, all we do, is we are putting bandages over those sores but we are not fixing them where the sore is coming from inside the person, or inside the community or society. So at the same time when we are talking about programs, covering up those sores. We need something going along side it to get people well, like antibiotics, if you have a sore you have antibiotics and it stops that sore from re-appearing.

With the community, you are trying to get programs and you have got the police out to try to stop those sniffers, what is going alongside that in the community, that's going to stop those families from being disrupted and the kids are getting disrupted and those things. Brian would you like to talk about that?

**Mr Perry:** If there is trouble with families I say nothing, and that is what I am saying, there has been too many interventions at the superficial level and they don't look at those other issues, they don't help with education, they don't help with that. They don't look at communities...

**Mr MILLS:** Sorry Brian, who's 'they'?

**Mr Perry:** Whoever comes in to do the intervention, outside service providers. In my mind, the programs have to be developed with more depth to include all the factors, like when the federal government was taking an initiative with the effect of petrol, that is good but it is not going to change anything, that is has to be supported by Northern Territory government initiatives. This council is very concerned and very proactive in developing approaches to these issues. But once again they are only one body they can't do it on their own.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You made a comment about the education before and education is the foundation. Smart kids make smart choices, you know, but kids can't get smart and they can't produce results unless they are at school. I know teachers are very passionate, there are some problem teachers, but by and large, generally teachers are people that go in there to produce good results for kids. But from where I come from, there is not a good attendance rate, the kids come for a few days and they disappear into town for a week, come back for a couple more days...

**Mr Butcher:** You have got to ask yourself, what the problem is. Is it the teachers or the students *[inaudible]*

**Mr NATT:** The parents are the other factor.

**Mr Butcher:** One time I acted like a teacher, and told all the kids, 'go to school'. Sat down with the kids and one of them could read, but people are leaving and they don't teach them a thing, so what is the problem, we have got to ask ourselves.

**Mr MILLS:** So what is the attendance rate at school like, here? So the service is provided but the attendance is not strong.

**Mr Butcher:** The school is there, but they don't go to school.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, and it's like if the crime is occurring the police are here but no reports are coming. The service is here, so that is what you are saying Sammy? The service is there but the community has to do its part to stand up and give support, the school is there, kids have got to go to school. What we need is partnership.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You talked about housing, and we drove around today and there seemed to be a lot of empty houses here and damaged houses. I mean if you are given a house you look after it.

When you talk about housing, I think there is Australia something like \$2b backlog with Indigenous housing and unless some government comes along and says ok, we are going to fund it, which I don't think that is going to be the case, they might increase it a bit but as I said it is not going to increase enough to satisfy everybody. It's a matter of utilising that money and also looking after the housing stock that is there.

**Mr MILLS:** Just imagine if there was a program that said that the money is now going to go to create the skills to fix up the old broken houses, not build new ones but to fix up broken houses and refurbish them. If you wanted to do that would there be enough interest in this community to train young people to learn the skills to fix up the old houses?

**Mr Butcher:** We have got 2 workers here, but they haven't got access to a car.

**Mr MILLS:** So you're saying that it's already here?

**Ms Patterson:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Linda is saying that the money is too low, Dalton and Reggie are on the IHANT program and Sammy just said that they're capable of doing the R&M there is no vehicle for them in order for them to go around the community to do it.

**Ms Patterson:** It is frustrating.

**Mr Butcher:** They can work, they know, they can do the job, they do a good job.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You have got a work force but you can't use them because there is not enough. Linda, how much difference and what sort of money do you get to work compared to, if you don't work. Is it worth while?

**Ms Patterson:** If someone is supervising that job, on full wages, that person pays us...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** This is through IHANT? The wages they are offering are not comparable, they are not good enough as an incentive for people.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What happens is that these people are CDEP participants, so they are on CDEP and they get a top up. What they are saying now is that the top

up is not good. Their full wages on the fortnightly basis for Dalton and Reggie is only \$480.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** \$480, so that is not much more than if you are on the dole.

**Mr KNIGHT:** That is a matter for your council to decide. It is up to your council, you can determine how much money you get paid on CDEP an hourly rate, determine how much top up you get when you get funded from IHANT, a figure. You have got to utilise that for your housing program and you can determine how much you pay, it has got to for materials, got to go for wages for administration, but your council has responsibility for determining what gets paid. With CDEP, you determine what hourly rate your participants get paid, so at the moment the base is about \$10 - \$11 and that worked out to about 18 hours a week, but you can decide that you want that rate to be higher and be less hours. So it comes back to the council to have a look at that.

**Mr Butcher:** I don't think CDEP is working, if you work you want to work for weekly wages, but the people don't see this, I wonder if they come back... *[inaudible]*

**Mr KNIGHT:** How many participants have you got here?

**A Witness:** 48

**Mr KNIGHT:** How many adult population have you got here?

**Mr Perry:** Adults about 250.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So you have about 200 people that are on unemployment. The federal government is talking about removing that remote area exemption, have they talked to you about that at all?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It is my understanding that it won't apply to places like Papunya, where there is no work available. But Alison was saying to us, when we went past the houses that are empty, that they need a lot of money to put back into making them liveable again, doing the maintenance on them, painting them, getting them fixed up. But she was saying that at the moment, IHANT only gives you money for a couple of houses and the only repair and maintenance money you get is for people who pay rent - is that right? Which is not enough to fix up the houses that are broken. So what we really need to do is to talk to IHANT to say, instead of funding, this \$300k for a new house, give that so you can fix up some of the old houses. How would that be Lance?

**Mr KNIGHT:** You can do that now, you can ask for that money to be changed over I think to housing upgrade.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can you? Well that is something you should perhaps think about, you might be able to get the money to fix your houses, rather than just build one or two new ones, and you could fix up a lot of houses with that money. Because it is expensive to build a house up here, it is about \$300k and that would fix up a lot of the old houses.

**Constable Devos:** I think also too, anybody who has unlawfully damaged the house is made accountable for it and is possibly prosecuted, but once again it is up to the Community or the Council to debate it or put it on a statement.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Terry I am just referring to your previous conversations that you had. After the question was answered by you, we can, as government put in 10 policemen here, we can give you 35 teachers, but if the kids are not going to school and you as leaders, and as part of this community, are not reporting incidents to the three police you have got, it is about you as a community getting together and identifying your own problems. Because we are the people who are going to live and die on this community, you have got to get together as parents first of all, because we all brought children into this world, into this community, we're all parents sitting around here we are all parents, we all have a responsibility and an obligation to our children first, and an obligation to our community second to our law and culture.

We have got to make sure that in order for us to keep our law and culture strong, we have to have the role of our parents and making sure that our children are going to school, making sure that our children are getting fed three meals a day, making sure as leaders that we report to the police every time we see someone going in, not just to pick up grog, we know who fuels up at that bowser and goes in for grog everyday, but none of us report it to the police. We know who brings ganja into this community but we don't report it to the police. Apart from Sammy doing little bits and pieces of getting kids out of the town area because they are sniffing around the shop or burning fire next to the music centre or the school, breaking into the school, nobody else seems to care and nobody seems to want to talk about the problem. You can't continue to hide the problem any more. You have got to talk about the problem. Unless you start being strong and talk about the problems, then the problem won't go away.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]* I am just interpreting now in my own language, what I just said to you in English.

We will not tolerate any kind of substance misuse in our community. We want to save Papunya for our children to grow up in, like me and you grew up in. Save Papunya. We lived in humpies out there and we used to get up and go to school, we never had a hot shower and electricity in the humpy. We used to run to that old school there. We used to have our shower at the school while our dirty camp clothes got washed in the washing machine at school, put school uniform on, brush our teeth, comb our hair and go to school for six hours, and then put our camp clothes on back in the evening at 3pm to go home with clean camp clothes. We come out of tents and we come out of humpies and we grew up during the ration days, not going to the shop buying Coke and lollypops and chips and hot pies for breakfast. We grew up on rations.

**Mr Butcher:** They get everything. I eat nothing for tea.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** government can only do so much. We have only got a certain amount of money sitting here. We can't just give, give, give. I want to go back to Rob's question before; 'Why is it so different on the Eastern Plenty to the western communities?' Because those people in the Eastern, if you go over there and you have a look at their strong leaders, they don't muck around...

**Ms Patterson:** And they work together.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They work together. You have a look at Harts Range, a community like Harts Range, they have all their non-Indigenous people living out at Harts Range, they don't live at Harts Range in the community, they have got the station, the health staff, the teachers all living outside of the community. There is no humbug to non-Indigenous people there from Indigenous people, but they don't get any problems. They might get the occasional person who comes in with one cask or

something like that, but that person gets locked up straight away. The whole community then has a meeting straight away to make that person 'shame', and those people have always had employment in the cattle industry, so their kids grew up seeing their mums and dads working on fencing and mustering cattle, so that is the toughness you have got from the Eastern Plenty. I have always said this and I've always said this to you to Sammy,

*[language]*

I think the problem with us people on the west side, is that we have always said 'yes' give, give, give, but we have never been partners in giving something back. Anything to do with a problem is about having a partnership, the community, individuals, families and government and non-government agencies, is all about having partnership and identifying the problem and really trying to get a solution for that problem.

Because with blame, we are not going to get anywhere, you can't just say that one person is responsible for this problem, this person is responsible for this problem, no it is the whole lot of our problem and we all have to work together.

These guys [the police], there are only 3 of them, there are 250 Aboriginal adult people that live here on this community, you need to report who is going in to get the grog before they come into Papunya and spread it around, not when the grog is already here and everybody has got in their belly.

**Mr McDonald:** Sometimes it is not only Papunya people from here bringing in alcohol...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Lance is just saying that it's people from Mount Liebig and Kintore, as they are passing through drop off some grog here and then take the rest through. But in that kind of situation Donald Grandfather, if you know that they are dropping the grog off here, Kintore has now got a station so all you have to do is ring these guys at the Papunya station and say someone has just dropped off a carton or cask here at Papunya and on the way to Kintore, and that helps Kintore come half way and arrest them before the grog gets further out at Kintore.

**Ms Patterson:** And it's the same with sniffing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, same.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Up my way, I live in Katherine and there are communities out to the west, back to Timber Creek way and up further north. A lot of the communities around the VRD area, they are really strong with their grog within their communities and they are putting strong rules in place. So the drinkers are coming into Katherine and the Katherine mob are complaining look at all of this, all of the drinkers here, and those communities should take them back. Those communities have been strong and they are quiet communities, they have problems now and again, but by and large they are fairly quiet communities. So what I am saying to the people of Katherine is, you have got to be strong with your community, if you don't want this kind of disruption in your community, you have got to be strong and say this is the way we want to live.

So it's up to each community to decide do we want to live like this, do we want this to happen here, or do we say no, this is the way it is going to be. That is what is happening out that way.

**Mr MILLS:** At the beginning someone said we are looking for the young ones who may become sniffers. Someone mentioned about gambling, parents are gambling and the children are neglected, is there lots of gambling in Papunya?

**Witnesses:** Yes. Cards.

**Mr MILLS:** Is there a lot of money in the pool?

**Mr McDonald:** For us, the people of Papunya, we have tried to reach out and achieve something for ourselves. On the other side, the Eastern side, they have got better education for kids, out here some of the parents always go to the school and pick up the kids to go hunting, but that school is effective, education wise.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** The interesting things is though, that people like Sammy and Alison can read and write, because their parents made them go to school and they wouldn't be here now, being leaders in your community if they weren't able to do that. I guess most of you can read and write too because you were probably made to go to school and that is why you have got to get that message through to your people. Kids need to have those skills, if they are going to talk about finding employment for them they have to know how to do that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You have a look at the school. I spoke to Noelene this morning and she now starts work at 7.30am and finishes at 6.30pm. She is a teacher, supposed to be teaching 6 hours a day but because she has to do the breakfast program, she is now in contact with children 8½ hours a day.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Hard work.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The community should be doing that, if you want the breakfast program, and that is what I keep saying, if you want to do any program you take the leadership role and say we will do it.

You can't just continuously push things onto non-Indigenous people all the time, 'nah! you do it, you do it'. Somewhere along the line you have got to take the leadership role and say, okay we want all these programs. You need to do a skills audit of the community to see what kind of skills you have on the community and make sure that people jump into those opportunities that they have been given, and making sure that you drive it properly as a true leader. It's like hopping inside a car with a driver that you don't know, it might be a P plate driver, is it going to get you to your destination, unless you are qualified and have got your driving licence, you can't drive the car to your destination.

**Mr KNIGHT:** How long has there been this feeling in the community, how many years?

**Mr McDonald:** This has been going on for a long time now, since the 80s or 90s I reckon!

**Mr KNIGHT:** 80s or 90s, so what has happened to those old drinkers, what's happened to them? The ones that started back in the 80s or 90s?

**Mr McDonald:** Some of them have passed away. Some of them had a car accident on the road, they had other problems as well.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So those ones that haven't died, that are still alive, are they still around, are they still alright?

**Mr McDonald:** Some of the people from Papunya, they have been drinking so long and some of them make we worry because they forget about where they came from.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So their brain is a bit...

**Mr McDonald:** Their brain is a bit gone and they aren't interested in anything, they mind their own business.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We have got one here, who was a chronic sniffer, I will point him out, we will go for a drive and have a look. Totally changed person, he just got up one morning and said I am not going to sniff no more and hasn't touched sniffing. He is back with his family now, with his kids and actually works.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What did he give up for?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** He just got sick of living in that rut that he got himself into, you know. Like Matt was saying, sleeping all during the day and walking around all during the night because that's what they do. Apart from that one that I pointed out, coming in that was still standing up with a can, we didn't see any, and that is because they all sleep. They won't wake up tonight until 6.30pm – 7.00 tonight, so our nights become their days.

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Betty is just saying that all the adults sniffers at her place, encourage all the young kids to break into the shop and steal all the money, and all the clothes and some food and they went back to her place and then put the money inside the washing machine and put all the food inside the tucker boxes and gave everybody the clothes.

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Her brother Jeremy Corby then went to house to do the washing, they didn't know what had happened, the owners of the house, and that is when Jeremy Corby realised that money was floating around while he was putting his washing in.

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Then Jeremy went over to the police station and told the police.

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Sergeant Bob came over and then got the money with Jeremy.

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** My mother and aunty were really, really upset that they had gone and stole from the shop.

*[language]* I am just saying in language Renee, that this just reiterates what (Jilby) said about the shop. Like what was said, that shop belongs to the community, the profits come back to you, they are not stealing from (Jilby) they are stealing from government, they are stealing from you, your own kids are stealing from you!

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Betty is just really, really worried that at the Town Hall, when they have got concerts on, that she sees school age kids actually smoking, so they are getting adults to buy their smokes from the shop. (Jilby), you have got to watch that.

**Mr Parkinson:** I don't let children into the shop, Alison. We are pretty good at that, when school is open, I spend half my day yelling at them, don't I?

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Betty is just saying that big people are buying it for the little kids and she is now seeing all the little kids smoking.

**Mr Parkinson:** Well that can't go on, that is the worst thing, we don't want little kids starting to smoke. So you must appreciate that I can't tell whether a grown up is buying cigarettes to give to kids.

**Ms Brown:** *[language]*

**Mr Parkinson:** We have got to find out who they are, I mean this is where you have to step in, this can't go on.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** This is where we are saying now, when go back to what we said before. Unless you take parent responsibility, because at the end of the day those children are your children. If you as aunties, uncles, parents, grandmothers go up to those children and snatch the smokes out of their hand and give them a smack, then they will learn. But if you just watch them and leave then they think that it's alright.

**Ms Patterson:** I've seen some of the incidents at school where boys got butts and start smoking, and I say where did you get the butts from? and they say we nicked them from home. If we say anything to those parents, they will probably say you're the teacher, it's your responsibility.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** While the kids are at school for those 6 hours with you, you have a duty of care to make sure that those children are safe, and one of the things about being safe is that they are not at harm or at risk by smoking or stuff like that. But it is your job then to go and inform the parents that their children are doing it. Terry is an ex- teacher, so I will let you answer that question Terry.

**Mr MILLS:** I think you are right.

**Ms Patterson:** About that Terry, he went there before me, and got his mother and brought her back and started saying, that he didn't do that, but he was doing it front of me. And because I was a teacher and I was on duty, I said you can't smoke.

**Mr MILLS:** So just one cigarette, or did he have other ones?

**Ms Patterson:** Two.

**Mr MILLS:** Take them off him, put them in the bin?

**Ms Patterson:** I took them off him and he started crying.

**Mr MILLS:** And you felt sorry him and gave him the cigarettes back?

**Ms Patterson:** I threw them out and took him to the office.

**Mr Parkinson:** How old is this kid Linda, how old is the little one?

**Ms Patterson:** He was about six.

**Mr Parkinson:** Six?

**Ms Patterson:** And I have seen lots of teenagers smoke too.

**Mr Parkinson:** But that is what worries me, because they are all of a sudden smoking, and when they break in to the shop it's the sniffers who will teach the little kids to break into the shops, because only the little kids can get in some of the gaps and steal the stuff.

Well the next step is that these bigger kids are going to be teaching these young kids how to sniff and that terrifies me, because little kids are quite easily led, we all know that. It's exciting for a little kid to be out with the big kids at night, and we have got to make sure that stops, we can't have any little kids learning how to sniff.

**Mr Butcher:** You know we are talking about break-ins, but not us!

**Mr Parkinson:** But you are good Sammy, because you are up late at night anyway, and there are a couple of people in the community who let them off.

**Mr Butcher:** Because we think we are winning, who will break into the shop, nobody else.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Sammy is just saying Renee, that there needs to be real community support for all these issues before they will go away.

**Mr Parkinson:** Not just a couple of elders, but all the grown ups.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Matt, can I just ask you a question about after school program? How many children do you get in those programs and how late do you go and what days do you have it?

**Mr McHugh:** Pretty much every day of the year. School finishes at 3 o'clock now so we usually start things around then, which is painting or watching movies. We are starting football up now, and we also go swimming. Per day I would probably work with about 20 - 30 kids, different kids at different times and not just kids, young men, young women as well and then finish up 9.00pm - 9.30pm.

**Mr McDonald:** What worries me about people, it was the main problem here in Papunya. Other people are still sniffing and are getting addicted to it and they should be taken away somewhere for treatment, somewhere they can learn, because they don't listen to us it is very difficult for us as a council to try and help some of the

sniffers. Especially I talk to them and those people who got addicted should be sent away for treatment somewhere.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But Lance, we have already got that where some Papunya kids that are in FACS care over at Barry Abbott's place, Wallace Rockhole, they don't sniff there in all the time that they are there, at Barry's, but every time they come back to Papunya they tend to sniff. That is a clear indication of leadership, Barry won't tolerate them doing it over there, he has got petrol laying all over the place. It's ok to put people and kids inside treatment centres, but one day they are going to have to come home. And what is it there that you have got at home, are you strong enough to say enough is enough and no?

**Mr Butcher:** But the parents, the mother and father say send them away, send them away so they can learn from other people.

**Mr McDonald:** Sometimes people from other communities come around here and they stay here and start sniffing.

**Mr Butcher:** The problem is, if something happens there and one of kids get into trouble... *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Payback system, see. Sammy is just saying at Yuendumu, they won't take the problem children from Papunya because of the cultural ramifications for them.

**Mr KNIGHT:** If a lot of those sniffers are boys and they are starting up around 13 years old, if you can't answer this don't answer it. What about ceremonies, that is around ceremony time isn't it?

**Mr Butcher:** We will leave that one for a while.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yeah, bit different up North there.

**Mr Perry:** One of the things that I heard you say, is you have solutions in mind. I have been thinking of this for a while, part of the solution here, we are talking about partnerships. Partnerships rely on communication and relations as well. Looks at something like, teaching them at the end of school, the kids can't relate to the teacher they don't go to school. That is the communication part, the relationship issue.

So when we are looking at solutions, I think one of the things we need to look at is how do we close the gap? Part of it is communication, I think and providing an environment where the kids actually want to go and be part of the education system. Of course, that is only a small piece of a big issue, there is also what is going on at home.

**Mr KNIGHT:** But they have got to go, I don't know when Alison and Sammy when you were here, whether you liked everyone of your teachers or whether there was ones you didn't like but you went anyway, because you had to go.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We used to get woken up in the morning, the teacher with a big stick would take us away from our camps take us to school, make us have a shower, and we would go home and they would give us a lot of fruit to take home; oranges and apples. Then we used to go. We had this office it used to be an old chook pen for the pastor, and the pastor used to live straight across there and we

used to go and hang the Pastor's wife's clothes on the line because she was a big woman, pick all the grapes off the trees and the vines, go and clean the church every Saturday so it was clean on Sunday and go and do things with non-Indigenous people and stuff like that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Parents, what we had in those days, were community police but they were community elders. Our camp used to be over here so we had two or three nominated elders and then the community group that lived out there they had their nominated groups. It was up to those people to bring all the children to school and see they stayed at school. So we saw our families interested in education and standing around the school all the time, so we stayed at the school. There were some days, three days out of the week I reckon, that the teachers were flat out trying to get us home at 3 o'clock, because we all wanted to stay at school until 5 o'clock.

Then we went out of that ration system into having the one meal a day for 10¢ a day at the kitchen, and we use to have to march over there. They played the music upstairs, the same school there and we used to have to march over to the kitchen. We were all taught manners, so we had to all sit there at the table and they served us the food, everybody worked at the kitchen, father, auntie, Violet Nelson's dad, Sammy's grandfather, Sammy's mum, and Snowy McDonald.

My mother was the pre-school teacher, if you go back and have a look at the 1979 report or the 1976 report, she was the first person to ask the Administrator of the Northern Territory if she can have a job, because Indigenous people were not known to have jobs.

So all the old people, health workers, like Dalton's mother, Katie; she has been a health worker all her life, she started from very, very young. We used to have all the wood cutters, all the old people used to get those axes, get on the truck and go out to the Yuendumu road to get at all those logs to make all those fences and make all the seats, they were carvers.

Absolutely beautiful, if you go back and have a look at the very first photos from when we were kids, most of these ones here except for me and Pinata were small kids and Syd would have been older than us, you have a look at the photos of Papunya, absolutely changed. No rubbish on the ground because everyone was made to pick it up, no rubbish in the camps, we lived in humpies not houses, but our humpies were clean, and no washing machine!

**Ms Patterson:** Today kids are lucky, aren't they?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Sylvina, Lance's mother, and me and another lady that is not here, I used to carry Amos on my back, Susie and me used to carry Gordon, *[inaudible]* used to carry Murray and we used to walk with putting grass on our feet in the hot summer, over at to 5 mile, with our little brothers to have a swim and teach them how to eat bush tucker along the way and kill the odd lizard along the way and eat them, Sammy was there.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So why not have another vegetable garden?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Big farm.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Big farm with chooks, goats, could that happen?

**Mr McDonald:** In the past it was good, but today is really bad on the kids growing up, maybe the youngest one sees her uncles getting drunk and that type of thing. Alice Springs is starting to grow and that is having an effect on the community especially our side, there are more people and the population is growing down here in Papunya.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** In those days, Papunya had a population of 1700, 1700 people lived here. They come in when we were kids, they brought the people in from the desert, we saw them!

**Ms Patterson:** Going back to your question Brian, we need parents interested in their children. That is where it is lacking here. We only see 4 or 5 parents at the school and they build a good relation with us, they need to be good parents because that is their kids...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Brian, I was just going to say before I got sidetracked on that, from the answers that you have given us, it is obvious that you are having problems with communication with the school. The council.

**Mr Perry:** They don't, but what I wanted to remind you is, if we don't provide a stimulating environment, as you described before when you went to school, you were describing the image of a very stimulating, involved environment, all the people then go there, at the moment I can't see it happening. Since we are acting under Parliamentary Privilege here today, I have actually had it told to me by staff from the school, that the computer program up here, they are putting the kids in front of a computer and then the person, who is talking, is walking away and leaving that child at the computer. All the kids are looking at the screen, they are not being taught how to use a computer, someone should say what the hell is going on, why do you have children not wanting to do school. They are not being supported, encouraged, nurtured to learn new things.

**Mr NATT:** Brian, pardon my ignorance, but you as a community council employee, do you have a say in who teaches at your school?

**Mr Perry:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Mr NATT:** So the Education Department just allots a couple of teachers to your school and that's it, so no interview process, not anything like that?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes there is, we actually had a dispute with the Northern Territory government about 11 years ago, over the school, and we withdrew the kids from that school for a whole week, because we wanted to participate as a community and with parents in an interview with teachers and making sure that we get teachers allocated to our community that the community agrees with.

I think there is an agreement somewhere, Brian, where the Education Department actually made an agreement that a community representative will sit on a panel, and I know that Linda sits on that panel, for interviewing.

**Ms Patterson:** It's for the minimum requirement.

**Mr NATT:** Brian, I agree with what you are saying, I see it from a sports perspective as well with the football, it's happening in Darwin where you get a particular coach and that coach hasn't changed his ways of his thinking since he played in the 1960's and he is going out and coaching in the old ways and the kids will come out and they

do the same thing every night, night after night, after night and they get bored, they don't even roll up because they are bored. Whereas if you get a coach that adds a bit of variety, something a little bit different, a little bit of interest, the kids will roll up and that is what's going to happen at school, that's what's going to happen with the parents and I agree with you Linda, that parents have got to get involved with that. They are the ones that can provide that bit of interest, they are the ones that can provide that little bit of spark that the kids like, to see their parents there as well.

So, what Brian is saying is the environment that these kids are brought up in is instrumental in them growing up to be good people.

**Ms Patterson:** We are looking at attendance and looking at voting in the school councils, and we need men on it because there are hardly any men out there in the council.

**Mr MILLS:** It's the same in Darwin and Palmerston too, we need the men to stand up.

**Mr NATT:** But we need the teachers that are there to have other projects to keep the kids at school, and to try and think of different ways to get them to school, so that when the kids get to school they have fun and they enjoy what they are doing. That is what Alison is saying, that is the reason they went to school, because they were enjoying what they were doing while they were there. That is why they were staying until 5 o'clock.

So you as a councillor, I think should be speaking to your teachers and saying, look what can we do to get these kids at school.

**Ms Patterson:** I am always saying that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** She does, she does.

**Mr NATT:** As a council I know you are very strong.

**Ms Patterson:** I really want men to get on that council, because we need some 'hands-on' stuff, practical stuff.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And we can't, I just want to say in defence of teachers too, because I don't know any of the new teachers here at the Papunya School by the way, but I would like to defend teachers anyway because I think that they are a valuable resource anywhere and not just non-Indigenous teachers, but other teachers as well.

That stimulation comes if you have got full attendance in the classroom, and if the parents aren't sending their kids inside the classroom, how can you be stimulated to teach if the classroom is empty?

That is what I heard from Noelene this morning when I went there and had a good talk with Charlotte and Noelene there this morning. They have got good teachers they're prepared to do anything, it is just that they are not getting the numbers through the gate, they are not getting them through the door, they are not even getting them through the outside gate. They had had 25 -30 kids out of a possible 82 in the last week. Mt Leibig I know from the Principal on Friday had 1 student for a whole week.

**Ms Patterson:** Here is the same.

**Mr NATT:** What are the parents doing?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That stimulation comes from full attendance, Brian. That is all I am trying to say because I really like to support teachers, because I think that teachers play a big role in any community like police. Like the resources of the council have in you Brian, and I think what I am saying is that we and you Matt and you Jilby is that we need the community to come together here and the community to say; Ok I will not tolerate my child, after 8:30am still being in bed, and I think you need to be open, Aboriginal people need to be open. If Linda goes over to someone and says your kids are not coming to school, no good fighting with Linda. Because the teachers are enthusiastic when they get here, like Matt with his program. I bet you if you had seen Matt on the first week that he was here, if you have known him from that first week and know him today, he is not as enthusiastic as he was the first week that he come here, because it actually drives you down.

It draws everything out of you and that is exactly what happens to teachers in the classroom and you know like. The stuff that Linda has done with the school, you have got to give credit where credit is due. The teachers can only do so much, at the end of the day it goes back to the community, it goes back to the leadership of parents. I make my child go to school everyday, no matter where he is. The only time my child doesn't go to school is when he is injured, and then the school has to be notified that he is injured, so we got to pick up the phone and ring the school or you walk over and tell the school, Linda my son can't come to school for three days, because he has got pneumonia, he has got five days penicillin, you know like that kind of stuff.

**Mr Butcher:** We talk about how we grew up. My grandson, he goes to school. We are here to be role models, what we are telling the younger ones from when they are young is they have got to be somebody.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We had so many role models, like Harry Nelson across at Yuendumu. He went to school at a College in Darwin when he was a young fella. He was taken away from his family and he was one of the role models that teachers used to bring around to all community schools.

I remember sitting there as a young kid at the Papunya School when Harry Nelson came in. He was being introduced to the whole class and I still remember this, I thought I hope one day that I can be like you, and this is little Alison five year old sitting down inside a classroom at Papunya School.

I am grateful for the things that Harry Nelson did to influence my life. I hope that we can use role models like you Sammy and role models like Linda and Sid and Michael; Nelson and Dalton and Lance, the whole lot of you. You need to stand up and be role models for the next generation.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well Sammy, I will test your musical ability now. If you can climb a ladder, if you don't climb a ladder you can never fall, who sings that song? Slim Dusty (laughter)

**Mr Butcher:** Opportunity waits ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, you have got to learn to climb that ladder in anything that you do in life. If you never climb that ladder you can never fall you stay down there.

*[banter]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Renee, Lance is actually asking Linda a question. You have got to say your name when you ask a question.

**Mr McDonald:** I was just asking a question about, when there are not many kids in school, can we make it two classes combined so that there are more kids?

**Ms Patterson:** In the afternoon we do that, we have cooking lessons, Tuesday art, Wednesday music and then Thursday culture day.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But you will lose a teacher won't you, if you don't keep your numbers up, that is the trouble. Because you are staffed on the number of kids that come to school, so if you don't have the numbers, the department is likely to take a teacher away.

**Mr McDonald:** What the problem is, it is not really the teacher. Teacher itself is learning too. Even the police or the council we are always learning day by day, night by night. But somewhere our children get more smart in education.

**Mr NATT:** So on school days, if there are not many kids at school do you hop in the van and go around and pick up kids and drag them to school?

**Ms Patterson:** In the morning I go to the outstation to pick them up.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I was there this morning when they was driving around picking them up.

**Mr NATT:** When we drove in today, we drove past that house just up the road here and there was three or four kids out the front that should have been at school.

**Ms Patterson:** I only do what I can.

**Mr Butcher:** So you have to stop them from missing out on education. They are missing out on a lot of things, they could be a CEO...

**Mr MILLS:** A politician!

**Mr Butcher:** Education is the most important thing. That is what they are missing out.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Like they keep on saying, like I said to you Sammy, education is the key to knowledge. It's like being locked up inside this room here and you happen to find the key to get out that door and you can only do that through education.

**Mr Parkinson:** Alison everyone in this room, the locals are very, very diligent and good at making sure that their children and their relations go to school. But appreciate there is a lot of people on the community that aren't in this room and they are the ones that we have a problem with their children not attending school. How

can you see us as a community getting together to reach out and talk to those people?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well one of the things, and I can have Linda and Sid and Sammy confirm this, what I used to do when I used to be the CEO here, is I used to always have a member of the police force, the principal or the principal's nomination, the nurse in charge or the nurse's nomination, always attend a council meeting. That way you are always assured that everybody's in on the loop, everybody is discussing the same problems, not necessarily talking about council business, but talking about community business.

That was the practice that was done all the time. Because the communication started off here and with the shop manager, we didn't have those problems, because they always sat in and they knew everything that was going on. So what we did is we got the council business out of the way in the morning and then straight after lunch was just community business, so every head of every department on this community was then welcome to come in and it was still official council business.

**Ms Patterson:** We started that...

**Mr Parkinson:** Yes, we have had a couple in there and they seem to be good. Service providers, I think we scored ourselves community service providers.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You are not a service provider?

**Mr Parkinson:** No, I am part of this community.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You are not a service provider. You are partly a service provider but you are part of this community. Whether you live here for two days, two years or 10 years, you're part of this community and you need to have an input into the direction of this community too. It needs to be non-Indigenous and Indigenous people together driving forward your vision and you can only do that if you sit and talk about the problems as well.

**Mr NATT:** So is it worth having as an agenda item for your meetings, whether it be a community or just your council meeting, a permanent item of substance abuse and inviting troubled family members in to sit and listen to the council, the way they are talking about it. Do you think that may sink into some of the families?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I think I know a way, like Aboriginal way, they will think that you are targeting that family, won't they?

**Mr NATT:** So is there an easier way?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, there is a way. What you do is you get the nearest council members that are related to that family that you have got the problem with, always on a nightly basis to go and talk to that whole family. It doesn't have to be on an official capacity, it can be an unofficial capacity, like in the evening just go and spend an hour and talk about the problems with that whole family. If you try and resolve the family at that level, then you start seeing the benefits that Brian is talking about, at that community level, that school level and the participation which that they have in talking about driving their community forward.

When we elected the council, we always elected councils from each family group, so that each family group had a representation on the council, so that you got the views

from everybody. That way you didn't have any conflict about someone coming in and saying there is only a few people deciding what happens in this community. Because I can tell you, if you think that politics in whitefella country is bad, you want to step into the politics of Indigenous people on the ground here, it's twice as hard.

So it is good to have a variety of people sitting around and you always make sure, and women have been on the council here for years and years and years. It's always good to have, if you have got six men, to have five women because women are the strongest and the women are never afraid to bring out the problems, whereas you will get the men, apart from the Sammy's and the Sid's and the Michael's, really not trying to talk about the issues.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That's a good suggestion.

**Mr McDonald:** Like in whitefella way, one person or three person, letting people know how to make decisions but in our culture, Aboriginal way, everyone is a decision maker.

**Mr Butcher:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is really, really important if you are talking together and making sure that every parent knows that their children have to go to school. It's mandatory for kids to go to school, you know you can get in big trouble. You mob can even talk about getting truancy officers on the community, where you have got truancy officers actually going to talk to parents about their kids not coming to school.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That is a good idea because that creates another job for people. Do you have night patrol?

**Ms Patterson:** Used to.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Used to, don't happen now.

**Mr McDonald:** One of my friends was doing night patrol but for the moment the council...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It is probably something we should think about, get some funding for night patrol, get people out so that they can talk to the sniffers when they come across them. The new rules now say that authorised people can take the petrol off people, they can also take those people's children into care if they need it. So with those coming to practice, something like a night patrol would help you to patrol it.

**Mr Ward:** My name is Hughey Ward, I am the supervisor for the CDEP and we have a problem in that we haven't got a night patrol to go around. We haven't got a night patrol going around the town to look after the petrol sniffers. But, the other thing is when we see all the young fellas sitting around playing music, they sit here and everybody talks, so they come back here at 2am, and I say they are all sleeping. That is the problem here.

That is the point I am making. The night patrol is better to go around and see drunken people and report things, am I right? *[inaudible]*

**Mr Butcher:** One night when I saw *[inaudible]* coming in from town, why am I doing this? why am I bringing grog? I would tell him to look after himself, he would buy himself a six-pack and that would be enough because a lot of money is being wasted on grog. So those little children are suffering here, the ones who get 10 cartons, 20 cartons...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Report on petrol sniffing, \$79m gets wasted on petrol sniffers every year. *[language]*

**Mr Butcher:** How come we still have a lot of government bodies coming up here, saying the same things and not doing much, why?

**Mr Ward:** What happens is that...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But what happens Mr Ward, when them petrol sniffers stone the night patrol vehicle and hit the night patrol officers, like it has happened in the past. Is the community going to stand by that night patrol man and discipline their own children?

**Mr Ward:** On my patrol I never see them fighting but they are arguing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And what happens too when kids see dysfunction in their families and dysfunction in their communities they tend to go along with that dysfunction too. I hate to keep going back to how we grew up, but when we grew up when we was kids, we seen strong elders holding the law of the land, very, very strongly. You know, no mucking around with them old people of the olden times, there is not many of them left, except *[inaudible]* and Snowy.

But we grew up with these old people. When they was young fellas, they were tough, therefore they kept the whole community strong. It was just like their hands were on the community. No mucking around, everybody went to school, everybody worked. Because we had our top leaders, our elders strong. But once you start it's like a puzzle, when you make the puzzle up it's full, but accidentally you drop it, the puzzle spreads out, it's about putting that puzzle back together.

**Mr Butcher:** They were strong.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Tough and proud people!

**Mrs BRAHAM:** What we should do Alison, when we go back we should think about everything that has been said to us and come up with some recommendations for you to take to government. Get these people, they obviously want some help but we need to find the best way to help you but as long as you help yourselves as well. That is what I think Alison keeps saying, whatever is done you have to be part of it.

**Ms Patterson:** And with those people that come out, service providers, they should maybe take the leaders somewhere where they can train them in what to do.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So they can teach you...

**Mr NATT:** So they can come back and teach the community, that is a good idea.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Blair McFarlane is with CAYLAS in Alice Springs.

**Ms Patterson:** I see shelter, food, accommodation. There are people who are at risk, who need services. Whenever you people come and do the same thing, talk for days, get the problems, take it back.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well what we will do is that we will go back and talk about it and make sure that this Committee puts some recommendations up to government, so that we can work with you and make sure that we get good things happening for you things that you want.

**Mr Butcher:** It doesn't matter if you are black or white, yellow or green.

**Ms Patterson:** And they get paid for that, they get a lot of money.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And don't forget this week is Harmony Week, so we have to harmonise with each other, you know but make sure that harmony is not just about this week, that it is every day.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Shall we make sure that we give some feedback to the council...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We certainly will, we will get in contact with you guys.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You just don't go away and forget them.

**Mr McDonald:** See like, some of our people live where it is crowded, that is why we need funding for the other things as well, so the people can live separately and talk to their own families so their families can live a better way and other families can teach their families and that is how the funding will get stretched in Papunya.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]* I am just saying how this Committee will go back and put it's recommendation to government, but before we put the recommendation we need to come back to this council, maybe through Brian, in a letter form to Brian, so Brian can present it to the council and also to the school and the police and the shop, so that you are happy with the recommendation that we are putting up, that we are not just going on a path of our own, that it is what you want.

**Mr Parkinson:** It is almost like an SRA to share the responsibility agreement, is that what it's about?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes

**Mr Parkinson:** So we as a community undertake to do certain things, so then obviously the government will give us some help. That is what it's all about.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And do the training.

**Mr Perry:** With housing, I would like to bring to your attention to the shortfall. In 2004 a shortage of 55 bedrooms in Papunya was identified. Since I have been here I haven't seen much movement in alleviating that problem, I've written to the Minister to get money for staff housing...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Elliot McAdam

**Mr Perry:** He sent me back a letter which I haven't yet mentioned to the council – haven't had a council meeting - but the response from the Northern Territory

government on that, he says that the Northern Territory government cannot help us and he advises us the council, to go back on commercial loans to supply houses.

I would like to talk to that chap because I need to tell him it was very inappropriate because for the council to and get a commercial loan, you have to service your repayments and as I reported here earlier today, Papunya is not that economically sound or have an economically producing base. Where are we going to get commercial loans to buy staff houses - that's the question I wanted to ask.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I would imagine they would probably say, add it to your programs?

**Mr Perry:** Which comes back to funding.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You go and build a house for \$200k, you service it with the current money from your programs.

**Mr Perry:** Were do you get that initial money?

**Mr KNIGHT:** What are the staff doing? Well you're saying this for staff housing, so what are the staff doing, what programs do they work on?

**Mr Perry:** There is virtually no staff here, and this is why it is such a hard slog. There is none existing in Papunya at the moment, we can't employ sufficient staff to run a program.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Have you got a housing program, have you got one government service, you take it out of that program as rent.

**Mr Perry:** The economic base for attending to our housing - at the moment it is barely serviced by the rent we collect plus the small amount from the Northern Territory government. Simply because, most of our money, because we pay for trades persons to come in and it goes in transport and travel expenses. An enormous amount of money goes in just that, getting people out here just paying them to travel out here, it is an enormous amount of money this is why we created initiatives to create our own builders and maintenance here in Papunya employed by the council though funding is provided by ICC.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So what percentage of your target are you actually achieving each year?

**Mr Perry:** Last year's figures were about 89%.

**Mr KNIGHT:** That is not too bad.

**Mr Perry:** Which is bloody good, very good for a community that is totally dependant on some sort of government support.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can this Committee take the opportunity to thank the Papunya Community Council Mr Chairman, and thank you Linda for your participation, Brian thank you very much for allowing the committee to meet here today and Matt, thank you for your participation. Thank you guys.

**Mr Butcher:** One more thing. Those cars which were taken. We would like the government to give us that one vehicle, we need it for the program...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well what you have got to do is you have to put in a submission to the Liquor Commission. If you get that submission ready and have it supported by the police and have it supported by the teachers and Brian and the whole community, then the Liquor Commission will see that you are trying to do a good job out of it, and then...

**Mr NATT:** And supported by your local member.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, and supported by your local member. I will certainly write a support letter for you.

**Mr Butcher:** Anything else?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well thank you very much. We do sincerely thank you, and thank you Brian. I now declare the meeting closed.

Witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 1.25pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Atitjere (Harts Range)**

*Tuesday 21 March 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Mr CW Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Ms Donna Cole, Chief Executive Officer, Council  
Ms Marie Sharper  
Ms Vanessa Petrick  
Ms Jacinta Bush  
Ms Natalie Petrick

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of the proceedings*

The Committee convened at 10.55am.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the community and welcome representatives from the Atitjere Community and the CEO Donna Cole.

This meeting is not open to public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may be eventually tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of Hansard record, I would ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear today.

On behalf of the Committee I just want to thank you for coming along, for your hospitality and for your presence here today. We'll start off by giving the first question to you, Terry.

**Mr MILLS:** Thank you. You have described something that's really quite unique and you've had experience of 20 odd years. Have you tried to work out why it's different here?

**Ms Cole:** I think leadership and education; I think that was the thing. Old Tony Petrick, who really was the founding father of everything that's happened here over the years, the man took them from sitting on the fence at the police station to lobbying to get a homelands resource centre, to what they have actually got now and he has been instrumental in that.

People say he ruled with an iron fist and that comes from local people, they tell you that, but that iron fist had a lot of respect given to him in relation to that, so I don't think that there were any qualms about what he was doing. I think he was phenomenal in the fact that he did two things which are very, very unique in the fact that he gave up, really, a part of living a cultural lifestyle to take his kids into town so they could be educated. He believed strongly that education was a huge link and that came through in terms of his kids were really the ones that when his health started to fail, those kids that had the education really were the ones that went on to lead and to move things forward and to get it where it is, so I think that that had a huge thing in the fact that they had.

I used to give Anthony everything and you would go back to him, and I must admit when I first came, you'd test the waters and you would go in and you would suggest little bits and pieces, and he'd say to you: 'Yes, I've read that', and you'd go: 'Okay', so that stopped immediately. It was like okay, he is actually reading what I am giving him and he would actually come back to me. When all the *Strong Families* stuff started with Jack Ah Kit, he would come back to me and tell me this is happening, you need to look into this and all the rest of it.

That had a huge bearing on it, and the fact that - and I think I said this to Rhonda to pass on to you - the other thing that I found absolutely phenomenal about old Tony Petrick was the fact that he knew the meaning of the word 'community'. That's what he worked for; it was for the community. It was never about him; it was always about advancing and moving forward the community, and they were the two key issues. He made sure that the kids had the education that they needed, and showed them a leadership role, and he didn't think - he never thought about himself. He always thought about, I mean as he got older, of course, he did, he wanted to move forward

with their own *[inaudible]* type of camp grounds, but in the initial stuff when he was really needed, that's what it was all about; it was about moving the community forward.

**Mr MILLS:** You say leadership and education, but employment - is there a hope for employment? Is there a purpose for education? Does it result in something?

**Ms Cole:** Well, I think where we failed in terms of that is training for the sake of training. I don't think education for the sake of education can be said, because I think that it is an extremely important thing. You are never going to get anywhere unless you have education, and even if there aren't the job opportunities in remote areas, there is the opportunity to be independent and to be able to run your own finances, to stop book up and stuff like that through education.

I think the training side of things has, and it's ground to a halt here because Council have just had enough of it. They say to me: 'Why can't we train two people rather than 10 people for jobs that are actually going to be here? What happens to the other eight at the end of day? Why do we bother? What is the point of that?' So that stopped immediately, but, yes, there are work opportunities.

We did a huge shift probably about 12 months ago where we took all of the people that we provided the old famous word 'top up' to, and we shifted those across to the relevant departments, so if they worked under admin, housing, the store, at the school, at the women's centre, or whatever, you had to take them and put them on your payroll, and you had to give them an equivalent amount of hours. If you wanted to use CDEP hours, that is what you did.

So we've probably got about 20 to 25 jobs where there are 30 hours or more offered to people, and those jobs are going - they are not hugely successful, but they're going quite well considering the history of things. They're going quite well, but there is room for further employment and that is the key. Get kids into school, get kids educated, work out this secondary education system. They need to face the fact that the kids aren't going to go away. It is too hard. When you've got a community, and all communities are like this, where everything is solved by coming to that front counter and everything is, nobody gets turned away, when you take somebody out of that environment, straight away they are never going to survive because when they can't go to that safe, secure place where everything gets solved, and they get told: 'I'm sorry, we don't do that. You need to go down the road to that other office', they get on the first bus and they come home because it is foreign. They just don't understand it. Secondary education is a huge issue that needs to be addressed.

Also, I think the other thing that we need to stop doing is assuming that kids are going to want to come back to communities and work. I mean, kids may not want to come back to communities and work. Some kids may, some kids may not. Kids may say: 'Well, the world is my oyster'. When I was a kid, my parents said that to me: 'The world is your oyster and you go off and find what you need to do'. I think we need to stop boxing things. I mean, just because they are indigenous, it doesn't mean that necessarily that is what they're going to want to do. They may want to go off to London or wherever and do whatever.

**Mr KNIGHT:** With the secondary education, are you talking about within the community or within Alice Springs?

**Ms Cole:** I think Alice Springs. The big thing that we found with Alice Springs was the fact that they are very reluctant to send people into Alice Springs because of the

family issues. They would say that the kids would get a great amount of humbug in town, especially if they had relatives in town that had a drinking issue. They would get hammered and the kids just couldn't cope with it and they would leave.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So you think they should go interstate or something?

**Ms Cole:** Well, interstate works, but will probably need some sort of a regional set up. Like with all of the regional stuff that is actually happening at the moment, I think that they need to look at how they can actually provide some sort of regional education and where may be the best place to provide that would be. I don't know if you're ever going to get to a stage - I mean, the scales of economics tell us that you're never going to probably warrant to have a secondary education here at Bonya or at Lake Nash, but we'd need to have something within that region where we can get the kids to go.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I've got a bush electorate and there's talk, you know, of a bush school going through to Year 9, and you talked about that exposure, but wouldn't you have a regional - wouldn't that not expose those kids to the wider world? I mean, if they went away to Adelaide and finished their schooling, they would be exposed to the big city, mixing with a whole range of, you know, Chinese, Japanese

**Ms Cole:** You'd only get a percentage of those kids that are going to want to do that because you are still going to offer that. You are going to say them, but it's the other kids that are never going to go away, that are always going to want to stay here and be part of the region, that will either go away and will not cope and want to come back, and that's the ones that we need to catch because if we lose them at Year 9, we don't pick them up for another two years when what we have to offer is CDEP, in that two years we've lost it all together.

You know, we've told our 14, 15 year old girls the only way that we can support you, because mum and dad can't any more, is if you get pregnant and have kids. That is exactly what we're promoting. There is no 'iffing' and 'butting' about it. With the young guys, we have said to them: 'There are no work opportunities, so you just have to wait until you go on CDEP or you are just going have to sponge off everybody' because there are no other options for that sort of stuff, unfortunately. That is the group, so that may be 50% of the overall group that we need to try and pick up to keep them in school.

**Mr KNIGHT:** That 50% that wouldn't go away predominantly for academic education that you're left with perhaps would do more trades, more VET stuff?

**Ms Cole:** That is exactly right, and I think that is one huge thing that we have lost, not just in indigenous places, it is across the board. I mean, if you look at the history with Malcolm Fraser, it started that long ago, when we actually told our kids that there was something wrong with manual labour and now we have a huge job shortage. That, in reality, is a lot of what we have actually done with indigenous people. We've actually said to them that you need to aspire to be technicians and computer geniuses and in a lot of cases, they don't need that sort of stuff and don't want it. I used to love woodwork when I was at school and metal work. We don't have any of those sorts of things and nine times out of 10, that's what is needed here on the ground. We need to provide the training for the outcomes that are realistically, at this stage, going to be here. In the future, who knows? But we need to address what is actually going on now to get those kids trained and into real employment.

**Mr MILLS:** I just want to go back to leadership is one of the main reasons why this community is strong. Was it Tony Petrick?

**Ms Cole:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Where did he derive his experience from to be able to bring it in here? You know, you don't just get leaders who just pop up out of the ground. Did he have a life experience that he carried into this? Was it the pastoral industry?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Would I be right in saying that this community has a reference point to let's say the pastoral industry, and it gives them sort of sense of the world in terms of work and reward and order and structure?

**Ms Cole:** Yes, and we have a lot of our guys who do part-time work with them. When there is mustering, we've probably got four at the moment that are away doing the mustering. Where we found it failed, and we did try to seek funding, was it was a lot of on the ground stuff that you need to be there at that point to deal with. It was in terms of their expectations of what the work was going to be like and the employer's expectations of what they were going to get and the wage and terms and conditions. So that was a major - because by the time we found out - - -

**A Witness:** Sorry. Marie or Vanessa, someone is out the front. They said you're expecting them to come in. Is that for this?

**Ms Cole:** I wouldn't have a clue. I won't be a sec. Ladies, come in. Come in and have a seat. We have tea, coffee and everything if you want. We have got Marie Sharper or Marie Ross, Vanessa Petrick and Jacinta Bush or Webb.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I remember Vanessa from when she was a little tacker. So Marie married Sharper...

**Ms Sharper:** No, my step-father's name.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Okay, so Evelyn is part of that family?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Ms Sharper:** Louey's brother.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You say hello from me because I taught her also. Would it be there, Vanessa, your times?

**Ms Petrick:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That's right, and that's where they got a good education, at Ross Park.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*. We know that you mob haven't got any of these petrol sniffing problems and stuff like that. We went out to *[inaudible]* and the name of that committee mob meeting in the *[inaudible]*, you know? *[language]*. Why is it, you know? *[language]*.

For *Hansard*, I'm just explaining to the three ladies why we are here, just to compare the western side of the north Stuart Highway to the eastern Plenty so that the Committee has an opportunity to see the problems on the west and that we don't have the petrol sniffing problems on the eastern Plenty because of strong leadership and connections in the pastoral industry.

**Ms Cole:** As I was saying, one of the big things that we found - by the time we realised this, it was really too late - is the fact that when there was a misunderstanding in relation to what terms and conditions they were going to get, what pay rate and stuff like that, we wouldn't find out until a couple of weeks later and by then it was too late.

So we identified that process - and we tried to apply for funding to actually get somebody, but it was a bit too wild a concept, I think, at the time, so what we tended to do is we tried to talk to the pastoralists, sticks our nags in a bit, and just say to them: 'We just need make things a little bit clearer so that the guys know exactly what the terms and conditions are going to be and what they actually need to do'.

**Mr MILLS:** Pastoral leases around here are privately held. They're not ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They're pastoral leases.

**Mr MILLS:** No, but they're not large companies?

**Ms Cole:** No, families.

**Mr MILLS:** Family run properties, okay. Have they been in the same families for a long time?

**Ms Cole:** Yes, they have because they have been around for years.

**Ms Sharper:** Because [*inaudible*] father is the smallest and his father was Elders.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay.

**Ms Sharper:** And they my grandfather's.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It was an excision of the pastoral property of - Mt Vinnie?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, Mt Vinnie.

**Mr MILLS:** That makes a lot of difference.

**Ms Cole:** Yes, it does, and there is a really good relationship between the local people and the pastoralists on both sides.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, so there is history there.

**Ms Cole:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So she comes from the oldest brother, Vanessa from the youngest and then she is the grand daughter of those.

**Mr MILLS:** Right.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And they all grew up in station life, too. Even when we were kids, dad used to bring us all out here before Harts Range was here and we used to roam this country. They even had people from the western side, Terry, actually come and work on pastoral properties on this side.

**Mr MILLS:** So around Papunya, there are no pastoral leases?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Derwent Station and [*inaudible*], but we only have sort of one person at a time going, only because they have got a good relationship with that person from Petrie Downs in South Australia because Ian Horton, who owns Glen Helen and Derwent, actually owns Petrie Downs in South Australia as well.

**Mr MILLS:** I see.

**Ms Cole:** I mean, Mt Riddock, for example, they recently got rid of all of their white staff and they just want to use local people when they've got work and everything available and they had - Shorty, Raymond Webb, he has worked with Mt Riddock for a number of years now. They have got a really good relationship.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Are you getting any support from the Indigenous Pastoral Unit?

**Ms Cole:** Don't really have anything to do with them. I guess there has never been any need for that aspect of things to take place, so it's not a major issue.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It is just about that point about pay and conditions. Have you had any trouble with DEWR when you have to take them off CDEP?

**Ms Cole:** We haven't, but we have taken a bit of a different tack in the fact that what we have offered to the pastoral companies is that they can utilise the 15 hours of CDEP if they want to, but they need to give equivalent and more hours. Now, they haven't, at this stage, taken that up. But our buy-off with DEWR has been that - what we've done is we've shifted across, so everybody we're trying to offer more hours to and not pay them under CDEP and that's how we've tried to negotiate it. And in a lot of cases, where we've been able to get grant funding, I've said because of CDEP, we can employ two people rather than one person. So we try to be proactive. We know that CDEP is going to wind up at some stage, but we've tried to be proactive as much as we can to try and prolong that as long as possible for us.

**Mr KNIGHT:** How many places have you got?

**Ms Cole:** We have got 43 at the moment.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What is your adult working age of the population?

**Ms Cole:** We're a young community, actually, so the majority of our population is - you would have at least 50% of the population would be of working age.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So what proportion is that working age to the CDEP?

**Ms Cole:** To the CDEP - what do you mean, sorry?

**Mr KNIGHT:** How many people here would be of working age?

**Ms Cole:** Of working age on CDEP?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Just in normal terms.

**Ms Cole:** I mean, 50%, so you'd be looking probably at about 60 people within the community that would be of working age.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So most of them are on CDEP?

**Ms Cole:** Well, no, because we have got the – Bonya - we do a host agreement with Bonya and Urapunga. We have lost some numbers and Lindsay Dunn was on the phone the other day, greatly concerned how come the CDEP numbers were down, but I said to them it is because we have taken that proactive stance of the no-work-no-pay policy, which is part of your terms and conditions now ,anyway, but we've also tried to cost - plus we have had Doris *[inaudible]*, for example, she is on full-time at the school. We've got the two at the store who are now on full-time. The office lady that was here but now gone to the store, she was on full-time, so we have cut the numbers in relation to that, but you can't keep.

I knew when they started all this that it was going to be a hard slog in terms of people, that CDEP would go away, but you've just got to persevere with that. If you want to move things in the right direction for employment, you've got no choice.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Donna, how did you go with putting the submission up for the roadhouse and the sponsorship from BP?

**Ms Cole:** Yes. What is happening now is that's in negotiations directly with BP and what I've done now is I am more or less going to hand over to the new lady who is coming. Her name is Lynn Moore. She is from the ANZ, she is the ANZ Bank Manager, yes, Katherine.

**Mr KNIGHT:** A very good place; I believe she is a very good lady.

**Ms Cole:** She will have an absolutely phenomenal business background, so when I spoke to BP the other day, I actually said to them that what we are better off doing now is leaving me out all together and BP and her, because she will have the business experience. What they will need to do then is put the plan and everything together. I have flagged it with the ICC for the shared responsibility agreements, and they are very interested. They wanted to come out, and I said: 'No, wait until she has come and that has taken place, and the community have been able to negotiate a bit better with BP about their expectations and then you can actually take it and see how it goes'. My guess would be within the next three to five years - BP are really excited about it - so I think it will happen.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** *[inaudible]*.

**Ms Cole:** Yes. I talked to them as well, like I said to them that the other potential of it all is if they want to be a little bit more multifunctional ...

**A Witness:** I am sorry. Did you want Vanessa Petrick?

**A Witness:** Barney's here.

**Ms Cole:** Natalie, yes. If they want to come in, they're more than welcome to come in, yes. Now what was I saying? I've lost my train of thought. Come in Nattie, have a seat. This is Natalie Petrick.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So this is ...

**Ms Petrick:** My daughter.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Your daughter? Okay.

**Ms Cole:** I talked to BP and said to them that maybe they need to look a little bit beyond the square of just a basic road house in the fact that if places like Murray Neck can't actually see the future out bush, which just amazes me that they're not – with all the regional development stuff that's happening, they're not actually starting to put their hands up to say: 'Hey, if you're going to look at having service provision in remote areas, we would like to be in there to actually provide that'.

I have said to the fellow from BP that's something that they need to look at, expand that in terms of furniture sales, and all of that.

**A Witness:** *[inaudible]*

**Ms Cole:** Yes, and he said he hadn't thought about that, so there is a huge potential. My theory is if Murray Neck and them are not going to provide it, then somebody has got to provide it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is right. If you have a road house here, you'll be servicing the whole lot of this region, you know.

**Ms Cole:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So how many kids in the school at the moment?

**Ms Cole:** I think the numbers are up at the moment. They are bringing heaps of kids in from the outstations. I don't know the exact number, but as far as I know, it is actually going really, really well at the moment.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** How many teachers and teacher assistants?

**Ms Cole:** We've got two full-time teachers there at the moment. I think they have got some part-time teachers out at the moment to help out because the numbers are right up at the moment. Doris Bundy works over there and they also utilise - we run a day care program as well and two of the ladies from here operate that with the assistance of the school, and Jill goes over in the afternoons and helps out over at the school as well.

She is talking now about adult, secondary - they are trying to sort out Mondays and Thursdays, I think it is, for the senior girls and senior boys, so one day for each, to actually try and get the secondary education side of things happening, but at this stage she has only got funding for two days a week, so she is going to try her best with that.

Rebecca Cadzow from Mt Riddock Station is actually a qualified teacher, so she is going to come down and she will be running that program.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It is good that parents make kids go to school

**Ms Cole:** Yes, it is good.

**Mr KNIGHT:** We were talking earlier on about that old man who passed away, how he had a very strong leadership, and then we've got this next, this kind of middle age group, which I think is – is it Anthony?

**Ms Cole:** Anthony, young, big fellow we were talking about.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So that leadership and strength was passed on to you. Now you've got another generation, that next generation coming through, which might be Natalie's age or younger. How is that going to push down to them? How do you do that? How was it done to you, like how did you get taught leadership and how do you push that down to the next generation?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Ms Sharper:** We just take all the kids hunting and all that. We don't go to town much

**Mr KNIGHT:** You participate.

**Ms Sharper:** Yes.

**Ms Cole:** Think that is a big thing in this community; the fact that it is a very open community, all the council meetings are open and the kids are actually encouraged to attend, but the big thing about this place is the fact that no decision is usually made until the community talks about stuff. People will come in and they will talk and they will go away and they will come back and pass their opinion on stuff and all of that sort of stuff, so Council is being very proactive. I don't know whether that comes from that aspect of community, but it has always been very important that it takes place, that the community has the chance to talk about issues that they want to see and not just have certain people making decisions.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They are very attached to their law and culture and they are very, very strong in their law and culture. They take all their children hunting on weekends, make sure that the children all understand bush tucker and bush foods. I know when I come here, I camp here. I'm always eating *[inaudible]* and kangaroo and porcupine, you know. We never, ever eat from the shelf.

**Ms Sharper:** And ceremony, we take you to ceremony.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, that's right, and the outlying communities as well.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you have a church here?

**Ms Cole:** We have a centre, which is used as a church and they come out once a quarter, I think. Yes, once a quarter they come out and they hold a service.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Who is that?

**Ms Cole:** The Catholic ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Lutherans?

**Ms Cole:** Lutheran or Catholic, I'm not sure.

**A Witness:** They both will come.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[inaudible]* Lutheran, yes. Catholics and Lutherans, yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can I ask what are the hard things in the community? What sort of things could be better? You have no petrol sniffing. You do not have many grog runners or anything?

**Ms Cole:** No.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** What sort of things have not been solved?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Solved?

**Ms Cole:** Yes, we did have, didn't we? We had a bit of a ganja problem, marijuana problem, there at one stage, but the community...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Addressed that.

**Ms Cole:** Disappeared!

**A Witness:** *[language]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What *[inaudible]*, the Elder, is just saying is that Aboriginal people sorted it out. *[inaudible]*

**Ms Petrick:** Talked amongst ourselves, all the people in the community, and sort that problem out.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So if someone doesn't agree or doesn't want to, you just say: 'You can't be here unless you do this'?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And that's what has happened. You know, like if people want to continue to drink or smoke ganja, this community will just say: 'Well, you're not welcome here. You go and do it somewhere else'. *[language]*

**Mr KNIGHT:** Who drives this community? Is it this building here, this office here, or is outside?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Community.

**Ms Cole:** Community. Nobody is backward in coming forward. If they are upset about something and angry, if they don't understand something and they want information, nobody is backward in coming forward and giving you their opinion here. It gets back to you fairly quickly, and people know we have an open office policy and they can come in and talk about whatever they like and get whatever information they want.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So from the perspective about sport and after school activities, what sort of things are happening?

**Ms Cole:** I mean, I think...

**Mr NATT:** Does sport play an important role in the community?

**Ms Cole:** Huge! I mean - and we don't have the facility – we put in this year for triennial funding to get a new sports and recreation centre and everything up and running, and that is looking quite good. *[inaudible]* is quite happy with all that and very supportive of it, but I mean, it is huge.

The reality of it is that we really need accommodation to have a sports and recreation officer. Whether it be an outsider to start with and then become a local person is really up to the community. We desperately need that to happen, and it really needs to be focussed on the youth and the young kids, not the elder ones. The older kids, they are organised, they have got themselves sorted out. They do their footy; it is really the younger kids.

When we ran that - I don't know whether you were back then or not - but when we ran the program on Tuesday afternoons at 4 o'clock, we would all get on the basketball court and act like idiots, and the kids - 50 people would turn up, you know, and then the adults started to come. It has a huge impact. It gives kids something to do. It keeps them active. It wears them out and sends them home to bed.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And one of the things, too, Terry, is that on the school days, they don't allow basketball or anything to go any later than half-past eight because the basketball court is right in the middle of where everybody lives. The whole community just says: 'Hey, time to go to bed, turn off the light, all the kids...'

**Mr MILLS:** Because school is tomorrow.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** ... school tomorrow'.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So basketball, football, softball...

**Ms Cole:** Oh, cricket, tennis - we have tried everything. The kids would say to us they wanted to play basketball, and I would say: 'Too bad. I want to play cricket'. You know, I am thinking to myself they have got to learn different - they love it!

**A Witness:** And disco, they want a disco.

**Ms Cole:** We do not have the cinema, and we do not have Baskin and Robins - I was talking about that last night - we don't have all of those things.

**A Witness:** *[language]*

**Ms Cole:** And there is a focus...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language.]* When their children are missing, you know, like they might just be taking a bit longer to get home, you can hear, you know, someone screaming out: 'Where's my kid? Oh, here it is! It's down there now'; it is just on a drop-off point.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** *[inaudible]* and I used to do that.

**Mr NATT:** Part of my life is, in conjunction with this committee, the Substance Abuse Committee, we have also got a Sport and Youth Committee, which I Chair, and I have taken the opportunity to come along with these people just to find out what the similarities are. I guess one of the items that we are looking at under this Committee is whether the government is spending money the right way to get people to participate in sport and recreation. It is not just sport, it is recreation as well. So I thought I would come along, and Terry is part of that Committee, so we thought we would just get a bit of an idea on that.

One of the problems they've got on the other side of the highway is that when there is a football carnival on, everyone leaves town and so the education, the school virtually closes down. Do you have that problem here if there are carnivals on? Do they take the kids with them?

**A Witness:** No. No.

**Ms Cole:** They tend to just go for the weekend and come back. We have a really phenomenal thing here, which I couldn't believe, when the Ti Tree sports were on, the parents packed up and went to the Ti Tree sports to watch their kids. I am going: 'I have never known that in a community before'.

**A Witness:** And they go into town for footy.

**Ms Cole:** Yes, and the kids come back. Like, they go in for the weekend and they come back.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Did they go in when the Carlton and West Coast Eagles played?

**A Witness:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But they came back?

**Ms Cole:** Yes, come back, yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But the difference was - because we were there at that footy - the kids that come from this side here actually went there well dressed, with all their little T-shirts and everything, with their teachers and with their parents.

**Mr NATT:** With their *[inaudible]* on.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes. Absolutely unreal so that they can be spotted in the crowd, you know. It was really, really good,

**Mr MILLS:** Is there a bus or something that you can travel together in?

**A Witness:** Yes, we have a community bus. 28 seater.

**Ms Cole:** I think it is a bit smaller than that actually; it might be smaller.

**Mr KNIGHT:** As I understand it, this was a living area. When it was established here, was it a living area?

**Ms Sharper:** Next to the police station area.

**Ms Cole:** 1973, I think, it was next to the police station.

**Mr KNIGHT:** And then when did...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The Old Mt Riddock Homestead, it was, yes.

**Ms Sharper:** And then next to the police station.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** This was actually an excision handed back in 1980, just after the *Native Title Act*, 1988?

**Ms Sharper:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So where was everyone living prior to that? Were they living in Alice Springs? Where were they living?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They were all here inside. They were living at Mt Riddock Station first and they moved to where the police station is just out there.

**Ms Cole:** They are all from this vicinity.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, the whole area.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Just working at the station, trying to find your own place here?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Those communities on that other side of that highway were set up - do you know?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[inaudible]* mission.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Mission times and that. Was it all of that mob together?

**A Witness:** *[inaudible]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That was set up in October 21, 1951.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So, what can you say about that difference between those settlements which were pushed together and different families and clans all pushed together to this place here? What could you say is the difference between them?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**A Witness:** Family all the time here.

**Ms Cole:** Family, yes. I really noticed that when we looked at regional development, because they have done their own regional development plan for their area here, and that was the big thing when they talked about the Alyawarra stuff at Lake Nash, that was the big thing. The families said: 'Well, that is not really our family group'. That is when I noticed that is what it has been here in that region, so they talk about their family groups at the Queensland border.

So that was the thing. They really had that family. So when you look at places like Port Keats where the Right Reverend brought 13 clans together, and now there are three in existence because all they did was murder each other. Well, there were three in existence when I was back there.

**Mr KNIGHT:** There are three different clans but ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You have a look at some of the Papunya mob, that's why ...

**Mr KNIGHT:** There are two ceremony ones.

**Ms Cole:** Yes, so that is the thing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** ... Warlpiri, Luritja, Western Arrertne, Pintubi, and Pitjintjatjara people, all five different clans living in one community.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Which community is this?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Papunya. This is just one family, come out of one grandfather, three from one grandfather – sorry, one grandmother even, and [*inaudible*] two married, but had very, very strict guidelines here for even outside people that marry into this family.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And your white community don't live on this...

**Ms Cole:** Council staff, which is only three of us, plus the Women's Centre lady, she is married to one of the council staff members, and the store manager. So all up, there are only five that live here. The rest - the health people and the school teachers and the police station - all live out of town.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you have got accommodation enough for the service people, but how many houses do you need for the rest of the community?

**Ms Cole:** Well, we talk about units and duplexes. Really, one of the biggest problems that we've got at the moment is the younger people who really need two bedroom units or duplexes of some description, but I mean another six of those wouldn't go astray to actually fill that void. That becomes a major issue.

Because we are such a young community, young people tend to want their own privacy, so we have got - and Maisie is another really good example. It would be nice to have another smaller place for Maisie to be able to go into because that is potentially a five bedroom house. If we put another room on it, it will be a five bedroom house for the bigger families. So really, the last few years when we have actually put in stuff to IHANT, it has been really for units and duplexes, the preference would be.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So what have you got?

**Ms Cole:** Nothing.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Nothing?

**Ms Cole:** Nothing.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It's cheaper to build three bedroom houses than it is to build units. It is more sensible. If you go into Alice Springs or Darwin or Katherine at Territory Housing, you can either get a one bedroom place, a two bedroom place, three bedroom house, four bedroom house. So if you have got lots of kids, well you get a four bedroom house. If it is you and your husband, you go into a one bedroom unit. You can pick what you want, but out here you see three bedroom houses.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So if you were given the money to do the contract yourself and you could build what you wanted. I sometimes feel that you have to change the way they allocate it.

**Ms Cole:** Oh, they do, and it would depend on what the IHANT guidelines were at the time, so that would be dependant on that, but I mean council hopefully will still be strong in their negotiations to actually say: 'Well no. If it means that we are going to only get five rather than six, then that would be a better preference' because then you would be able to split things up and it would actually then give us more accommodation for the larger families.

**Mr MILLS:** So new dwellings have been *[inaudible]* here. Is there enough skill here to do the building?

**Ms Cole:** Well, we run our own refurbishment program and we have up to three people that work with our carpenter that do that. The reality of it is it would be hard for the community to build six buildings, but certainly out of that, we have done that before.

Like at Mindibungu when we had to do all of the houses, we just took a select amount that we could actually cope with. So that would be the - you would have to be honest and work out what you could and you couldn't cope with, and you would do it along those lines.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But you do all your own R and M here?

**Ms Cole:** We do all of that ourselves, yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And they have had the Manual Arts Learning Unit here for months and months and months, and years and years and years, I think. Now they want to come back, all those *[inaudible]*, the Manual Arts Learning Unit belongs to Harts Range.

**Ms Cole:** They haven't held back this year.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And it is absolutely wonderful to see young men and young women on the computers and doing the tucker boxes and tables.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It's the mobile - it comes out of CDU. It is a mobile unit. What's it called? MALU?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** MALU, and it stands for Manual Arts Learning Unit.

**Mr MILLS:** Oh, I've heard about that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And that *[inaudible]*, Terry, which is on the demountable education unit on the back, but when it actually parks here, it actually extends out to accommodation and everything for the lecturers.

**Mr MILLS:** Is this based in the Centre?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes. All the tables just pop up and then they put all the computers and everything on them.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It is a really good unit. I am not quite sure who is running it or who the teacher is, but it is so good it used to go out to the communities.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The old ladies used to ...

**Ms Cole:** Sister Helen. She was great.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That gets around and you could use two or three of those, couldn't you?

**Ms Cole:** Oh, without any doubt. They are really, really good units. They come and they are self sufficient and you really don't have to worry about; it is all there. They are a great idea. They really are.

**Mr MILLS:** Is there one at the Top End?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** There is.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** *[inaudible]*

**Ms Cole:** Yes, and that is what we need. In terms of service provision with all this regional, stuff that is what we need. We need a dentist to come and we need an optometrist to come to provide real services.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Could you tell the committee that lady I was talking to from LGANT, what her role is at the moment?

**Ms Cole:** We had Judy Brennan this morning from LGANT, the local government Association of the Northern Territory, and what they're trying to do is correlate data in relation to the stuff that DBERD is doing with regional development. There is a big twist. I met with Paul Henderson the other week, and there is a big change that is taking place with regional development. It is about economic growth.

So what Judy is doing is she is going around from place to place and she is trying to find out what potential there is for economic development in all of these places so they can go back to DBERD, under this regionalisation thing, and they can say: 'Okay, the potential is really good at Atitjere for the roadhouse, or for the arts centre' or whatever, so that is what she is actually doing. Part of that is the housing stuff as well. She is taking all the housing statistics with her and she is saying there is a huge potential - we have ours started, anyway - for the actual community to have a housing gang, and to be employing people, which we do; we employ the three guys anyway.

So that is what her role is and the big change, which I'm excited about, is the fact that then will go back to the economic mob and they will then, once that is identified, come out here with the relevant organisations that they need to put the business

plans together, so they will liaise directly with you guys to put the business plans together, and then they will also help to source the funding.

So all my years of whinging, not that I have had anything to do with it, but it is sort of going on the right track finally. So she is getting all of that information from everywhere to actually help move the things forward and, of course, the outcome of that is real employment. To have that happen ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** A new venture started so that people can be employed and also the profits back into the community to use for the school or whatever, recreation or something like that. Your store is community-owned isn't it?

**Ms Cole:** Yes, it is, yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So profits – does it make a profit?

**Ms Cole:** It is self-incorporated and it doesn't have really anything to do with council, so I don't really know.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So it obviously survives quite well.

**Ms Cole:** It employs - it pays for Geoff and Tina.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you have market gardens?

**Ms Cole:** No, we don't. There has been talk about having – we've got a small garden at the Women's Centre which provides stuff for the old people's program, for the kids program and all that sort of stuff. There has been some talk about looking into native vegetation, even if it is long term, of actually having that sort of stuff planted out rather than the market garden itself.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** A market at the moment would make a difference, particularly in Alice. It's being used in some of the restaurants.

**Mr MILLS:** The service station: you say in about three years' time you would expect the service station to be operating. You would expect, too, that it would make a difference to this community and it becomes now – starting off *[inaudible]* more activity here. It would change this community. What are your thoughts on what you predict to be changes and how are you going to respond to those? Are you aware of some of the problems that may come with a big change like that?

**Ms Cole:** I mean, change management is always a bit of a challenge, but I guess in terms of growth, it's something that the community is well prepared for. They have plans. When I first came - I don't know where the book is, but there is a book here; oh, it's over the back there about the things that you guys want to see. There was an arts centre and all of that sort of stuff and it never actually happened.

The reality of it is they have been waiting for years for this sort of stuff to take place, so that sort of build up has been happening bit by bit. The one thing that I have said to them all the way through and I have said this to BP as well: 'I know it is not always an easy process, but you need to move at a pace that people can accept'. Like the arts centre; they wanted the arts centre and so we got the arts centre happening and then we identified that we really needed a coordinator for the arts centre, but in the meantime I had gone to NTACC and lodged an application.

Now what I have done is I have gone back to them and I've said to them: 'That is fine. You need to wait. We need to hold this until the community is actually ready for that to take place'. If that takes another couple of years, then that is what the process has to be.

I guess in the immediate term in terms of the roadhouse and the service provision and stuff like that, when they have been waiting so long for it, plus we have trialled a lot of things in terms of furniture sales and stuff like that. We actually did our homework. We operated everything from this council office and we tried that. In the last financial year in terms of furniture sales, we turned out \$154 000 worth of furniture, so we tried a lot of things in terms of getting people prepared. Communication: change management is not a bad thing; it is about communication and as long as that keeps happening and people are still informed and let know, I think they will cope as long as it is not - don't chuck everything at once.

**Mr MILLS:** Sure. So the community is actively engaged every part of this happening.

**Ms Cole:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** What about training for mechanics or service? Is any of that sort of training being planned for now?

**Ms Cole:** We do it on the ground. I mean it is very, very hard. I was actually talking to Judy about this before. It is really, really hard, especially in the workshop, as she was talking about the workshop as well, it is really, really hard to get a mechanic and he has to be the ESO as well, so you need a mechanic, an ESO, you need him to be a retail manager, you need him to be the service manager and you need him to be a trainer. Oh, God! I don't know who could do that because I can't. So that is one of the big difficulties that you have in terms of any of this. It is very, very difficult to perform all of those roles that are actually required.

I guess our tack that has been taken is: turn up and we will do our best to show you what we do because you are really just so limited because you are pulled and poked in every direction in communities, it is very, very hard. It is an absolutely stupid comment when people say - and I have got it happening at the moment - 'We will get training happening and they can come in the office, and Donna you can show them what to do'. I go: 'Hang on. Number one, I am not a trainer. I wouldn't have a clue how to train somebody'.

Some of the things that I have put into practice over these years suit me. They are certainly not professional practices. It is the fact that you've got so many things that you have to do, you do things easy. I wouldn't know how to show somebody the correct way to do it. I'll show them the way I do it and I get the results I need, but that is not necessarily the right thing to do.

So that is a huge thing that really needs to change. People need to realise you can't do your job and train people at the same time. What you can do is work with people. If you have got somebody to come in and stand beside you and understand what you are doing and do that stuff with you, that's a totally different scenario. Then it works.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Well, it is great to see that you are still on track and Harts Range hasn't been spoilt because it has been such a good community for so long, and the fact that people still want to live here, that is important, isn't it? But we have got to look to the future. People won't always want to stay here unless you have something that will keep them here. That's the hardest part, making sure that you provide that

service and the job opportunities, good lifestyle. Did you say that you had a recreational hall?

**Ms Cole:** We have a small place that we built, Council built, we had a spare shed that we built, which gets utilised but it is really not - it is just not appropriate. So we have put in for triennial funding with Sport and Recreation, so we are very hopeful that we will get that and that would make a ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So it is these communities that have less infrastructure, less sporting infrastructure, yet don't have any of the problems that we see on the eastern side.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you have a swimming pool?

**Ms Cole:** No, we have actually flagged that and the deal is now that once we get an indication from Sport and Recreation that the recreation centre is going to happen, then we will be able to move with the swimming pool. When we first talked to them about the swimming pool, the deal was that we would make it a joint management scenario so that we could actually prove our point, that the community were very serious about what they were doing and that they had good management practices in place and all of that sort of stuff. So once we get an indication from Sport and Recreation that we are going to take the next step, then we will be able to develop the pool stuff further.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** One of the comments that was made to us yesterday is that the community we were in did not have enough income producing capacity. Is there enough income in this community to sustain it?

**Ms Cole:** I can remember having a conversation with Council, we were talking about the furniture sales, and I got really, really frustrated with Council, and I said to them: 'Look, it is about producing a job. I don't care whether you make any money or not. If you just produce a job, you have made a major achievement'. So Council just think in a totally different direction. That's the way they think. They say now: 'Okay, can we put enough, like in terms of the furniture stuff and all the rest of it and the RTC stuff, the fee for service, what do we need to do to make sure that we can employ someone to do it?' And that is their achievement.

This community has never been a money hungry community. They wanted to be able to do things and achieve things, but it has never been that scenario. If they really want to produce a better future in terms of having - even if it is a multitude of small things that will provide somebody with a work opportunity, so therefore they are being more productive in the community.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And do you still have those tourist buses come in? So they have got a couple of tourist buses a week coming in and buying art.

**A Witness:** This morning.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, this morning they were in.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is Spotted Tiger still around?

**Ms Cole:** Coming along. We had water issues, and we have just solved those water issues, but Sue Lee from the Tourism Commission, they're working closely with her, and she is actually going to come out with the family and develop the business plan.

Then it will be able to go. Council is just acting as an auspicing body for that one. We are not doing anything else.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And how far away from the community, about 5 kms?

**Ms Cole:** No, it's about 15 kms.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Can you ladies tell me why it's called Spotted Tiger?

**Ms Cole:** I reckon it is because there is a rock there that looks like a spotted tiger. I am convinced of it. That's what I say. I wouldn't have a clue, but when tourists ask me, I say: 'I don't know but this is my theory'.

**Mr NATT:** Perhaps it has a Tasmanian Tiger standing around.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*.

**Mr NATT:** Fantastic. Thank you very much

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I want to take this opportunity *[language]* this committee. We have had this opportunity to come out here and really show people on this committee have not been here so that we could have a look and compare why so many communities on the western side have problems compared with the eastern side.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, congratulations.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you very much. Thank you for your hospitality, too. It is absolutely wonderful.

**Ms Cole:** Thank you all very much.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We went to Papunya yesterday, right? You've been with us just straight across on the other side and Harts Range here. Now, Napperby is about here. Starting from Napperby all the way down, no problems. No problems. It is only like Yuendumu, Willowra ...

**Mr KNIGHT:** Where is the Stuart Highway?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The Stuart Highway is here, and that is the Tanami Highway that comes up here. So all the way from here to Haasts Bluff and Areyonga and into the AP Lands, but if you have a look at all these communities, they were all ration depots at one time during the Labor policies where they did that, you know, bringing in of different tribes and then they found that they have all the problems.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Even in AP Lands.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** This is all pastoral. AP and across here.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, I know. That is what I am saying, starting from here.

**Mr MILLS:** And that's part of the answer, isn't it?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Because that was the old NT Administration and the welfare ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is what I have been saying for 11 years, but I'll bet you any money as soon as someone with a PhD tells them, they will listen.

Witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 11.47am.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Engawala (Alcoota)**

*Tuesday 21 March 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Ms Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also Present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Mr Arthur Turner  
Mr Marcus Schwartz  
Mr Clifford Tilmouth  
Mr Cameron Neal

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 2.07pm.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives of the Alcoota community. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced, which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the Hansard record, I would ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear today. *[language]*

I am just explaining to people here that for Hansard, please put your names on the record, and that the committee will ask questions of individual people here. Do you want to go first, Rob?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes. I guess one of the first things I noticed is that at Atitjere we had all women come along and talk to us, and now we have got all men at this community. Are women stronger there or men stronger here, or is it the same, kind of balanced?

**Mr Turner:** It is the same.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Same? So there are strong women here as well?

**Mr Turner:** Yes.

**Mr Schwarz:** Yes, I think so. I am surprised that a few more haven't turn up here, actually.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So we went and visited Papunya yesterday and just had a look around there and listened to their problems over there, and we have just come here today. Are you able to say in your own words what you see as the difference between the western communities and the ones on the eastern side of that highway? Just the difference, you know, when you are talking about sniffing, grog, you know, all that stuff.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Mr Schwarz:** Nancy, Murray, Irene, Nancy, Barbara, come on.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Mr Tilmouth:** We got scared, we don't do those things, sniffing and all of that.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What was your name, sorry?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Clifford Tilmouth, and he's just saying then that they're too scared to do things like petrol sniffing and ganja and when their children start doing that kind of stuff, they're stamped on very, very quickly, you know, because it's a foreign object to their culture and they instil very strongly their law and culture here, as you can see, you know, like these men and women.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So has someone tried to bring sniffing in at some time?

**Mr Tilmouth:** No.

**Mr KNIGHT:** No, they know they're not ...

**Mr Tilmouth:** In the old days *[inaudible]* we didn't do anything like that.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So why are those other communities doing it, do you think?

**Mr Tilmouth:** *[inaudible]*

**Mr KNIGHT:** What, sorry?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Might be allowed to do it at other communities. See how the communities deal with it. That's why they're doing that there.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You know how we heard at Harts Range that the late Snowy Petrick ruled with an iron fist, well the same thing has happened here with Arthur Turner, ruled with an iron fist when he first started up this community, but it's an iron fist of compassion, you know, to make sure that people respect their law and culture and that people remain strong and they do not allow substances to come in to this community and this community has always had strong leadership. You can see that the new generation with the *[inaudible]*. They are shy people to strangers, but in their own way, their communities are really, really healthy. They really look after their children. All the kids go to school. *[language]*

**Mr MILLS:** That is good, very good.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So, Clifford, do these people stay on the communities? They don't go into town and go away for a long time or anything?

**Mr Tilmouth:** No, they stay here.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They stay here. They're all born here?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Brother, your dogs are being noisy out there!

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** I am a father. I have a son and I have seen many young boys, even if you've got a strong community, sometimes it is hard to keep your boys, young boys, on the right track. Is that the same here?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes? So how do you keep them on the right track?

**Mr Tilmouth:** We just tell them not to do it, go to school and...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]* football, and we have a great *[inaudible]*, eh?

**A Witness:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So they have their own team or they play with Ti Tree?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No they've got their own team and they do sports at Ti Tree. They go to Harts Range for the sports weekend.

**Mr MILLS:** But if a young boy wants to, he goes – two or three of them go and do the wrong thing, what do you do?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Growl.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They growl on them and tell them not to do it, that it's not right.

**Mr MILLS:** Do you have, like, a meeting or just in the family?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Just in the family.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Mr Tilmouth:** The fathers.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you have grog runners?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Sometimes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Petrol sniffing?

**Mr Tilmouth:** No.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Just with the group here, it is one family or one clan?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** There is one clan and three or four families. There is Turners, Kunoths, Tilmouths and Weirs. They all come out of the station family, you know? If you have a look at the surnames of most of the people, they come out of stations, yes. Station people and they all come out of grandfathers and fathers who were stockmen, used to work on these stations. All the stuff here belongs to them mob, you know, and they have got links to Ti Tree, Harts Range.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So, Clifford, Papunya has got all different clans living there? That is right?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Different tribes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes, different tribes live in that one spot. Do you see that as being a problem for Papunya and where - the strength that you have only got one clan here, you can control that? Is that one of the things you see as a problem with Papunya?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** But you can't tell another clan what to do.

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*. Because too many different people you know like Warlpiri mob, Imparja mob, Arrernte mob, Luritja mob, Pintubi mob, and that's

why we can't - problem, you know, sort them out, because really we can't tell each other off. *[language]*. All one family *[language]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do these young fellows, what about employment? What do you do when you get to that age to keep them here and keep them occupied?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes ...

**Mr Schwarz:** Well, that is with me. I am the CDEP organiser.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So how many people on CDEP?

**Mr Schwarz:** There are about 55.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Oh, that's good.

**Mr Schwarz:** We find little jobs for them to do, little projects. We have a workshop over there and we - there's a lot rubbish pickup around the place. The boys get in the tractors and go around and do all that. Yes, we have got projects with shelving, we are making shelving around the place for the store.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you have got a workshop and *[inaudible]* and things like that.

**Mr Schwarz:** Yes, yes we have got all that stuff. Yes. We have got a project going - that ATCO across the road here is going to be the store manager's residence, and we have extended onto that and we are busy finishing that off.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That's the ATCO, is it?

**Mr Schwarz:** This is that little ATCO across the road here, yes, extended on another room, a verandah and carport and that. So, yes, the boys keep fairly busy, about four or five of them go to the station and help the Station Manager with all the work on the station, hey, Cameron? Cameron is one of the boys that usually - Clint and Robin - they are always out down the station.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They look very strong and healthy.

**Mr Schwarz:** They need to be, working out there.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Sorry, Marcus, what has DEWR told you about the future of CDEP?

**Mr Schwarz:** I am not really up with it all. I've only been here five or six months, so I'm sort of coasting along, trying to get to grips with it all, and, no, I don't really know what is going on there. The main thing I am just doing is giving these people some employment and for the little bit of money they get, I think it is pretty good. They get out and they do their jobs.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Clifford, what would be good to make this place even better? I mean, it looks good now to us. You've got kids going to school, people employed. What sort of things would you like to do to make it better?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Some of the council is talking about putting a rec centre...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** A recreation centre.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Somewhere people can go after work.

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes *[inaudible]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do they have a band here or music?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes *[inaudible]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[inaudible]*, but they just can't get any kind of infrastructure apart from the CDEP participants working.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** For the music?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes. All they have got is this little stage and what Clifford is saying is they need, like, a recreation centre because if you have a look at the population here, there are lots of young people growing up and they need somewhere for these young fellas, you know, to just hang out and have a game of snooker or darts or watch television, footy on *[language]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Are you listening, Chris?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And they have got their footy oval just across there.

**Mr NATT:** Yes, I saw that. They need some goal posts.

**Mr Schwarz:** Yes, we have been talking about that; getting a project up and doing something about cleaning it up.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So this is where we are going around seeing less infrastructure on these Eastern Plenty communities, yet the communities are not dysfunctional.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Clifford, we heard at Atitjere today that when they were talking about petrol sniffing problems or something like that, the community thought that it wasn't the responsibility of the Council or of the office, it wasn't their responsibility to sort it out, that the community would sort it out themselves. What happens here when there is a problem with alcohol or petrol sniffing or whatever? Who is responsible for sorting it out?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*. The same thing happens here, eh?

**Witnesses:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Like, there was an incident just a week ago or a couple of weeks ago here where you had two families fighting. They sorted that out in the community, yes, and, you know, like everything's okay. People are at peace with each other, and you are going to get that kind of animosity from time to time in any community, whether it is good or bad, but what you see is the environment is absolutely wonderful and I think that these people for what they have got here and what they are achieving now is absolutely wonderful. You know, like not to have the problems of lots of the western communities.

It is so easy for people who haven't got anything to do nothing and go out and get on ganja and get on petrol. It is so easy, but these people choose still to live and work in the cattle industry, you know. They've still got real pride.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** How many cattle?

**Mr Schwarz:** Cameron might know. How many cattle have you got out there - just a guess?

**Mr Neal:** More than ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Four and a half thousand head of cattle?

**Mr Neal:** *[inaudible]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What, eight thousand?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** More?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, it is the biggest cattle company in this region, and the community actually owns the Alcoota Cattle Company. So all the dividends that Alcoota Cattle Company gets actually comes back into this community and these people.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So what do they use the funds for?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They use it to help their football team and all these elders, like Arthur might get a car out of it, like we've seen there, you know, to help get around and the community for other stuff, you know, they give some to the school for school children.

**Mr MILLS:** And you kill the beasts for meat here?

**Witnesses:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Where do you slaughter?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** At the station.

**Mr MILLS:** At the station?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Like one a week, or two a week?

**A Witness:** Month.

**Mr Turner:** Bush.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*. Might be during the week *[language]*

**Mr Turner:** Yes, that's right.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One a week.

**Mr MILLS:** One a week.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you share it around?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Who gets the fillet steak?

**Mr NATT:** The elders.

**Mr Schwarz:** Probably Arthur, eh, Arthur?

**Mr NATT:** Arthur gets the best steaks. Do you get the best steaks?

**Mr Turner:** I get the leg.

**Mr NATT:** You get the leg. The leg is better, is it?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Rump.

**Mr MILLS:** So when you men look at the little ones here, do you have some concerns for the future? Do you have some worry about the future in 10, 15 years time? If you do, what are those worries for the future of your community?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Work.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Work.

**Mr MILLS:** Employment.

**Mr Tilmouth:** *[inaudible]* people out there.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, so employment in mainly the cattle industry, that is the main part. Is the communication good between this community and the cattle industry, particularly the station?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They've got good relationship with the – they employ the manager.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It's their cattle station.

**Mr MILLS:** Oh, I see. It's their cattle station.

**Mr Tilmouth:** We make it *[inaudible]*. We still do that *[inaudible]*

**Mr MILLS:** Okay, and the training for the cattle industry?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** There are training programs over there?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes, operating for *[inaudible]*

**Mr MILLS:** Okay. And do you have rodeos?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Sometimes.

**Mr MILLS:** They are too dangerous. Has everyone here been on the bull?

**Mr Tilmouth:** No, men *[inaudible]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Health is good? Your children are healthy?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They do not have any problems or sickness?

**Mr Schwarz:** That is probably something we would like to talk about - we really think we need a full-time sister here, right?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Nurse.

**Mr Schwarz:** Nurse or whatever. At the moment, there is only a visit once a week, and it is pretty hard because we have these people having boils on them, and we are not - my partner and I work - Myra works in the store and she has to do a lot of attending to them when she is not qualified to do it. Otherwise, they have to be sent over to Harts Range or to Alice Springs. It would be good if we had a full-time sister here. I think it is about time we did have the *[inaudible]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you have health workers?

**Mr Schwarz:** We have some health workers come out from time to time - nutritionists and...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you don't have anyone in employed on the community as a health worker?

**Mr Schwarz:** I beg your pardon?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** As a health worker on the community?

**Mr Schwarz:** No.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Perhaps you could train them.

**Mr Schwarz:** It really should be happening, I think. From time to time, we get calls - maybe all hours of the night - and we are just not qualified to tell them what to do. The only thing we probably do is just give them a bit of Panadol or something like that. That is all we can do. Otherwise, it is always a big drive to head off to Harts Range from here and sometimes there is not a vehicle available. It does create quite a few problems.

I just thought I would bring some of this. This is the sort of stuff we get through all the time when you've got, you know, you send them off here and there to different places. This has been done *[inaudible]*. Valentine made an appointment in Alice Springs and they're expected to go in there and be there all the time. Transport is a big problem.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You do not have a community bus?

**Mr Schwarz:** We have got like a community troopy. That is handled by members. Members pay into it. Sometimes that's gone somewhere else and it is a problem.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is there anything else, Marcus, you wanted to raise?

**Mr NATT:** How many school teachers are here, Marcus?

**Mr Schwarz:** We have got one school teacher, a husband and wife team. He is just like a helper and she is a teacher.

**Mr NATT:** How many kids in the school?

**Mr Schwarz:** How many kids in the school, Clifford? There would be about 50 kids – would there be about 50 kids?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** How many kids *[language]*

**Mr Schwarz:** Margaret?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Forty-five.

**Mr NATT:** For one teacher.

**Mr KNIGHT:** There should be two teachers, shouldn't there?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, that is right.

**Mr Schwarz:** I am not sure of this. Sophie and Tim - I know Sophie is a qualified teacher, but I am not sure of Tim, whether he is a qualified teacher or not.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you have teacher's aids?

**Mr Schwarz:** Teacher's aids. Yes, Margaret works over in the school. She's over there.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Who delivers the local government services here?

**Mr Schwarz:** Sorry?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Who does the local government services here?

**Mr Schwarz:** Anmatjere Council.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So how do they do it? Do they subcontract you to do the work?

**Mr Schwarz:** No, I am actually employed by Anmatjere Council.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Do you do CDEP or local government?

**Mr Schwarz:** Just to do the CDEP.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Right. So who does the municipal stuff or the local government services around town?

**Mr Schwarz:** What, to do with, like, power and water or...

**Mr KNIGHT:** Oh, rubbish collection, general administration, you know.

**Mr Schwarz:** That is up to us with the CDEP. We organise that through the CDEP. The boys are here, now, and then they get paid their weekly rates for doing that work.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes. How does that relationship go with having somebody in Ti Tree and you out here. Does that work all right?

**Mr Schwarz:** It works pretty good, yes. We have got one of the boys, the main boys, he is off there today at a meeting there today with council. That is Colin. I have got a meeting Friday. We will go in to Anmatjere Friday and have a meeting with them. It doesn't happen that often, but we are constantly in touch by phone. Do you know them at all, there?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Neil [*Peasy*] ?

**Mr Schwarz:** Neil, yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes. I just wondered how that worked with outlying areas.

**Mr Schwarz:** It's pretty good, yes. You see we have got some outstations. Mulga Bore about 60 km out here, north, and Angula, and another outstation down south is [*inaudible*]

**Mr KNIGHT:** Outstations from here or part of the council?

**Mr Schwarz:** We have six employed out there at Angula and one – there's only a couple down there, but one is employed down there. It's going well.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes, good. How's your dog control program?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is there anything that anyone else wants to tell us? Does anyone else want to tell us anything?

**Mr Schwarz:** You girls? Nancy, do you want to say something?

**Mr NATT:** Clifford, part of my role is I am Chairman of the Youth and Sport Committee and Terry is also on that committee. We are looking at the ways government is spending its money on how we get more indigenous youth involved in sport and recreation. You are saying you haven't got good facilities here for sport so that is something we need to look at. However, when you go into town or other communities to play a carnival, do the families follow and then they come back to the community – they don't stay out?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Mr NATT:** They all come back?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes.

**Mr NATT:** Okay. So it does not affect the school attendances in any way? We heard over at Papunya yesterday that when they go to a carnival, they will all go to

the carnival and everyone will leave the school and they will stay away for a week and school virtually shuts down. That doesn't happen over this side of the highway?

**Mr Tilmouth:** No.

**Mr NATT:** No? Yes, okay, that is good.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do they have a recreational officer, someone in charge of that? No? Okay. So government hasn't funded a Rec Officer.

**Mr NATT:** I think, just talking to them, when we interviewed the CEO the other week, they have got funding for recreation officers, but it is just that we can not find recreation officers to fill the spots. However, I am sure there is probably someone within the community that would probably take on that role.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But you need good *[inaudible]*.

**Mr NATT:** That is right. So the infrastructure or the amenities we have got to have a look at pretty closely.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you can have someone organise things after school and after work. Do you have anyone in the community who could do that?

**Mr Schwarz:** I think Kyle was going to do that, wasn't he? Yes, I think that is what he talked about.

**Mr NATT:** Because the Department of Sport and Recreation will actually train the person to do the role if someone is interested in doing it, and the funding is there for that to happen.

**Mr Schwarz:** Yes, I think our man Kyle was looking to do that. He was over at the meeting today, doing the major accounts.

**Mr NATT:** If you need to follow that up, I will give you my card afterwards and we can chase that down for you and find you some more information because they'll supply all the equipment and do all that sort of that stuff. A lot of the money just falls to the AFL and they'll give you a kit. Do you get the Auskick people coming out here doing the clinics every now and again from Alice Springs? Auskick clinics or KickStart clinics?

**Mr Schwarz:** I am not sure. They may have; lots of things happen out here.

**Mr NATT:** Who is the footballer around here?

**Mr Schwarz:** Footballer? Who are the footballers?

**Mr NATT:** Clifford, do you play AFL?

**Mr Tilmouth:** No.

**Mr NATT:** Sorry? At Harts Range? So no AFL team here? No? Well, we will have to do something about that. Footie, I'm sorry, okay, football.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Who do you play for in Alice? You play for the country league in there? The bush league, eh?

**A Witness:** Yes, *[inaudible]*

**Mr NATT:** So does the KickStart program come out from Alice Springs? Does KickStart come here for the kids at school?

**A Witness:** Yes.

**Mr NATT:** They have been out a couple of times? Good, and they leave a kit for you with footballs and goal posts and all that sort of thing?

**A Witness:** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is that David Kearin, is it? That's Kevin Kearin's son, isn't it, from Tennant Creek?

**Mr NATT:** I'm not sure who's there now..

**Mr MILLS:** So you have a local team? What colours?

**Mr Tilmouth:** The Crows.

**Mr MILLS:** The Crows.

**Mr NATT:** Oh no! Port Adelaide, Port Adelaide!

**Mr MILLS:** Chris used to play for Port Adelaide.

**Mr NATT:** Don't hold that against me.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Well, I haven't got any more.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Unless you people have anything else, I would like to say thank you very much for coming and thank you for letting us come into your community and have a look around. It has been really good. It is really good that we can go somewhere where things are working well rather than only seeing all the bad things that happen in town and on that side of the road. You get tired of hearing all the bad things, so it's good to hear some good things.

**Mr MILLS:** Congratulations.

**Mr NATT:** And the support that is here today is fantastic. Well done. It just shows that the community is working together. Well done, everyone.

**Mr MILLS:** Mr Turner, would you please say hi to the dogs from us?

**Mr Turner:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Thank you

Witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 2.40pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Tangentyere Council *and* Larapinta Valley Town Camp**

*Wednesday 22 March 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Ms Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also Present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Peter Lowsen, Coordinator, Tangentyere Youth Services  
Mr William Tilmouth, Executive Director, Tangentyere Youth Services  
Ms Astri Baker, Tangentyere Social Services Manager  
Ms Leonie Sheedy, Yarrenyty-Arltere Community Coordinator  
Mr Mervyn Rabuntja, Community Elder, Yarrenyty-Arltere Community  
Mr George Close, Yarrenyty-Arltere Community Support Worker  
Mr Tristram Malbunka, Yarrenyty-Arltere Community CDEP Worker  
Ms Janelle Ebatarinja, Yarrenyty-Arltere Learning Community Committee

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 8.44 am.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I welcome you to this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives of Larapinta and Tangentyere Council and *[language]*

This meeting is not open to public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may be eventually tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the Committee and remind you that evidence given to the Committee is protected Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full name and the capacity of which you appear today.

*[language]* Just welcoming the *[inaudible]* and Peter, just to give a background on what they do. Thank you.

**Mr Lowson:** Thank you. *[inaudible]* are here today because they are a community of great drummers and also to help open this meeting, but also it's the reflection of what is done in the community if you give strength to people. Like, for example, I'm the Coordinator for Tangentyere Youth Services. I've lived in this town for 24 years and I've worked with Aboriginal organisations for 20 years as a teacher and in different programs at Tangentyere Council, and one of the great things that makes things move forward is giving the community strength by giving families - everyone talks about petrol sniffing and all the things that go on - one of the greatest strengths that I've seen here, and there's been many, is what happened with Yerrentryl Aldrara, with the Learning Centre there, and Larapinta Valley. Many years ago there was a community there that was absolutely devastated.

I would go out on a daily basis as the Youth Services Coordinator with some of our team, with probably half a dozen other services, every morning, first thing in the morning to deal with sniffers, which is an incredible waste of resources in terms of young people devastated. We were picking up young people out of the camp and taking them back to the homes they should have been in.

This was a daily occurrence. Every single day this went on and we were to try and deal with it and because of the insight of what had happened with Yerrentryl Aldrara and the set up of the community centre, the Learning Centre and things like that, all of a sudden people started to grow and become strong in that centre because there was an arts centre there. It allowed people to start to become proud of what they were doing, and give them the strength to stand up against what was going on there with the sniffers. Those sniffers ruled the camp. Those young blokes and young women running through that camp ruled what was going on in that camp and it ruled old people's lives to grandmothers to mothers to aunties to uncles, to everything.

The change that has happened there has just been incredible. I mean, people are strong now and, through the efforts of Tangentyere and many other different organisations, they actually got on top of things and it shows that you can get on top of things, but you have got to support it.

The other thing is it would be like *[inaudible]* for an example; if we said 'Oh, Drumatoong [?] are well practiced now. They'll be right. We'll just let them go as they are'. The thing is they have to be mentored and practiced every day, and the same thing has to happen in the communities.

You've got to give the strength back to the Aboriginal people, and the change will happen. It costs more to lock people up in prisons than send people off for rehabilitation when it's too late. If you get, with the Irrkerlantye example, with what's happened, early intervention programs are the way to go.

I really believe we're not going to get to every sniffer and some are going to pass away and it's a tragic, horrible thing, but we can celebrate that there are good things out there and keep that strength going. It's taken 200 years for people to have their lives ruined, well its going to probably take another 200 years to get it strong again. There are great examples out there, but that's where, I believe, things should be put into.

Anyway, thank you. I'd rather sit behind a drum kit and drum with these kids than speak too much, so we'll just do a quick opening. Drumatoong [?] was formed by a bunch of young girls seeing us play in the mall and saying: 'Can we do what you do?' with these adults that I was playing, and we said: 'All right, we'll do that' and with the incredible support of Tangentyere, we were able to move forward.

They're actually an unfunded group, so we receive no funding except for some things with their trips, but last year they turned over about a \$5 500 profit, which is not bad, and everything that they save, they actually can save now and this is one example of an early intervention type practice that can be put into place.

All these kids are at risk on a daily basis and they could be if programs are not in place to help them, whether its sport or music or whatever. We'll just do a quick thing for you.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do they do busking still to fundraise? They were doing some busking earlier.

**Mr Lowson:** Yes. When they busk in the mall, they can make anything up to over \$300 in an hour from...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Tourists.

**Mr Lowson:** Well, tourists come here and just absolutely love them because they want to make contact with Aboriginal people, and that's another thing that could make this community, Alice Springs, and make Australia really strong is if we all come together. The Aboriginal thing is the key in there. That's the key we need to open the door and make this country a really strong place.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Tell us about the little one. You've got a seven year-old there.

**Mr Lowson:** Seven year-old, we've got a Ringo! I mean, how could you not allow a drummer called Ringo to join the drum group? Apparently he's got another group on the side called *The Beatles* or something, but we don't know how they'll go.

What happens is we have a mentoring program. The older girls over there are all talking at the moment. They run the group, the 11 year-olds, and they get to say who comes in the group and they've got to come in with the right behaviours and things like that, they've got to put the dedication into practice, they've got to be going to school and everything. We have six year-olds coming into the group and we mentor them through. We have a program, Yerrenryl Aldrara, too. We go and do music on Wednesdays with the kids out there, a drum program.

Drumming is my passion and the thing is that you can actually accommodate a lot of kids in a drum program. They can make all the sounds together. They work and develop their own sounds now. A couple of years ago, they couldn't even get out of the back of a troopy to go to a Steiner fate because they were too shy and too shame. For the first few shows, they used to put hoods over their head and drum. I mean, it looked good, like some sort of cult drumming group, but now they are really confident. They stand up and speak really well. The thing is it's giving them strength. Like any other kids or any other programs in the community, if you give people strength, and if its adults as well, you can make change. You can change the devastation of what's happening with petrol and a whole lot of other things, and it doesn't cost a bomb of money to do it.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So how did you start with your drums? *[inaudible]* your mates?

**Mr Lowsen:** We started off playing on 44 gallon drums that CDEP gave us. Old oil drums. Most of the drums there are mine, which I brought in from home because I am a mad collector of them, much to my wife's dismay.

So we played on plastic barrels and things like that, which was a good sound, then we progressed. We've got drums from the dump and drums that were donated to us and the kids stripped them all down and painted designs, these are on the ones they use for marching. So they own it. It's their thing and the idea is for them to keep going if they want to keep going with it and when the Ursula's and the Tony's and the Darcy's who were 11 and 12 now are 16, well they've got something they can always go to.

The good thing about it is they can come back. Any of the kids that go out bush might be away for a while. If they come back, they can come back to join the group. They can come back and be in the group. They're never outed from the group, so it gives them a stable thing to come back to and it reminds me about kids coming back from bush that may come back from the community at Yerrentryl Aldrara to be able to come back there and have a stable community to go. It's no use getting a sniffer and saying: 'Great, back to this community', which is still completely wrecked and people haven't got any power and control over it. That's how we try and look at how they do that with their music, too.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is there a big proportion of girls there?

**Mr Lowsen:** Yes. That was one thing. You hardly ever see any girls perform in the Northern Territory or, I've been told, throughout Australia where they are a big strong Indigenous... it's to give them a big voice. We've got a boys group, and we've divided it because of testosterone levels.

The girls were really proactive about having their own group, and they wanted the strength to be able to speak up for their own group and do the dances without someone laughing at them or things like that, so they come to us now with lots of rhythms.

**Mr NATT:** Peter, is this linked with their education as well?

**Mr Lowsen:** I beg your pardon?

**Mr NATT:** Peter, is this linked with their education as well?

**Mr Lowesen:** It's part of their program in school. Tangentyere provides sport and rec programs to Yiperinya, which was Irrkerlantye, but it won't be in a couple of weeks, to Yerrentryl Aldrara. We provide sport programs and after school care programs for 18 town camps, and this drumming program is part of that, but we also do it outside of school hours. On weekends I spend time if we need to practice or go and do shows and things like that.

**Mr NATT:** So if they don't go to school, are they still allowed to play the drums?

**Mr Lowesen:** No.

**Mr NATT:** Right.

**Mr Lowesen:** If they're just slacking off and not going, part of the program is you have to go to school every day to be part of the drum program. If you miss that - if it's normal things, sickness or family business or cultural business, that's fine, but if it's just 'I don't wanna go to school' then we normally catch up with them and remind them.

Their attendance went from about 50-something percent now to 90 per cent attendance rate and that was just through the programs of the school and the programs that Tangentyere helped initiate as well, so it was a communal effort by everyone; it wasn't just the drum program. They love it because they are independent in what they do.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks, Pete.

**Mr Lowesen:** So we'll do a quick piece for you. You ready? Here we go!

**A Drummer:** No, I'm not ready.

**Mr Lowesen:** Ready? Now they're starting to lead, but they asked me to lead them today, but they are starting to lead their own program, so we'll do a quick one.

These are all based on Afro-Cuban rhythms and Brazilian rhythms, but they use their own language, too. They are starting to come up with their own... they use language to describe rhythms and everything so they have taken a bit from Africa and everything and added their own Arrernte touch to it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, that's good.

**Mr Lowesen:** You ready?

*[Drum performance]*

**Mr Lowesen:** We were going to get Ringo to do a solo but there's a contract thing, so I'm not sure about that. Thank you. I hope you have a successful outcome.

**MEMBERS:** Thank you!

*[Drummers withdrew]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can we just have everyone at the front here introduce themselves to the Committee, please?

**Mr Tilmouth:** William Tilmouth, Executive Director, Tangentyere Council.

**Mr Close:** George Close, Support Worker, Learning Centre.

**Mr Rabunja:** Mervyn Rubunja, Executive Member for Tangentyere

**Mr Hassell:** Phil Hassell. I'm with CAYLUS, the Central Australian Youth Link Up Service, doing case work.

**Mr Sheedy:** I'm Leonie Sheedy. I'm the coordinator at Yarrenyty-Arltere Learning Centre.

**Ms Baker:** I'm Astri Baker. I'm the Acting Manager for Youth and Family Services at Tangentyere Council, and I've also worked at the Learning Centre.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Thanks for coming in today. It's a great introduction, isn't it, for the whole session this morning? I think the best thing about this Committee coming to Central Australia is that some of these big politicians from the Top End are hearing about our problems first hand.

Alison and I probably know a lot of what's going on, so its really important for us to make sure that they understand, more than understand - you know, you sort of get the feeling that we do have problems, but we are trying very hard to correct them and there are obviously things we can do and perhaps should be done, and we need to prioritise those so that we do know where we are going. It's not much good having people form different organisations running around and doing their own thing; we really need that coordinated approach and we need to see results.

What I have been asking is that people tell us the good things that are happening, the bad things that are happening and the sort of things we need to take on as a Committee and go back and discuss and see what recommendations we can make. I'm not sure who is going to start.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can I just say, just so that it gives you an idea of where we have been and what we've seen, we went out to Papunya first stop on Monday, and yesterday we went out to Harts Range and Alcoota and it was basically just to show this Committee the difference on the Eastern Plenty because we've been saying to government for years, 11 or 12 years now, that people that haven't been assimilated, people that have just got their land back from the *Native Title Act* since 1982, there's very different situations in these communities. They don't have petrol sniffing they don't have as much ganja, and every indicator shows that even with failure to thrive, there's less failure to thrive coming from the Eastern Plenty to the Western side of the community.

If you have a look at all the communities where we've got devastation with petrol sniffing and destruction – family destruction as well at places like Papunya, Hermannsburg and places in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands, Yuendumu and it's places that have had too many different clans put into these communities and people haven't been able to work out their leadership role because of too many different cultures and laws put in, you know.

Whereas if you go and have a look at communities on the Eastern Plenty, they've got their leaders all sorted out and those communities are really led by - and the communication between the council and the community people are also at the level that people want them. So we've seen a very different contrast on the Eastern Plenty to what we've seen at Papunya.

It's a pity that I couldn't take the Committee to another community, but I think that - and Papunya is really, really trying. We're not knocking Papunya for the problems. They've identified to the Committee that they have problems with leadership and they've identified that there are communication problems, but they are talking about it.

They've got a community meeting on Wednesday, which is today, to talk about all these issues, the issues of the VSA legislation and Papunya is working through their problems but they've identified that it's about a lack of leadership and also the communication between the school, the health service, the Police and the communication from the council to the people. So it's really good to see Papunya standing up and identifying those problems to try and combat the problems that they have.

**Mr Tilmouth:** Do I talk into the mike?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, state your name as well, please, William.

**Mr Tilmouth:** Is it on? Yes. William Tilmouth, Tangentyere Executive Director. I've been in that position for approximately eight and a half years now. Just on your opening comments there, Alison, may I call you Alison or Chair?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Tilmouth:** I totally agree with you. I think the process of colonisation within the Territory has allowed two streams of behaviour. On the eastern side, you have the pastoralists who came in and worked differently as opposed to the churches and the missions on the western side and the pastoralists on the eastern side allowed Aboriginal people to also practice culture as well as work within the pastoral industry, and the pastoralists knew that the value of Indigenous people in that arena.

In the western side, it was more about large settlements moving all different kinds of people into areas that didn't belong to them in the first place and as a result, a lot of dysfunction came off that. So the government of the day took the two-prong strategy and one worked and one didn't.

Just briefly, a background. Tangentyere Council is a resource centre for the 18 town council of Alice Springs and, as you can see with Drumatoong [?], we run a variety of services and when you hear those kids play, it brings a tear to my eye every time.

Currently Tangentyere is the third biggest employer in the Northern Territory outside of government, with 75% of our staff Indigenous. The council is arguably the biggest Indigenous employer in the country. Our services cover most social, employment and business portfolios in government in our attempt to deliver a broad range of services to address the direct needs of Indigenous people.

Tangentyere's service delivery is based strategically in response to the following: municipal services, employment and training, housing and infrastructure, education, youth and family services, financial services, social justice, social services, health

and age, and the arts. Tangentyere provides services to town camps of Alice Springs, to town and to remote areas. Services in remote areas include: youth, employment, construction and social justice.

Tangentyere has been addressing the impact of substance abuse over the past 25 years and has a strong base on the experience in this area. We have been very proactive in setting up a lot of the programs that you see today, including CARPU, which came from our alcohol Committee, and the idea of total abstinence was one model. The other idea was learning to live with alcohol and that was the Tjuritja (?) model, which, sadly, did not get legs, did not get the support that it warranted from the community and, as a result, has now been suspended and the licenses suspended by the Liquor Commission.

But Tangentyere has been very, very active in all those areas. I've got my staff here today and I really think they will tell their story, their programs, and I want them to do that, but also I want them to be able to ask you questions and for you to ask them questions and feel free to do that, okay? So that's just an opening statement from myself and I'll now hand you to - who is next in line? Okay, Astri Baker who runs our programs in Tangentyere.

**Ms Baker:** Hi, is this actually working? I'll keep this brief. I wanted to ask on behalf of everyone who has come today, I suppose, if you could explain what you'll have impact on because there have been a lot of enquiries over the years. There's a lot of talk about petrol sniffing and the impact of that, and one of things that Yenegj Aldere (?) has found is that - and I've worked out there so I've also been a part of it - a lot of time is spent reporting on funding, requesting funding, showing bureaucrats or politicians the programs so they understand the effectiveness of it and they understand the context. So we didn't want to just start talking again about what we think it is that you will have impact on; we want to actually hear whether you will have impact on funding, which is really the most urgent thing for this program, or what areas do you really believe this enquiry will have impact on, so we can pitch it to the right...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We'll go back as a Committee and do a report back to the Parliament and we'll put in recommendations. I mean, we spoke last night over dinner about how we should put in our recommendations, identifying areas of where government may be failing in service delivery, but we've been over to *[inaudible]* and went out to Papunya. One of the issues raised at Papunya was that they needed more housing for staff, and we counted 17 empty houses at Papunya. They have two houses built every year. The recommendation we would put back for them would be: 'Okay, they can turn the \$600,000 that they have for the two houses a year and have that as an R and M program to fix up the 17 houses that they have and they can make it so that the seven become non-Indigenous houses, and the 10 become Indigenous houses to alleviate some of the over crowding'.

So we are looking at all those issues as well, and taking the Committee to the eastern side was to see the lack of infrastructure on the eastern side and, really, no problems. So its not about giving more to the problem; it's about saying: 'Okay, how do we get leadership in these communities? How do we make sure that Aboriginal people themselves are driving it so that they have the power to communicate with each other as Indigenous people who suffer from all this destruction from petrol sniffing?'

Our recommendations will be around a lot of things that we've seen and from what we hear from you today. If you are saying to this Committee that it's a lack of

government putting in resources to support these programs then, you know, that'll be some of the recommendations that we as a Committee will have to agree on after hearing what you have to say to us because, you know, you have to take into consideration that, especially if you are talking to me, that I'm born and bred in some of these communities and live and breathe the problems every day, and I see some as a form of destruction of the Assimilation policies. I see some as helplessness and hopelessness and people getting entrenched in that rut. I see the destruction of law and *[inaudible]* through petrol sniffing and ganja and alcohol. There's no respect for elders left any more, and all that kind of stuff. I see that every day in my life, you know, so I need to be very convinced that it's appropriate for the government to just keep on pouring money into these when, you know, we can be working with the resources we've got with extra money, long term, and have long term strategies rather than just for the year.

**Ms Baker:** And how will it link with the Commonwealth enquiry?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It's got no links to the Commonwealth enquiry at all. We have a look at the recommendations of the Commonwealth enquiry, but the Commonwealth enquiry is totally different and this Committee will look at the recommendations of the Commonwealth enquiry, and try and come up with our solutions differently for the Territory, rather than just follow the Commonwealth enquiry.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Just be aware that the last Substance Abuse Committee in the last term, in fact, as a result of their recommendations, the petrol sniffing legislation that's been passed came out of that. As you know before, people could not take petrol from sniffers but now there's legislation whereby there will be people who will have the ability to actually take them and if they are at risk, put them into a rehabilitation program. So that's a result of this particular Committee's work last term.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And the community then nominates 10 people to say: 'Okay, you'll be the one that's going to take the petrol off those kids' and it's really giving power back to the people to say: 'Okay, our priority is on *[inaudible]*'.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So we need to know from you where you think - what's the best way we can support the programs without it just being a grab for money, I guess, is what Alison is saying. You need to make some constructive solution.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You need to convince us.

**Ms Baker:** Okay, I suppose one of the comments that I would then make is that at the moment, and I guess this is always the case, there's always a change. There's a new idea, there's a new plan, which is about trying new things, which is a good thing, and sometimes they are really effective and sometimes they aren't and, hopefully, programs get evaluated.

At the moment, the context is there's Opal roll out, there's eight-point plans in certain areas, there's concern about what the impact of that's going to be on Alice Springs and town camps in particular, and there's also the new legislation. I went to a meeting recently about the new legislation and some parts of it, aspects, I think will be effective and some of them I can see huge concerns with already. I'm not going to go into all the detail of that because there are other areas working on that, but while all those changes are occurring, the things that do work well need to be sustained because there will always be a gap, and that's what I want to lead in to, let Larapinta talk about the program there because it's a program that's proved itself to

work really well in an incredibly hard context with very little money and has done amazing things, which is not to say there aren't problems still for that community, which they work on every day and they address as quickly as they can and come together and have meetings, and Mervyn and George and Leonie will tell you about all that, but just to say don't throw out the things that are going well; they need to be sustained.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Oh, look absolutely. This Committee understands that, you know, like we're not going to throw the baby out with the bath water. We will have a collective recommendation that we put up to government, hopefully supporting good programs that are happening, but really emphasising the fact that it needs leadership, it needs a lot of communication because that's what we've seen in the communities to the east, where they've got good communication and people make real leaders standing up, you're not seeing the problems that we are seeing on the west and maybe in the town camps and in Alice Springs. So it's about people taking that leadership role and I know with Mervyn, since he's taken the leadership role at Larapinta, things are starting to change around because Aboriginal kids are seeing that.

I had the privilege of camping out at Elva Cook's place the other night with Cynthia and talking to her about it, and she said the same thing. She can walk around free now (language) you know, because she knows that her son is there, taking over from the father and that people there at Larapinta are respecting him. She doesn't feel that she needs to come back any more, you know, and she's starting to do things with Hermannsburg people to help them, you know, getting the drunks out for treatment at Elva's place and that's really, really good to see. I camped there the other night with them, and it's absolutely wonderful to see Elva and Cynthia working together, trying to take people who are on too much grog out there to heal them by talking to them and making sure that they're part of that community. That's what we want to see. Terry.

**Mr MILLS:** Astri, I hear what you are saying, and I'm sure panel members here on the Committee would feel similarly as we approach this, that you guys have fronted to different groups before and you've told your stories before and it's like this is the sort of thing that politicians do; they go and have a listen and it looks pretty flash and goes away and we report, everyone continues on, institutional needs are identified and addressed, we address our own institutional, political ends and really it's just rubbish.

I don't want to be a part of that and I reckon members here are similarly trying to drill through. Some of us are new members. I'm from the Top End. I have a concern about these issues. We've seen some things that have made an impact upon us. As politicians, we have to attend to a whole range of things from education in itself to substance abuse, some intricate issues that I've only just begun to understand as a result of this trip.

So I know that you may feel that this just may just be an exercise that you are going through, but I can assure you that it is important to us to allow us to play our part. We approach it with some sincerity. I don't know everything about this, a lot of this I am going to be listening to and then it will inform our discussions later on. Primarily, it's drilling right down to understand the problem and there is no satisfaction in stating what the problem is once you've got a grasp of the deeper levels of the problem. Next comes an answer: what can we actually then do? For example, what we've identified is the approach of the pastoral industry as opposed to the ration camps and the missions. Right, we now understand the problem, but the next step is how the

heck do you fix that? It's like unscrambling an egg. I've been listening really carefully to see if there's any way that we can start to fix that. So I just assure you, I heard what you are saying. I know you probably resent it. I see it on TV and read the papers, everyone's come to have a listen and a talk, but please continue; it's important.

**Mr NATT:** Can I just say something before we go? This is just to let you know that I'm not part of the Substance Abuse Committee. I'm actually heading up the Youth and Sport Committee, and Terry is a member of that Committee. I'm just an observer in this case, but one of the roles of our Committee is to see whether the government is spending money in the right areas, to make sure that, more so Indigenous kids, are being brought into the system and have got sport and recreation facilities available to them.

The Committee thinks there is a link there, too, to help the substance abuse side of it so we think sport can play an integral part of that. So I'll go back to our Committee and report on that as well.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Just from my part, I mean, this is a wider issue than petrol sniffing or alcohol or drugs or violence or whatever' it's just a symptom of a deep-seated problem. What we saw at Papunya is kind of mirrored back in - I'm from a bush electorate in the northern area - it is mirrored in those communities where you've got that mission history where everyone's been pushed together, they're stuck in somebody else's land and they feel very disempowered.

So how do you fix that? You start talking about moving back onto country, and a heap of bureaucrats freak out about another homelands movement, but it's what people want and what they see as a way of solving the social problems and that possible solution is economic development. So that brings another aspect into it as well. You've got this urban drift as well, so what do we do with that?

I know we're looking at substance abuse, but if you look back to where it's coming from and what you can do there is to stop this constant infection of problems in communities and in urban centres as well. So although we're looking at substance abuse, I'm looking back towards how we make homelands sustainable, how do we try and allow groups to move back onto country, and what we can do we about that urban drift, how do we get people to be successful when they do come to town?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** All right. Let's start listening.

**Ms Sheedy:** I'm itching to answer some of those questions.

**Mr Tilmouth:** I've just taken the mike off Leonie because I do want to respond to what has been said. What we're here for today is to tell you that Tangentyere is a model that has worked on substance abuse for its entire existence; it has been one of our primary focuses. It's a model that is also about the empowerment of Aboriginal people to make decisions and choices. Most times, the decisions that are made are cost effective and efficient and, as a result, Tangentyere stands on its record because of the structure that we have.

Tangentyere is also a model that is transportable. If you look at the skeleton, the structure of Tangentyere in itself, you can transport this model to anywhere else in Australia and it will work because it has that empowerment of Indigenous people, where the town camp people are the people who sit on my executive, they give me

directions, I'm a servant to them. I ensure that, ultimately, the services that they want at the bottom are being delivered.

We're also out there lobbying with governments and State governments and, like Astri says, sometimes we are that empty can just rattling in the wind and time and time again we present ourselves to Senate enquiries, yet we ourselves feel threatened under the new federal government way of operation. We ourselves feel that maybe at the end of the year, there won't be an Indigenous organisation standing. That, to us, is quite scary. I think the town of Alice Springs should be more scared because you are taking away the dam and we're the people sitting there with our finger in the hole in the leak. You take us away and the whole dam collapses. I think that's what the people of Alice Springs don't realise: Tangentyere has always been the buffer zone for the town Alice Springs, trying to work very hard on Indigenous issues and at times we are expected to be everything for everyone on Indigenous issues.

What Astri talked about with the legislation on substance abuse that was recently brought down, where people have to look after sniffers, take petrol off sniffers, that sort of stuff, a lot of those people won't be on full-time wages; they will actually on CDEP. Really, there is no empowerment or incentive for them to work on CDEP. You and I would not do it, and I don't think we should expect other people to do it. That is what it is going to boil down to: people on CDEP will be expected to go and work with the sniffers and tip the petrol out for a full 24 hours a day, not just for 20 hours a week. That is a criticism that I have of that legislation.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One of the things, though, brother, is that the VSA legislation comes out of the previous Committee as well, so the Committee, when it took its recommendations to the government, it has instigated the VSA legislation. So don't feel that. I know how you feel, like with people just come in and asking you questions and stuff like that. Like Terry said, you know, going out to these communities absolutely shocked him, you know, because he's from the Top End. One of the comments that he actually made when we left Papunya, and Loraine's made the same comment as well, was: 'Thanks a lot for showing us Papunya with all its warts as well'. It's good to take people like Loraine and Terry out to communities and show them exactly what's going on. The message that we got back from Papunya was clear: it's about communication, it's about leadership, and it's good that Papunya is talking about it.

I don't want you to feel that nothing's going to come out of this because you've got passionate people on this Committee. I mean, you've heard Terry on education and substance misuse and he's very, very passionate. I know that going out to some of these communities absolutely shocked him. I know a few people know the way that Loraine talks passionately about substance misuse in this town and also Rob and Chris. Chris is an observer on this Committee, but he's linked to us through sports and he's got a wide range of views now by going out to the Eastern Plenty and Papunya about sporting infrastructure and just having a look at the beauty of the children inside the schools.

**Mr Tilmouth:** I realise that is so, but the dark cloud is on the horizon. The Day Patrol, the program that had 19,000 contacts, which has now got to be picked up by the police, who are stretched to the limit, anyway ...

**Mr MILLS:** Sorry, William, did you say 19?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Thousand over three years of the program.

**Mr MILLS:** Nineteen thousand contacts?

**Mr Tilmouth:** Yes, over the three years of the program and that statistic now is the responsibility of the police, and the police are busy enough now doing just policing work, let alone dealing with people who humbug around supermarkets and things and that is a concern.

The other cloud that is looming more immediately is the Larapinta Learning Centre's funding is probably a bit sketchy at the moment. I will let Leonie talk a bit about that, but we do have concerns that whilst we are talking positive, the sustainability of positive programs now is vitally important. To build on those programs and to work with other initiatives that the community themselves come up with is vitally important. Let's not take away some of the foundations that made the success.

The other thing, as I said earlier, I'm promoting the structure of Tangentyere as being very much a model that can be put not only in communities, but within regions and have it in that way because it's the empowerment of people; giving people choice, giving people the opportunities to be the leaders that they want to be is what its all about, but with that comes employment and all those sort of things and for people on CDEP to be working with sniffers just because they're on CDEP, sometimes that incentive is not there. I'm just pointing these things out. There are dark clouds on our horizon and we worry very much about it.

**Ms Sheedy:** Thank you for inviting us today. Do I need to use this?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, it is for recording.

**Ms Sheedy:** I see, okay. I'm really sorry that you couldn't come out to Larapinta, especially talking to you now because it does give you a very hands-on feel, but its just not always appropriate and because of the sorry business that we've got at the moment...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Leonie, can we just stop you for a minute because Terry and I actually have to go and do live to air on...

**Ms Sheedy:** Don't say that; I'll weep. Are you coming back?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes. We'll have a 15-minute break just for a cup of tea, and we'll run off and do our interview with CAAMA and we'll come straight back. It probably won't even take 15 minutes.

**Mr MILLS:** I reckon it will take more!

**Ms Sheedy:** No worries.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We'll adjourn for 15 minutes.

*[Committee suspended]*

**Ms Sheedy:** I thought it was quite a good place to come, when Rob was talking before about well, we've looked at communities and what do we do about this issue and what do we do about that issue. That's basically where Larapinta, it is the Yarrenyty-Altere Learning Centre, but another language name that is commonly called, but I'm better at pronouncing it as Larapinta so I'll just refer to it as Larapinta.

That is where we started at Larapinta: what do we do about these issues? The background is that there was chronic petrol sniffing and there was no employment, all the kids were out of school, kids were involved in crime, kids were being incarcerated, parents had lost control and it was really a very violent and difficult lifestyle for everybody. There were children as young as four years old being taken away by FACS because the kids were sniffing. In fact, there were four children taken away from that particular mother and one of the outcomes I can say now is that she's just had her first baby where she is now looking after that child and she's successfully doing that because she's gained strength to be able to look after her kids and put boundaries down, and that's a huge outcome for that particular individual.

So we were faced with all of those issues, and the first thing that happened, to my knowledge, was that all the organisations in Alice Springs got together and said: 'This uncoordinated response is not working and we can't really do it better. This is all we can offer' and it wasn't working. So they trialled taking kids to Yipirinya with a dedicated worker and people there. Yipirinya said: 'We can't take these kids; they're too difficult'.

Yipirinya weren't able to take them and that's when Tangentyere went into full-on discussions with the community about what they wanted and what they thought would work. That's been one of the pivots of the success of the program since that time: maintaining that discussion with that grassroots community so they had ownership for their own problems and had a voice to put into place solutions that they'd identified. They wanted their kids back in school; they didn't want them at home all the time. They didn't want them getting into trouble with the police. They also wanted their quality of life to be improved, but couldn't get a handle on getting it any better because they were held to ransom by so much violence.

So they did listen. Tangentyere talked to the Department of Education and, amazingly, in a very creative and unique model, they worked out a program at Gillen Primary School so that a teacher from there was auspiced to the Learning Centre and the community dedicated that community building which is usually just a, you know, it was a community facility, a number of town camps have got them, this one wasn't being fully utilised, to be a Learning Centre where a school could happen, adults could partake in activities. Astri was actually involved in this meeting before I came on board.

Young people identified a number of needs that they felt were unmet as well and they were being excluded from, they were around recreation needs, schooling needs, basic access to education, health, justice, all sorts of financial associated things. So through that process a school did come on board, the Learning Centre was established. It started as a manual Learning Centre, then it became a family resource centre because it was obvious that it needed significant linking in with other areas to do with justice, health and legal matters and all those other service areas that people needed because of all the different problems that had stacked up and were unmet.

Gradually, over the years, the school has been maintained. The young people that were involved in substance misuse, it hasn't been easy. There were like 15 to 20 young kids at that time that were all sniffing. School was seen as an answer. Well, school was partially the answer, but one school teacher in a school wasn't going to be able to deal with all of that. I guess myself as the coordinator has had to lobby and bring in other infrastructure to assist with that and, in some cases, family have

identified that this child is - we've tried this and it isn't working so we would like them to go to an outstation or we'd like this to happen. So through coming to the Learning Centre and having regular meetings through a Committee that's established there, the young people and the adults in that family were part of that Committee and strategise what they want to happen. They work out strategies to deal with sniffing, they identify people who they think need extra care, who it's not working for, what else we can do. They identify other agencies that they want to come in who may be work already or don't work already. They work on Learning Centre planning and governance for the Learning Centre and through that process of governance, we believe we've really strengthened that community and decreased petrol sniffing. We haven't totally eradicated it, and sometimes it goes up and then sometimes it goes down.

At the moment, it has gone up and a large amount of that, I think, is the stability because of sorry business and people have moved and other people have come back that we can't control. One thing the family do at the Learning Centre is they have a strict sort of code now of who come in and out of their community and when young people come in that they don't want there, then they can go back and work out what family members to talk to, to come and get those kids or what other agencies can come and take those kids away and if that's too difficult, then they can put trespass orders on those young people, which is a last resort but works very well in terms of then police will be involved to really get the message home or do FACS reports. But with the Sorry camp, it's been living somewhere else and perhaps we've sort of not been able to - but that will change.

Last year, we had five months of no sniffing and then we had very low sniffing. We're an option, not mandatory. That's sort of the premise of what we do and I'm very happy to answer questions to go from there.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So Leonie, how many sniffers do you have back on Larapinta now?

**Ms Sheedy:** Well, with sniffers, we've got young people who are always in the community who are in and out of sniffing and then we have like a new generation of young people that are going to the school now that have never been involved in sniffing. So from when we started having the whole school – literally, all those kids had a sniffing history, we've now got 10 young people who haven't been involved in sniffing and then there's that generation when we started, and we work with them ongoing. Of that, we've probably got in the community at the moment probably six young people that have got issues. I mean, it could be eight, I'm not quite sure, so...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And is it just petrol or is it paint and glue and ganja?

**Ms Sheedy:** It's often spray. It's often that sort of thing and there's been a lot of strategies with us working with CAYLUS to take family to the shops in town to identify... Blair's petrol sniffing mob, this is where are getting it from, going to Auto Cheap. Janella, who is the young person that was going to come today, I really wish you could have been at Larapinta because this would have made a lot more sense, but she worked with CAYLUS for a short time to go to the different places in town, and that's a very good thing for a family member to do, to be in that process. That's what we've been able to do: give some of these people strength to be proactive to make that change.

It's very difficult to understand how everybody can be involved in this or it's very difficult to have a model where you can effect change for everybody and I think that's

what the Learning Centre does from a young age to an old age, right up through the generations, but traditionally, I mean, we are dealing with petrol, spray and glue and alcohol. There is a poly-drug situation with young people.

**Mr MILLS:** Leonie, I'm interested in what you said about some from outside coming into that community and a means to have them removed or turned away. Can you describe how that works? Who effects it? How are they turned away?

**Ms Sheedy:** It's not a sort of instant, magic formula. It's kind of a working through. Family identify, they come to the centre, that's the other underlying ingredient that makes this place work: it is owned by the families at risk who really, on the ground, want to make change and need that for their family. So they always come to me or to George or to somebody that works at the centre and say: 'So and so and so and so are here. They won't go. We told them to go and they won't go'. So we generally sit down and go: 'Who are they? Who's their mother, who's their father? Who in their family can help?'. Yesterday, with Mervyn, he had a person that turned up at his place and he said: 'No, that family, the father lives in the river. Not much help,' so with that situation - and there are always different responses - we rang CAYLUS and did a FACS report. Phil was going to ring Mt Theo because they know the Yuendumu people quite well, and it was identified that she was a Yuendumu young person and so that was going to be the response, to keep linking in with that crew to see if they could come and pick her up or if somebody from Return to Country could perhaps take her out or if Phil or someone like that could.

With Larapinta mob, quite often they're relative to family so quite often we have habitual kind of in-and-outs with some young people so family have said after a number of times: 'We will try and work with people, too, at the centre if we've got identified programs for young people and a work program for young men,' which is particularly important that we now have a drug and alcohol case worker working with us as well, but George is very much that person that works with the young men so they're involved in a work program as well as, you know, being in the process of governance.

We will sort of go through that Committee identifying the people, then they will try - you know, sometimes we've gone out to Hermannsburg and sat down with remote Night Patrol and they have sat with the Relekha Committee out there and then they've sent in their mob and they've picked up young people and taken them out. It varies and depends on what communities say and what they want to do.

**Mr MILLS:** Sure. Is this a reason, strengthening within the community the capacity to ask that question, to work out whether they legitimately belong there or not? Is that a recent development?

**Ms Sheedy:** Yes, I think it's something that started and grown and grown and grown. An underlying part of that too, is people having strength to put down boundaries. Ultimately, that's what we're trying to mentor and strengthen and continue, and people are doing that. They're having more respect for houses, putting down rules about who can be there and who can't and the lack of significant other people because of whole generations being missing, because so many people, as William was saying before, young people are orphans, there are so many, so much grief and loss that people are dealing with.

We have the situation with our main family that there's just one significant great grandmother who's the significant leader for all of that family. It's very, very difficult for her. She's raising three young great-grandchildren but she's seen as the one that

kind of is the leadership but we're trying to kind of, through that Committee, create leadership with the young people who have been involved in sniffing and aren't involved any more and other stronger family members who are there, you know, aunties and uncles who haven't got those sort of issues and ability.

**Mr MILLS:** How many Indigenous people generally work in the Learning Centre and how many specifically are from town camps?

**Ms Sheedy:** It's all town camp.

**Mr MILLS:** No, those who work in the learning ...

**Ms Sheedy:** Oh, the workers, the staff?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, the staff.

**Ms Sheedy:** There's myself, the coordinator, there's a teacher from Gillen Primary School. Most of the programs, learning programs are ones we have to apply for funding so they bring in the workers and there's an art program person from Bachelor College who comes in. There's George, who is the support worker and security and works with the young men. He's a full-time position. There is a nutrition worker who's a community person from another community who used to live at Larapinta, and she has a nearly full-time position. There are eight young people on CDEP, and we have a drug and alcohol case worker from outside the community. Who have I missed? We have a teacher's aide and tutor that come from Gillen Primary School, so it's a holistic patching together of programs from different government departments.

**Mr MILLS:** So would I be right in saying about a quarter of those that work there are source from the *[inaudible]* group of the town camp?

**Ms Sheedy:** Yes. Is that right?

**Ms Baker:** Well, I guess eight.

**Ms Sheedy:** CDEP is a big part of our workforce but, I mean, if you count that, it is much more than - but that is where, you know, our community work is the strength. It is a great way of leading into a work program through the CDEP, and that's our challenge: finding jobs and funding for these - not funding, but employment opportunities.

**Mr MILLS:** I've asked a lot of questions and I'll make this the last one in this respect: what I'm hearing, and I'm sure members of the Committee are hearing, is that there appears to be a maturing and strengthening of this program in that town camp.

**Ms Sheedy:** That's right.

**Mr MILLS:** Now you've also made reference to the need for funding to keep this operation going. How real is the threat of funding changing to the extent that the program, which has gained some momentum, stalls?

**Ms Sheedy:** My position, which is the coordinator's position, has been on a pilot program type of funding situation with Commonwealth FACS, Stronger Families and Community Strategies, for the last four years. So they gave us two years then they

gave us another two years then they said: 'Definitely no more,' and that's brought us up to the current date.

I think without the coordinating role, it will be very difficult to sustain the level of commitment that we've got to the centre, especially through the other programs like the Department of Education, and they're very supportive of our program. We had Margaret, the CEO – I've forgotten her surname.

**Mr MILLS:** Margaret Banks

**Ms Sheedy:** Yes and *[inaudible]* Henry out the other day and they were very supportive and they were going to go and talk to FACS on our behalf, but essentially it's a huge risk if that funding for a coordinator is not maintained.

We have put in submissions to other people that we can apply for but whether or not... and linked with that, we've had a Drug and Alcohol Case Worker that's made a huge difference which came through another program from NIDS, which is National Illicit Drugs Strategy. So you can really start working one-on-one and really focussing on individuals and that is also at risk.

So at the moment have probably \$240,000, I think we worked out, that we exist on, but we need that to be maintained and part of that is Territory Health. They've been a great partner for us since we began, and that's mainly operational, materials plus George's job and the community nutrition worker and the transport and all the other bits and pieces. So that's about just over \$100,000 comes from Territory Health and the other comes from the Commonwealth funding that we really need to keep going. We'd like \$300,000. We could then have a male Drug and Alcohol Case Worker as well as a female Drug and Alcohol Case Worker, and that would really, you know, give us proper resources to operate a full program to the extent that we'd like to.

It is a critical role to link in all the different agencies that come to Larapinta and there is substantial commitment to Larapinta now from other agencies in town. There is enormous frustration and inability to know how to deliver services into very marginalised groups in Alice Springs, and it's taken quite a lot of time to teach people: 'Well, this is how: you come here, you do this and that', to build relationships of trust and that they have to be long term and they have to have these ingredients so we now have a lot of support from different agencies, but without maintaining that role, that will all fall away. I have no doubt that it will all disintegrate and end up a big problem again back where we were five years ago.

**Mr MILLS:** Irrkerlantye comes to mind.

**Ms Sheedy:** That's right.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Rob.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You talked a bit about the pressing need for the people in crisis and addressing how people are trying to stabilise the families. Once those families are somewhat stabilised, what links do you have for them to progress into work? Do you provide that service, that linking service?

**Ms Sheedy:** That's what we're trying to do now. We've always kind of tried to feed to mainstream opportunities. There's no secret that there's not a lot of positions in Alice Springs for Indigenous people, even for very skilled people, so we're dealing with young people that are sort of coming from serious drug issues, but at the

moment, we're linking in through Tangentyere, our own organisation, and Indigenous organisations for employment opportunities for young people. So some people, for example, that George works with have done concreting courses and now they are going out through CDEP to other opportunities for work. We're constantly looking for those opportunities.

The school is linked to Gillen and so we are trying to do mainstream with those young people so they go over to Gillen Primary School on particular afternoons. One young person is going to go perhaps to Yirara College. We don't want to keep people there. We are kind of trying to link in with - but that is not a quick thing. That requires a lot of mentoring and ongoing program delivery. We are trying to go through different sort of strategies to create employment and schooling.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I think there was a report about the cost of petrol sniffing being about \$78m a year. Have you ever done an exercise with the people you deal with about the cost [*inaudible*], what the cost would be to...

**Ms Sheedy:** No, but it would be interesting to do. Astri's probably better able to say what the situation was before we were there because she worked in an agency that certainly had to deal with young people when there was no Learning Centre. I don't know if you want...

**Ms Baker:** Do you want to hear that or do you want to hear Mervyn? I'm happy to talk about it, but maybe after other people have had a say.

**Mr NATT:** Sorry, Leonie, just before you go, you mentioned linking in with other groups.

**Ms Sheedy:** Yes, one of the agencies has been FACS, that young people have got, you know, chronic issues and then it's been difficult at Larapinta, they've been in outstations and have come back to Larapinta without planning, without any back up or anything so that we can work out a way of working in and a large amount of the difficulty there has been because FACS is incredibly after staffed.

**Mr NATT:** Is this Commonwealth or Territory?

**Ms Sheedy:** Territory FACS, and there are a couple of workers there but they're so stressed and so over worked. When three young people from Larapinta all ran away from their outstation placements and came back to Larapinta - that's the other significant thing: all the young people from the family always come back to Larapinta.

So we're, you know, like this is where they live, this is the work needs to be done, but those outstation placements are very good and very significant and do very good work, but when they run away and come back to Larapinta, unless FACS are able - because they are now in the guardianship of FACS - to respond by sitting down with family, following up, what's going to be the plan, they've run away, we better take them back out, then make a plan and bring them in.

They just don't have the staffing. I thought you'd know more about this, but sometimes you can talk to four different people within a month dealing with the one individual, but the changeover and the lack of funding for FACS is very, very problematic.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is it money or is it just that [*inaudible*] money is going towards?

**Ms Sheedy:** It's not funding, sorry; it's just the positions aren't filled.

**Mr Hassell:** We were at a meeting recently and David Ross spoke about the six positions they have under the new legislation. I think they have six positions; two are in their normal team and four in their youth team.

The trouble is that those positions aren't all filled and then their other generic positions aren't all filled so everybody is just totally stretched. I think if the funding is really there, which I couldn't speak to, then they have enough positions probably to do quite an effective job, but recruitment and retention...

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is it the money for the positions or is it that people aren't actually applying for those positions?

**Mr Hassell:** You'd have to speak with David Ross or Jenny Scott, I guess in the long run, but my impression was the funding is there the positions are there and the people aren't.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Aren't going into those careers. It's a very challenging career.

**Mr Hassell:** And I think because they're chronically understaffed, it is hard to retain staff because everyone is expected to work 60 hours a week and most people can't.

**Ms Sheedy:** So we do a lot of liaising with them, like flying around the kids because we're the ones actually on the ground working with them constantly through issues.

**Mr Hassell:** Just on this topic, 10 seconds then I'll hand over, I think Mt Theo's probably the extraordinary success in the region, and a lot of their success is because there were real repercussions for people if they came back to Yuendumu and started sniffing. They were in a troop carrier within minutes and back out to Mt Theo.

I guess what Leonie would ask of FACS is exactly the same thing: if young people come in to spend time with family and then start sniffing again, a quick response back out to the outstation would send a clear message, but unfortunately that quick response is very rarely possible.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Mervyn?

**Mr Rubunja:** Yes, a bit of a problem with my side. It's a lot worse than young girls sniffing, smoking. I was talking to [inaudible] Arrernte [inaudible] for us for that outstation so I can keep them back there, my nephews and niece, sons. And there was [inaudible] back, we don't have any funding.

I'm just going to try ask, get out the [inaudible], get over the [inaudible] ICC, I've been talking with them and he say: 'Oh, we'll help you out unless we find the resources', but I told them [inaudible] but I've been talking to Scott and he say: 'Yes, we'll go there on Wednesday, we'll go there on Friday' but he not even go. That [inaudible] last year and this year [inaudible]. [language].

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The other day I spoke to [inaudible] and Scott again and he's just not listening to me when I ask him to take me back to my father's country - which is, just for the Committee's benefit, it's on the Tanami Highway on Amburla Station and they've got three tin houses now?

**Mr Rubunja:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, three tin sheds there and he wants to take all his nieces and nephews and sons back as rehabilitation and rehabilitate them with law and culture and make sure that they are healthy brothers, healthy people again.

**Mr Rubunja:** Yes, so I want to - that's what I was talking about is taking all my mob back there and keep them all away from town because there's too much trouble. That's been for quite a long time now, and they been say: 'No, it won't'. I'll talk to someone - might talk to the government, give us bit of hand just get real mob back to outstation because the old fella's got the place but can't stay empty. We must get over there and do something, like start on program, start doing their job, and I talked to that other fella on ICC...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Ross McDougall.

**Mr Rubunja:** Yes, and we go back there we'll sit down and talk about that and might start doing something of building a house or get something started.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But one of the things that the Commonwealth said early on before Christmas *[language]* Aboriginal Affairs Minister *[language]* – I'm just explaining to Mervyn in language that the former Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Amanda Vanstone, said before Christmas that any population under 50 will not be getting Commonwealth funding any more, you know, and ICC might be looking down that road.

One of the things that I was going to say to you, Mervyn, rather than go back your father's country on Amburla where you've only got three tin houses, you got no motor car and you going to have to need a lot of money to build infrastructure for your kids, you've got your uncle's country just down the road here, 40 kilometres on the Hermannsburg Highway with five houses.

**Mr Rubunja:** *[language]* that won't stop. Them mob go back to their grandfather, see grandfather meet them, well it could be another way go back to their traditional land, you know.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]* put infrastructure there, five brand spanking new houses. Nobody's lived in them for seven years and you got water and everything and it's only 40 kilometres down the road, and that would be a better option for you than going out there to live inside three tin houses and 80 or 90 kilometres on the Amburla Highway, whereas you got all that infrastructure there that's just standing there.

I've been out there as ATSIC Commissioner, former ATSIC Commissioner, and nobody's ever lived there. The only time that you mob stayed there was when you lost old man, you went out there for a little while to *[inaudible]* and maybe its time that you and Raelene start talking about you using that for your family, you know, that it's part of a healing process of taking your children out there to your uncle's country because it is his uncle's country.

**Mr Rubunja:** But the other thing is the roads not too far, the road *[inaudible]*. Those fellas, they start walking to that main road and stop a motor car.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, he's just saying that those kids will have - because it's easy access; it's only six kilometres from the homeland to the main highway,

Namatjira Drive so, they'll just walk off on to the road and catch any car back into Alice Springs. But this is where, Mervyn, we keep talking about leadership, you know. Unless we show leadership to our children, then our children are never going to listen to us. You and me grew up in an environment where we had that strong leaders, you know. *[language]*

**Mr Rubunja:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And that's the same thing that the Committee heard out at Papunya: it's about getting that strong leadership back within our old people, you know, to make sure that they send strong message to the kids saying: 'Look, we're in control of your life. Whether you are on drugs, alcohol, petrol or anything, you listen to us' and that's what parents are saying now. We want that reconnection back to our children because that reconnection has been taken away.

I will go back to saying some of the things that I have said in the past where, you know, like we've become an industry for the survival of other people as well, and I think it is not in the best interests of those people to really come up with solutions, to find solutions to cure the problem because at the end of the day, our disadvantage factor determines what kind of houses a lot people live in, what kind of cars they drive, what kind of food they eat, where their children are educated.

I think it's about giving control back to the old people. We heard this in the three communities that we went to; it's about that strong leadership, and I think that leadership has been shown at Harts Range and Alcoota where, through the pastoral industry, none of their powers were taken away from them and the old people still got really, really hard control over the young people.

We saw, as we drove into Alcoota, there's a certain place where they drink. They clean that place up, and that's a clear message from the elders: 'Okay, you're not drinking on our community. We're not tolerating that. You drink outside there, and you come into our community with booze in your tummy and you go straight to bed. Any kind of messing around in the community and we'll deal with you tomorrow when you are sober' because, like me and you know, Mervyn, when our people stand up brave it's only the grog and drugs talking, but when they're sober, they don't open their mouth.

**Mr Rubunja:** If they want to go back to Raelene's place, the only thing *[inaudible]* Raelene's son, he's another drug addict, see. If they listen to that fella, they'll probably start using that place.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Mervyn's just saying to the Committee that the place where I'm suggesting that he goes back to, where there's infrastructure, the people who own that community are also into drugs so he's scared that those people will influence the children to get into harder drugs and so he's really hoping that Tangentyere and *[inaudible]* will help him go back to his father's country, which is on Amburla, which is farthest away and then he can start teaching his kids and nephews and nieces, you know, through law, that toughness.

**Mr MILLS:** How many people would be involved in this change? You're talking about an extended group. How many people?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*. How many people is he going to take back for...

**Mr Rubunja:** I got my brother's son, three of my brother's sons. They are all young men now and belong to my sister, two girls, two young fella and I got one, and another three, plus grandchildren because old lady's back with *[inaudible]* because that's what the old lady going because they drinking, smoking – that's why I had to send her back to cousin's place, stay there because he can't come back because the grandchildren just keep on drinking, smoking. They like to stay back with Sally. Sally go around *[inaudible]* half the night, come back. Now no one's seems to look out for my children. What are they going to have in the future? There'll be no future.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Did you get that? He's just saying that he really wants to set up a really good future for his grandchildren and his nieces and nephews and his children. He's had to send his mum back out to his cousin, Elva at *[inaudible]* because the children are smoking ganja and drinking grog and sniffing petrol and if there's no capacity for him to move back to his homeland with his family, then his family just wallow and live in this rut of destruction through alcohol, drugs and petrol.

**Mr Rubunja:** But last time, they'll jump out with a big bottle of petrol... went to my place. I didn't know she was from Yuendumu, grandmother, Peggy *[inaudible]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Rubunja:** And went to Mt Theo, you know, that *[inaudible]* course, came back and I didn't know what - my mother-in-law told me: 'Someone – she's got something under the pillow there'. Two big bottle of *[inaudible]* full of petrol, and I had to get them out and spit them out, and then I told him: 'Don't stay here'.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's the Yuendumu *[inaudible]*

**Mr Rubunja:** I had to ring up Yuendumu, family come and pick her up, take her back to *[inaudible]*. She's kept there. The rest just starts there.

**Mr MILLS:** Mervyn, if you are successful in the move to this new place, will you be taking a lot of people from that town camp that will not be going to the Learning Centre anymore? Can the Learning Centre still continue if you go?

**Mr Rubunja:** Yes, the Learning Centre will continue, but I just want to take a few of mine, I test it and come back, work together, we can leave a few of the kids. I just can take the sniffers and the smokers back.

**Ms Sheedy:** Mervyn's got - because there's great strength in that family and leadership, as you can see, whenever there's been an issue in Mervyn's family about sniffing, I go and say: 'Mervyn, this person' and the next day after that, he just sorts it with his family and deals with it. I think there is about four young people doing CDEP, three or four from you mob, aye? And some of them young women come...

**Mr Rubunja:** Four.

**Ms Sheedy:** Four. So we deal. People can access the Learning Centre from Mervyn's group. Primarily, the sniffing has been in other family, the *[inaudible]* family, which is another family group, and so certainly Rabunja's probably use this centre as a family resource centre for support with young mothers on that level, and with young men involved in CDEP and training. So the Learning Centre would still continue despite whether Mervyn's - that would be a very good strengthening program that would offer more opportunities for work and leadership, etcetera.

**Mr MILLS:** For others.

**Ms Sheedy:** For others, but for Mervyn's family in particular and for the young men in Mervyn's family. At the moment, they are doing different work programs and that, but Mervyn is concerned about alcohol issues, which you know in Alice Springs is huge, smoking issues. This has been something he's been very passionate and strong about for a long time, yes, before the old man passed away, gradually trying and trying to get this significant place established.

**Mr Rabunja:** We got that Japaltjari [*language*]

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** [*language*]

**Mr Rabunja:** Yes, he's too much drinking grog, spoil it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** There's a tin house just on the side of Mervyn in Larapinta and there's a guy living there from Papunya who just brings in all the grog and bashes his wife and their little baby. I think she's about five or something.

**Mr Rabunja:** Wife just like this one, you know.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Rabunja:** He's looking for wife.

**Mr Tilmouth:** I think, too, just on what Mervyn's saying, that when families try to do something with their families, respite is not an option because it is just not available to him, and I think what Mervyn wants to do is to get out of that system to work with his family and strengthen them before they even come back into this community.

And that respite for people who want to do something about substance abuse. There is just no way of getting out of that rut apart from yourself, stop drinking. Mervyn is a strong character in that regard and a leader, but a leader who is powerless because there is no support behind him to do what he wants to do.

Tangentyere would be prepared to help him, but Tangentyere's charter is town camps and that's where the frustration lies. Ingkerreke has the charter where Mervyn's outstation is, and even if it's just to get people away for a while to detox and get them back to being a bit healthy again is not an option because it's not available.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Mervyn, can I just ask you a question and George and William might like to have some comments if they choose to. Your father is a very respected man and you've now taken on a role of leadership. What can you tell me about leadership? How difficult is it with all these problems, and how challenging is it for you within your own family, within your own clan, tribal groups, to tackle it? How do you deal with it? What problems do you have with leadership trying to ...

**Mr Rabunja:** I am try to do something for all of them, trying to get things straight, straighten them out but my own [*inaudible*] pass. Talking to them: how are you going to be? How are you going to keep on following the wrong track? You don't want to have the same track ever since they were young. They're young men now. Time to change. You have to change. How will it be in the future? Are you going to be still the same? Are you still going to follow the same road? They just say: 'I don't know, Uncle' but there's nothing you can do.

The best thing you can do is give them something, give what you are doing, and *[inaudible]* help them, you must get something out of this problem *[inaudible]*, forget about these drinking problems, smoking, all this buying grog and *[inaudible]* doesn't have a licence. He used to sell the grog there. Fifty dollars, 20 dollars.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]*

**Mr Rubunja:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Fifty dollar, hundred dollar.

**Mr Rubunja:** He sell that grog, that fella.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, he's selling. The bloke I was telling you about, he was saying that there's a bloke there from Papunya that lives inside the tin shed. He is selling grog to the town camper for \$50 to \$100. So one cask is \$50 to \$100.

**Mr Rubunja:** I been ask him once, I been ask him a question. I been asking my brother-in-law, my sister and my nephew: 'Where you get this grog?' and even brother, I said: 'Where you getting liquor' and he goes: 'I went buy grog', 'From who?' 'Japaltjari'. 'How much you give him? \$50? \$50 just for that thing? Why can't you go to bottle shop? It's more cheaper'.

**Mr MILLS:** I probably don't know the detail of this well enough, but we're trying to understand ways of developing better strategies to reduce the core problem of substance abuse. What I'm hearing is a solution for Mervyn and his family, but how does that solution for Mervyn and his family assist us in gaining a grasp of strategy that assists solving the deeper problem?

It may be a clumsy question, but I'm wondering. I can understand Mervyn's response, but the problem remains in that community or in that camp. Can you give me a comment on that? Is that a concern to you? Does it move us closer to a solution? Is what Mervyn has chosen to do an indication of the sorts of answers we need to be finding? I'm having trouble trying to find a way through this. I can see it's good for Mervyn if it can be supported, but how does it help us move towards a solution generally?

**Mr Tilmouth:** I'm a firm believer that people's solution has to be owned and controlled by the people themselves, and Mervyn has a solution. It is a solution that in a realistic world would work if he had the resources, but Mervyn's pushing against the current. We're all pushing against the current in regards to the policies in relation to outstations and the development of outstations, yet that is his answer because that is his country.

As he explained earlier to Alison, there's a lot of reasons why he wants to go there. It is because of the easy access to the highway, the behaviour of other family members, that sort of stuff and he's pushing against the current. Ultimately, that tide will come in and we know that. I think it is the struggle of Aboriginal people through history that whatever initiatives we do have, eventually the tide comes in and the sand castle is washed away. It's a sad thing to say that, but ultimately at the end of the day, it's a strategy that he himself has devised in conjunction with his family and, yes, this is where we are going to go, but how do we get there?

**Mr MILLS:** So therefore, the bloke in the tin shed from Papunya, what's the solution there? One day he will decide that he wants to go somewhere else, back to Papunya.

**Mr Tilmouth:** The solution with him would be very much for the Committee of Larapinta to say to him: 'We don't want you doing what you're doing, and if you continue to do what you're doing we'll ask you to leave'. Now that's the decision of that community and, as Leonie explained earlier, the community is not just one family. There's quite a group of different families and each of them have their own individual problem in that regard, and they're all dealing with it in their own isolation. It is putting it to the Committee to say: 'This bloke has to go back'.

**Mr MILLS:** It may appear hard, but the reason why Mervyn wants to leave is because of lawlessness and problems within that camp. So would it be another way. I don't know what the price tag would be to provide the solution, but what about going the other way? Can there be strategies that are probably more gutsy and a bit more courageous to make that a better place and so then he doesn't feel like he has to go?

**Mr Tilmouth:** The reason why Mervyn wants to go and take his family is to teach them another way of life.

**Mr MILLS:** I understand that.

**Mr Tilmouth:** To give them an option. Too many times Aboriginal people aren't given any option and they have to struggle with the solution that has been prescribed to them, at the end of the day without their consultation. The decision in regards to outstations has never been in consultation with Aboriginal people and so we have to live those solutions that have been prescribed for us, not a solution that we came up with.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, I'm just having trouble with...

**Mr Tilmouth:** Because we're all thinking dollar terms and economics and how much will it cost, but the proof in the pudding is that it will cost you more if you don't do anything.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, but walking this through, to extrapolate on this, I'm wondering if this is a realistic solution generally, or whether there's another way - to go back the other way, I don't know.

**Mr Tilmouth:** There is. I mean, as many individuals as there are, there are as many individual solutions. This is one that suits this individual. This individual and his family have decided that that would be the best solution. Sorry, Astri.

**Ms Baker:** No, no. You finish.

**Mr Tilmouth:** And that's what Mervyn is frustrated with because he knows what his family wants, he knows what he wants, but at the end of the day there is no assistance in achieving that.

**Ms Baker:** It makes it difficult in your positions because it would be great to be able to write a document after speaking to everyone that comes up with some key points that everyone can adopt, but that's just not how, on the ground, it will work.

Each different environment has a different combination of issues and complexities. Abbotts Camp, for example, worked really, really long and hard to become a dry housing association and town camp, and that was with a lot of opposition over many years, as far as I understand. I wasn't part of that process. So people are trying.

Night Patrol Learning Centres. Community members are all trying to create safer places. That's ongoing.

**Mr Tilmouth:** Each town camp has their own way of dealing with the same problem, maybe in different ways. Abbotts Camp is a classic example where the tide came in. By the time they got dry area legislation, the non-drinking president had succumbed to drinking because of the amount of pressure that was put on him. It was opposed by the police in the initial stages without really no rhyme or reason because they needed to push people out of the rivers to enforce the two kilometre law. So where did they push them? Into Abbotts Camp.

This is our fear with the dry area legislation that's been proposed in this town: ultimately, those people will be pushed into town camps to drink because that will be the only space, apart from inside the hotel, that they will be able to drink and the hotel restricts them on dress regulations, so they have no option but to drink within town camps.

That will just exacerbate the problems that people like Mervyn have to put up with on a day to day basis in relation into just that policy that serves the whole town. Abbotts Camp had the two kilometre law. There are three liquor outlets in close proximity. The two kilometre did nothing but to serve to push people in there. Abbotts Camp said: 'We're sick of this. We'll go for dry area legislation' and six years ago, they fought they same thing and eventually got it, but the whole thing had just collapsed.

People are tired of arguing the same point time and time again, and the president there was a non-drinker. Now he's succumbed to the pressures of the drink because the police are not enforcing it. They are stretched to their max, as I said earlier, the day patrol statistics are now being picked up by the police. They have a work load that is just building up, whereas this strategy actually worked. The enforcement of the dry area legislation falls legitimately back to the police force to enforce. We can't enforce it and we don't want to enforce it. We don't want to be policing, so at the end of the day the work is there. It's just inundated with alcohol.

**Mr MILLS:** Just very generally, as it troubles me a little, in my own community, too, that if the pressure becomes so great that the good people leave, just as a general principle, that worries me. That's why I say it, because it concerns me deeply as we follow that through, where will we be in 15 or 20 years time?

**Mr Tilmouth:** I mean, you hear very much a classic saying, I think, amongst people who drink and substance abuse and petrol sniff, and they say to you: 'This is my body, this is my body', and the reason why they say that is that is the last thing they'd ever have control of. They have control of nothing external from their body and it's their body and so it's their choice to do what they do. That's a sad thing to say, but at the end of the day, that's all they have left.

**Mr NATT:** William, I'm just amazed at the strength of Mervyn and obviously he's looking after his family. Are there other elders within other skin groups that you're working with to try and do the same sort of thing?

**Mr Tilmouth:** I have an executive membership, and Mervyn is one of them. He represents the Four Corners Council, which is a traditional authority men's council. We also have women's councils to do the same thing. Each town camp has their own Committees and they are independent, autonomous bodies, but they elect three members to be on the executive and while they go into three is that if number one

can't make it, number two will make it, and if number two can't make it, then number three turns up.

So they always have a representation from each camp, and all of them are of the same ilk that Mervyn is. They want to do something. How do they do it; we talk about solutions, we try strategies, we do presentations *ad nauseam*. I mean, I go to a lot of conferences, I talk to a lot of people about things, yet very little gets through and ultimately at the end of the day it filters through the programs or how we can strategise and develop programs, and yes, we have a lot of Aboriginal leadership in Tangentyere from each camp and whether they are men or women, they still have very strong views on how to deal with issues and Mervyn is just one of those people.

**Ms Baker:** Can I just add something on the topic of drug and alcohol? I suppose that for all people who develop problems with drugs and alcohol, not just Indigenous people, it is known that there's a multiple range of reasons that they may have occurred, and some of the things that people have raised at Larapinta. For example, straight up is loss of family, significant family carers. Some people's identity and connection, like knowing who you are connected to and how important you are and where you are going in your life and socialising, just having a group of people to have fun with is also self-medication. People have actually described alcohol and other substances as 'it's like medicine.' 'It stops you when you shake.' 'It helps you feel happy.' So for physical issues, like sometimes medical conditions, for mental health or depression, for boredom or lack of job opportunities, there's a whole range of different issues that people use drugs and alcohol for.

It's time consuming and it's frustrating, but people do need to sit down listen to the people who are having that difficulty at that particular time and really nut out what it is because it is not going to be the same picture for this person as this person. That's why it's hard work, and that's why the Learning Centre and what Mervyn is talking about has a possibility for success because there is time spent in listening to people and asking the questions and listening to community members talk about other family rather than someone new come in and talk.

So there have to be individually developed solutions or there has to be at least some space, not to say that for every single person you create a whole new picture, but there has to be avenues so that people can build the blocks that will make a picture that works for them.

**Mr MILLS:** On that, then, perhaps Mervyn - just imagine that you have still got the pressure. You're in the camp. Tell me what you would like to happen. What would you like to happen to make it so that you can stay there? What sort of support would you like for your family so that you can stay there?

**Mr Rubunja:** If I want to stay there, I want a dry area, just like *[inaudible]* Camp.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[inaudible]* Camp.

**Mr MILLS:** Oh, yes.

**Mr Rubunja:** People just go. We don't get much sleep, too, carrying on all night having a party every night. And I'll get out of bed: 'What's going on? We got kids here. Go drink somewhere else'. 'No, nobody can move me. I can stay here, it's my place'.

**Mr MILLS:** If you phone the police, do they come and deal with problem?

**Mr Rubunja:** Police come, they take off.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Up in the hills.

**Ms Sheedy:** Mervyn, have you ever talked to housing association about that, having a dry area for Larapinta? Have they talked to you about that, that housing association?

**Mr Rubunja:** No, I never talked, but I want all that area to be dry. They'll have to bring in the grog through that gate. Go and drink in the pub. They go back full of grog in their guts. *[inaudible]* happen in town, that's fair enough, and when they go back, they sit down there and they only going to have a feed then go back to sleep.

**Mr MILLS:** William, is there something that you can do to help with that challenge?

**Mr Tilmouth:** I can suggest it to the Committee, but ultimately I would prefer that the Committee itself makes that decision and puts that...

**Mr MILLS:** This Committee?

**Mr Tilmouth:** No, the...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Larapinta Committee

**Mr Tilmouth:** *[inaudible]* Larapinta Valley Committee, and ultimately for them to take ownership and we will assist them with applications to the Liquor Commission or to whoever, bearing in mind that, as I said earlier, when Tangentyere had the alcohol Committee set up in Tangentyere, there were two streams of thought: One was a total abstinence model. No grog, totally do without, and that suits in certain areas; but there are people saying: 'No, we want to still drink' so let's learn to drink and live with it, learn to live with alcohol. So you've got two different ways of thinking.

When there's a total abstinence model, give it away all together, that was the CARPU model, the one down near the alcohol *[inaudible]*, but people go into there for six weeks and then step back out into a pool of alcohol, there's no outreach works with them and before you know it, they're back into the drink. So that model needs a lot of work in order to make it effective.

The other model was the Turitja Club where people could drink in an environment that is controlled by them but has strict rules in relation to alcohol. The association of alcohol with nutrition by having people buy a counter meal so that they're not just drinking on an empty stomach, working with them on alcohol education. They're working with them on health education about diseases and STIs and things like that, but also assisting with their families so you've the support around the drinker that ultimately will bring about some quality of life to that family, and it's just not all drink.

That strategy down there at Turitja was never popular with the broader community. Aboriginal people were expected to drink the stuff and die from the stuff, but never be in the business of selling the stuff and so as a result, the flack that was copped down there unnecessarily stifled the growth of Turitja and in the end, Turitja just sort of imploded and became non-existent. Even though it still exists in reality today, but not as an alcohol outlet. So it's just a club and that's it. There are no activities down there and so the impetus of Turitja was stifled from the very start, so that strategy never, ever took off and yet you see an increase of licensed all around the place.

**Mr MILLS:** So if a recommendation or a resolution of the Committee comes to you...

**Mr Tilmouth:** No, the Committee comes to me and says: 'This is the direction we want to go in' and I put all the weight of our organisation behind it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** He'll wait until the Committee comes from Larapinta and then...

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Ms Baker:** From my understanding, when Abbots Camp did it, it then requires quite a lot of writing, so then it would be about identifying who in the organisation would support that whole process.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can I just say on behalf of the Committee thank you very much? Don't feel that your time has been wasted talking to us because like we said, from the previous Committee you go the VSA legislation that came out of it, and that's the next help for communities who are struggling. Now they can nominate treatment centres for their children to go to, there's scope within that legislation now for nominated people to pour the petrol out, and I think that gives a little bit extra resources for community members.

Certainly, our recommendations will be based on what we've heard from you, to government, to make sure that we give you support. I just want to again, on behalf on the Committee, thank you for your participation here this morning. We invite you to have lunch with us. We've got sandwiches coming out shortly and we'd really like to continue our discussions with you over sandwiches.

**Ms Sheedy:** Alison, can I just make a final comment? That is to link alcohol with petrol sniffing and that is a huge thing. There are families that have got a lot of alcohol issues that lose control that end up with kids that are sniffing and lose significant members who often die with alcohol-related issues and that is huge. There is a direct link and that is...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well, maybe one of the things that we need to do as Aboriginal people is - and I'll talk to Mervyn in language directly and report it back to Hansard, and William - maybe we need to take that ability for our people to have take away liquor taken off them and just say: 'Okay, you want to drink, you're only going to drink inside pubs from now on and take your grog back to your communities and your homes in your tummy' and as Aboriginal people, we'll have a discussion to say that you shouldn't be given that opportunity any more.

*[language]*

Just reporting for Hansard that the discussion that I've had with Mervyn is basically what I said in English, that we need to start having respect for other people's country again and not to burn rubbish and bring rubbish and have anti-social behaviour on other people's country and maybe suggest to our own people in towns like Alice Springs that we want to try and stop the take-away liquor for them and just encourage them to drink socially inside pubs and go home with the grog inside their belly, and see how that operates.

**Mr Tilmouth:** Sorry, but I did bring Phil Hassell, and he is a hassle, no, he's a good bloke. He works in our Youth Link Up service and that was the only part of this presentation that we never gave a chance to.

**Mr Hassell:** I don't need to say much, I don't think. I'm probably the most peripheral to Larapinta Valley here. CAYLUS, who I work for, are largely focussed in remote communities. Most of my work is in town, but a lot of it is communicating with remote communities about individuals, you know, whether someone should be sent back out bush or things like that.

I guess I'm reasonably close the cutting edge of the new VSA legislation, but at the moment I think we're all curious about how it will pan out, and nobody really knows. I really don't feel I've got a lot I want to say.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks very much for having Phil here.

**Ms Sheedy:** Can I make a final ... sorry Alison...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Very, very quickly because we need to...

**Ms Sheedy:** An invitation. Because you couldn't come out today, we have two major events that we've established which are great community building, strengthening parts of our program, that is the middle of the year we have an art and film exhibition where community exhibit their work and show films that young people have made. That's in June.

At the end of the year, which you've attended and been our special guest at, Alison, we have an end of year graduation open day where people receive certificates to reward the successes and build up that positive side that was sadly lacking before. That's in December around the 15<sup>th</sup>. I haven't quite looked at the calendar; it's the last week of school. So if I could send invitations to you all and then if you are able to put them on your calendar, that would be great because we always like to have people here.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you very much, and maybe send an invitation to wider Alice Springs, too, to go in there and see what they doing because it is wonderful work that they're doing.

**Mr Tilmouth:** It's amazing. You can see over 300 whitefellas in a town camp, eh?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks very much.

**Mr Tilmouth:** Thanks, everyone.

Witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 12.48pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Drug & Alcohol Services Association**

*Wednesday 22 March 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain  
Ms Barbara McCarthy, MLA, Member for Arnhem

**Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Mr Paul Finlay, Manager  
Ms Kathy Broadbent, Program Manager

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 1.40pm.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives of DASA. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced, which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the Committee and remind you that evidence that given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary Privilege.

For the purposes of *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Again, I'd just like to thank you on behalf of the Committee for your attendance. This gives us a good opportunity to find out what DASA is doing. We might start off by, if that's okay Terry, just allowing them to go through what they do.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, sure.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks, Kath.

**Mr Finlay:** Did you say you want my name first?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Finlay:** I'm Paul Finlay. I'm the Director of DASA. Do you want to know about what DASA does on everything, or on volatile substance?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Volatile substance.

**Mr Finlay:** Right, okay. Volatile substance abuse.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, so glue, ganja, petrol, alcohol.

**Mr Finlay:** Oh, everything.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Finlay:** Okay. Well, DASA is a 10 bed detox unit. We put in a successful tender for Aranda House. As far as we know at this stage, we're going to have a 20 room bed recovery sector, and that's to tackle and help people who've got volatile substance abuse problems.

The program will run for two months. Some of the clients will be mandated, some obviously non-mandated, and we're currently trialling a program which will be up running in the next couple of days, hopefully, and we're doing that in the current premises that we've got in the detox unit. We're going to trial the program with three clients. Do you want more?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Tell us about the petrol sniffing.

**Ms Broadbent:** I can actually probably elaborate on that because I did write some information down, but I'll speak to it, okay?

We've been running a program for sniffers or inhalant users or people with volatile substance abuse problems for about three years now, but we've been under-resourced to do that. We actually haven't had any funding to be able to do that, so generally what we've been doing is admitting about two inhalant users and family members, so a support family person, in a month.

So over a period of about three years, we've had 30 admissions. Now, some of them have worked out quite well and people have finished the program and gone back to their community or we've been able to get them into CAAAPU but because CAAAPU really only takes inhalant users or cannabis users, if people wanted to go on and do further rehab, there was no facility for them.

So we kept inhalant users or petrol sniffers in as long as we could, sometimes up to two months, until they were safe to actually go back to their community or to an outstation, they were strong enough, but it was seen that we needed to actually have the resources to be able to provide a good program for people if they were going to have any sort of hope for recovery.

With the Volatile Substance Abuse funding, what we've been able to do is increase the staff capacity, which is significant because now we have at all times two residential staff on. The other thing is we are just introducing a group program, a recovery program for people, so they'll be involved in group activities in areas like self-development, nutrition and health, exercise, cultural issues.

**Mr Finlay:** Living skills.

**Ms Broadbent:** Living skills, sport - you know, that physical activity, which is all very important. We've also been able to appoint an interim VSA - that's Volatile Substance Abuse - Coordinator and we've selected someone from inhouse at the moment. It is an interim position. Her name is Naomi Asling and she's worked at DASA on and off for the last four years. She's worked with me with the inhalant users in detox so she's familiar with the area now. She has also spent some time down at Mutitjulu. She's an indigenous woman who originally comes from Melbourne. She's Victorian, like I am. She has a really good handle on - she doesn't have to be trained up or anything like that; she's running with the program at the moment.

Our first admission is tomorrow. We have a young lad from Finke coming in, so he's the first admission under this new program.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Where did he come from? Town?

**Ms Broadbent:** Finke community. We also have six referrals through the police, four from Mutitjulu and two from Docker River, I think, yes. I think there are about 14 people on the waiting list waiting to come into this program. Within a week we've got 14 people on the waiting list, which is quite incredible and we haven't done any advertising, haven't even sent out notices or emails.

We've been around to see a few people like CAYLUS and ADSCA and NPY and a few others that are in know, but other than organisations in the know we haven't advertised as yet.

We want to start fairly slow because it is a very new program and we want to actually monitor it and evaluate it as we go along. We have had a lot of support from the Northern Territory government from Community Services. I have to acknowledge the support from Nick Raymond and Bryce and Brooks and the people in Darwin in the

AOD department have been really fantastic, and Kevin who did some policies for us. We're just about ready to get up and running. There is still a few....

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Are you talking about juveniles or adults?

**Ms Broadbent:** I am talking about 17 and up. It's an adult residential program, so its 17 to any age, Loraine.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So when are you going to be Aranda House?

**Ms Broadbent:** September, we hope. It is currently being refurbished. It needs a lot of work as far as the electricals go and plumbing, and disability access needs to be fixed up because that's very important. We do get admissions of people who are in wheelchairs or on walkers, you know, some people that come in are physically very fragile. Initially, it's a lot of care work, a lot of support work and a lot of health issues that we actually have to work with.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So this isn't interrupting your shelter program?

**Ms Broadbent:** No.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So it's the *[inaudible]* same time.

**Mr Finlay:** Yes, in September we will move to totally different premises and as far as I'm aware, it's been signed off, the draft, hasn't it?

**Ms Broadbent:** Yes, it has been agreed. The agreement has been made with the Department of Community Services, yes. But the sobering up shelter is completely different. That will run from the DASA site. Aranda House will include the VSA rehabilitation program, the adult detox, which is officially a 10 day program, just a detox program for alcohol and other drugs which include cannabis and heroin, amphetamines and some prescribed drugs, but that's only a 10 day detox at this stage. It includes individual counselling, community counselling so that people can come in and get alcohol and other drug counselling at Aranda House as well as the VSA program at this stage.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** This is a big move for DASA.

**Ms Broadbent:** It's a huge thing to take on. It is daunting sometimes, but it's much needed.

**Mr Finlay:** I think it's good. It is necessary. There's also been talk about the current detox unit, when that moves up to Aranda House of perhaps putting youth in there and getting a VSA program up and running for youth, which we're in negotiations with and quite keen to do because it's a good premises for that.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Because it's the juveniles also that we need to really assist here because I know you don't have any beds for them at the moment.

**Ms Broadbent:** No.

**Mr Finlay:** No, nothing. You see, that's why we decided...

**MS ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Yes, but I think that it's good that you are taking care of the adults first because, like I was saying to Terry, a lot of these petrol sniffing groups are manned and led by adult males.

**Mr Finlay:** Well that's true, yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We've seen in the past that if you remove certain people out of that group, then the other kids just don't touch it.

**Ms Broadbent:** No, no. You need to actually look at the people who are chronic users and they're actually supplying these young kids as well. We need to actually work with those people as well as working with the younger kids. Bush Mob is going to be doing some intensive case management with the younger ones. They're actually been auspiced by DASA and they're located in a donga on site. We've got the whole VSA team actually in the demountable at DASA, so I've moved in there, Naomi's in there and Bush Mob are in there as well, which is good.

**Mr Finlay:** It's fairly ideal, really.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** *[inaudible]*

**Ms Broadbent:** Yes. We've got the resources in the one spot, which is important.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I'm not too sure how *[inaudible]* what DASA does. Obviously you've got some people that come from troubled backgrounds and troubled family life, and then they get into substance abuse, whether it be alcohol, drugs or petrol or whatever, and then you pick them up in mid-crisis, you settle them down, you try to get them off that.

**Mr Finlay:** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What happens then? I mean, what's to stop them going back into the home life they left?

**Mr Finlay:** Well, there's nothing to stop them going back. All we can do is encourage them to abstain from going back. It's the whole question of looking at their lifestyle. What they are actually doing to themselves physically and psychologically.

We work on it on several levels. First of all, it's the withdrawal, so we look at the physical side of that. We're heavily involved with Congress, but we've got trained counsellors there as well who do one-to-one counselling. We also look at nutrition. Basically, we'll do an individual case plan to look at the triggers: what will set them off again? Would it be necessary that they have to move? Anything to minimise the return to what they were doing, but we can't guarantee that.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You might need to explain to Rob DASA's role as the sobering up shelter and how many people go through that door. Are you aware of that?

**Mr Finlay:** That's a different service all together.

**Ms Broadbent:** We've got a number of services. I'll just go through the services. We've got the sobering up shelter and we've got a 10 day detox, and we've just taken on the VSA program. We've also got a Community Education Officer and

we're a registered training organisation, so we run drink driving education every month and also the responsible serving of alcohol, and that's to the hospitality area.

Now the sobering up shelter is a 26 bed unit and it's open from 2 o'clock on Mondays until 12 o'clock on Saturday nights. It is not open on Sunday, and that's a funding and staffing issue. It is very hard to staff it around the clock. It's open all year. People are generally brought in by the night patrol or the police, usually intoxicated with alcohol, but it can be other drugs including petrol, so it's a safe place for people to be while they actually sleep off their intoxication.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Do you find, especially with the younger children that come through the program, that you might deal with them but if there's a problem with families and disruption and all that, then you might case manage them, but they're drawn back to the family. There obviously needs to be some work done back into the community with the families.

**Ms Broadbent:** There does.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What are your links to that?

**Mr Finlay:** But we don't deal with children at this stage. We don't deal with that.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So what age do you start with?

**Ms Broadbent:** 17.

**Mr Finlay:** 17 and upwards.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Even a 17 year old still has *[inaudible]* with their family.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And they do have re-offending. Some people come back through DASA.

**Mr Finlay:** I'll explain a little bit. The sobering up shelter, they're brought in really intoxicated. It could be on the Todd River, it could be from the mall. What we offer there is, instead of them going into the lock up cell, they can come into the sobering up shelter where they'll get a feed, they'll be showered, a good night's sleep and looked after. Then we'll encourage them to either go into the detox unit or we'll help them any way we can, but more often they'll just like to wake up and wander off. I mean, we can't force anybody to do anything that way.

The detox unit, we will often bring in a support person. You know, it could be a family member - it could be a husband or a wife or a relative - to actually support them whilst they are in detox. We also have outreach. Two people who will follow up, perhaps go into the community, look at what their needs are and hopefully re-engage them back into the community.

**Mr KNIGHT:** If the community is in turmoil. I'm just wondering whether; you obviously don't play that role with trying to help a family or a community. Do you have connections with organisations that do that?

**Ms Broadbent:** We do. That's the idea of intensive case management, particularly with this VSA program. It is to make sure that we work with the organisation. Say if its CAYLUS or NPY; it might be the clinic back at Imampa - I'm just making it up - or Muti or somewhere, but we make sure that we keep in contact with those

organisations and actually have case management meetings with the person and their family while they are in the program before they go home,

Also, we're pretty well linked into those organisations that go out to remote communities and we will, with this VSA program, make sure that we get out there, particularly if we've got a few young people who have gone back, and make sure that we actually do some follow up.

We have worked out quite thoroughly the model for the residential program, but none of us have actually worked out a really effective program for after care or follow up or how to - how can you say it? - make the journey meaningful when they go back to their communities so that things don't sort of muck up.

The only thing that we can promise wholeheartedly with better resources is that people can come back in quickly if they need to. There were a couple of instance lately where people have sort of relapsed and we haven't been able to get them back into town and into the program, even though we knew that these people wanted to. With the extra resources, we'll be able to say: 'I'm going out there. I'm going to get such-and-such. He wants to come in. We'll make sure we get out there and pick him up'. So we'll be able to get them back in here to get them stronger again.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Kath, how are you linked to CAAAPU?

**Ms Broadbent:** We don't have...

**Mr Finlay:** Loosely.

**Ms Broadbent:** Loosely at the moment. In the past, we've had stronger links with CAAAPU. I'd say over the last six months they've sort of loosened up a lot.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** CAAAPU is the rehabilitation centre for alcoholics. You know, the chronic...

**Ms Broadbent:** Yes. We still refer quite a few people with alcohol and cannabis problems into CAAAPU, but of course they don't take illicit drug users or sniffers.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Are you seeing any sort of trends with marijuana and amphetamines?

**Mr Finlay:** I think you'd have to ask NTAC that, the AIDS and Hepatitis Council. They would keep figures on how many people are coming in asking for needles, or how many people are using speed. We just touch the top of the iceberg. I think it's becoming more and more, where they are using more illicit drugs rather than alcohol and pot, but you'd have to go to someone else for that to get a true and accurate figure.

**Ms Broadbent:** The incidence of people coming in to withdraw from amphetamines seems to fluctuate from year to year. I think three years ago, it was quite high. I remember when I was working as a counsellor in detox and we seemed to be detoxing, well, you don't know whether people are wanting to come off or getting into trouble and having to come into detox, but it's a bit hard to actually ascertain the numbers.

**Mr KNIGHT:** And that is Aboriginal people?

**Ms Broadbent:** No, these are mainly non-indigenous males. Cannabis can be indigenous and non-indigenous. Alcohol is still the biggest problem and causes the most devastation as far as numbers go.

**Mr MILLS:** I'd like to hear a little more about the Bush Mob program. How is it going? I understand from your original comments that it's a younger set.

**Ms Broadbent:** It is, yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Would you mind just telling us a little more about it?

**Ms Broadbent:** Do you want to know a little bit more about Bush Mob?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. I had a meeting with them about a year ago, and I've got an inkling that it does connect to what we're talking about, earlier intervention.

**Ms Broadbent:** Yes. They recently signed a service agreement with the Department of Community Services for a program to provide intensive case management. Initially, as far as I know, it was 16 - 24, you know the youth, but I think that age group is going to be lowered.

I think because Bush Mob were so closely linked to us and it was all in one organisation and they had the expertise and the qualifications to be able to go with it and they had the contacts in remote communities. They had contact with youth in town camps. It is an intensive case management model. It is based on this case management model, but its also adventure therapy, so it is taking some of these young kids out bush and giving them a positive experience. Like our adult VSA program, it's working very closely with the families so the families are integral in this sort of case management model that we've come up with. They're actually doing a bit of field work at the moment. As we did, they only signed the service agreement about two weeks ago so it is in its very early developmental stage.

When the adult program moves to Aranda House in September or whenever, hopefully, there will be some young people probably, and we haven't fully negotiated with the department, but young people will be housed in what is currently the detox house on site at DASA. This is only for a short period. They'll only be there for a short period during a time of stabilisation.

When people come in for petrol sniffing, when they've been sniffing for weeks, they don't eat. Their health is extremely poor. They need a lot of support and a lot of care, but most of all they need to sleep a lot and they need to be fed up. I mean, they need good meals and good nutrition. This is very important. Basically, this idea of having a detox for youth will be to stabilise them during the first seven days or whatever it is and make sure they get to medical...

**Mr Finlay:** But the link there with Bush Mob is they will be given priority to be taken out and have this adventure therapy once they're stabilised.

**Mr MILLS:** How do they come to the program? How are they referred?

**Ms Broadbent:** It can be a voluntary referral or it can be mandated through the court, and the mandated part of it, this is adults and youth, can take up. We haven't had one mandated into the program yet to two months because they have to have a series of assessments and then it goes to a panel. I have to think of the process. Here in Alice and then the recommendations from that panel are sent to the Minister

and then the Minister makes a recommendation whether that person goes to treatment or not. Then that person goes to court. I hope I've got that right.

**Mr MILLS:** In other words...

**Ms Broadbent:** It's quite a convoluted...

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. The process is in place but no one has actually been through that process...

**Ms Broadbent:** Been through the process to test the process, yes. Initially, that was what the program was about, but in discussions with the department, if a person can come in on a voluntary basis that is so much better for that person and that person's recovery.

With the youth program, it is compulsory that the person have a family member with them. With the adult program, it's highly recommended that the person have a family support person come in with them and stay with them for the two months.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you think it's on the increase, the use of substances?

**Mr Finlay:** I think so. It's not getting any better.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** In Alice Springs?

**Ms Broadbent:** I'd say yes. I don't know if it's the use of substances, but it is people in distress, or the abuse of it, I can't say that, but I certainly think that over the four year period that I've been in Alice, I have seen an increase each year. That increase is mainly with alcohol.

I know they say that there's a lot of sniffers coming into town because of OPAL, but it's nothing compared to the devastation that alcohol causes physically, socially, psychologically. Just the devastation it causes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can you give us some stats on how many people actually go through the sobering up shelter?

**Mr Finlay:** Oh, yes. It's quite high.

**Ms Broadbent:** It is about 8000 a year, 8000 to 9000 and that varies from year to year. That might be some repeat users of the service, obviously. Some people keep coming back and back. I consider the sobering up shelter one of the most important services in Alice because it provides that safe place for people. I really do. I know I developed this VSA program and that is sort of my baby, but the sobering up shelter has saved so many people's lives.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Where else would they go?

**Mr Finlay:** Well, it's the service.

**Ms Broadbent:** Where else would they go? And then you've got the deaths in custody and that is not a good place. We've had staff that have worked in the sobering shelter for 14 years, and they know people and it has become more than just a holding place for people. It has actually become a place where they can, even in a short period of time, get some support and help and advice.

**Mr Finlay:** They know they can go somewhere.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Kath, isn't it wearing the resources of the sobering up centre if people just went out there to sleep it off and just sort of wander off in the morning and are not really put into any kind of program or be forced to be put into a program? I mean, just on the CAAAPU, one of the previous questions I asked, I really think that if we're going to be addressing an issue holistically about alcoholism and other drugs then, do you see a scope for CAAAPU and DASA to work together?

**Ms Broadbent:** There is scope for CAAAPU and DASA to work together. What we have at the present moment, and Paul mentioned it, is an indigenous outreach program that is connected to the sobering up shelter. The role of those two workers is actually to link individuals from the sobering up shelter into other programs. Now, that might be the detox program, that might be CAAAPU or that might be Congress if they've got medical problems. They do that. There is scope for us to work closer with CAAAPU, I agree with that, yes. I agree with you, Alison.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** CAAAPU is fully funded by the Commonwealth, and they've only just got new facilities put in there now. I think it is an absolute waste if we don't have two agencies who are trying to do the same thing not working together and sharing resources because when you are out bush, it's the resource factor that people look at. You know, if you have a look at DASA. 10 beds and you've got 35 alcoholics shaking out on a community and you can only send four to five people.

**Ms Broadbent:** Exactly.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** If we had DASA and CAAAPU working together, then you can start pushing a lot more people out there as well, and their facilities are absolutely wonderful.

**Ms Broadbent:** Yes. At the moment, we've got problems as far as referral to CAAAPU. Quite often, people go through detox and they want to go to CAAAPU. There is one in there at the moment and he wants to go to CAAAPU. It is actually getting that person in there after they've finished their detox: they're full up, they might have mandated clients from the courts so they take priority over any voluntary patients. So it is actually a matter of organising it so that you maybe have some voluntary beds.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Or they have to make a decision not to take petrol sniffers.

**Ms Broadbent:** They don't take inhalant users.

**Mr Finlay:** They've got - I wouldn't say stringent criteria to get in, but, you know, you have to fit the profile to get into CAAAPU, whereas we tend not to do that. It is whatever the drug of choice is, come in and we'll try to help you.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** We should encourage CAAAPU as...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Absolutely, yes. Are there any more questions, Committee?

**Mr MILLS:** No, I'm right, thank you.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I want to take this opportunity to thank both of you. This Committee is passionate about substance misuse and we've heard what you've said. We'll make sure that the recommendations that we put to government are appropriate for your facilities or for alcohol and other drugs in communities, to make sure that we get a good streamline of services that are not duplicating.

**Mr Finlay:** Excellent, thank you. We're very excited about it. We are fairly passionate about it. We want Aranda House up and running. We can have the detox unit for the youth, and it can work.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It would be great to see Aranda House being used.

**Ms Broadbent:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks very much.

**Ms Broadbent:** Thank you, everybody.

**Mr Finlay:** Thank you.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 2.10pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Mount Theo Program**

*Wednesday 22 March 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Ms Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Ms Susie Low, Manager, Mount Theo Program  
Mr Cecil 'Croc' Johnston

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 2.12pm.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives from Mount Theo. This meeting is not open to the public, however is being recorded and a transcript will be produced, which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

**Ms Low:** I am Susie Low. I'm the Manager of the Mount Theo program.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I'll hand over to you, Susie and Croc.

**Ms Low:** Well, I guess it would be nice just to have it clear what you expect from us. Do you want to know what our concerns are about substance misuse or petrol sniffing in general? Is that what you are looking for from us today?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** For some of the newbies, I wouldn't mind you just explaining how Mount Theo started and how it's doing now and whether you really combat the petrol sniffing or whether it just went from petrol sniffing to ganja at Yuendumu? We need to know all that. We're a Committee made up Independents, the Labor Party and the CLP, which will report back to government. We will put our recommendations together and report back to the government.

We really want to just see whether you just turned petrol sniffing into a ganja and alcohol at Yuendumu, or whether the program's worked for you. I want to give credit where credit is due, and Mount Theo program has got rid of petrol sniffing through *[inaudible]* and it's a pity that she couldn't be here. So just a background of how it started, Susie.

**Ms Low:** Well, I might just summarise, Croc, and you can correct me where I make mistakes.

**Mr Johnston:** Yes, how it started is *[inaudible]* because, you know, there's been a more than wherever, you know, in *[inaudible]* and the other communities now, keep on going back to Yuendumu, just started off with old vehicle and the rations and no money. No money. That's how that started up.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One thousand dollars from AASPA. You mob got, through *[inaudible]*.

**Mr Johnston:** *[language]*. Just getting ration, and no money, there was no - just nothing. Tea and sugar, and that's it.

**Ms Low:** Just a lot of community commitment.

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** I think that's probably one of the key things of Mount Theo that you may of heard is that it was totally a community initiative. At that time, there were about 70 young people sniffing, this is 12 years ago now, in Yuendumu, and the principal at

the time, who was Mr Toyne, noted that there were more kids sniffing in the school ground at night than there were going to school during the day.

The community decided enough was enough, and had a community meeting and decided what they could do. Between themselves they decided that it was a good idea to remove those ring leaders from the community and take them out to an outstation, and it was Croc and his family who said: 'You can use Mount Theo outstation' and it was Peggy Brown Nampajimpa who was the one who said: "I'll stop there and I'll look after those ones'. Two very, very key aspects, I think, to the program.

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** I know when we've talked to other communities, there might be an outstation, but its very hard to find another Peggy, and for 12 years on and off, but mostly on. Peggy has denied herself Sorry Business, Ceremony, Family Business just to sit down and look after those kids. She's quite extraordinary, eh?

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** So that's how it started. They took the ring leaders out initially, to Mount Theo, and they sat down with Peggy and her husband and they just looked after them cultural way.

It was an opportunity for the young people to be removed from sniffing. That was the first thing so their body would have a little bit of time to have a break from sniffing. It was also respite for their families in Yuendumu who were at their wits end knowing what to do with them, but, above all, it was a chance for them to be cared for culturally. It was a chance for them to go back to hunting, to listen to story and really feel proud of their country and their culture.

Peggy used to say it then, and we still say it now when we take young people out, that Mount Theo will make them strong on the inside and on the outside because most of them weren't eating. Because they sniff, they don't eat and after a few days you can see the changes in them. It's quite extraordinary, and it's still the same today.

There hasn't been constant sniffing in Yuendumu for many, many years. I wouldn't say there's no sniffing; there are still experiments. Over Christmas there were two young boys who sniffed so they went straight out to Mount Theo. We now also work, I think it was about four years ago the committee made the decision to work through all Warlpiri communities because Yuendumu seemed to have a good system and a good processing place, very much embedded in community culture. If someone sniffs, within the day they are out at Mount Theo being cared for.

We now have a community full of dobbers because it's no longer cool to sniff. Back in my first week, I've been there for over 12 months now, in Yuendumu. Two young men came to the office and dobbed themselves in and said: 'We've been sniffing. We've got to go to Mount Theo' because they knew eventually we'd find out. So it's very embedded in community culture: it is just not okay to sniff. That is a very strong point.

We now work with Warlpiri in Willowra. We have a youth worker in Willowra as well now. It is important to note that the two things started at once: Mount Theo Outstation opened at the same time as Andrew Stojanovski they're talking about,

who was a non-Aboriginal who worked in the community. He started up youth activities at the same time and he often refers to it as the carrot and stick approach. You know, the carrot was youth activities that people loved – you know, disco and football and all those sorts of things - and the stick was going to Mount Theo. It still works today. We have the young people ringing us from Mount Theo saying: 'What's on tonight?'. When we say 'Disco,' they go 'Ohhh'. They are very upset because they're missing all the fun things.

So it's a consequence, and that was one thing that was part of the thinking right back then, from Peggy and all her family and community: taking the young people to Mount Theo was an immediate consequence of sniffing. It is very difficult for young people to think about the fact their brain may turn to mush in a few years time, but if you immediately take them away from family and friends, it is an immediate consequence so that's a penalty.

Today, most of our clients come from Alice Springs, in fact, Warlpiri people in Alice Springs. They must have a Warlpiri connection, which is part of the way the program was conceived and I think it is quite a key to its success, just having that one mob. So most of our clients are there. We now have diversionary clients as well.

Now, in terms the success of the program, in terms of almost eradicating petrol sniffing, certainly in Yuendumu, yes, we've done it and, even more importantly, there is an immediate response if someone does sniff. That's good. That is also the same in Willowra and agencies in Alice Springs use us in the same way.

For all substance abuse, I wouldn't say the same at all. The focus was always on petrol sniffing. Last year, we had a ganja and alcohol-related suicide in our community, a young 18 year-old man, and that was really devastating for community and for our program. It highlighted a problem that was considered quite acceptable in the community. People were thinking ganja was okay, that it wasn't, you know, deadly.

Again, the commitment of the Warlpiri was amazing. Not long after that particular death, we had our annual general meeting and our committee members went from 25 to 37 because they've seen Mount Theo do something very successful with petrol sniffing so they're all looking towards Mount Theo addressing this as well and wanting to be part of it. It was quite inspirational.

How do we address that? At the moment, it's mainly through one-on-one. Youth workers working with youth at risk. One of the things that has developed very, very strongly over the last few years is what we call our *Jarapitjidi*, which is Strong Voices program, and that's youth leadership and youth development. There is a bit of a process where we have young people at Mount Theo, they come back and there's the diversionary program and youth activities, and then we have *Jarapitjidi* which is Strong Voices - youth leadership, youth development. Most of them are former clients now and they're really becoming strong youth leaders. It's because they have a real contribution into the well-being of the community and they take that very, very seriously. All our youth activities are run by these Jari members.

We don't run a youth activity if one of them is not there so if the disco's not open or something, the younger ones will go and humbug them, not the non-Aboriginal staff; it's very much their responsibility.

Within that Jari mob, there has also developed a very strong mentoring relationship between the older ones who've already come through this and the young ones. That

just happened naturally. We didn't even call it anything for a long time, it was just support, but now its very, very clear, and at least once a week the senior youth worker takes a big mob of kids out of town, and a lot of those are Jari workers, and those Jari workers decide who they think is at risk, who they want to take with them, and they'll sit down and talk about those issues, one-on-one, out of the community where they're safe. So that's probably the strongest weapon we've got against ganja.

Alcohol is a whole other issue. For us, a lot of the alcohol problems in the community are older people, so we're not necessarily coming into contact with those who are abusing alcohol. But a lot of the older young men are double dipping in ganja and alcohol, and that's where it definitely affects us and that's where this mentoring process is working.

We're very concerned about the rise of ganja, very concerned, and its something we discussed long and hard at the annual general meeting, about getting some assistance in to deal with ganja as opposed to sniffing. It is a different sort of treatment, if you like, as opposed to petrol sniffing. We are concerned about it. What can I say? We're on the case. We haven't eradicated it at all.

The other thing that recently, I think, has become apparent to all of us as a team is that the perceived success and sort of national acclaim, and even international, of the Mount Theo program is based on the amazing stories of the young people that have gone through it and the carers, people like Peggy and Croc and Japanardi and we need hard evidence. We need to be able to back up those really good stories with data and I think that's becoming more and more necessary as our profile gets higher and higher.

Service delivery has always been way up there, and some of those processes of analysing. The data is all there. Records have been kept really well over the last 12 years, but getting to the point of actually analysing and showing that we're doing what we say we're doing is the next step in the process, which we've applied for funding to do. That's more a management principle, but probably something that's worth keeping in mind for other organisations who are starting up. If they can put systems in place early, that might be helpful.

Croc is also the mental health worker out there so at least once a week he's up at Mount Theo working with those young people up there, going to and fro, providing that sort of assistance as well.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So what sort of health problems would you be contending with?

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** What sort of mental health problems?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** What do you talk about mostly up there, Croc?

**Mr Johnston:** We just communicate with them, you know, and give them treatment, you know, just talk more stories just to make them understand and probably stay out there for. I think they got two weeks to stay out, and after that two weeks, come back to their communities and if they start sniffing again, then they go back out, do another

two more weeks. They go back another two weeks again then they'll go out for a month, stay out there for a month until they come back and they're all right.

**Ms Low:** After that suicide, Croc spent a lot of time out there because some of the young men were saying they were going to kill themselves, the young man's brother and his really good friends, and we were really concerned about them for a long time and they really required intensive care, and Croc spent a lot of time with that mob.

But what is interesting about all those young men that were saying they were going to kill themselves, and some of them were admitted into hospital here, but they only get into that state when they've been drinking. You know, when they're not drinking and they're a bit more rational, they're really not at risk at all, but its very, very hard to stop them drinking.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I've just got a couple of questions. How did you get the name Croc? How did you get your name, Croc?

**Mr Johnston:** Oh, I got a family name from Bullaroo.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Ah!

**Mr Johnston:** I used to go to college and there was a Crocodile Dreaming.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Ah! No crocodiles in Alice Springs!

**Mr Johnston:** No, no.

**Ms Low:** Only one.

**Mr Johnston:** *[inaudible]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No crocodile at *[language]*

**Mr KNIGHT:** Amphetamines. Have you seen anything out there?

**Ms Low:** Not yet. Not yet, and I do say 'yet'.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Just from your own personal experience, what do you think the cause, whether its alcohol or for petrol sniffing or anything else, what are people saying the cause is?

**Ms Low:** Wow, that's a big question. I think there's a myriad of causes. From my experience living in a community, which is not extensive, but enough for me to say I actually think in many communities, it's a matter of survival every day. It is not a matter of getting up and just living your life; it is 'how am I going to survive the day?'

In some cases it may be parents that aren't caring for their kids. You know, a lot of those sniffers are hungry. In fact, sniffing, ganja, all those things, they take away your hunger. Some people say it's boredom. There may be something in that because there's something about a youth activity program, a diversion program that keeps kids, well, they're so much happier so they're healthier and they're focussed on things. They're not looking for trouble so much and that certainly makes a difference.

I think a lot of communities don't necessarily have the opportunities Yuendumu has. We do have a number of very strong Aboriginal associations there, and there are some employment opportunities that may not exist in other ones, maybe because we're a bit bigger but there are employment opportunities. At the moment, we actually employ 34 young people to run that youth program. They're all casual workers, but for them that's so important, and they know that if they don't go to work, the activity doesn't happen. They take a great deal of pride in being responsible and contributing to the community and that's when they've turned the corner.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You talked about [*inaudible*] things there. We visited on Tuesday Harts Range and Engawala. They don't have many sports facilities, they have a fairly small community, there are limited employment opportunities, yet they don't have any substance abuse problems, the kids are happy, they make their own fun, I guess.

**Ms Low:** I know. It's a phenomenon, isn't it? It's not east of the Macs, east of the highway. Yes, I've known that for a while. I can't explain that.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So when you talk about cause, there's no sort of indication that it's the disempowerment of a lot of people being together. The size factor of Yuendumu, is that... it's hard for ownership when there's lots of different groups together?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And fighting between families.

**Ms Low:** Yes, fighting between families is big, isn't it?

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** Really, really big.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Croc, is that because there's too many people there, too many wrong people there, like not from that country? I don't know about Yuendumu. Where did everybody come from? Did they come from...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Everywhere.

**Mr Johnston:** The sniffers or the whole...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No, the population.

**Mr Johnston:** Oh, the population is all from just right round Yuendumu. There are some places that people used in the old days, yes, and they first brought, Yuendumu was the first one to be our first community and they had some had to ask bloke, didn't they?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Once you get a big lot of people together, it's hard to control?

**Mr Johnston:** Oh, it's a problem right round Yuendumu and for Granites at Tanamis, all those people that been living round all that country, right round to [*inaudible*] been living at Mt Doreen and Coniston.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Mt Doreen Station and Coniston.

**Mr Johnston:** Yes, Mt Doreen Station and Coniston and Mt Denison. Few been living at Mt Allen and Mt Wedge, all those places, they used to work out on the stations and the managers used to feed the people.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What about liability? Not strictly, in the whitefella, but talking about duty of care. In whitefella way, if you're in hospital or a police station, you have a duty of care. Culturally, what duty of care have you got looking after that person. Is that a danger?

**Mr Johnston:** The station used to look after people, yes. They used to have bandages and stuff.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Right. I mean for Mount Theo, the rehabilitation there, if you take some boys...

**Mr Johnston:** Oh, you're talking about Mt Theo.

**Ms Low:** Yes, now.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Do you get blamed if anything if happened to them?

**Mr Johnston:** Well, yes, we just take our first aid out. Nurse or a doctor's out there and they'll give them treatment and things.

**Ms Low:** And it was of the phenomenon, I think, when it started, that was discussed in community and it was kind of a cultural shift that Peggy Brown and her family could look after anybody's children. That was the big shift and there's never been any cause for payback or otherwise, but it was agreed at the time that if she was prepared to do that, then families would not blame her for problems.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes. I think up in my way at VRD, we had one fella disappear, he walked off. He was Warlpiri man, and there was a bit of *[inaudible]*

**Ms Low:** Our young ones walk off all the time. They think they're going to walk back to Yuendumu when they first get there.

**Mr KNIGHT:** They never found this bloke.

**Mr Johnston:** They won't make it. Three of those young boys tried when I was out there.

**Ms Low:** Yes, just recently.

**Mr Johnston:** Couldn't walk.

**Ms Low:** It's too hard.

**Mr Johnston:** We had no vehicle to chase them up and I had to walk after them, and I got to them before dark, caught them up and took them back to Mt Theo.

**Ms Low:** It's too far to walk anywhere. They eventually come back.

**Mr Johnston:** And the police and everybody went out there.

**Ms Low:** Yes. When they get hungry and thirsty, they come back.

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** They know no one's going to come and get them.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can I ask where they are getting the ganja from?

**Ms Low:** I don't know. There are lots of stories within the community. I think everybody will tell you a couple of people that they get it from, but police don't seem to be able to do anything about it, hey?

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** Everybody knows.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** How big is it, Susie? You know, like ganja?

**Ms Low:** I think it's big. I think there was a shift when that young one passed away because even some of our really strong Jari members aged between 18 and 22 or 23 would use ganja thinking it was all right. Some of them at that time went: 'Wow, I'm not going to use it any more,' but it's extremely available, extremely available.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So it would have to come from outsiders, South Australia?

**Ms Low:** It comes from Alice Springs and there are a couple of police operations working on that, but nothing has come up yet.

**Mr KNIGHT:** They must have a fairly significant financial cost, like \$50 for an ounce or something or \$50 for a bag?

**Ms Low:** If you are inclined to abuse substances, you always find the money. You always find the money whether it be for petrol, ganja or alcohol. That becomes your priority.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I want to measure the trend, Susie. How many of the kids that have stopped sniffing petrol are now on ganja?

**Ms Low:** We can't categorically say, which is why I want to get this data out. Part of that will be, if you like, completing case files, those ones that started with Nathan. Nathan's probably one of the few that's still alive, at the very least, it's kept him alive, but a lot of his contemporaries, some of the ones I knew from Papunya, they've passed away now. Nathan's not well. He doesn't abuse ganja but he certainly abuses alcohol. Part of the process to get that data is going back to those original ones. It's one of the things that will work well is because it's Yuendumu and because it's Warlpiri, we'll be able to find where those young ones now and actually classify that. That's what I was saying; there's a perceived success, but we want to be able to show there has been a real change. There's also ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So have you any idea how many have gone through the program?

**Ms Low:** I did a count, because somebody asked me the other day, and all I could really count was, if you like, episodes of care. Over 12 years it's been 1200. Now, I can't, at this point in time, tell you how many were repeats. The fact that we are now taking ganja clients as well will be another thing to count. We are also taking young

men who are on bail or parole for alcohol-related offences in Alice Springs, so we're taking them as well.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can I ask where you get your funding now from?

**Ms Low:** Primarily from Commonwealth Health. They're the core funding body. In fact, mostly. We don't get much from the NT at all.

**Mr NATT:** Susie, are there many females involved in this process as well or is mainly young men?

**Ms Low:** As sniffers?

**Mr NATT:** As sniffers.

**Ms Low:** Yes, yes. It seems to not discriminate.

**Mr NATT:** Okay, so they can go to Mount Theo as well, it's not a problem?

**Ms Low:** Yes, no.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** As long as they're Warlpiri mob.

**Ms Low:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Do you use those case studies, some of those first people that went 12 years ago telling the kids today about their life, you know, and how *[inaudible]* and got back on the rails.

**Ms Low:** They do that themselves. Those young ones, people like MG, they actually go out to Mount Theo now and sit with sniffers and say: 'I used to be like you. I used to do this, this and this and my Grandmother used to chase me with a nulla nulla. Now look at me: I'm working for Jarapitjidi. I'm really strong one, I'm happy, I've got a job' So that happens naturally, and there's nothing stronger than someone saying: 'I've been where you are'.

**Mr KNIGHT:** And they're telling their story *[inaudible]* they kind of repeat at the end of it and come back to the program and continue to...

**Ms Low:** To tell those stories?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** We've got a living one of those, living in the community sometimes and sometimes not. Everyone's very much aware, and he's quite special.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** *[inaudible]* about doing a documentary on that? Have you ever been approached?

**Ms Low:** All the time. It's hard. It's fascinating, but you are also dealing with peoples lives. What is interesting, I mean, we're really happy to show those ones how they've become really strong because they have, and they're really proud to tell their story, but we're not prepared to show young sniffers' faces out at Mount Theo or people on bail and that's where it falls down every time. Press decide that it's not sexy enough if

you can't see the ones that are still suffering and it's just not right. We don't think that's right.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Susie, just going back to the employment opportunities. The money that they get, where does that come from?

**Ms Low:** Most of it for those 34 employees comes from one Northern Territory Sport and Rec Officer Position. So we negotiated with that Department...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So they're CDEP participants that get a top up.

**Ms Low:** Exactly. So they're CDEP with top up or they might be on sit-down topped up.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And what about employment opportunities at Tanami Mines?

**Ms Low:** They're recruiting at the moment. What happens is we have had quite a few start there, but they get homesick. They stay there for a little while in that training and they just get too homesick. I think they have to be there... I think its eight weeks. Shaky was doing?

**Mr Johnston:** Yes.

**Ms Low:** Eight weeks full on, and that's a long time to be so close to your family but not be able to see them so it hasn't proven very successful, but they're recruiting right now for eight, but they can't find anyone to take them up on it.

**Mr MILLS:** Do clients come to Mount Theo from other communities other than Yuendumu?

**Ms Low:** Alice Springs.

**Mr MILLS:** Alice Springs.

**Ms Low:** We get a lot of clients from Alice Springs now through two agencies, one's called Reconnect, that you might have heard of, and CAYLUS, they also send them and we get FACS clients as well. We also have our own arm of our program working in Willowra, but there hasn't been sniffing there for quite some time, which is great.

**Mr MILLS:** And those who may use Mount Theo, there's no recognition of coming from *[inaudible]* language groups?

**Ms Low:** They have to be Warlpiri.

**Mr MILLS:** They have to be Warlpiri?.

**Ms Low:** Which is key to, I think, why it's worked.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay. So how many language groups in Yuendumu?

**Ms Low:** Well, it's a Warlpiri community. There are several other languages spoken, but it is primarily a Warlpiri community. For some of the young people that come, the poor old agencies in town really try hard to find a really tenuous Warlpiri link because they want to use Mount Theo. Just recently actually, we had a couple

of occasions where the young girls, the link was too tenuous and they didn't speak Warlpiri, they only spoke Arrernte, and it was really very difficult. At one stage they were getting upset with Peggy who was caring for them and swearing at her in another language and she got wild, rightfully so. So that's another consideration that we discussed in committee, that they have to be able to speak Warlpiri.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Sue, how do you work with girls, the boys, the men and women? Do you separate them?

**Ms Low:** Oh, it's a natural separation. There's always one man, at least one man, looking after men's side and one woman looking after women's side and the girls sleep together, the boys sleep together. It's just accepted; it's not an issue.

As Croc was saying, they started with nothing, absolutely nothing, and it's one of the things our committee really tries to tell other communities, that it's not about waiting for the money, not about waiting for the money.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's exactly what I said yesterday, Susie: it's not about money.

**Ms Low:** Not at all.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** These mob started with *[inaudible]* with \$1000 from ASSPA. Yuendumu School donated \$1000 to them from ASSPA funds to take the kids out.

**Ms Low:** Yes, and people used their pension, whoever had a vehicle with petrol, they'd go out.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And every little motor car, even tick-tick ones that couldn't be driven, they were going, and everybody was chucking in. If they had an old spare tyre. 'Here, look you take tyre from here, you go' you know.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Have you got OPAL at Yuendumu?

**Ms Low:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is it effective?

**Ms Low:** Well, see, petrol sniffing isn't a problem for us any more, but we really still lobbied very heavily to have it in there because Yuendumu was in a region that had a lot of OPAL and we didn't have OPAL. Well where are the sniffers going to go? They'll come and find our petrol. So it's very important that there be, you know, we've been supporting that regional rollout very, very strongly.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And that's where you can see now the move or the trend of petrol sniffers from around our area coming into Hermannsburg because Hermannsburg hasn't got OPAL. So it's very, very important because they'll just move. The mobility of Aboriginal people to access anything, I tell you they'll fly out here. They'll go and wait for the fuel truck to come from the Tanami Mines and get on that, too.

**Ms Low:** Where there's a will, there's away.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It's been a pleasure having you, Susie, here to talk to us about ...

**Ms Low:** Can I say one more thing?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes!

**Ms Low:** Sorry, there's another thing that's quite dear to my heart. That little girl who passed away recently was one of our clients and she had only been back from Mount Theo for maybe five days. Are the rest of the committee aware of that girl, that situation?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** This is the one...

**Ms Low:** The little Ryan girl, yes. She'd only been back in town for about five days. She was a repeat client. She'd been there twice, and she was finally getting it together. She had a very strong Auntie here in town and she'd agreed to go up to Kormilda in Darwin. She was really a beautiful little girl, and one of the things that concerns us greatly, because after-care is so important after Mount Theo, and if they're from Yuendumu or Willowra, fine, we can care for them. If they come back here, we can't care for them.

There is nothing in Alice Springs that is even remotely close to what we provide in Yuendumu, a small community. Those sorts of activities and that ongoing connection with Youth Workers and other mentors that can keep an eye on where you are and what you're doing. Like, we would have known if she was in Yuendumu if she was out, you know, that sort of thing.

We talked recently to the Senators who came to Mount Theo about that same issue. So for us, we feel like we're throwing them back into the fire. They come from Mount Theo really feeling quite strong and they come back to Alice Springs, and what are they going to do?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They could be picked up by Reconnect or CAYLUS.

**Ms Low:** Well, they can, but they're agencies and the people who work with them are wonderful, absolutely wonderful, but there are only one or two of them and they've got a whole city to find these kids in. I'm told that there are no full-on youth programs, like youth activities that can keep going to keep these kids engaged after they come back. Is that right? That's the sort of information I'm getting from Reconnect and CAYLUS, which sort of blew me away a bit.

It just breaks our hearts when we get someone from Alice Springs, they get really strong out there and we drive them back in here and we think: 'What now?' Some of them we've been able to keep at Yuendumu until they've gotten a little bit stronger.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Centres like The Gap Youth Centre are operating so that they can, they have somewhere to go to when they come to town.

**Ms Low:** And enough connections, like one-on-one connections so people know when they're having trouble or they're going to be out all night or that sort of thing. It's all about the relationships that we can build in Yuendumu that's obviously quite difficult to build here.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you need to someone to contact the town and say this person...

**Ms Low:** Well, we do. If they've been referred by an agency, we do. We contact them and, in most cases, we deliver them back to that agency. The only time that's problematic is in fact with FACS because they work 9 - 5 or 8 - 4 or something. They know they're coming back, but there are then no resources for those young people or enough case workers to look after them.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I guess we think the other way around. We're talking about services that are needed on communities, but we don't think about the services that perhaps we lack in town for the people who are transient coming into town.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you very much Susie, Croc.

**Mr Johnston:** Thank you.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** *[language]* and we'll make sure that the committee will talk about it before we make recommendations, Susie. These are some of the opportunities that we'd like to sort of repeat what's happening with Mount Theo or what has happened at Mount Theo in other areas where we have the problem, but like Rob was saying, we've also been to the other side where they're lacking in real infrastructure but there's real leadership there and there's no, none of this problem at all.

So it might be good for our people to go across to the other side as well and have a look and, you know, stay for a couple of weeks there, have a look around and see what people are doing. But I take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of our committee.

**Ms Low:** Thank you for inviting us.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Thank you very much.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And safe journey in your endeavours.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 2.48pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Wallace Rockhole**

*Wednesday 22 March 2006*

- Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain
- Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant
- Witness:** Mr Barry Abbott, Youth Worker and Trainer

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 3.02pm.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community, and welcome Mr Barry Abbott from Wallace Rockhole.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and the transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the Hansard record, I would ask that you state your full names and your capacity in which you appear today. I just want to welcome you, Barry, on behalf of the Committee.

**Mr Abbott:** Thanks for that.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Perhaps you could give some of the members some of the background on what you've been doing, Barry, because some of these fellas are from the Top End.

**Mr Abbott:** You all know my name?

**MEMBERS:** Yes

**Mr Abbott:** All right. Well, I don't just deal with petrol. I deal with drugs, grog, paint, spray, you name it. I deal with the whole lot of them. Most of the time I take on the worst ones, like *[inaudible]*. If nobody wants them, yes, I take them. But over Christmas, I had 26 and now I'm down to nine and I've got five coming on the 27<sup>th</sup>. One from Kintore, grandfather sniffed, mother sniffed, father sniffs, the whole lot. So this young fellow rang me up himself, so I got on to let them FACS mob pick him up.

A lot of my kids - I call them my kids - used to run away from school and didn't want to listen to nobody and now we've got four at Yulara [College] and they're doing well because the teachers ring me up and they ask me if I've got any more to come in so they'll have another two at the end of the month, plus the ones that used to run away from them, didn't want to listen to nobody and didn't want to go to school. But we're still having a problem with funding and that. You know that yourself. I think we're going to get some from federal government now, anyway. We'll have another *[inaudible]* from them just to improve living conditions for them because our kitchen, we've got a pile of ashes about this high, that's how we've been cooking for so long. We haven't got a kitchen, we haven't got proper room for them; everybody got swags outside, but we pull through.

The kids that I've got - I have still got petrol and everything on my place. I don't deal with no petrol. I make sure they work through it. Make sure I've got the stuff there. So they can see what I'm doing and what I use it for and that 44 drum of mine never been touched, and the spray and everything else never been touched because we use it for it for spray painting anything that we weld up. They don't touch it at all, and I'm proud of the work of the boys that of I've got.

One comes from Docker River. Three doctors said he got about a week or two weeks at the most to die. So father rang me up and said: 'Can you try it, please? If you don't, he dies, you know. He'll be no trouble'. So we got him. Now, he's running

around, kicking footballs and he's happy and the father seen him yesterday and he couldn't believe that it was his son.

I get on with the kids. One thing I found with the kids. You do more talking. If you've got the worst one, you might have grab him and shake him a bit, just make out you're going to do something. That frightens them. A lot of the kids that I found, when they go out and they are ducking and weaving when you're talking to them, they've been hit that many times I think from the parents or from other people, I don't know.

The kids are real good with me now because they can joke with me all the time. We had a trainer came out yesterday to teach them how to look after lawn mowers and work with whipper snippers and things like that. They brought it out in pieces to show them how to put them together. Kids do it themselves, anyway, so that bloke reckons he waste my time coming here.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Doug, how long have you been working with the kids?

**Mr Abbott:** With the kids? Getting on to 48 years, but I've done at no cost for a long time and only the last 14 years, I think, I got the funding.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** There was a grant [*inaudible*] three outstations.

**Mr Abbott:** Ipurla is 258 southwest of Alice Springs. There's long travelling, and when I get sick of one place then I bring them over to Wallace to give them a bit of a change for a couple of weeks there, and then I'll go anywhere down Henbury Station, just down the creek, you know, just take them out for the weekend, something different.

I found kids pull through a lot better and quicker. For so long, I was only this one worker, only the last year and half, I got my son to give me a hand. That's two and half we've got, yes. Half of one is over there now because one is up in Darwin doing training over there now.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You do a lot of fencing and cattle mustering?

**Mr Abbott:** I do everything, anything and everything, yes. Motor mechanic, only self taught; pulling bores, just learnt on the station. Putting up fences, tanks or whatever. We do those station hand jobs, and they do that. My two grandsons for a while now, they're doing these working apprenticeships in Alice Springs here.

One is working with a mob that do steel work and that, but he's going for a boilermaker and other one, he's only 16, he's taken on a motor mechanic apprenticeship. They've both got their own flat. They're not living off somebody else and they both don't drink.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Where do the children come from, communities or towns?

**Mr Abbott:** Our kids from everywhere. We've got from Kintore, Mt Liebig, Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Harts Range and north road here, it's only about 30 or 40 kilometres out, I've got a couple from there. I've got three from Alice Springs and one from Docker River, one from Amatjere and two from Ernabella.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And Hermannsburg?

**Mr Abbott:** And Hermannsburg, yes. Well, I'm getting another Hermannsburg and Kintore and two from Alice Springs on Monday, one from Ernabella.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** What's the success rate, Barry? Do you get them coming back if they re-offend?

**Mr Abbott:** Well, when they first come, I make sure they get out of the *[inaudible]* system that they was in, then I recommend them to the people or FACS or whoever, you know, for school or give them option to go somewhere else and try it.

FACS tried to take some before without asking me first. I told them 'Look, these here are a bit slow yet. Give me another couple of months on them'. They said: 'They're looking good now, can we try it?' and I said: 'You'll bring them back in a week'. They brought them back in two days. But every one of them that I recommend, they never come back. They come back for school holidays, yes, things like that.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So over time, do you have any idea how many young people you've dealt with?

**Mr Abbott:** What in the 48 years? Over 500.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The bloke that lives in WA now, that Perth boy, that Neil...

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, Neil is another one, yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The first one that - he was a Darwin petrol sniffer and he rings up and talks to Barry and asks if he can come.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, and he's the one recommends some of the kids from over there: 'You should go over there'. 'Oh, but if he gives us a hard...'. 'No, I don't think he will. Go over there and see. Don't listen to nobody'. So they come there and just fit in, working, you know, slowly, and in about two or three weeks, just about riding right over me, anyway, so I'm father to just about every kid that's on the place. They all call me uncle or grandfather or someone.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And if they fall back or *[inaudible]* for some reasons, their family pass away, Barry takes them on board, you know, for the family to do Sorry Business and funerals and stuff like that.

**Mr Abbott:** Kids go back and they come back again.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Straight back in the car to come back.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, they couldn't wait long enough. Straight after the funeral, they'll be waiting for somebody to pick them up.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So where do you get the funding from? What funding do you get?

**Mr Abbott:** We get for our work from Age and Old care.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So that's the Territory government?

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, that's the Territory government. We were on, what? I think we used to run the place with \$140 000 a year. That's all we were getting for so long.

Only this year, it's going up to \$267 000, I think it is, \$260 000 or \$270 000, something like that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And you only got a car this year, too.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes. A second hand one and one for carting our stuff and that because I was using my own tray top all the time carting stuff out of town. For so long, I was using my own vehicle, we had one for the kids and that, but we couldn't put all the kids in there because it's only a seven seater and the kids that we've got, you know, 18 to 20 all the time. So I put a cage on my Toyota as well if we're going to move to place to place somewhere, you know.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** What age group?

**Mr Abbott:** Age? Anything from six to 40.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you've got adults, too?

**Mr Abbott:** Adults, too, yes. I had a husband and wife for six months because they were both drinkers. Husband got out of it and missus went and done something stupid, and she's in hospital

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And the good thing about it, I think, is at Barry's outstation, everything's settled down so to get people to come and live with them and educate not to touch that stuff.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you can come away and everything's going to be all right.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, when I come here, I don't worry about it. I know they're doing the right thing. Otherwise, I wouldn't leave unless I've got somebody there that knows what he's doing. If we've got new kids, I'm there for the first two or three weeks, then after that, if a meeting's on, I'll go, but if we've got problems, I won't leave. But I've never had problems. That's the one thing.

**Mr MILLS:** Barry, you mentioned work on the station, fencing and so on. Is the community or the outstation on a station?

**Mr Abbott:** It's on the cattle station.

**Mr MILLS:** It is on a cattle station?

**Mr Abbott:** Yes. We go to Ross Morton and give him a hand, too. So if anybody else asks me to go and do something, I take the boys with me.

**Mr MILLS:** Righto.

**Mr Abbott:** Pulling bores and that, and I'll just show them and this one here goes up there and you do it and I'll check after just make sure everything is done properly and I just sit there with one of those electric winches. I'll pull it up and they take it off, make sure they do the job to learn.

**Mr MILLS:** There's plenty of work?

**Mr Abbott:** There are quite a few jobs around, yes. We do our own bores, too. We don't get anybody to go out and fix our bores and that. If our bore breaks down, we just do it ourselves. All the tools I've got, that's my own.

**Mr MILLS:** Just so I understand, whose station is it that you're on?

**Mr Abbott:** I've got five kilometres square off Emery Station.

**Mr MILLS:** Right.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, and we've got another one at Wallace Rockhole that used to belong to Finke River Mission.

**Mr MILLS:** Do you run cattle?

**Mr Abbott:** I run just a few over the old *[inaudible]* just for our meat and Wallace Rockhole, my family run the cattle there. I don't have anything to do with it, but I come over and give them a hand and things like that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** All the young fellows.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes.

**Mr NATT:** Barry, do you have to get permission from the families of the kids to come there at all, or do they just come?

**Mr Abbott:** Sometimes family want the kids to go there.

**Mr NATT:** Yes. So you don't have to chase back, in other instances, back through families to make sure to get permission to come out?

**Mr Abbott:** No, because I usually bring them in and get the welfare to bring them in and talk to the family, go back out there and check with them and everything else.

**Mr NATT:** So you get support from welfare and all those other agencies.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, I get a lot from welfare. I even get a lot of support from the court or Correctional Services. I get a lot of support around Alice Springs here and I get a lot of support from the communities.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Barry, you've been doing it for a long time. What do you think the causes are? They might have changed over...

**Mr Abbott:** You really want to know what the cause of it? Can the Committee or the government please get together and try to cut down on grog, too. All the supermarkets get liquor licence, and that shouldn't be on.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Why do people drink?

**Mr Abbott:** Pardon? Why? Well, simple thing. There's no jobs for them. They've got no jobs anywhere. If you go back to the communities, they've got jobs for about half a dozen but there's no money to pay. There's plenty of jobs, but no money.

Then the community stores are too dear. I've been going on about that all the time. Packet of cigarettes, I know at Kintore, with 25 cigarettes in it for \$25. You go to

Docker River and it's exactly the same, and a tin of corned beef is \$10 or \$11 and they only get, what? \$390 or \$400 a fortnight? The community stores are too dear.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You need a bit of competition.

**Mr Abbott:** Well, I don't know about competition. I reckon somebody should step in and check it all out because it's overpriced. They reckon it's freight. It's not freight. You know, it might be \$200 freight because they get it in big bulk, but everything is too dear.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So you shouldn't have to work where there are people not working or not bringing in extra income in.

**Mr Abbott:** Where are they going to get it? They've got no jobs on the community, you know. No money to pay the people. Why don't the government look at that side of it? CDEP, that's what we know the flash name for unemployment. If you don't work, you'll get \$75 a week, I think it is, if you don't work, or it's \$55. Something like that. It's pretty low. And if you're in work, you're only doing four hours a day, and then you'll get the same as what you've was getting on unemployment, or bit less because unemployment pays a bit more.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So 40 years ago, what was the problem then?

**Mr Abbott:** 40 years ago, there wasn't any of this problem. Just a few kids started off sniffing and that because too many kids come in from all different places, you know, and I suppose they've got nothing to do. There's too many of them. For example, Papunya was the one that I used to work, but kids come from all over the place. There was little trouble makers from everywhere. You know, one or two comes in, then they teach the others.

I used to look after a lot of kids at Papunya, too, when I was working for the government. She was only a young girl, then; you know, probably about this high. So I know these families here since this one was a kid. I worked in Papunya, but I grew up on the cattle station. I've never been to school, to be honest with you, but just self-taught.

**Mr MILLS:** Barry, what about growing vegetables on there?

**Mr Abbott:** We are growing ours.

**Mr MILLS:** You are?

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, and we've got our own meat. Don't have to buy it from town. But in town, we can come in and buy a lot of cheap stuff, too, because we shop around and out on the communities, like 500 or 600 kilometres away, they've got no choice and also they've got the GST put on everything else.

I don't know what they did that because Aboriginal people are struggling already. GST should be taken off Aboriginal community stores. That shouldn't have been on because they're all unemployed people. GST makes a lot of dear stuff in the shops, but their unemployment never went up, their CDEP never went up, either. It's all right for us. We work and get paid and we can come into town and do shopping, but them people can't.

Also that Opal fuel we talked about. These started from the communities. That's where problems will come into Alice Springs. If they're not going to change that petrol in Alice Springs, then you're going to have more problems here. Should have started from the Centre and worked out to the communities. Should have started from the Centre. That was my argument all the time.

**Mr KNIGHT:** If they don't get petrol, will they go to something else?

**Mr Abbott:** Oh, they've tried something else already. I don't like to say it. On Opal fuel, they've already tried something else.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Putting something in it.

**Mr Abbott:** No, because I only got it from other kids. They ring me up from 700 kilometres away from where we are.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You were at Wallace Rockhole, and I remember the school there was great. You had great...

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, Wallace Rockhole. We've still got that same rule at Wallace Rockhole because I keep coming back. I got a house there, too, with my kids are going to school there.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** The school attendance was great.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So what made Wallace Rockhole so good?

**Mr Abbott:** Strong community.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And your children all learnt to read and write.

**Mr Abbott:** Strong community and the kids pushed into the school. You know, they can't say: 'I don't want to go today'. 'Why is that?' 'Oh, I'm a bit sick', 'Go and see the nurse first'. If they're lying, they won't get away with it next time and they have to go to school, that I didn't have because I just run from place to place. And that's true.

My grandfather died when I was 10. I grew up with my grandfather; didn't grow up with my mum and dad. When he died, they buried him in Alice they didn't bring him here, so I just left Henbury and went further down, grew up with somebody else.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So what's the future for you, Barry?

**Mr Abbott:** Future for kids?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And for you?

**Mr Abbott:** Well, my future's all right and all my grandchildren's future's okay, and the kids that I've got now, they got a future coming up. I got two now and when they're 15, I'm going to try and get them a job in Alice here and get a flat where they can live themselves without anybody else. They're just about leading it now, and one's only 14, another one 12. They're leading the groups.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So you're going to continue your work?

**Mr Abbott:** Yes, I'll keep going until I get in a wooden box, mate. I'll never stop. never going to stop. Well, I've got my kids and the kids that I grew up, they'll keep going because that's what I was telling them: 'If anything happens to me, don't stop. Do the things that I did. Keep them up'.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So, Barry, what message do we need to hear from you? Tell us what sort of things you want.

**Mr Abbott:** Well, I'd still like to see things getting back to the major communities. Get people trained up, Aboriginal people, belong to that community, get them to work with the kids instead of always going to somebody else from somewhere and they don't even understand the language, and go in there and just push something into it and then they've gone. Should have somebody belong to that place where he's got to keep working with the kids and teaching the kids with the same language. Because I can speak seven different languages; I'm right. Doesn't matter where they bring the kids from, I still speak the language, except Warlpiri. That's one language I don't speak, but I understand it.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** What you just said is what we've been hearing, isn't it? It has to be the people themselves.

**Mr Abbott:** People themselves, yes. I even offered some of the communities: 'If we can get funding for you mob,' we tried to get some money from FACS and that because a couple of old people were doing it at Docker River, but they got let down. They probably thought I was lying, but I was fighting welfare and things like that, too, and I couldn't get anything out of them.

All I said to them: 'Look, even \$14 000 a year, put it into the shop where they can buy tucker for the kids'. These two old people was buying tucker for everybody else's kids and theirs were going hungry because they come out to our place with 19 kids and we've got to turn around and feed 19 other kids, but we had them for two weeks and what they were doing and before and they picked up a lot more from us, and they were really interested, but I couldn't get any back up. They're probably still doing it now; they're probably broke and just going crazy.

They had an old tractor. That's all they had. They should have some decent motor car so they can go out and camp because he was taking the kids away from Docker River. And everybody's kids they weren't, not only just one lot. There was kids from 10 year old right up to 28 come to our place, and they mixed in pretty well with other kids. And, you know, I tried my best with department and that, but I get knocked back. I went to age and old care and all them mob, too. I was going to get people to go out there, but they was telling them what they was telling me for, I think, 30 years exactly.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you get many kids from the Pit Lands?

**Mr Abbott:** I get a lot of kids from Pit Lands.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It seems to be bad down there.

**Mr Abbott:** Well, I've got the two worst ones and the doctor said: 'They're not going to last long. They'll be dead', but I proved them wrong. Two of them went back with this business mob the other day. They went back there, and they couldn't believe that's the same two blokes went there, and they're back with me again now. As soon

as business is finished, they jumped in the car and got off at our turn off. We went and picked them up.

So they've pulled their head in together, too. They didn't say: 'All right, we're back there now. We'll go and do our old things again'. They were over there for two weeks, and people ring me up: 'Why don't you take some more?' I said: 'Wait a minute. I got five coming and I've already got nine.' There's only two of us working. Wait until we get proper accommodation and kitchen and things like that'.

We're looking for about seven workers. That's why we need extra money, but we get knocked on the head all the time. We are going to get kitchen now because we've got some funding from the federal government so we will get kitchen and proper accommodation for them over three years, but we've still got to get some from the Territory government as well because it's not the federal government problem; it's Territory government's problem as well, you know.

I'll just change over from that, too. I heard Loraine and all them talking about them kids on the street in school hours, running away in shopping centres and things like that. I really agree with what she said. She reckoned send somebody in there to get the kids out of there, into the school. Push them out of the shopping centres. They're running around there all day. They're causing a lot of problems. They're fighting amongst themselves. I've seen two 13 year olds fighting over a boyfriend. A week later, that little girl got murdered. That was another woman did it over a boyfriend. And then three boys went back 2.5 hours later, people seen it, they didn't even ring up. The coppers already know who it is now, too. They didn't even ring the ambulance, didn't even ring the police while she was laying there for 2.5 hours. Otherwise she would have been saved.

The boys come back late at night and this fella is still sitting outside watching them. He's having a coffee and having a smoke, living straight across. Then the boys saw it. 'Oh, there's a young girl laying there drunk' so they took them over the hill, and while the two blokes were there later, the other one spotted her: 'Hey, this one's got blood on her'. They knew they didn't do it. Then they just left and bolted. They run scared. She was half dead. She tried to talk to them. All she was doing: moving her fingers and just rolling her eyes. They thought she had drugs in her.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Sad.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Any more questions?

**Mr MILLS:** No, I'm right.

**Mr Abbott:** All we need: more money back into the communities, please. That's all we need. We can sort out our problems, and a lot of these people can sort out their problems, but they haven't got funding. They get some foreigners from somewhere else to go in there and try and tell people how to run it. They can't do it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's what we've heard everywhere, you know. Everybody that's come here today is saying to us: 'Let us deal with our own issues', you know.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes. Well, I've been talking to a lot of people about it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Empower us to do it, you know.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And make sure that the kids have things to do.

**Mr Abbott:** Make sure they've got something to do. Make sure they've got games shed and things like that and somebody controlling them; don't just open the door and leave them.

See a lot of stuff I've got now, I bought out of my pocket and we've got a shed and now I've got the door open. They don't muck around during the working hours. They go and do other things. When they knock off, after they've had a feed, then they'll go and have a few games. I've got my kids really trained up for everything, just about.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You do a remarkable job, Barry.

**Mr Abbott:** Well, I get that from the welfare. Actually I've got a letter from the lawyers there, too, from Legal Aid. Couple of them boys from here was going through court and was too young to put in gaol. Now, I had them for, what? Eight months. They come into town, they stay with their grandmothers for a week, they go home. They never had trouble again. And one of them cleared his own, you know, the police record. So many months if he doesn't turn up. I took them around to the police station, and they just scrubbed them all out.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I want to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of the Committee, Brother. Thanks a lot for informing this Committee of how you feel things should be run. We want to listen to people like you that have got success rates over a long period of time and that are helping communities achieve discipline and mechanisms for their children, and it's shown through. You know, you might be hard sometimes, but it's all done with passion. It's done with compassion and it's done with lots of love, too. Like you said, you are making this Committee see how some people don't even want to go home to their parents and their communities.

**Mr Abbott:** No. You know that yourself.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, that's right. Yes.

**Mr Abbott:** I got somebody that knows me from way back. Them kids, some of the community kids we had, they didn't know how to light a fire. They didn't even know how to cook. I don't cook no more. They make damper and they make stew and they cook steak and everything for us now. They take it in turns. The bloke was out there yesterday training, he got biggest shock. They said: 'Do you want to come over and have a feed?' and I said: 'Why don't you stay here and have a feed?' 'Oh, well, where are we going to have a feed?' 'The boys are already doing it'.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, that's good.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Taking on the jobs and being empowered to look after themselves. It's great.

**Mr Abbott:** Yes. But, please, I hope somebody looks at the other communities, too, please.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, we will. And like I said, this Committee will go back and we'll formulate our recommendations that we're going to give to the government.

We've got three members of government on this Committee, and we've got good support from our CLP member and the member for Braitling, an Independent member, and we're all passionate about this subject of substance misuse. We want to make sure that we see, not an end to it, because we think there wouldn't be an end to it, but we just want to see it reduced. Like even grog, petrol sniffing and all that kind of stuff.

**Mr Abbott:** Well I'm just got to say: look into that very hard, too. The grog is killing more because they didn't go. Just sit down and count who died from petrol and who died from grog or accident, grog-related.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well, thanks again.

**Mr Abbott:** Thanks very much for letting me know to come in here. Now I can go back and relax again, and tell them boys: 'Well, we'll see what happens'. Thanks very much.

The witness withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 3.30pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Central Australia Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS)**

*Wednesday 5 April 2006*

***Present:***

***Alice Springs***

Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling

***Darwin***

Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

***Also present:***

Mr CW Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Ms Renee Remfrey, Admin/Research Assistant  
Ms Kim Cowcher, Administration Assistant

***Witnesses:***

***By Video Conference***

Mr Blair McFarland, Coordinator  
Mr Tristran Ray, Youth Worker

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Sub-Committee convened at 10.10 am.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome Blair McFarland, Co-ordinator of Central Australian Youth Link Up, with CAYLUS via video conference to brief on us on the work of the organisation with regard to petrol sniffing.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and will be produced, which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your answers to be *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to this committee is protected by Parliamentary Privilege. For the purpose of the Hansard record, I would ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Can I just thank Blair and Tristran and Terry, Chris, Pat, Loraine, Brian, and Renee of course, thanks very much.

**Mr McFarland:** My name is Blair McFarland, I and the Co-ordinator of CAYLUS; Central Australian Youth Link Up Service at Tangentyere Council.

**Mr Ray:** I'm Tristran Ray and I am also a Co-ordinator at CAYLUS.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And just a brief background, Blair, of some of the things that you do for the committee members that don't know what CAYLUS do.

**Mr McFarland:** CAYLUS is about trying to improve the quality of life of young people in remote communities and also in Alice Springs, with a view towards reducing substance abuse, particularly petrol sniffing. We operate on a supply reduction front and also a demand reduction front. With supply reduction, we have been promoting the roll out of OPAL. That is our latest strategy. Over the years, CAYLUS has been operating since November 2002. Alison was involved in setting up CAYLUS before that.

The history of CAYLUS goes back to Petrol Link Up in the mid 1990s and, you could say, back to *[inaudible]* in the 1980s. Since 2002 when it actually started on the ground, we have been doing that supply reduction and demand reduction, and that supply reduction originally took the form of promoting AVGAS and working with the police and communities to bust petrol dealers and get more enforcement of, at that stage, section 18 of the *Misuse of Drugs Act*, which has now moved into the VSA legislation in a slightly different form.

We also do demand reduction by promoting recreation programs and youth programs in remote areas, so hopefully when the supply reduction kicks in and the kids are walking around without a can against their face, they will have something more interesting to engage with.

If you look at, say, Docker River where there has been really substantial and solid youth programs for the last 12, 18 months, they are really kicking goals down there with the combination of OPAL and a really good youth and recreation program. Docker River was one of those communities that everyone had sort of given up on. It looked so entrenched there that it seemed like there was nothing anyone could do. There was no police station at Docker River and no plans for there to be one there.

It was just the whole culture, the whole culture of the place was all about petrol sniffing, but over the course of 18 months, the combination of OPAL and a youth program that's had a male and a female youth worker, two troopies so they can carry men and women separately to cut down on family tensions, fighting and that sort of stuff, a really nice big solid recreation hall, which was built by the army in the 1990s and accommodation of the two youth workers, which has been supplied by the council, they have given them aged care workers' flat because they didn't have any aged care workers.

The combination of accommodation, resources, male and female youth workers, and a recreation hall, that is the killer combination for actually creating a really solid program that enhances local cultural input as well. A lot of the youth program agenda is cross-generational learning and bringing families together as families on bush trips, making sure that there are opportunities for the older women to work with the younger women to do bush tucker, *[inaudible]* and a lot of that cultural maintenance is fostered as an important part of that youth program.

As well as they have discos. They have formed a youth committee so that the young people in the community very proudly call themselves part of the Youth Team and they wear golden t-shirts, and they are integral in both the rec hall and the operation of their youth program. They do the planning and they do the implementation of it. They run very appropriate programs, like the camel programs that they run, or the male youth worker is the team cameleer, and he takes the men out with rifles and they shoot a camel, slaughter it and bring it back. The young men give meat to their families, which is really good for the family's view of them. The clinic says that there is no anaemia in the community now since that camel program has been going.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Camel pizza.

**Mr McFarland:** Camel pizza. The women grind up the camel meat and make pizzas and they sell the pizzas to the people in the community and use that money to buy the other vegetables and stuff they use to make big stews on Monday and Tuesday night, the young people do, so they sell the pizzas to raise money to keep the program going.

There are two youth workers. One is funded by Reconnect and the other's funded by JDU(?) and the money that the community council gets for out of school care and sport and recreation, they use as the operational budget so that they've got money to keep the Toyotas going to go on trips and to buy things for the program.

That combination totally changed the dynamic in that community, and that is demand reduction. They are the sort of resources that we need for the demand reduction side of it. There is supply reduction, which is important. You can't do demand reduction without supply reduction, but the demand reduction requires resources. That's a look at Docker River as an example of what is working.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Because it has had such a bad history. So how many people are out at Docker now?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** 320.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** 320?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, 320 people that live there. The population is 320, but I was there just a week before parliament for the whole week and I can back Blair up

in what he was saying. The community was absolutely quiet and, like I said, I enjoyed camel pizza, Terry. It was absolutely beautiful.

**Mr MILLS:** Really!

**Mr NATT:** Alison, just for my information, is Docker River an assortment of various skin groups like Papunya is?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, Docker River was set up as a mission depot just after Areyonga and some of the people from there were actually forced to come and live at Areyonga and people that stayed there moved into WA because Docker River is only seven km this side of the WA border in the Territory. And you have got combination of Ngaanyatjarra, Yunkunytjatjara, Pitjantjatjara there, with a bit of Luritja and Pintubi people. So practically five different clans.

**Mr NATT:** Okay. I guess my question is: why is it successful at Docker River? Why can't that sort of process be successful at Papunya?

**Mr McFarland:** I think it probably could be successful at Papunya if they had the same level of resources.

**Mr NATT:** Right.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Blair, this is what I have been saying for ages: you need a staged approach to the recreational type program that Blair is talking about. We have talked about this, Chris, where government needs to put resources in. I like the idea of the male and female recreation officers. You usually just see a male recreation officer out on communities, and that we start with the idea of the recreational centre and gradually add activities to it and give people resources. I think your committee should be looking more at that sort of thing. It's obvious. That's the message we're getting, isn't it?

**Mr NATT:** Yes. Just to explain to Blair, I don't know whether Alison has told you, but I am not actually on this Substance Abuse committee. I actually head up a youth and sport committee, and one of the areas that we are looking at is where sport could probably help the substance abuse area and we are looking to see where the government is spending their money, are they spending it wisely, what sort of programs can we initiate to help the substance abuse as well as other areas to get participation in sport and recreation. So that is why I am sort of sitting here as an observer at this stage.

**Mr McFarland:** No worries.

**Mr MILLS:** Blair, could you describe the role that leadership within the Docker community played, right from the very earliest stages? Did they have to be brought in or was there residual strength in the leadership within that community to start with?

**Mr McFarland:** There is a lot of strength in the community, but without a focus, it is dissipated. Because there are inter-family tensions, sometimes it is difficult for somebody who might be a leader but is a member of one family to be effective in other families.

The leadership that the Docker River program has fostered, and Alison can probably talk about that as well, is through those youth workers who aren't affiliated with any families, have set up a team of self-identified young people who are interested in the

rec program and want to see good things happening in the community and don't want to see it go back to the way it used to be, when it was a big sniffing place and it was really awful to be a young person, particularly a young woman in that situation.

There is a strength in the community, but it has to have a forum created in order for it to come out.

**Mr MILLS:** I am interested in what you said about the young people having no association with any of the families. How does that occur? Are they from another place?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Are they white? Outsiders?

**Mr MILLS:** Outsiders.

**Mr McFarland:** The youth workers?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes.

**Mr McFarland:** Yes, the youth workers are outsiders. They are not members of the community. There is a male and female youth worker and they are whitefellas from outside.

**Mr MILLS:** I thought you were referring to the young people. Were you referring to the young people in this? Are they representative of the different clan groups or do they see themselves in a different role?

**Mr McFarland:** I think they definitely are representative of the different clan groups, because the family is the most important thing. It is essential to everybody's identity. But they're coming together around another issue, around the issue of sort of working together to create that recreation program and youth program. So they have got a forum in which they can sit down all together and work on something. Like, it is really important that somebody outside is there to create that potential.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Does Ngaanyatjarra Secondary College have a campus out there?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** No? It used to.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What they have got is Ngaanyatjarra College. A college based at Ayers Rock. Docker, Mititjulu and Imanpa have got little buildings and the problem with Docker River at the moment is the building is falling to bits so they are trying to get extra money from Ngaanyatjarra Corporation to do the building up at Docker River. So that is a good step that Docker is taking. Just one of the things, Terry, to maybe answer your question, is that there is also consistency in staff at Docker River.

Leon, the Administrator, has been there for 2½ years now, and the teachers; Edwin and Gloria May, 3½ years and they don't intend to leave until they see the children going through to secondary school. So that is a really good commitment from non-indigenous people in the community as well.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, it makes a difference.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Absolutely!

**Mr NATT:** What about the cannabis situation out there?

**Mr McFarland:** I am not really au fait with it. I believe it's pretty bad in that region, but I haven't got any specific information about it, I'm afraid. Most of the programs that operate at Docker River, though, the nature of them is that they will impact on cannabis use as much as they will on petrol use there. They provide alternatives to help families bring their kids up well; they do things that will impact on multi drugs.

**Mr NATT:** Right.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Blair, just a question on that Eastern Plenty: why is it that there is so much problem on the Western side of the community and even in the AP Lands compared to - if you have a look at excision on a pastoral lease, we don't see these problems?

**Mr McFarland:** Well, I think if you live at *[inaudible]*, you can see the same thing. It has to do with the fact that those communities are based on - they are still living on their country and they weren't ever settlement communities, and they weren't ever missionary communities because, with all the best intentions, the settlement people and the missionary people moved people around and put people together in funny lofts and really undermined traditional authority. Sometimes that was their stated intention like during the era of, what is it? Not indoctrination; what did they call it? Assimilation!

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Assimilation, yes.

**Mr McFarland:** Assimilation was definitely the stated intention, and the missionaries, too, it was their full intention, stated intention, to stop this devil worship and get everybody, turn all Aboriginal people into nice Christians. So that really disrupted people's capacity to deal with things themselves, within their own social setting, whereas on the Eastern side of the highway on the excisions, people were still living in their country. They still had the connections to the country, they still had intact authority systems and they had an engagement with the world through an exchange of labour. They were needed there and they had a role to play in the pastoral industry and so it wasn't like the welfare thing where people were encouraged to sit down and do nothing to some degree. They had a role and they had a meaning in their life and their cultural systems were much more in tact than on the Eastern side.

You can see that by just going to Larumba. Larumba Station is an excision on Napperby and it is the same. That community doesn't allow petrol sniffing. They have got the best night patrol, they're really down on grog.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No gambling.

**Mr McFarland:** They burn cards, and once they started burning cards, the health indicators of the kids in the community went up. They are sitting down in their country and they have that relationship with Napperby, with Chisholms that has gone back generations, and they have that same strength. Now, that is great, but where you go from there, I don't know. You can't sort of undo history.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So who are in town at the moment, on the camps, causing all the problems? Are they from the west?

**Mr McFarland:** Predominantly, from the west and the south.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes, Pit Lands.

**Mr McFarland:** Yes, because OPAL was rolled out into that region, a lot of people stopped and that is why we currently have this window of opportunity for bringing in demand reduction. Like, supply reduction has kicked in. It is very much harder to get your hands on petrol now anywhere but Alice Springs, and around Tilmouth Roadhouse, they are still selling petrol. But Alice Springs is the main drawcard.

A lot of people, when supply reduction kicked in in the south, they stopped and they are still floating around and they occasionally can get petrol, but not very regularly. Some people have moved into Alice Springs from both the west and the south and we see increase in sniffing in Alice Springs as a consequence, and this is not the first time this has happened.

When the Western Desert went onto AVGAS in late 2003, by early 2004 there was a heap of petrol sniffers in town. The Attorney-General called a crisis meeting because there were people sniffing in the mall and there was just a large increase. This current increase isn't as large as that because there have been some recreation programs and that sort of stuff and some people did stop after, you know, once AVGAS was out there, the numbers went down a bit and the recreational, occasional sniffers stopped.

The difference is that when there is petrol in every car, anyone can be a sniffer in five minutes if they have a bit of hose this long, but once the AVGAS went in and it became black market, you needed cash to buy petrol the same way you need cash to buy grog. So particularly little kids couldn't get their hands on it whereas before, it was very easy and you would see little kids sniffing because they'd see big kids doing it and they do it to.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can you describe the scene in town at the moment?

**Mr McFarland:** Yes. Nobody has got any really hard numbers about town, but the Commonwealth is apparently trying to commission a study, a sort of census of who is in town and who is sniffing and that sort of stuff, but at the moment we just run on what we see and on anecdotes we get from the night patrol and from people in the community.

I, personally, have seen a lot more sniffing in town. I am looking for it, I suppose, but I certainly have seen it. It is mostly glue and paint because that is what people prefer to sniff when they are in town if they can get their hands on it, and there's an increase, but it is not the same level of increase we saw in 2003-04.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is it young people or the male adults in the 20-30 age group?

**Mr McFarland:** It's both. You would have to say the more southern communities the older, it seems to be mostly guys and they seem to be older, and the Western Desert communities, they are younger. That probably also reflects the fact that petrol sniffing has really only been chronic in the Western Desert for 10 years, would you say?

When I lived in Papunya, it was sporadic. Very sporadic, and the community would mobilise against sniffers who came in from elsewhere and stop in before it really got a chance to dig in and get a hold.

So there hasn't been that sort of long-term sniffing in the Western Desert, whereas in the Pit Lands, they've been sniffing solidly for 30 years. So you have multi-generational sniffing and you have a much older demographic of sniffers.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You should tell people what else you do rather than Docker River.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, we will deal with the CAYLUS programs.

**Mr McFarland:** We'll work with any community that has got a petrol sniffing problem and we work consistently with Papunya, Mutitjulu, Kintore, Mt Liebig, Areyonga, Ntaria, Willowra, Yuendumu, Nyirripi ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** There is none left out there!

**Mr McFarland:** Alice Springs. A little bit we do with Areyonga. We work with Areyonga and we do a bit with Amoonguna, too. They call us when they have outbreaks of sniffing there and we do a quick response thing, which is all they ask us to do and all they really need.

We tried at one stage to get money for them from Youth at Risk funding, but they weren't successful in their application. We were successful in getting money for Willowra from the NT FACS Youth at Risk program, which has made such a difference to Willowra.

That is a story which is probably worth telling you about because we believe that that program is being reviewed, so we would like to tell you how excellent that program was for Willowra. I might hand over to Tristran for this.

**Mr Ray:** The funding is actually called the NT FACS Youth Initiatives Funding. It was a two year program and funded maybe two projects in Central Australia, but, importantly, one of them was Willowra. I am sure Alison will confirm that Willowra has had very little *[inaudible]*. I don't think it has had a new program for seven or eight years other than that. It doesn't get even the most essential services a lot of the time.

But they have had a youth program there. Willowra has had sporadic petrol sniffing, up to 20 people and they can access the Mt Theo program so that pattern has tended to be over the years that they have outbreaks, big mobs of kids go to Mt Theo, they go back, there is no support upon return really, no structured support, and eventually they return to sniffing, particularly in the school holidays.

The introduction of a program on the ground in Willowra that supported families and the community in getting initiatives up for young people including discos, recreational halls, a range of services and programs and projects has meant that there has been no sniffing in Willowra. A great example of the power of that program was last November, when the non-indigenous youth worker was away and two people started sniffing, but then the young fellas of that community told them that they weren't to sniff and they stopped.

So that sort of support. Not that that program could just stop now and it will all be fixed by any means, but it is indicative that when some support community capacity is really built in that way. They built their own recreational hall in Willowra. They didn't have any money to build it so they renovated a very dilapidated house that was being lived in by donkeys and we all laughed, well, we didn't laugh, but when they told me

they were going to renovate that, I never believed it until I saw it. They pulled [*inaudible*] screws out of the tip, bits that were laying at the tip, and they even recycled the [*inaudible*] screws and built their own recreation hall.

When you look at it, it is in a functional state but it is pretty dilapidated looking and the roof is not lined but it is something very meaningful to the families there and, impressively, when you go and watch activities taking place there, it is the old people who are supervising the children at the activities. The families there are being very much a part of the recreation program and they insisted that the recreation hall was amongst their family houses in the community so that they could sit at home and watch what was going on and monitor the well being of their children.

That funding may run out for the core position that really has facilitated a lot of that work. It is funded through until April 2007, so next April, and we would certainly like that to be a recommendation that the project is refunded in some way. The funding is \$70 000. There is no operational budget. There has been some Commonwealth money that has come in on top of that, which is going to support it, but it doesn't support the wage. The Commonwealth money will renovate the youth centre and provide leasing for a car.

The youth workers use their own vehicle for most of the program and the Mt Theo program auspiced the money, so they have also had that logistical and supervision and support from Yuendumu mob in that way.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Tristran, what about Yuendumu? Are you getting any sniffers there or just a lot of ganja?

**Mr Ray:** Ganja is a big issue in Yuendumu and it is what the Mt Theo program has identified as their next target and they have started. Suicide and ganja are strongly related and a completed suicide in Yuendumu last year really brought home to the program there that ganja was the new thing that they needed to work with.

So they are treating ganja in a similar way to petrol. They are taking some ganja users to Mt Theo and some people who are attempting suicide or corrections referrals and starting initiatives and working with the community to see how they can work with ganja.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And how many sniffers?

**Mr Ray:** Today? Yuendumu tends to be occasionally kids will try it and there is a very fast response. They get taken at 170 km up the road to Mt Theo and they can't sniff there and, generally, they only do it once.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** How many in CAYLUS? How many workers do you have?

**Mr McFarland:** Tristran and I do the community development, that's the supply and demand reduction stuff. We found that we were sort of forced to do case work as well, because you can't go to a community and say: 'We care about the sniffers' and then they actually bring a sniffer out and say: 'This guy is starving, what can you do about it?' You can't say: 'Sorry, we only do community development'.

So we ended up doing a heap of case work as well until it was really impacting on our major work. I think this is one of the problems that possibly other petrol sniffing programs have faced in the past. Because you just end up running around doing case work and if you are doing case work, you are not addressing the reasons why

there are sniffers in the first place, and you can spend all your time chasing around after the end product of this big system that is producing sniffers.

So we got funding from the AERF, the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation Foundation, for a case worker for two years, so now we have a third person who specifically does case work. So now when somebody rings up and says: 'I've got a 12 year old girl sniffing here and she doesn't seem to have any family', I go: 'Oh, great, I will just pass you over to Phil'.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Phil Hassell.

**Mr McFarland:** Phil Hassell, who we were terribly fortunate in getting. He is a very dear and close friend of mine, but he is also a qualified lawyer and a qualified social worker with 20 years experience in the field and he is extremely professional and a very good worker.

He creates like a buffer so when people come needing that sort of stuff, we pass that over to Phil and that is all he does; he doesn't do the community development stuff, he doesn't write submissions, he doesn't do any of that, he just does the case work. Consequently, we are freed up to do the other stuff that nobody is doing. There a bunch of case workers in Alice Springs, however people fall through the net. *[inaudible]* will refer them to other agencies, but other agencies have trouble working with adult men. Most of the other agencies are youth-focussed, so adult men are a problem for them. So Phil tends to have the *[inaudible]* one and the adult men.

So that is Tristran, me and Phil, and we also now have an Outstation Development Worker. Again, from the AERF we got funding for 18 months for a four-day a week worker to develop the *[inaudible]* Outstation because *[inaudible]* seems to have some potential and has been operating for ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, Danielle.

**Mr McFarland:** Danielle White, who was a CAALAS lawyer until she took on this position. She is a qualified lawyer, but again got sick of being just at that one point in the system and not being able to actually develop after services that she could see were needed in the field.

So she is now working with Mavis and, to a more limited degree maybe with Barry, although Barry has already got a reasonable amount of support whereas Mavis is just beginning. So we have got that funding for her specifically to work to develop up that outstation as a resource for Hermannsburg and the Arrernte people. So there are now four of us in CAYLUS.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** *[inaudible]*

**Mr McFarland:** Our funding. Well, we're getting there.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** In the past Robyn said to me you felt as though a lot of the funding wasn't getting to the grassroots, that the money seems to... I don't know where it goes. It disappears. Can you comment on that?

**Mr McFarland:** Yes. We appreciate the Northern Territory government put \$10m into petrol sniffing. It is great. It is the first time that it's happened and it is great that a certain set of resources are being generated because of that, but quite a lot of that money has gone to FACS workers.

I believe there are four extra FACS workers and I think there are supposed to be another two, but they are unfilled positions. They are supposed to be doing work with petrol sniffers, and that is great, but it is a pity that it took substance abuse money specifically for petrol sniffing to get FACS to the point where they can do their statutory obligations anyway.

Consequently, a lot of the money was absorbed by that. A lot of the other money is going to be absorbed by the rehab centre. There is no argument that Aboriginal people have been asking for that for a long time, but that is really expensive capital item.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Aranda House. That's about two million, I think.

**Mr McFarland:** Yes, Aranda House, and over the five years it probably is, or maybe even more because they have to and, sure, that's needed. You know how I said before it's like there is a factory that is producing petrol sniffers and the petrol sniffers come out of it and then there are case workers, then there is a rehabilitation place, like an Aranda House type thing, but that is at that end of the factory. There are me and Tristran trying to take this factory apart and we have got one shift up. We're trying to take the factory apart that's producing all these petrol sniffers and it is great that the Northern Territory government has put some money into these things, but ...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Concentrate on before they become petrol sniffers.

**Mr McFarland:** Prevention has got to be the way. Like it is just so expensive to wait until somebody is in a wheel chair, brain damaged or has destroyed \$2000 worth of community grader by driving it into the school. There is so much damage. I don't know if you have got a copy of the cost benefit analysis that Access Economics did.

**A MEMBER:** Yes.

**Mr McFarland:** Yes? Well, you know how much it is costing the Northern Territory government.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** To fix up the problem.

**Mr McFarland:** To fix up the problem.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** The person. Fix up the person!

**Mr McFarland:** Exactly. So we are saying it is great that you are putting some money into the outward end of the petrol sniffing factory, but put some money into the other end and try to take that factory apart because Docker River and Willowra and OPAL show that it can be done. It's do-able.

Petrol sniffing is not like grog. Grog is a much harder thing to deal with because there are acceptable levels of drinking and there is a whole industry trying to sell people grog, whereas with petrol sniffing, industry isn't trying to sell them petrol. They are actually *[inaudible]* and they're right on side. When we talk to them about supply reduction strategies, they're quite on side and they help. When there was a big outbreak at *[inaudible]* we talked to *[inaudible]* mob, and they said they are getting petrol from those two petrol stations over the road.

We talked to those petrol stations and they were surprised that that is what they were doing with the petrol, and, two, very amenable to banning selling petrol to the people

the community had identified as dealers, and they put trespass orders on a couple of them to stop them coming in to the petrol station. So it is not like the grog industry. The petrol industry is not undermining our efforts. They are supporting us: OPAL.

Petrol sniffing is fixable. It really is fixable. Look at Docker River. Petrol sniffing could become something like it is in Yuendumu now, where occasional experimental outbreaks are dealt with, as opposed to this chronic ongoing problem that has plagued the community for 50 years, 56 years. So we really think it is fixable and we have had these limited successes on occasions, and, like you say, the continuity of staff in Docker River is one of the reasons why it is working there.

Now that all could change. Twelve months from now, there might be a whole bunch of new staff and we are back to square one, and if a new community administrator prioritises aged care over youth work because he looks around and says: 'Look, there is not sniffing here. We don't need those youth workers, we need aged care workers. Look at these old people, then, bang! That program is gone and it won't take long before it is back the way it was before.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They need both.

**Mr Ray:** The youth workers in Docker have been housed at the expense of the aged care program. They have not been able to recruit enough aged care workers because the youth workers were in the house and they have to make that choice.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But if there was a *[inaudible]* crisis, Docker River does have two education houses that they normally rent out to other people, anyway, because it is only a two teacher school, so they have got two empty houses at Docker.

**Mr Ray:** Lots of people have empty education houses because we just can't get... they sit empty and we just can't put staff in them, despite trying so hard.

**Mr McFarland:** I don't know if you guys were in a position to make some recommendations to the Education Department about that because that is certainly an issue in Papunya right now.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes, and Health.

**Mr Ray:** And Batchelor. Batchelor have two houses at Nyirripi that have never been lived in, beautiful houses and Nyirripi has no recreation program. Zero. Nothing. They have a community hall that is used for various things, but they have got no recreation program whatsoever. So I don't know if you guys are in a position where you could make a recommendation that that sort of housing is...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, we can.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, we are.

**Mr Ray:** That will make such a difference because housing is the big impediment. A lot of communities, it is possible to get funding for wages from Reconnect from that Youth at Risk program, from Commonwealth FACS through after school hours care. It is possible to get wages money from various programs, but what stops communities getting it is that they have got nowhere to put them.

The Willowra program will fall over as soon as the current worker leaves because she's married. We happened to get a really good one who is married to the clinic manager, so they're accommodated in Health housing. When they leave, we won't be able to recruit on merit because there will be no house. So we will have to either choose someone who happens to be in the community, which is not a great way to go, or house them in Yuendumu, I don't know. So that will be the end of the program, just because of housing in Willowra.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Any questions, Terry or Chris?

**Mr MILLS:** No, I am fascinated by what you guys have been describing, and I admire the way that you have analysed the core of the problem and have hope that there are solutions. Everywhere we go, people are saying, after the problem is described, 'but is there an answer?', and I am encouraged by the approach that you are taking.

**Mr NATT:** No, I am right, Alison, thank you.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Loraine?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Could I ask what is happening in Alice Springs, rather than just... You are involved in with Bush Mob. Do you use them?

**Mr McFarland:** Bush mob, yes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Their social workers?

**Mr McFarland:** Bush Mob don't offer social workers as such, but they've just got Commonwealth funding for 12 months of operation. They were taking kids out to the Namitjira Camp and Larapinta last time we saw them.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Take them out bush.

**Mr Ray:** They also with the NT Health funding coming under the VSAP money.

**Mr McFarland:** That is partly why they have been doing the work with the Namitjira Camp and they have been very responsive.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What do we do, though, Blair, with all of the problems that we have on the ground, how do we stop kids from abusing full stop. Because we just tend to just move them on from one drug to another?

If you have a look at the petrol sniffing at Yuendumu and the Mt Theo program, absolutely wonderful program, 100% percent community and especially from *[inaudible]* and the people that work there but you have got young people selling ganja. It's just becoming the capital of ganja. What are we going to say when we are just moving the kids over to, say, glue and paint? What some of the teachers are saying now is that in some communities when petrol sniffing stops, they're now getting kids coming to school and grabbing those white-outs and taking the white-out and the school has to reorder white-out all the time.

**A Witness:** Re-order them!

**Mr McFarland:** You are absolutely right and there will be a migration to other drugs, but like Tristran said about the Willowra program, you approach this in two ways: supply reduction and demand reduction. So you don't order more white-out, you lock

up everything that is sniffable in the community, and that is really possible in a community because it is not like Alice Springs where there are 101 places where you can buy glue, but in the community just lock up all the things that people are sniffing and that is the supply reduction side of things.

If there are dealers, then you make sure that the community knows that they can secretly identify dealers and you get the police involved in chasing up on those dealers and busting them and getting them in gaol.

The demand reduction, as Tristran said, works on all drugs. If you make it hard to get white-out and there is a really good recreation program where they are going shooting pool and having lots of fun, they will go and do that and the very small core that won't go to the next thing, then you'll need the case worker, but they are a really small core.

When I first got this job and I went out to Mt Liebig, I was in the community and I looked around and said: 'What the hell am I doing in this dive?' Every kid was sniffing. From where I was standing, I counted 60 kids who were sniffing just standing in the community. They were walking past, they were on push bikes, they were on motor bikes, they were in the back of utes. Every kid seemed to have a plastic bowl against his face and if somebody ran out, they would go to any car and steal a bit, take a bit out and just continue sniffing. It just seemed so entrenched, but they got AVGAS gas in and the numbers dropped overnight to six, so it really is do able.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do you really think rolling out OPAL in Alice Springs is the answer? I mean, we still have a big tourist industry with people coming across the border from South Australia. You still have roadhouses that sell unleaded fuel, so why do you think OPAL is going to help the problem in Alice Springs?

**Mr McFarland:** Because they can't sniff it.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But don't you think there will be other ways of getting it?

**Mr McFarland:** I suppose it's the same as a remote community. The difference is if it's so easy to get, it's like free and in every car and every eight year old can get it with a metre long bit of hose, that is one scenario and that is the Alice Springs scenario right now, versus there is OPAL in every car and if you want to buy petrol, then you have to buy it from a dealer who's trucked it in from Port Augusta and who will be charging \$100 litre.

**Mr Ray:** It's really bustable.

**Mr McFarland:** It is very bustable because the Alice Springs Town Council, like the remote councils under the VSAP legislation have got the capacity to ban petrol, ban sniffable petrol from their area. We've just out at Mt Liebig, Papunya, Kintore and *[inaudible]*, and all of those communities are petitioning the Minister for that power, to make it a petrol-free zone in the same way it is a grog free zone, which means that if you turn up with a jerry of petrol and if you say: 'It is just for my car', if you are on one of those communities they say: 'Bad luck. It is banned and we are taking it'. So that could happen in Alice Springs as well.

You will still need Premium Unleaded. At the moment there is no Premium OPAL. The BP mob say that they might be able to make it if there was a demand for it, but at the moment in Alice Springs, if you did roll out OPAL, then there would still be a whole lot of places where you could get sniffable petrol in town and you would have

to keep fences around those in the same way that it is possible to keep fences around paint.

**Mr Ray:** Premium Unleaded is less than 10% of the market in Alice Springs, so you are talking about dramatically reducing the amount of what you have to look after carefully.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I never buy it. It's expensive!

**Mr Ray:** Yes, very few cars really need it. The remote petrol stations that we have talked to about this say that it would be easy for them to monitor that because they will just keep a lock on the Premium thing, and if you roll in with a late model Mercedes that needs it, you get it and if you roll in with an HQ, you don't because you don't need it. So they say it would be relatively easy to keep that under control in remote areas now.

It would probably be the same in Alice Springs. If there was the political will to roll it out here, there are certainly ways that we have used and proved to be successful in creating fences around those substances.

**Mr MILLS:** Blair, you just described that where there is a will, there is a way. This may be an urban myth, but you can correct it: the story around the traps is that with OPAL, you simply add polystyrene and sniff it, is that true?

**Mr McFarland:** No. We hear it everywhere, but it's not true. If you put polystyrene into any petrol, it will release chlorine gas and chlorine gas is not sniffable. It's not a hydrocarbon, it won't get you high.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Rip your lungs.

**Mr McFarland:** Yes, it will burn you.

**Mr Ray:** You can't inhale it.

**Mr McFarland:** You can't inhale it. It's chlorine gas.

**Mr MILLS:** Right.

**Mr McFarland:** It won't get you high and anybody who tries it will only try it once.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay, so these know alls going around the place saying: 'I know what is happening' and getting the beans out of the bean bag and putting them in the OPAL, they all bulldusting?

**Mr McFarland:** Yes, that is right.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay.

**Mr McFarland:** And it is the same thing, when I talked about Mr Liebig. In Mt Liebig before they introduced AVGAS, they had AVGAS back in the early 1990s, but because there were no other communities around with it, they stopped using it, but when they had all that sniffing, they brought that AVGAS again, but the local clinic sister said: 'Oh, no! I heard that if you put brown sugar in AVGAS, you can sniff it'.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr McFarland:** So the community said: 'Oh, there's no point putting in AVGAS because if you put brown sugar in it they will sniff it'. So they didn't, and it took Tristran and I to go out and say: 'No, if you put brown sugar in AVGAS, you just get sweet AVGAS'. So they bought AVGAS and, as I said, the numbers went from 60 to six overnight because you just can't sniff it.

The AVGAS report commissioned by the federal government before they continued with the AVGAS subsidy found that those urban myths or remote area myths were everywhere and everybody was an expert and everybody had their own things, and kids were trying everything to try and make AVGAS sniffable. It is the same with OPAL. They will try everything, but you might as well try to turn water into wine.

**Mr MILLS:** It makes me think of uni days with the banana skins!

**Mr McFarland:** Or drinking beer through straw. They're just myths.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I took Mark [*inaudible*] around, from BP Australia very early in the piece to these communities to tell people that they couldn't do certain things and he was actually showing them what happens if they try and mix the two substances together.

A lot of people come up with really poor excuses in communities when Mark and I went around, saying: 'But it's going to wreck the motor for our motor car' and he had answers for the whole lot. He said: 'It doesn't wreck your motor car'.

So people will come up with excuses because they don't want to see change, and sometimes you will get it from people who are actually supplying. These two guys know. The biggest fronts that you get to stopping any improvements in the remote Aboriginal communities is from people that supply.

**Mr McFarland:** Yes, that's right.

**Mr Ray:** We were in a remote community yesterday that was talking about implementing the new management areas, so banning petrol from their community, and one of the non-Indigenous teachers came up to us and her excuse was: 'Oh, I have got a 1978 Torana that won't run properly on OPAL' and she was arguing not to implement a management area because of that. It seems so simple, I think people look for reasons to debunk it and it is understandable but its simplicity is its strength: if you can't sniff it, you can't sniff it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Another thing that we need to look at and I am really, really curious as to all the subsidies that BP Australia is getting. I know that back during the OPAL rollout or AVGAS rollout did help Aboriginal people, but shouldn't they start doing a little bit more now? Say, fund you to do a lot more programs. You know, that is maybe something that they can start doing. Setting up a BP foundation.

**Mr McFarland:** We suggested exactly that to them early on, but they didn't want to play. They have never helped us in any way. We've told them there are things to do. You can BP Memorial all over it and we will say what a great job you are doing, but they seem to have their own ideas about what they want to do and they are just not interested in hearing from us about things.

**Mr Ray:** OPAL was a very good one, though, and they weren't subsidised to make it. The only way that they make money is through selling it now. They didn't get a lump of Commonwealth funds to develop it.

**Mr McFarland:** The formula was developed by the Australian Institute of Petroleum because *[inaudible]* went to the AIP and said: 'Can you design us a fuel that will be good for motors but can't be sniffable?' The AIP designed a fuel, came up with a formula, and BP said 'We will make that'. So it didn't cost them anything to develop it, really. It has cost them a bit of money to actually make it, but they're certainly making that back and they have got a nice little market share because of it. And we agree, Alison, but we are just not in a position where we can have any influence over these things.

**Mr MILLS:** I just want to go back if, I may, to what you said about rolling out OPAL to Alice Springs. Initially you were talking about the treatment of those who are affected by this industry or this factory, which is producing the causes for the desire to sniff or misuse substances, and then on the other hand if we remove sniffable petrol from Alice Springs, of course, logically you are going to then move to remove glue and paint. How far do you actually go? If you follow it through logically, is it really practical?

I take some encouragement by what you are saying about 'dismantling' or 'analysing' the causes of this, that may well be the better place to put the focus than to embark on something that may be actually impossible to do if we follow it through to the next step. What else do we remove?

**Mr McFarland:** I understand where you are coming from, but on the ground we find that if there are 100 petrol sniffers and you do a supply reduction thing and suddenly there's only OPAL, then the 100 go down to 20. The numbers always drop when you do these things, so if we have OPAL in Alice Springs and suddenly there is no more petrol, of that 20 maybe five will start to really try and get paint and glue. If we put in restrictions around that, and we've ran quite a successful campaign in 2004 that really put a lid on paint sniffing, which was getting out of control in Alice Springs after that migration in from the Western Desert.

We put a lid on that through developing with the retailers, with the assistance of the Town Council and the police, a Retailers Code of Practice, which means that now, in order to buy spray paint, you have to have your licence, a photo ID, which you then give to the retailer and they make a note of who is getting paint when.

Now, some people who we know are dealers, we told retailers not to sell to those people. The police collect those lists and they have the capacity to go and investigate. So if one particular woman comes in every day and buys six cans of silver paint and the kids are all sniffing that brand of silver paint, which the youth workers identify, then the police have got the capacity to go and chase that dealer up, and we have got the capacity to ban that person from getting that paints.

So what I am saying is yes, you do have to chase people through various gates, but every time you do something, the numbers drop off. These are all supply reduction strategies and if we can keep doing the supply reduction strategies until everything is *[inaudible]* and there is nowhere they can get it, but it is possible.

But on the other side, there is the demand reduction strategy, and they're the things that will draw kids away from trying to jump over the hurdles we have put between them and their drug of choice, and go and do something more wholesome that could

lead them back into education and employment. So that is why our strategy has to run on both fronts.

**Mr MILLS:** I am worried that we are going to end up with white-out under lock and key in Alice Springs.

*[Editors note: loss of audio from 11.02.20-11.06.23]*

The Committee adjourned at 11.06am.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Department of Health & Community Services**

**Alcohol & Other Drugs Program Unit**

*Wednesday 3 May 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Ms Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling

**Also present:** Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Kim Cowcher, Administration Assistant

**Witnesses:** Ms Jo Townsend  
Mr Andris Bergs

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 12.15pm.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community. I introduce Ms Jo Townsend and Mr Andris Bergs of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Program, Department of Health and Community Services who are appearing before the Committee to brief members with regards to the Volatile Substance Abuse Legislation and Program.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be in-camera and I thank you for taking the time to meet with the Committee and I remind you that evidence given to the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege.

For the purposes of the Hansard, I would ask that you please state your full name and capacity in which you appear today, thank you.

**Mrs Townsend:** My name is Joanne Townsend and I am the Director of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Program.

**Mr Bergs:** I'm Andris Bergs. I am the Senior Policy Officer of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Program.

**Mrs Townsend:** Firstly, I would like to thank the Committee for giving us the opportunity to brief you. There have been a number of attempts to get to this point. I am pleased that you are interested in the briefing because this Committee has actually expressed a lot of interest in petrol and made some very strong recommendations that have been certainly considered by us in our deliberations.

I briefed a number of you separately or in other groups around the legislation so I will just provide a very brief overview of it, but I won't labour what the legislation is about, I assume that the information is understood.

Essentially, the Act commenced on 9 February. It includes five main areas. They are; powers for police and others to seize and dispose of petrol; powers for police and others to take people to a safe environment, or into the care of an adult; powers to compel, for the courts to compel people to participate in assessment and treatment, and stronger powers if they relate to the illegal supply of petrol; and the ability for local communities to implement community management plans, regulating the supply and sale of petrol in the designated area.

By way of context, the legislation was designed to encompass immediate interventions, like the ability to take petrol off people in the immediate sense as a protective measure and to take them to a safe environment. Longer term interventions around treatment services and the ability to compel people to participate in treatment, but also since some applied measures around the illegal supply and also community health plans. So there was a deliberate effort to try and encompass the full gamut of harm reduction, supply reduction and treatment services.

The Minister that led a lot of this work was informed last year, I think through this Committee, and that is Marion Scrymgour. She had done a great deal of work in talking to communities about what it was that those communities wanted and she was very confident and very strong about these provisions. The Alcohol and Other

Drugs Program has had the task of developing up the legislation but also developing up the treatment programs that support it, as well as the other activity that supports it.

Government has committed in addition \$2m per annum to support this legislation. That money has been used predominantly to fund treatment services and I should say there were very few treatment services available for this target group prior to this. There has been some additional money for the Department of Justice to offer some court based assessors, there has been some additional money for information services and just going back to treatment services there was money, deliberate money set aside for urban services in Darwin and Alice Springs, but also for a range of remote services. Are people interested in getting a bit more information about those services?

If I start with Alice Springs because obviously Central Australia is the region that is most affected. It was decided that there needed to be an urban service based in Alice Springs. The Alcohol and Other Drugs Program did a whole heap of work on tender specifications that was publicly advertised in July last year. And from that, DASA (Drug and Alcohol Services Association of Alice Springs) was identified as the preferred tenderer. DASA had already been providing some detox services for this client group so they were well placed to provide services. They had tendered for an adult service, and in February this year they commenced providing volatile substance abuse treatment services from their existing facility at Short's Crescent.

The Aranda House facility in Alice Springs has been identified as the site for the adult services and whilst that is being refurbished, the service remains small, but once that service is refurbished then the service capacity will expand to 22 people.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And that is for adults?

**Mrs Townsend:** That is for adults and not just volatile substances. They will take all of the adult services there but it is a significantly expanded service. DASA have expressed interest in providing the youth service from their old facility at Short's Crescent. So they will provide a residential youth service on another site and adult services from Aranda.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** And that is going to be separate to their sobering up shelter?

**Mrs Townsend:** Yes, the sobering up shelter won't move. Sobering up shelters are very purpose built so that will stay in its current location. We contracted 'Bush Mob', who are a non-government organisation based in Alice Springs to provide the therapeutic part of the treatment for young people in Alice Springs and that service has already commenced. So they are already working with a range of young people from both Alice Springs and also from remote communities. That service is small but it is intended that that will grow once the residential service is on line.

So the youth services in Alice Springs are essentially split into a residential component and also a therapeutic component which works with the residential part, but also works out bush and with other service providers in town. We came to that service model after a lot of discussion with service providers in Alice Springs about what the service gaps were. Obviously it's a bigger service and a more expensive service than what we anticipated but I believe that it is going to be a better service.

In the Top End the Council of Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services, or CAAPS, are providing services for both adults and for young people who are accompanied by an adult or a carer. So they provide service for both adults and for young people but

their condition with young people is that a carer comes in. The carer then participates in the program with the idea that they then learn skills that then assist that young person when they return back to the community. It is also a duty of care issue.

I should say that DASA in Alice Springs have also got the capacity to accept family members, if that is what people want to do. By way of referrals, so far since legislation commenced in February, there has been a number of referrals, under section 33(a) of the legislation. In Central Australia there have been 21 requests for volatile substance abuse treatment or intervention received by us. 19 of those have been under the legislation where section 33(a) request for treatment and assessment; two of those have been informal. Of those 19 requests, 13 have proceeded to applications to the Minister and are still in the process of being managed through that process. The remainder have been either voluntarily referred to treatment, diverted to Family and Children Services or in the course of events those people have actually ended up in police custody because of some other offence.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Are you talking about Alice Springs town or the communities?

**Mrs Townsend:** At the moment the applications have mainly come from Mutitjulu, Finke and some from the town camps and a couple from Docker. But what we are noticing is that a number of communities that are most affected at present have actually got somebody in their community, either a police officer or a health worker or someone else who is making a number of referrals at once. That is actually not a bad option in that it means that *[inaudible]* and DASA are now managing to accept groups of people from the one community rather than taking one person from Docker and one person from Mutitjulu.

So they are actually trying to keep people together from the one community where that is possible. What we have tried to do with section 33(a) is to help people that want to make the referral and those people being referred understand what the formal treatment pathway is. The court procedure is not an easy procedure and what we have tried to help people understand, is that they can access treatment voluntarily and it is far less a difficult process.

Of course, there will always be people who are not going to voluntarily access treatment and that is what the Section 3a should be reserved for. The number of referrals we have in Central Australia actually meet the capacity of DASA at this point in time. Almost all of those referrals have been ours.

What we have done, because we are waiting for some construction work to happen, is negotiate with another service provider in town, CAAAPU, to accept those clients and provide the care, but with the treatment or the intervention component to be provided by DASA. So they are still participating in the DASA program, they are still getting a counselling part from DASA, they are still participating in DASA programs but their living arrangements are through CAAAPU.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Did they agree to that?

**Mrs Townsend:** Yes, and full credit to the Alcohol and Other Drugs Manager in Alice Springs for pulling off that arrangement.

It's a good way to manage the overflow, but it also means that the quality of the service is there for that group. In the Top End there has been no section 33(a)

referrals. There was some interest expressed by a community in the Katherine region about one young person, and a number of visits from my staff to help them understand and to get through that process, and they decided not to do that.

What that community has decided to do is to put in an application for a Community Management Plan. There are 5 applications with our Minister for Community Management Plans; one in the Top End and the other four from Central Australia. And what they are seeking to do is to make Opal the only fuel available in those communities and for that to be enforceable under Territory Law, and the Community Management Plan allows for that. So it seems to us, that those communities that have got Opal are the most likely to use the Community Management Plans at this point in time.

There were a number of remote area services and/or remote communities funded to develop new services. Funding was provided in the Central Australian Region: Iperle received a small amount of funding; Ipolera received some funding; Mt Theo received some funding and Kintore received some funding. Again, they were small amounts of money plus the one off infrastructure money, so that they would be able to accept clients.

In Central Australia, they have a number of existing station programs and that was relatively straight forward, though I would say that those outstations are very vulnerable and I am sure that the Chair can probably agree that they are reliant on one or two individuals, so they are quite vulnerable and we don't expect to place a high burden on those services through this legislation, however they do remain an option where they are operational.

In the Top End where they don't have any established outstations, or don't have a practice for providing remote services, it's been much more difficult and we are doing a lot of work with Groote Eylandt, Gapuwiyak, Oenpelli, to help them decide what sort of service model they want. That work is still fairly intensive and it's possible that one of those services won't proceed because that community is just not ready.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Why is take up so much slower?

**Mrs Townsend:** They don't have any outstation, they don't have existing services that deliver outstations, so those communities are deciding what the site should be. A lot of them are feeling quite vulnerable about whether they have the capacity to provide the service, so unlike Central Australia, which have got some outstations that are existing and people have already put their hand up and identified with, we are sort of boosting that capacity. In Groote Eylandt, we really are saying to the community 'where would you like it to be', and there is a lot of division about whether they actually do want to do it. What the clients...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But it is still just as urgent or not as urgent?

**Mrs Townsend:** The prevalence with petrol sniffing really is much higher and even though there are a number of adult sniffers in Top End communities, most of the communities have a focus on younger people, hence the family focus of CAAPS.

We will continue working with these communities, but at some point we don't want to over burden remote areas with a service model or a service expectation that they just couldn't possibly meet, and at some point we may need to decide how to re-invest that amount of money. Angurugu does have a drug and alcohol service but they don't have a residential component.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The point with the Top End communities, Loraine, is that they have actually already moved on to the harder drugs. You have a look at the majority of the Top End communities. They are all really into speed and stuff like that.

**Mrs Townsend:** Yes, definitely cannabis and I don't want to talk about those particular communities, but some communities in the Top End have got their own ways of dealing with petrol that they don't need or want to participate in this, they have got their own strategies and they are usually about coming down hard on young people if they are doing the wrong thing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well in Finke. Elliot and I were in Finke, and I think there are only a couple of sniffers down there, only a handful. The mother actually came and told Elliot and I that there is no service. That is why she keeps locking her son up in DASA because of his behaviour and she has done that herself. But every time the son comes home there is nothing at Finke for the son and it is just the hopelessness that she feels that the only way that she can deal with her sons' behaviour is to keep sending him back to DASA. She reckons that it is not right, because at the end of the day he is still her child and he still needs to come home, but there is nothing at Finke. It is sort of end of the road 'out of mind out of sight', they don't get many services there anyway.

**Mrs Townsend:** What you are describing is the absolute challenge of providing treatment. There will be many calls for treatment services. People talk about the need to have more facilities with alcohol and drug problems not just petrol sniffing problems, but the reality is if people have to go back to environments where grog, petrol, cannabis is readily available, where they are the only one that may not be using, it's very difficult.

One of the challenges for our treatment services and certainly the ones that the Alcohol and Other Drugs Program funds, is to develop better after care programs. They have to remain in contact with those people to care about what happens to them when they return, also there needs to be more emphasis on teaching, and this is a big part of treatment, teaching people skills. Coping skills, resilience skills but also skills in how to manage social situations when they are going to be around drugs.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about the fact that if you have a look at Ilperle, you have got a diverse age group, from eight - 16 and you have got Centralia College going out there twice a week and Centralia practically goes and delivers that. You really need literacy and numeracy for those children from the age of eight until 14, and I really believe that there needs to be a separation between the age group. It is not dividing two brothers or two sisters if they are there, but actually providing some form of education because I think it is so easy for government to say to people like Mavis and Herman and Barry, 'You have got a treatment centre, we will give you \$25k because that is all we fund Barry Abbott: \$25k. You go and stay out at Ilperle' Beth goes out there and does two days a week in VET training and there we have children between the age of eight – 14 that should be getting literacy and numeracy not having anything at all.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That is what we are saying. There needs to be more involvement of other departments and agencies.

**Mrs Townsend:** Yes, we have had discussions with the Department of Education about providing education at outstations, because they really are, as you say, there

are some young people for long periods of time, particularly when they are clients of FACS, which most of those clients are and we have had some discussions and they do have an identified model and we hoping that that can be considered as part of the bilateral arrangements around petrol. But we are certainly very aware that if we don't have any clients under this legislation in those services at present, but we are very aware that those people more than any other should be given the same opportunities to participate in education.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I just think that it is very, very important if we are going to get results, and we are working in a holistic approach both Commonwealth and Territory governments together, and local government, then we need to do things right. If we are going to put children at risk out there, then we need to make sure that their health care needs are looked after and their education needs are looked after because at the end of the day, if we have taken 25 kids out of that situation every five years, that is 25 kids that are unhealthy and uneducated.

So we are putting them back into a worse situation in the community and I think as government we have to make sure that we are putting the best service out there, holistic service, rather than just one part of the service.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Rather than try to do what you are doing in isolation from the other services you need. Coordination has always been a hard thing though, to get them to talk to each other and to work together.

**Mrs Townsend:** Partly, what you are describing is why the work with the Top End is not as straight forward as money; providing money; it is actually about getting some capacity there. The outstations in central Australia are really an unusual way of delivering services, because those outstations are given some government money, but they are actually owned and run by family members and that is an unusual way for us to do our business in terms of services.

It also makes it very difficult for us to compel individuals to operate in a certain way, but we are very conscious of this, particularly with those remote outstations which is why we haven't pushed them to take on anything that they are not comfortable to do, and that we are not comfortable in this place, so part of the work that we have been doing has been around first aid training, making links with the Education Department and making sure that there is adequate infrastructure. Though I anticipate over time, we are going to have less of us remote services, because they are not going to be able to meet that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Absolutely, they are not going to cope with the amount of money that we invest into them, because as you would know, we only give Ilperle \$25k, that's it! And he looks after up to 14 children.

**Mrs Townsend:** Their clients are FACS clients. They get a different amount of money from FACS.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The emphasis is in a coordinated approach, that is what we are supposed to be doing, and if we have got 14 kids out there, giving them \$25 000 with no education and no health, we are neglecting those children as well, legally.

**Mrs Townsend:** What I was saying is that, those 14 children are funded through another source of money so it's not \$25 000, it is a foster care amount.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But are you able to draw on other services to work with you, like education, like health?

**Mrs Townsend:** The other contributor for us is the Commonwealth who do put some money into some of the outstations in Central Australia like Ipolera and Mt Theo, so obviously we are trying to liaise with them. In the Top End, again, it is starting from greenfields.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You see Jo, one of the things that I mentioned when I was doing the Committee in Alice Springs, was the fact that the Commonwealth just invested millions of dollars into CAAAPU and why is it that the Northern Territory government can't make a bilateral on this, so that we have already established brand new facilities that we could be working with the Commonwealth on?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Good question isn't it?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can I ask you this. I have had contact from South Australia that the South Australian government was putting money into a rehabilitation centre...

**Mrs Townsend:** The Commonwealth has funded a rehabilitation centre. Two mobile rehabilitation centres.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** The feedback is that in fact, they don't want it in the Pit Lands, they are going to put it in Alice Springs, which worries me because we don't want a South Australian person being rehabilitated in Alice Springs, have you heard that?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No.

**Mrs Townsend:** [*inaudible*] bilateral negotiations on the cross border strategy on petrol sniffing, the Commonwealth has put in, I think it's about \$2 or 3 million, into a rehabilitation for South Australia, for the AP lands. My understanding is that South Australia has had some difficulty in identifying a suitable site, mainly because they wonder who will staff it. Now that project has been at this point for the last three or four years and I can't see any immediate resolution.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** This is apparently something that has been started, to be suggested in recent weeks and I would like a bit more information when it comes to Alice.

**Mrs Townsend:** Sorry, my understanding is that it has been raised at the bilateral as a potential way and I do know that the Commonwealth had, not at very senior levels, but on a junior level, there have been some 'well what about ...' and the Northern Territory has been very strong that we will have reciprocal treatment arrangements with South Australia when their service is established. Of course, if there are family relationships with South Australia we will accept clients from South Australia, but we will not be the petrol sniffing centre of Australia.

The main issue isn't the treatment issue, it's the fact that around treatment you need to have mental health facilities, you need to have ambulance care, it's the infrastructure around that facility and we already have enough pressure around those types of services in Central Australia to be important and I also think that Alice Springs, the residents of Alice Springs, would have a view about anti-social behaviour and I think that is unfair. I believe that that message is being heard and at the last bilateral meeting it was reiterated to us.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It has only reared its head again after the last election, so that is why it has been raised again within the last month in South Australia.

**Mrs Townsend:** I would say in the last month we have made it clear that that is not acceptable to us and we have reiterated that it is not an option for us.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** We just need to be aware of that.

**Mrs Townsend:** We have good reciprocal arrangements in South Australia around mental health already, in clients from that region, and as I said I am sure DASA wants to have a larger capacity so they can accept people from South Australia, providing they can also accept clients from the Northern Territory as required.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Well, we must say it tends to bring family members close as you know, so we get a lot of people from the Pit Lands coming up, which often then causes us more problems.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well I tell you, we are getting more and more, it is a trend. I went to the Eastern Plenty last week and people were just moving in to access services, banking and stuff like that. That is why we need to talk to the Commonwealth about putting more rural transaction centres in communities, so it keeps people out on the communities, because that is all it is. If you're going to have a key card and you haven't got a banking system out on remote Aboriginal communities, of course you are going to go into town.

That is the biggest problem, and I think that if we can negotiate some kind of agreement with the Commonwealth to start putting more rural transaction centres out there, so their Centrelink is done properly through the rural transaction centre, their banking, you will find that people will stay out there. We opened one a week ago at Hart's Range; Nigel and myself.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** The difficulty you have is that we can't restrict freedom of movement.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is right and Alice Springs is the 'hub centre'.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** We need to get Coober Pedy more of a 'hub centre'.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And Tennant Creek, and further down, Katherine.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can we ask you about the authorised persons you are going to provide training to. Has that started?

**Mrs Townsend:** Training since yesterday in Alice Springs.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Whereabouts?

**Mrs Townsend:** We ran it out of ADSCA (Alcohol and Other Drug Services Central Australia) so at the moment we haven't had a lot of interest in being an authorised staff officer but the staff at 'bush mob' and the staff at CAYLUS have said that they want to do it, which is good. We can run that training regularly as needs to be, so that was 5 people I think.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Apparently Papunya signed up to do that. The day after we went there the Committee went up. People there just didn't understand what it meant because it wasn't done in language and they reported straight back to me

because we were there the day before and they rang me and told us, and all they did was nominate all the whitefellas. The teachers, police and nurses and when someone explained to them 'it's not about the whitefellas, it's about you and Mum and Dads taking responsibility to take the petrol off the kids', they reckon, 'No, no, no, we won't touch that with a 10 foot pole because of the animosity that it would cause between families'.

**Mrs Townsend:** We provide some money to CAYLUS, Waltja and NPY.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** CAYLUS and Waltja did this and they employed a person from Papunya to interpret what they were saying but apparently the interpreter was not interpreting what he was supposed to be doing. So that is the biggest problem that you have got.

**Mrs Townsend:** Because I think it is very important that people that do sign up understand what it means and I can anticipate what you were describing would happen in other places.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And the easiest way to do it is to get a tape or something together, like a videotape. I am prepared to help you to do anything in language as the Chair of this Committee, to put something across on the media. And even if we send it out to the BRACS units, just so that they get their own families to do the stuff to their own kids because if you get someone else from another clan to do it, then that just causes fights in the community. But get their own parents to do it, if you responsible for your child's action, you take the petrol off your children. And that is what this legislation does. It is empowering you as a parent to get your stature back in society because the kids have stripped it off you. Like I said, I am prepared...

**Mrs Townsend:** We may well accept that, thank you Alison. Because that is the challenge. It is law, so there are some things that people need to understand and making sure that people do understand that, I think is a particular obstacle for us. Generally the legislation is aligned to the accredited training we provide, which is about dealing with intoxicated people. But it also very much focused on what's in the legislation, what people are able and aren't able to do, what they should do to protect their own safety, what they need to do to protect the person that their dealing with; safety; issues around disposal.

**Mr NATT:** First aid?

**Mrs Townsend:** Yes, some first aid, issues around reasonable force, making sure people understand what that means and what is appropriate and what isn't. So we have got things like disposing but it is also where you shouldn't dispose of volatile substances because of environmental and other hazards. Then there is the second part, which is about if you are apprehending a person which is a bit more detailed, but the same kind of issues: what is in the legislation and what is important.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** This needs to be a joint person. Not one person having all that responsibility.

**Mrs Townsend:** The obvious group would be your night patrol. That would be your obvious authorised persons, because they often work with back up. Perhaps a cultural authority. They are doing a similar role, and I think that if we can help some of those groups understand.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Have they approached you, the night patrols?

**Mrs Townsend:** No they haven't, but to be fair we haven't done any targeted work with the night patrols around becoming an authorised person. The emphasis has been on rolling out the sort of massive, well, massive for us, legislation and getting the treatment unit. Now that we have this training and it is almost like we have done a dummy run with CAYLUS and Bush Mob, who are well established services in this area. I think the next step will be to say 'well how do we roll this out more, how do we help people to understand what is in there.'

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Police too?

**Mrs Townsend:** Yes, police are very much a partner in the VSA legislation.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But what you have got is some administrators currently, according to Blair, but that is not helping them. So CAYLUS has told me that some of the administrators in particular communities are just not helping them when they go out to talk about these issues.

**Mrs Townsend:** I think there is still a lot of; maybe not misunderstanding; but there is still a lot of work to be done around trying to communicate what it means and the message that we have tried to promote, and also CAYLUS have tried to promote to let people understand that this actually, as you say, gives the community back power. It shouldn't be seen as, 'well we can step away from this because the police will come and do it.'

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well I can tell you one thing, Jo. When this Committee went to Papunya, two weeks after I went out to Papunya and I was absolutely shocked to see the decrease in petrol sniffers in Papunya after the people meet with members of the Committee like Rob, Terry Mills and Loraine Braham and Chris Natt were talking to people just after the Committee had broken up. And it was absolutely wonderful. I thought I was walking into a new community. I said 'where are all the sniffers', because it is part of life, you walk in and you see them first and people, even including my daughter, said, 'Mum it was absolutely amazing when you people came that day for that meeting, it was then just a big turnaround the very next day'.

And it was to do with what I said, like people like Terry and Loraine and Chris and Rob just standing around talking to people saying like, 'this is not right' and stuff like that, it sort of gave people hope, that if they stood up for themselves that things will start calming down a bit and this is just good to see. Absolutely amazing.

**Mrs Townsend:** I don't want to oversell this, but we certainly have noticed that in those communities where there has been a lot more focus on helping them understand the legislation, a lot of those communities have actually said 'well we don't need to do any of this, but we do need to clamp down on sniffing behaviour', so we have had some flow-on effects, particularly I can think of one Top End community that...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** When you do, as time goes on let's feed some positive stories out to the media. There are some good things happening but we never hear about them.

**Mrs Townsend:** There is always a risk. I get quite anxious as there is always that if I say a good story there will be a howling mass to point out all the bad ones. But you are right, we do need to, this legislation was never going and is not, the single solution to...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes it is a multitude of lots of things, you know, people, programs and individuals.

**Mrs Townsend:** It is a complex issue, located predominantly in remote areas, which have limited resources and infrastructure, so it was always going to be difficult. This adds another option where there previously was none, but there will still be things that this doesn't do.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** One of the biggest problems you are going to have is selling Opal to Alice Springs.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And Opal has had such a good effect in communities too. It is a multitude of lots of people trying to do stuff, like Opal on its own is not going to solve anything. It is one small part of helping the community when people start coming in then it becomes a big program.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** It will probably transfer the problem to the Roadhouses or places like that, so I don't know how you control it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It is really funny, because Haasts Bluff is only a half hour away from Papunya and it is just amazing to see the swap and remember what young Matt is doing with the music class is absolutely wonderful, because he just sat there 24 hours a day with those young fellas, taking them out on bush trips, and they have got a program when they come back to Papunya and he tells everybody 'if you are going to go and sniff petrol, then you can't be part of this program.' So it is an exclusion as well, saying 'if you are not responsible for your own life we can't make you responsible to this program.' So it is really, really good.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That is what you need to also push, to get more recreational officers to support the people.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is right. That is what we heard in a couple of the places that we went to.

**Mrs Townsend:** It is certainly the case of the work through the bilateral that there is a very strong focus on youth development, that is not going to roll out right across Central Australia unfortunately, it focuses on *[inaudible]* region, but I think there is a real opportunity there for some additional support, particularly for that because at the moment, youth services are spread across a range of portfolios, a range of governments.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Because as you know Jo, this kind of behaviour that we see in children, you see it world wide. It is the trend of people in poverty. And unless you address the underlying issues then there is a multitude of problems further down the road that we have to combat if we are going to have a look at this problem now. And if we can work together as a community, whole of government to try and combat this problem, then the problem will be less down the road or down the river, you know.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** The ones that are successful. You need to find what makes them successful so we can sort of develop a model around that. We know if you take Barry Abbott away that might collapse. Who knows, because it often is around personality and a lot of programs...

**Mrs Townsend:** Well that is what happened in Mt Theo a few years ago when Andrew left and suddenly the program stalled and they realised that that is what it was and they resurrected it from the point, but knowing that is what made their program successful. Most effective youth programs are based on program but you do have to have some charismatic person that connects with the young person.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And I think you go back to what Loraine says. We have got to be careful that we are not shifting the problem. My argument has always been that you can have all these little outstation programs but at the end of the day those kids have to come back to their community and their parents and their family, otherwise you get that disconnection and the kid has got mental problems and thinking 'what happened to my Mum and Dad, what happened to my family' and stuff like that.

They start thinking like that and then they go back into some other form of abuse, whether it be when they get older they bash their wives and stuff like that because of all the stuff that is in their mind. So at the same time taking these kids away there has got to be that gradual program where these kids are able to come home to their parents, you know. If we can't give them that, then we might as well just take them away forever and put them inside a detention home.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Demountables.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Demountables, that is right.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Are the police implementing this by taking the petrol away? Have they started doing this?

**Mrs Townsend:** I don't have any data from the police about their seizure rates but they are collecting that information.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But you should be able to get that shouldn't you? It is the same as they do for alcohol.

**Mrs Townsend:** I haven't seen any current ones yet. Largely it depends on obviously the community but also it depends on the police officer in that community as some police officers are more active than others around.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** What we want is a number for people to ring. Not always the police because they have such a lot of work, but you need 'If you see a petrol sniffer ring this number'. A bit like dob in a drug user. You ring the police and they might not get around until 20 minutes, 40 minutes, you know, and by then the petrol sniffers have scattered.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Mutitjulu has just gone backwards again.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Has it?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Eight year old kids walking around with petrol to their nose and they are getting it from Ayers Rock.

**Mrs Townsend:** Tell the police.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I'm the biggest dobber in my electorate. I am seen to be 'the dobber'. Everywhere I go, I dob people in. Every time I go to Docker River, I pull

in at Yulara and dob people in. Dob the Mutijulu people in, so I have just become the biggest dobber.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes I know, but someone has got to do it, Alison.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes I know.

**Mrs Townsend:** There is new protection under the VSA legislation.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, but you don't stop the druggies from killing you on the road on the way back, the bikies.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes but somehow or another, people have seen it, they ring night patrol but quite often they don't respond to it, they don't want to know about it do they, quite often in Alice Springs. I even tried to, and perhaps CAYLUS did to get an after hours number, so if you can find a contact that people can actually ring in and say 'there are a couple of petrol sniffers'.

**Mrs Townsend:** The police response in Alice Springs has been, certainly in response to our services, has been pretty good around this. I don't want to speculate.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But they are pretty low though.

**Mrs Townsend:** Yes, considering they are pretty low, their response rate has been pretty good.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But there was someone else with the supervised person training. The night patrol, if we can get them to be active and do it or someone, because ultimately...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You would be seeing that kind of stuff in Katherine too there Rob?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Sniffing?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Nothing?

**Mr KNIGHT:** No.

**Mrs Townsend:** There is a bit of sniffing to the East of Katherine.

**Mr KNIGHT:** There is a little bit at Binjari.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about that place, 'Millalu' or whatever, I don't know.

**Mrs Townsend:** Jilkminggan?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes that's it.

**Mrs Townsend:** There is a lot of activity around there.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes that is what I've heard. A lady from Barunga, she was telling me.

**Mrs Townsend:** Staff do a lot of work with Jilkminggan. That is an example of a community that have identified that they have had problems, sought advice from us and then come up with their own solution.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about the Tiwi Islands and Wadeye? The reports that we are hearing about Wadeye, this was just yesterday, Kerry and I heard it in a speech in the Darwin Mall.

**Mrs Townsend:** About sniffing?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Not just sniffing. Violence. Children walk around with machetes chopping off dogs' heads and hanging them.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I know you have that view, but there is no sniffing that I am aware about there. There is certainly a lot of marijuana getting out there and of course, ice.

**Mrs Townsend:** Really! We have very little ice in Darwin.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I have got the word from the Daly police that there has been a bit of Ice on offer and nursing staff saying that there was a lot of disruption in the community that wasn't alcohol or marijuana.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And this person that told us was really, really concerned that nothing is being done. I think that this is really, really serious if kids are running around with machetes, chopping off dog's heads and hanging the dogs. That is a message that those children need help. There is something wrong with them. Apparently last Saturday, according to these men, the kids chased all the nannas around with the machetes.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Why don't men take the machetes off the kids?

**Mr KNIGHT:** I found that *[inaudible]*

**Mrs BRAHAM:** There is legislation about weapons like that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** This was no drunk, I am telling you brother. This person actually works for the Northern Territory government that told us.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Get your spies out Rob.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I know there is a lot of tension in that community, there are a lot of issues there.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** We had a successful *[inaudible]*, so that was quite successful.

**Mrs Townsend:** I will just finish by saying I am more than happy to come back in another 6 months and let you know how it is going.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can I just thank you on behalf of this Committee, both of you and it is just so good to get information so that we know as a Committee when we go around, we can actually help you pass that message on as well. Certainly the offer is out there, if you want stuff done in language.

**Mrs Townsend:** I am just trying to work out the incredible pathway to get permission for that, but we will work it out.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I have actually done some stuff for CAYLUS on radio.

**Mrs Townsend:** It is always easier for an NGO, but we will seek advice.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That comes with a pretty big footprint, something like that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks very much.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 1.30pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Groote Eylandt, Angurugu Community**

*Monday 29 May 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain  
Ms Barbara McCarthy, MLA, Member for Arnhem

**Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Sharon McAlear, Administration Officer

**Witnesses:** Mr Jabani Lalara, Chairman, Angurugu Council  
Mr Greg Arnott, CEO, Angurugu Council  
Ms Michele Clarke, Substance Misuse Unit Manager  
Mr Paul Thomas, After School Care Co-ordinator  
Mr Jason Mamarika, Community Worker  
Mr Daniel Amagula, Community Worker

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The meeting opened at 11.10am.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives of Angurugu. Michele, Daniel, Paul, Jason and the CEO. Thank you very much for your hospitality as well.

**Mr Arnott:** It is a pleasure.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We apologise for being a bit late.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be in camera.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the Committee and remind you that evidence given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary Privilege. For the purpose of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Once again I want to thank you on behalf of the Committee. If you could give us a background of what is happening in the community, what kind of programs you have, and what substances and challenges there are such as petrol sniffing, kava, ganja, or alcohol, so the Committee gets a picture before we start asking you questions.

**Mr Arnott:** The community has been here since the 1940's and has gradually built up. There are 20 clans or family groups which is probably a more accurate description, represented within the community which is broken into two loyalties. A number of those clans are from East Arnhem Land and have been here for hundreds of years; however they are still recognised as being from the mainland, as opposed to the traditional people from Groote Eylandt.

The language spoken predominately is Anindilyakwa and most people speak it as their first language and English as the second. There are also a few people from North Queensland and Mornington Island, but predominately it is all people from this area.

We have a sport and recreation program which Paul runs as an after school care program, and he will talk further about that. Michele is the supervisor and social worker for the Substance Misuse and Domestic Violence program, and we also have an Aged Care program that runs respite care, meals on wheels, and that type of thing. They also look after our MJD sufferers, which is Machado Joseph Disease. This is a generic disease which can affect people from a young age, and unfortunately it eventually leads to their death. It is a real problem in our community.

We have got a CDEP program which is very successful. It currently has 105 participants and there are a number of host employers engaged. It has been very successful over the last 12 months and although it has only been going for four years, it is a program which will expand and continue to show success. We have tradesmen on site who do the housing maintenance which is a bit unique from some of the communities. They also assist the CDEP participants with training to upskill to a tradesperson or a trades assistant.

There are a 100 other things I could tell you as well, but hopefully that gives you a brief outline. There are approximately 1000 people on the community with six

outstations that are occupied and range from about 15 km to 40 km away. The populations of the outstations vary with the largest being around 50 and the smallest around six people, and again that is seasonal. In the wet season people are more likely to come into the community and go back to their homelands in the dry season.

The population does vary because of people from Umbakumba, Bickerton, and Numbulwar coming to Angurugu and also people from Angurugu going to those places. This movement fluctuates depending on what is happening in terms of family and cultural commitments.

From a substance misuse perspective, alcohol is certainly a big problem. This is being somewhat mitigated through the Liquor Management Plan which has been going for nearly 12 months and has been very successful in combating a lot of alcohol related problems and anti-social behaviour.

Petrol sniffing is an issue and it is anticipated that Opal fuel is going to be available on the Island in approximately two months. This was announced recently in the federal Budget. The reason for the delay is that nobody in the community sells petrol; it is only sold through the mining company GEMCO in Alyangula, who get their fuel through Singapore which is cheaper than buying it in Australia. Consequently, we had to talk to the federal government about increasing the subsidy so the fuel price would be the same as if they were still sourcing it through Singapore, however we are now doing the paperwork to get that happening and looking at what current fuel stocks are here, and probably in two months Opal will be the only source of petrol on the island.

Marijuana is also an issue. Michele is the best person to talk more about that, however there has been a fair bit of work done through the Menzies School of Health on usage and users, etcetera.

As far as I know kava is not used on the Island. There has been talk about having it available for particular things, however the council has pretty much knocked that on the head but we need to be aware of it because it is being used in other parts of East Arnhem.

Like a lot of communities, we have an issue with housing. We are under-housed by approximately 80 houses. We have about 110 community houses, but we are 285 bedrooms short of bringing it to a level of two people per bedroom.

**Mrs MILLER:** What have you got now?

**Mr Arnott:** At worst there are three bedroom houses with 20 odd people in them, however it averages out to about 11 people per house.

We have had a number of houses built over the last 18 months, but that really has not alleviated the problem as it was through the NAALAS project which requires houses to be removed and replaced rather than newly erected.

We currently have five IHANT houses under construction. Four should be completed by beginning of June, and the other one by the middle of June.

**Mrs MILLER:** Have you taken that into account when you talk about the number of bedrooms you are still short?

**Mr Arnott:** Bringing those in will help, but when we need 80 houses and get five, it is still a big issue.

**Mr KNIGHT:** How much does it cost for them to build a house?

**Mr Arnott:** At least \$291 000 for a three bedroom block construction, core filled, and built to IHANT standards.

**Mr MILLS:** Are the 80 houses required based on today's population?

**Mr Arnott:** That's right. The population is increasing. The birth rate is having an impact on it and also people coming into the community. Quite frankly, it is hard to have an accurate gauge of population growth because of the fluctuations. If you go back ten years, there have certainly been questions asked about how accurate those records are.

**Mrs MILLER:** You were saying there is an illness; what is it?

**Mr Arnott:** Marchado Joseph Disease is a genetic disease which was introduced to Groote Eylandt through the Macassans from the Portuguese, and it causes muscle breakdown. It predominately occurred when people were in their late 40s or 50s when the first symptoms were shown, however as every generation comes it is affecting people at a younger age. We currently have people who are 10 or 11 years old that have started to show symptoms. The older it affects people the slower the condition develops so if the symptoms show at 45, life expectancy is probably around 15 years. If it starts affecting people at 10 or 11, they may live until only 18 or 19.

**Mrs MILLER:** How many people have it do you know?

**Mr Arnott:** We do not have absolute accurate figures but there been talk about screening, as genetic testing is now available, to determine how many people have got it. My best guess is over the next few years we are looking at 100s of people; perhaps 10% of our population could potentially be affected. That is very serious and as it occurs in younger people we need to do home and school modifications, and modify activities so as people become more disabled we can help them still have an active life in the community.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is it exacerbated by lifestyle?

**Mr Arnott:** The research that has been done says there is no environment impact on generation or onset or anything like that. It is purely genetic.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is it exclusive to this island?

**Mr Arnott:** No, there are some people in Yirrakala, Elcho, Japan, and Israel where it is also predominant.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have never heard of it before.

**Mr MILLS:** What is it called again?

**Mr Arnott:** Marchado Joseph Disease.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** There was a piece on it a while ago on the television.

**Mr MILLS:** *Stateline*?

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Yes, it looked terrible.

**Mr Arnott:** *Stateline* came here and interviewed some people from the community who talked about their family who have it. It is relatively limited to one family and one of our counsellors talked about how she has had two of her brothers die, and two of her other siblings have the disease. She is the only one that has not.

Menzies School of Health have done a fair bit of research on it. If you look at it purely from a statistical genetical point of view, it should only be one in two people who have it but the incidence is higher than that. Instead of 50% of people being affected, it is about 63% to 65% and they are trying to find out why that is.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you Greg

**Ms Clarke:** Are there any particular questions you would like to start with, or will I give a bit of an overview.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Tell the Committee what happens, and as Terry and Fay have shown, we will ask questions.

**Ms Clarke:** I have been in the position of Supervisor Social Community Worker for five years. It is a Commonwealth funded health and ageing [OATSIS] program. We have three dayshift workers, myself and two others, and we have up to four nightshift workers, two of which are Jason and Daniel.

They are CDEP funded positions with [OATSIS] top up. We do not have any Northern Territory government funding, and have one vehicle, a dungered up one.

**Mr MILLS:** A new word for today.

**Mrs MILLER:** It would not pass the test you mean?

**Ms Clarke:** Yes, you got it. The workers represent the different clan groups and the cultural appropriateness of the programs we do is through language. All the children and clients speak Anindilyakwa, and we use what I refer to as an uncle/nephew discipline to decide which worker is matched with which client to intervene.

The interventions are either brief crisis, or the other work we do is education, one-to-one counselling, case management and follow-up support of clients. We have referrals from Northern Territory Corrections and Youth Development, from families and youth themselves and a minimum from FACS.

We cover Angurugu, Umbakumba and Bickerton Island. Every Wednesday we go to Umbakumba and visit our eight clients there and do an intervention with the senior school boys' class on prevention, drug awareness, personal development, anger management, etcetera.

The nightshift goes from 7:00pm to 3:00am, and we coincide with the police nightshift during that time. Jason and Daniel will talk more in regards to the client group which comes and what they do.

The other service position in the area previously was John Hopkins, an Education Support Officer with Northern Territory government Alcohol and Other Drugs. That position has now been vacant for over a year.

As Greg said, the Menzies School of Health have done some research in regards to cannabis and from that research they produce educational material which we use.

All the workers get training, and some go to Batchelor and do alcohol and other drugs training. John Hopkins was a great support in regard to in service and training. A couple of us go to CAPS to do alcohol and other drugs training, and we do anger management and first aid training, and suicide intervention. The workers intervene in regard to scenarios of self harm, anger, domestic violence, and intoxication.

Petrol sniffing is like being under the influence of alcohol, as opposed to being stoned under ganja, therefore there are slightly different behaviours that come out in a person. We link with the Angurugu Clinic in regard to the doctor check up, referrals to mental health and support workers going with clients who are psychotic or suicidal and have had to go to the Cowdy Ward.

The other training is computer and the workers are quite literate in that. They have to document in a dayshift and a nightshift diary any clients coming in, and we are working towards putting that on a computer system.

We refer to it as the pink room because literally the walls are pink. We inherited it and it is a beautiful colour. Basically it is a place where young people feel comfortable to drop in, and other times the police drop them off under the new *Volatile Substance Act*.

Depending on the scenario, their mood swings, behaviour, headache, vomiting, etcetera, and what condition they are in, the workers have to calm and settle them down. Often they are erratic, will move fast, and keep moving. Over the five years we have worked from them coming in and staying only five to 10 minutes to 30 or 45 minutes, or an hour. The concentration to get these young people to stay with you is difficult. The workers have to keep talking and calming and it is very draining.

The families are getting tired. They say the kids have no ears and will not listen, so you have got a bit of that in regards to family interventions. Parents will sometimes be fearful because of the psychotic and agitated behaviour. Yes, they do carry knives, machetes and different things, and the workers intervene to get them to take them out put them in the truck or whatever, so you can understand that some parents have fear of their kids and give in to them. There is noise, banging, waking up the household and in a given house there could be five or six petrol sniffers in one room. They will walk in the house and sniff so there are issues of educating young people depending on their addiction and on how we are able to help them; such as at least sniff outside in the fresh air and minimise any problems of falling asleep inhaling, so there is harm minimisation is built into it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Michele, how many petrol sniffers do you have here?

**Ms Clarke:** There are up to 22. Of the eight clients at Umbakumba, three are sniffers, and there are six to eight that come from Numbulwar, and girls also come from there. The majority in Angurugu are all males, and there are only three females.

They are a peer group amongst themselves so they are outcasts in regard to other peers. It is hard to get them to do sporting activities with other people as they are

outcasts and the others do not really want to hang with them. They eat out households a lot and depending on their timeframe when everybody else is asleep they are all awake and they will eat all the food on a given time.

It is great they have learnt to come to the pink room when they are hungry and that they are recognising their own body clock, hunger, etcetera, and that they know this is a place to come for help, to talk and to sit down.

The nightshift was initiated under the ATSIC Domestic Violence and Substance initiative. Although domestic violence was minimal, we had a high number of sniffers. Their body clock is at night time so we evaluated there is a need to maintain that shift because of the number of young people walking around at night and depending on their break and enter, we needed to offer something during that timeframe.

They are young adolescents going through their own puberty development. They have minimum life skills and are looking at their own independent living skills, therefore need guidance and mentoring. They have an element of shyness and shame because of that lack of self confidence and esteem. English is a second language and depending on when they finish school, we do educational workshops, I will do a minimum in English and Daniel and Jason will do it in language. We put it up on an overhead projector and make sure it is very interactive. There is an education component and a nutritional component where they cook, cut and prepare food together. We also have music activity.

The issue of money: family payment going towards youth homeless allowance, and depending on their independent status and timeframes, when they are without money. This highlights parental supervision and interaction.

The other intervention is where young couples are put together in regard to settling down and living independently and that can either work or not. We are more education and counselling. We have minimum opportunities in other areas, but we have offered basketball on a Tuesday night as a prevention activity, keeping in mind that we cover all substances not just petrol. We have only had one inhalant of a spray can four years ago and that has never continued or been mimicked. I have not known of any intravenous drug users in the community.

The Liquor Management Plan is good in regard to addressing some of the liquor issues, but of course in every scenario you will have another time when the consequences of that will affect the behaviour. We have had an increase of consumption of liquor in a restricted area, whereas previously we had a lot of what we referred to as 'bush club' drinking out of the dry area zones. The other thing is mobility and going off the island to Gove or Darwin and drinking in the long grass areas, not necessarily in homes.

The nature of the work is about working with the youth when they come in, so the workers have to drop things and grab the opportunity. Their motivation is there so pack up the troopie and get out straight away. Take them when they want to go bush hunting, just get them out. It is that thing of keeping them busy and occupied, but of course we have to be careful of nutrition, dehydration, and all those sorts of things. Everything is affected by the seasons and it is good in the dry season when we have more mobility to go camping.

We all need a rest. We work Monday to Friday from 7:00am to 3:00pm on dayshift and the other gap is the weekends where there is a lack of activity and parental support, and transport. It is another thing we have to look at.

Looking at some illicit drugs I guess tobacco is becoming a worry as it is being used by more people under 18 years of age. It is sometimes a passive thing, or passing a cigarette and beginning to get the taste, and the stimulus you get from it. So they are starting early with infrequent use, but of course the long-term effects of tobacco are quite serious. In regards to illicit drugs it is mainly petrol which we recognise as a poison as opposed to anything else, and there are still issues such as supply, access and break and enters associated with that.

Bringing alcohol into a restricted area was on the court list in quite high numbers. I do the drink driver education MVR Licensee Education course in conjunction with the council and Charles Darwin University. There are some people being picked up for drink driving and that course is offered to everyone, including the mining town contractors and Aboriginal communities.

As Greg was saying, there has been a decrease in the ganja as a result of the remote drug strategy. The road blocks from Katherine to come into our area from Numbulwar and the sniffer dogs to detect it coming in on planes, have been quite effective in that decrease. I have been here for five years and you would not be close to guessing the amount of ganja in this community when I arrived. It was significantly high, therefore what we are dealing with now is people's withdrawal depending on their addiction and this is a significant issue.

**Mrs MILLER:** Michele, would you say petrol sniffing is the biggest concern you have?

**Ms Clarke:** As I said, petrol is a poison and you have a higher risk of certain brain damage and other issues in regards to health affects, and they are such a young group. With things such as ganja, you have a minimum of something like one in four developing a psychosis and depending on intervention you can get help so to speak. Yes, I would prioritise the petrol sniffing as the highest issue.

**Mrs MILLER:** With the introduction of *[inaudible]*

**Ms Clarke:** We would have a period of, I think Greg is very hopeful in regards to two months but I was thinking it would be by the end of the year, and looking at what that means in preparing the youth, to start detoxing them and the withdrawal period, and then the behaviour that is going to happen after their body starts to withdraw..

**Mr MILLS:** Michele, the reduction in supply of marijuana, has that seen an increase in petrol sniffing?

**Ms Clarke:** No.

**Mr MILLS:** So have they perhaps shown up in alcohol abuse?

**Ms Clarke:** Some in alcohol abuse and the other thing is mobility. They have either come to terms with their withdrawal and addiction and have coped with it, and others have moved off island.

We have minimum referrals in regard to treatment centres forwarding CAPS other than court referrals. They are not looking at that, but independently some families and individuals have tried to cope and that is where you will get some of the behaviour which comes out as a reaction to withdrawal symptom.

**Mrs MILLER:** That is interesting because I thought if ganja was now hard to get hold of they would redirect their addiction or their need for some substance abuse to another area. So that is interesting to say that they have not gone from ganja to petrol sniffing.

**Ms Clarke:** I am pretty well informed in regard to the scenarios and individuals and you will find it is more likely those who have sniffed when they have been teenagers or younger may sniff, but generally they will not. It is only if you have had that experience before.

With the Liquor Management Plan access to alcohol is harder, and you find they are trying to cope. We have had a lot of good things happen in the community in regard to encouragement for employment and football, and for people to get off the ganja and be part of the community.

**Mr MILLS:** As a result of all this Michele, are you saying that globally the incidence of substance abuse has decreased?

**Ms Clarke:** Yes, based on availability, however you would have to count up the scenarios that impact Gove and Darwin and how many are Groote Eylandters.

**Mr MILLS:** Transferred?

**Ms Clarke:** Yes. There is some of that and Numbulwar is not a complete free zone either. That is the next mainland area where you can access ganja. They have Opal fuel and that is why the five girls come from there and sniff here, as opposed to our one chronic female sniffer.

Do you want to ask Daniel or Jason something about nightshift?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Daniel do you find it is better they have their own people working with these young fellows at night so you can help them in their own language and make them understand that this kind of behaviour is not a good behaviour?

**Mr Amagula:** Yes we try that and tell them to act proper. And we talk to them about what their mother said or dad did. They always say, you know 'give me something else' that's why I started sniffing and walking around, making noise and break up the home, [*inaudible*] the carpenters. Half of them they talk stories. They sad and that's why they keep doing it. It is very hard to talk to them, but girls talk with their mothers and their fathers.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What are the mothers and fathers saying about their behaviour and why they are doing it?

**Mr Amagula:** Because they want something you know. Money to go to shop, and they say [parents] do not respect their kids and that is why they are doing wrong and sniffing petrol.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Do most of those sniffers Daniel come from parents that drink; like mum and dad might drink and abuse ganja and that is why the kids do petrol and ganja?

**Mr Amagula:** Yes there is.

**Ms Clarke:** This is where the workers are so valuable as they can sensitively ask those questions of the kids and parents without offending or blaming. Daniel and Jason go right in, and where a given client is walking down the street with a machete or going to ding something, they drive right up and stop them. They have the ability to bring them down, get the weapons off them and take them to the police station because we always get them to own up to the consequences of their behaviour in those sorts of situation. We do other things such as licence support. They may be driving while not licensed so we collect names, sit down and read together, and help them get their licence.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Jason is that what you do?

**Mr Mamarika:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Do you want to tell the Committee some of the other stuff you do?

**Ms Clarke:** Jason, tell them about the patrol on nightshift; where you drive and go to look for them.

**Mr Mamarika:** Yeah I drive around the school, council property area. I drive around and see some mob talk to them and *[inaudible]*. Some of them listen, but some of them don't listen. They are still refusing what we say.

**Mrs MILLER:** They do not try to harm you do they?

**Mr Mamarika:** Yeah.

**Mrs MILLER:** They do, they try and harm you?

**Mr Mamarika:** It is hard, but we try our best

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well you are doing a good job.

**Mr MILLS:** Do you blokes sleep during the day time too?

**Ms McCARTHY:** We have probably got you up when you should be asleep.

**Ms Clarke:** We used to go from Tuesday to Saturday and some break-ins would happen on the Sunday or the Monday so we changed the shift to Monday to Friday to try and fit in with them. They have to come on day shift for four hours minimum for handover and to do the food shopping, so they do a lot in that way. I cook two nights and they cook three nights.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Who is the best cook, you fellas?

**Ms Clarke:** You would have to ask the clients that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can we give Paul an opportunity to talk about some of the recreational stuff and problems here.

**Mr Thomas:** I have been in Angurugu for 14 months and as part of the sport and recreation program I run an Active After School Care Program. This is part of the funding obligation I have with FACS. It is part of a national program that is currently run by the Australian Sports Commission.

When time permits I take kids out to do outdoor education programs. My background is in outdoor education so I take them sea kayaking, abseiling, and those types of activities.

In sport and recreation I do not have anything to do with substance misuse as I do not have the time or the resources to spread myself around. In my last report it was about 40 children per day who come through sport and recreation after school. As I do not have any indigenous workers to help me at the moment, I have not had anybody with me for the last eight weeks, I now work with the school, with the CEC, as an extra teacher, so to speak and therefore I am doing what the physical education teacher used to do under the old system. Every day I go to the school and work from 12 to 2 pm with a different class and run activity programs with the kids. So can actually fulfil my obligations under the funding, because of the lack of resources that is the only way I can do it.

On Monday I work with the secondary school girls at the school. I like to take them away from the community and involve them with Alyangula and Umbakumba kids to try to get some integration going and away from their safety zone and it is working quite well. The girls now ask to go, and they want to have more competition with kids in Alyangula and to play sport with Umbakumba kids.

On a Tuesday I have years two and three, which are the little tackers, and again I do the same thing and try to get them away from Angurugu and also introduce them to some sports a lot of them have never played before. I have them playing cricket, soccer and softball which are totally new sports to these kids.

**Mrs MILLER:** No AFL?

**Mr Thomas:** I actually do not do a lot of footy. I believe there are enough people in the community who have the knowledge and all that sort of stuff to deal with footy and basketball. In every community I have ever been to, the focus has been on footy and basketball. Footy. Girls cannot play footy.

**Mrs MILLER:** Oh yes they can.

**Mr Thomas:** With the talent we have here I want to give those girls the opportunity to play sports where they may be able to get to a point where they can be more competitive and have an opportunity to represent a sport outside of Groote Eylandt. That is why I have not concentrated on sports that, in the past, have been a religion in communities and why I have left football and basketball to the people who know how to deal with that. I have introduced new sports to give them different options. They can decide they like abseiling, or something else, and they may be able to pursue that.

Since I have been here I been trying to work on how I can assist Michele with substance misuse as I have seen quite a few petrol sniffers and substance misuse users here. They have not had anybody who has given them any opportunities to participate in activities and I have come up with an outdoor education program. I think it has a good opportunity of working, however there are a lot of things I have got to look at such as community participation because I do not believe I can make it work here if it is my program. The community has to have some ownership and input over this type of program to help the kids who are obviously being left out. Running the sport and recreation program I do not get any of the kids or people from

substance misuse. I might get a few who will turn up for a disco on a Saturday night, but generally they stay outside and will not come in.

So, over the last few months I have been trying to work on a program where I can help Michele, but it means that perhaps I have to get out of sport and recreation and work solely with substance misuse people.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Maybe you could be the third person Michele needs to fill in the gap?

**Mr Thomas:** From a sport and recreation perspective that is an issue. Over the Christmas period I had two good workers, and unfortunately when I get good workers they do not last long because somebody else steals them. We worked hard over the Christmas holiday program seven days a week, and by moving guys around so that one person was not working more than five days we provided a whole lot of programs and activities for six weeks giving the kids and young people a lot of things to do. There was less opportunity for them to get into trouble, so sport and recreation, with the right resources, should be a seven day a week service to the community to get optimum benefit.

Sport and recreation is not given a high priority, but with child development I believe I have more clients to work with than the school as a lot of the children who will not go to school come to sport and recreation. If you came down at 2.30pm you would see I have got kids from under five through to their 30s and the reason why I shifted to working in the school was the fact that the age group was too big for me to take children out and do child development programs; it was impossible and you cannot say to some kids you cannot come in. You have to take everyone that arrives and try to make it a good safe experience for them. I do that to a point, but I do not provide them with enough programs.

**Mrs MILLER:** I tell you what, if you were offering a lot of kids kayaking, I know where they'd rather be. Kayaking rather than school, wouldn't you?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What is your youngest sniffer? What age group?

**Ms Clarke:** 12 to 13 years old

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Female or male?

**Ms Clarke:** Male

**Mr MILLS:** Why do you think it is difficult to get assistance? I am sure I got the impression that it is difficult finding people to support you and to train them up. Why is that difficult?

**Mr Thomas:** Responsibility. I get people who want to come and work in sport and recreation during the wet season because I have air conditioning. That is okay because you have to go where you are comfortable, so I bring them in and we start doing work and it is great. As soon as the kids arrive and start yelling and screaming whatever, it scares them away; they do not want to work with screaming children. And there is the responsibility which goes with running programs for kids. Getting somebody to organise and set up activities, even minor activities, for young kids is a lot of responsibility and sometimes they do not want it.

**Mr MILLS:** If someone steps up or looks like they have got talent, is there training available for someone to come in and provide that support?

**Mr Thomas:** Absolutely. Yes we have a lot of outlets that are willing to come in and train, but it is getting people to that point. I had two guys ready to do an apprenticeship and they pulled out at the last minute and did not want to know about it because of the extra responsibility they would have had to take on. That is the difficult part.

**Mr MILLS:** Daniel and Jason, have you got many young friends of yours that are interested in doing the sort of work you are doing?

**Mr Amagula:** A couple.

**Mr Mamarika:** One of them would come down and work with us.

**Mr MILLS:** Do you enjoy your work?

**Mr Amagula:** Yes, start from Community Worker.

**Mr MILLS:** How long have you been doing it?

**Mr Mamarika:** Two and a half years

**Mr MILLS:** You too Daniel.

**Mr Amagula:** Just a little bit less.

**Mr MILLS:** Keep up the good work.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes it is hard work. Really hard work.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I want to thank you all on behalf of the Committee. It is always hard for government to see the pressure that is on the ground, and I know that Aboriginal communities work with a small portion of money always trying to combat the big problems.

It is really good to see Michele that you have taken a holistic approach to substance misuse. As you have told this Committee, you are not seeing the movement because of the alcohol plan of more people getting onto ganja or petrol. It means you are keeping a focus on the three substances and maybe the next time we come back, we will get more information from you as to whether there has been a movement, or a trend into another community or to Darwin.

It helps this Committee to report back to Parliament that they need to start investing a lot more into remote Aboriginal communities, and they need to thank people like you who are doing the hard yakka on the ground to make us look good up there.

I want to also take this opportunity to thank Greg, Paul, Daniel, Jason and Michele, and also your local member Barbara McCarthy.

**Mrs MILLER:** Paul, I am going to sneak in one last question, when you ran that six weeks program and I know how hard it is running something in the school holidays as kids get really ratty. Did that get well attended?

**Mr Thomas:** Yes it did. When you say the kids get ratty, the kids here don't. They get really excited because if they feel that someone is there to assist in various programs. They really enjoy it.

**Mrs MILLER:** So they did respect the work you put in, and for six weeks you had a good attendance?

**Mr Thomas:** Yes. I guess the negative part about this is that they come to my home now and want me to open the sport and recreation shed. That is a negative part of it, but I mean it is not a bad part.

**Mrs MILLER:** So what they are looking for is plenty of activity.

**Mr Thomas:** If we had the resources here we could flood the place with activities. I believe there is a large window of opportunity when Opal comes in. From the inquiries I have made, we have about three weeks from the time Opal arrives until we can try and get them involved with programs and activities. The people I have been talking to and who have given me this information, have said that you have that period where you can involve them with activities and programs, and if you do not do it in that time you may miss out.

**Mrs MILLER:** It is a good opportunity isn't it? It is a lot of work organising those programs. Keep up the good work everyone. You are doing a great job.

Witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 12.07pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**  
**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Groote Eylandt, Alyangula Community**

*Monday 29 May 2006*

- Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain
- Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Barbara McCarthy, MLA - Member for Arnhem  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Sharon McAlear, Administration Officer
- Witnesses:** Mr Walter Amagula, Vice Chairman, Anindilyakwa Land Council  
Mr Richard Herbert, Chief Executive Officer, Umbakumba Council  
Mr Keith Hansen, Coordinator, Umbakumba Council  
Mr Rick Peters, government, Community & Aboriginal Liaison  
Manager, GEMCO  
Mr Mark Bushnell, Indigenous Affairs Officer, GEMCO  
Ms Usher Castillon, Chief Executive Officer, Milyakburra Council  
Ms Ida Mamarika, Milyakburra Council  
Ms Lena Mamarika, Milyakburra Council  
Mr Geoff Wood, Licensee, Alyangula Recreation Club  
Mr Graham Phelps, NT government Regional Coordinator,  
Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island  
Ms Melanie Strang, Coordinator, Groote Eylandt Milyakburra  
Youth Development Unit  
Ms Ida Mamarika, Chair, Groote Eylandt Milyakburra Youth  
Development Unit  
Ms Lena Mamarika, Board Member Groote Eylandt Milyakburra  
Youth Development Unit  
Ms Jennifer Fry, Juvenile Diversion Case Worker, Groote Eylandt  
Milyakburra Youth Development Unit  
Sgt Dean McMaster, NT Police

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 1.00pm.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Dean, can I just officially thank you for giving us this opportunity to talk to you about the alcohol plan and also to Walter for welcoming us to his country. Thanks very much. I just have to go through the opening statement.

**Sgt McMaster:** Sure.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community, and welcome representatives of Alyangula. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced, which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish for any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purpose of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear here today.

**Sgt McMaster:** Dean Stuart McMaster. I am the Officer in Charge of Alyangula Police Station.

**Mrs MILLER:** And you're not on trial, okay?

**Sgt McMaster:** I haven't sworn on any bibles.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Basically, can you tell the committee how the alcohol plan started and what is happening with it now? Are you getting trends of people who are alcoholics moving away because of the ban, or are people moving to other substances?

**Sgt McMaster:** The Groote Eylandt Liquor Management Plan was a culmination of two or three years' consultation, as laid down by the *Liquor Act*. It was basically the same process of any landholder group that has decided that they want their area to be declared a restricted area. Under the *Liquor Act*, there needs to be community consultation to make sure that everyone is happy with whatever decision is finally made.

Groote Eylandt was no different. My predecessor, Tony Fuller, at the request of some of the senior people from the ALC, requested something be done about the alcohol problem, the crime-related problems from alcohol, so that the whole process was set in place.

I believe there was over two years worth of consultation with numerous meetings with the Licensing Commission. There were meetings at the various communities: Umbakumba, Angurugu, Alyangula and Bickerton. There was a chance for community input. I believe there were about 13 drafts of the proposal put together and the final, agreed management plan was set in place for 1 July 2005.

I might add that became a bit of an administration problem because there was only something like, six weeks between the decision being made and for it to actually be implemented, so there wasn't a lot of time for us to be able to sell it to the community and organise a permit because it was quite a big change.

The main part of the liquor management plan, I guess, revolves around the fact that Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra at Bickerton Island are now restricted areas and

therefore governed under the *Liquor Act*. As such, everyone that wants to have access to take-away alcohol must have a liquor permit. Liquor permits, as you know, don't cost anything. Permits can be applied for anywhere, but at the moment, purely for administrative reasons, they are handled through the police. We do all the permit handling. What we do is do our various checks and most of the permit applications that go through are sent on to the Licensing Commission for approval. Via our checks, if we have a query, a question or a doubt about whether someone should have a liquor permit, we hold that one and put it before the Groote Eylandt Liquor Permit Committee.

There is a requirement under the decision that there is a local permit assessment committee and they are made up of seven or eight specific representatives of the community. The Groote Eylandt Liquor Permit Committee meets the first Monday of every month. It is made up of a representative of the four communities: Alyangula, Umbakumba, Bickerton and Angurugu. There are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous representation from those councils. There is a health department representative, an education department representative and a Police representative. I think that covers it. Basically the philosophy behind it is that it is community representation.

We had problems with that initially. The people who were on the committee wished to remain anonymous and that, at times, makes it difficult, for obvious reasons. Making hard decisions about certain individuals permits, either revocation or refusal of permits, they didn't want any sort of come back so at times it is a bit hard to keep the identity of the committee anonymous.

What the permit committee is responsible for are those permits that have been identified as being not suitable by police, they will make a decision on that based on the information that the police put forward, also on their own. For example, Walter will have far better knowledge of an individual that has applied from Angurugu than anyone else would have, so obviously he would have quite a say in that. Richard Herbert comes in from Umbakumba and - it changes a bit; it is not the same faces all the time, which is good, and the committee relies heavily on that. So that is one function of the committee.

The other function of the committee, when people apply for a permit, it is written on the permit seven or eight quite strict conditions under which you apply for that permit. Now, remembering the philosophy on which the permit system was introduced: there was an escalating problem with anti-social behaviour, particularly in Alyangula. There was a problem with associated domestic violence, alcohol-related domestic violence and assaults at all communities. Alyangula, Angurugu, Umbakumba and Bickerton Island. So that was a philosophy by which we needed to manage peoples' alcohol consumption.

So the conditions that are put on the permit are basically designed to stop that type of behaviour, so anti-social behaviour features quite heavily on the condition, so if you are involved in any sort of anti-social behaviour, run amok when you are drunk basically, then you are more than likely going to have your permit reviewed by the assessment committee. So, the committee has a responsibility for looking at possible revocations of existing permits.

Now, remembering that the committee is only advisory in its nature, the Licensing Commissioner needs to actually make the decision of yes or no. The permit committee simply puts recommendations forward. We keep minutes of the meetings.

I collate it all and I actually send the wishes or the recommendations from the permit committee through to the Licensing Commission.

The other thing the committee can make decisions on is people may get conditional permits, so rather than having a full permit and access to full take-away alcohol, and this is at the request of individuals often, is that they simply want to have, for example; access to one carton of heavy beer Friday nights only. This has been particularly relevant to the Indigenous GEMCO employees. Whereas during the week, they really don't want to be humbugged or have any hassle with alcohol, but on the weekend, like anyone else, after a hard week's working, they want to have a beer. Anecdotally, if you speak to GEMCO, their retention rates and sick leave rates are better than their European rates at the moment, so it has really made a big difference to that social side of things.

The committee will make decisions and sometimes people's permits may get revoked or it may be a recommendation that the permit becomes conditional, so for the next six months you will be on light beers only or whatever the case may be.

It became a bit confusing for the Licensing Commission because the whole area was declared restricted except for two exempt areas at the moment, the exempt area of Alyangula township and the exempt area of a portion of Umbakumba. Mistakenly, the inhabitants thought: 'If I have a liquor permit, I can drink anywhere in Alyangula township or I can drink anywhere in Umbakumba'. What then comes into play in Alyangula is the drink within 2 km legislation. So the permit committee also makes decisions on exemptions under the 2 km law, so if they want to have a picnic day, for example, and have access to alcohol at a function, then we write for an exemption under the 2 km law. As in places like Nightcliff where currently there are permanent exempt areas, we make applications for permanent exempt areas here, the barbeque at the beachfront, around the squash courts and places like that.

So they are the miscellaneous things that the committee will sit and make decisions on. They are only recommendations that go to the Licensing Commission but, by and large, I haven't experienced anything yet where the Licensing Commission has overturned a recommendation from the permit committee.

One of the problems that we had when it first came out - and Barbara came over and sat in a couple of conciliation meetings - there was a perception that the whole permit system and the committee was police-run and dominated and that we basically told people who could and couldn't have permits. That was tied into the short lead-in time of six weeks. It was probably a mistake on my behalf and this is where we are finding problems: under the current legislation, police need reasonable grounds to suspect under the Act before we can search bags. We can't just go and search for no reason, I guess. We have had three interesting court cases at the last court where the searches that we conducted were challenged and we won two out of three. It has a low standard of proof. In other words, the court has indicated to us that they will accept an anonymous phone call. What happens is the anonymous phone calls often come from the family of the bloke. They know that trouble is coming. They won't give us their name for obvious reasons; they just ring up and say: 'There is going to be grog coming on such-and-such a plane'.

The other trend we are finding now is because some of these recidivous offenders are being caught bringing grog in, they are now using intimidation and forceful means to get family members to bring it in for them, like wives and children, which is unfortunate. So it is becoming a problem for us, and I see it as probably getting worse not better once this knowledge gets around. It is a relatively new thing and, as

with all offending, whether it is against the *Misuse of Drugs Act*, this act, the Volatile Substance legislation, people are going to find ways around it and I have identified this as a major problem. People are going to start shipping stuff in on Perkins and other ways once we get the problem sorted out at the airport.

What I proposed in a Cabinet Submission would be to change the *Liquor Act* so that anybody entering a restricted area would be subject to a mandatory search and it would be of a random nature. I have based my argument on the fact that the community has gone to the effort of having the area declared a restricted area, so therefore it is quite obvious that they have identified an alcohol problem and want the area to remain restricted. We can now give, and not just to police, we can give the powers to the airlines to inspect anybody, give them the power to enforce that correctly, and if you are coming into a restricted area, you could be subject to a random search, as you are if you travel overseas due to the counter-terrorist laws. That was my proposal and it would give that piece of legislation a bit of bite.

It is definitely working, like I said. There is a marked change in people's alcohol management and that is the theme that I have been trying to push. It's really not about prohibition, it's about management, and if you have a problem with alcohol management, then it's going to get managed for you. A lot of these people have been refused a permit for a year. We are now looking at: 'Okay, well you have been good for a year, what's the next step?' The committee might be able to say: 'Let's give them a chance on a carton or a couple of cartons a week', whichever, 'and see how it goes'. So it's not about prohibition, it's about management.

There has obviously been some resistance from certain individuals about it, and I can understand why. I think it's a balancing act for me and the committee to balance the greater community need and well-being against individuals' rights and freedoms. The biggest resistance we got from this, when I first got here, the Liquor Management Plan was in place and we proposed a take-away limit, a voluntary, self-imposed take-away limit and the biggest resistance we got was from the European population, not being able to see the bigger picture, I guess. That was a bit of a hurdle, but I think everyone now, just from hearsay and talking to people, it does become a bit of a pain applying for a permit, but I think most people now generally accept that the management plan is here to stay and the reasons for it, and that it is a good idea.

We are still having some problems with certain individuals, certain addresses, but that is just an everyday matter of what we police.

Unless there are any specific questions you want to ask in relation to the Liquor Management Plan, I can talk about petrol and ganja as well if you like.

**Mr MILLS:** How often do you apply the permit?

**Sgt McMaster:** Twelve months.

**Mr MILLS:** Every 12 months.

**Sgt McMaster:** Yes. We asked, purely for selfish and administrative reasons, for every two years, but it makes sense to do it this way. It is such a transient population. Not so much the Aboriginal community but the European community is such a transient population.

Quite frankly, some of the criminal histories that we cop are pretty severe, so it makes more sense for us to review it every year.

**Mrs MILLER:** Dean, under this Management Act, do you have the power, if somebody is blatantly breaking the rules, like constantly; they have got a permit but they are blatantly breaking the rules, do you have the power to revoke that permit immediately?

**Sgt McMaster:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** It doesn't have to wait for a month to go before ...

**Sgt McMaster:** No. Police have the discretion under the Act to revoke the permit straight away, and we have done that on several occasions. We had to haul out someone this morning who was a bit disgruntled.

If I go back, one of the main reasons with the Liquor Management Plan and the problems we were having were tied in with the two clubs here. We have the ARC and the Golf Club, and that was the only access to alcohol. To be a member of the ARC or Golf Club, you have to be a permanent resident of Alyangula. What happened when some of the local people got a job, they get a house in Alyangula and therefore access to alcohol. Now it wasn't particularly those individuals that would be the problem; it was the humbug from family that would come in, knowing they had access to alcohol. The cultural obligation was there and an unlimited amount of alcohol would be supplied.

We have taken that responsibility and pressure off by giving people a permit and they know that if they do supply, because it is an offence now. Supply wasn't an offence before because it wasn't a restricted area, but now it is a restricted area, if you supply a non-permit holder alcohol, you are committing not only a criminal offence, but it is immediate permit revocation time. So it allowed us to police it more black and white, whereas before, it was a very grey area, and that has actually helped the employment rate because the sick and absentee rates have improved out of sight.

Last weekend there was a big party and police were called, there was a few non-permit holders drinking there, there was a domestic violence incident, some cautions were issued and everything settled down. Three hours later we attended the same place and it was worse. The following Monday, individuals were identified and permits requested to be revoked to the Licensing Commission, who immediately act on our behalf. Once they are revoked, individuals still have a right of review. They can put their case forward to the Licensing Commission to have their permits reinstated. Most of the ones that aren't an emergency will go to the permit committee and, even so, the ones we do in an emergency, we'll still take to the committee as back up to say: 'This is the incident we had. These are the individuals involved. This is what happened. We revoked their permits. Are you guys happy to continue that?' Most of the time, you get really good support.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** So the card is an electronic swipe card, you said?

**Sgt McMaster:** When you get a membership here, you get a card of entry to the ARC, and that card of entry is also swiped when you purchase alcohol. You don't need a card of entry for the Golf Club, but you need a card to purchase takeaway which also get swiped.

This became an issue for the committee members of the ARC and Golf Club; they were worried about Freedom of Information and people knowing how much they drink each week and that sort of stuff, and lawyers looked into it from both clubs and the logic we use is: 'We are not really worried unless you come to our attention of selling 15 or buying 20 bottles of rum a day when there is obviously something dodgy going on'.

**Mrs MILLER:** They are in strife if they're drinking that much, anyway.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** With ID, is there a photo on it or anything like that?

**Sgt McMaster:** No.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** How do you go with identifying people? Is it small enough at this point to be able to ID everyone every time. Make sure that they are not passing the card around or pinching someone else's card?

**Sgt McMaster:** Each week, the Licensing Commission send us an update permit list. That permit list is sent down to the Golf Club and the ARC. If they are unsure, they will check the permit against the person and they also have to provide other ID. Yes, it is small enough that they know each other, but when they don't know, when it is someone unfamiliar, they will check against the permit and ask for an ID.

We are slightly changing it this year. Last year, what happened was all the people who are members of the ARC and Golf Club automatically got a liquor permit. This year we are making everyone reapply, so they sign. You can fill out your permit anywhere, but when you come and pick your permit up from the police station, which is the only place you can pick it up, you are going to have to show photo ID to show that it's actually you that is picking your permit up.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** So the permit is actually just a piece of paper, as such?

**Sgt McMaster:** The permit is just a piece of paper.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** It would be good to have it like a driver's licence with a photo in it.

**Sgt McMaster:** This is one of the complaints we have because Air North have picked their game up a bit and you have to have your permit. If you have alcohol, you have to show your permit to Air North in Darwin. That is the form a permit comes in at the moment. It has been suggested to the Licensing Commission that there is a machine like a driver's licence machine and it can be done, which is better than this, but that is an issue for the Licensing Commission, I guess.

**Mrs MILLER:** I think it's great.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And petrol sniffing, Dean, petrol sniffing, kava or ganja?

**Sgt McMaster:** Yes. The *Volatile Substance Intervention Act* that came in, you guys are aware of it; it has obviously been debated in Parliament at length. It hasn't posed us any great problems at the moment and it's probably a common problem you are hearing about across the Territory, just the after-care service for petrol sniffers. We do have petrol sniffing in Angurugu. Whilst there are no more than a dozen kids or so, probably eight or so hard core ones.

Under the Act, we basically have an obligation if we are picking up someone that has been sniffing petrol to go and tip the petrol out, but it is then that it becomes a problem for police. The Pink Room, because of funding and staff, is rarely open in the hours that we are getting the petrol sniffers, like 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, it's not open. The next option, I guess, is dropping off to parents. Dropping off with family or parents often isn't a good option because there is disinterest or just not the care there that is required, so therefore we are left with the option of either sending them to the health clinic, which we don't want to do because we will be waking up the poor nurses, so the police get left to care and we are not supposed to put juveniles in our watch house, which again ties up our resources of people to sit and look after them. So the after care is a real problem, we've referred, I think, two petrol sniffers under the Act to the Minister for ongoing care, but apparently the waiting list is just astronomical to get people on courses. So whilst it's a good piece of legislation, the support and care isn't there.

Michelle does a good job with the resources she has got, Michelle Clarke from the substance abuse place at Angurugu. We have probably got four or five sniffers at Umbakumba and the same at Bickerton. It's not a huge problem, but it's enough to be a bit concerned about. Numbulwar has just recently opened, as you are aware. There are petrol sniffers at Numbulwar. I believe they have gone to OPAL fuel, but OPAL fuel becomes a problem at somewhere like Numbulwar because it's readily available at Mataranka and other places if you want to get it.

There is an OPAL submission in here, which I think has been progressed and is now looking at being introduced which, to me, would solve petrol sniffing overnight here. It's an island and it's easy to police. If you get rid of all the unleaded petrol here and replace it with OPAL, then just the access to unleaded fuel is denied. There were problems, again with the European population, with concerns about the quality of OPAL going in expensive outboard motors and things like that, but we have been assured from BP OPAL that it meets all the standards so we just have to really push it home and we do it through - Graham Phelps does the Community Harmony meetings about it being a community effort and we have all got to accept that there is a petrol sniffing problem and OPAL is the way to go to help solve it. So hopefully we are a bit further down the track with that.

Ganja is an ongoing problem, cannabis. To give you an example of the mindset amongst the communities at the moment, probably six weeks ago we had quite a success with an ongoing surveillance operation that had been going for a while and we managed to simultaneously, in a period of two weeks, really dry up the cannabis supply. Two of the main dealers from Darwin are Europeans using a network of Darwin-based suppliers filtering through to the communities, so there is a real cannabis shortage. There was an emergency community meeting, an impromptu meeting, held which probably 100 people attended, obviously the Cannabis users, demanding that: 'Cannabis be made legal and if we don't get to smoke ganja, we are going to start sniffing petrol' and sort of making demands like that. So it is quite engrained in the community, cannabis use, and it is used on a regular basis. Obviously, trying to explain the harmful effects of ongoing cannabis use, not just the health affects, but the money going out of the community to the suppliers and not going where it should go. So it was a bit of a concern that actually happened. There is still a steady flow of cannabis into the communities. Again, it's very hard to police. We are such a big geographical district.

Kava is not a problem as yet. I have heard rumours that kava is going into Umbakumba, but we haven't yet detected any. There is no indication of any other

volatile substances such as glue or petrol or anything like that. Our main problems continue to be alcohol, marijuana and petrol, I guess.

I can't really think of anything else unless you have any specific questions.

**Mrs MILLER:** With the ganja, have you noticed a decrease in ganja, in smokers here?

**Sgt McMaster:** It's hard to tell. I know Dr Alan Clough did a study and I've read the results. That indicated a downturn in personal use etcetera. Police don't really get to that level where we know each individual user. It is hard to strike a balance between commonsense policing in communities. Whilst we appreciate it is still an illegal activity, with my limited resources, I have to focus on the supply network. So we are really looking to the suppliers, the large amounts of money moving in and out of the communities rather than the individual users, so I really couldn't give an accurate answer to how many people are actually using, but I know there are monies on the scale of hundreds of thousands of dollars at times that travel in and out of the community. So we are not talking small amounts; it is large amounts of money being earned by only a few individuals.

**Mr MILLS:** Dean, how does it get onto the Island?

**Sgt McMaster:** Whatever way we combat it, it gets in another way. We might, like I said, we broke up a couple of networks that were doing it a certain way. One way is and, unfortunately, this is a problem that we have had, with the last couple, we had a case of two chaps that are from Victoria being welcomed to Angurugu. They obviously had no place being there or living there, they were there for obvious reasons and provided protection under land permits being granted, peddling their wares, and they might use isolated communities on the coast, where it will either be brought. I mean, they go to the extent of Darwin, Katherine, Roper Highway through to the Numbulwar, a boat from Numbulwar to Bickerton, and Bickerton into some of these coastal outstations, and then through to Angurugu.

**Mrs MILLER:** They go to great lengths.

**Sgt McMaster:** Oh, great lengths. The frustration for us, if you have a look at it, these guys aren't silly. They know the rules and the legislation so very rarely do you get people caught with more than 50 grams, a \$200 fine. What is at risk? I mean, these guys are willing to cop 10 \$200 fines for a possible profit of \$100,000, you know, so it is hard.

That meeting of up to 100 people really opened my eyes. I don't mean to be offensive here, Walter, but some of the people that were voicing their disgust were some of the senior people in the community, people supporting the ganja and openly saying that they would support the sale and protection of the people that were bringing it for them.

**Sgt McMaster:** No, I wasn't there, but it basically was a push from that core group, anyway, for legalising the stuff. So, yes, very ingenious and inventive ways they get in. It makes it very hard to police and we rely heavily on informants.

**Mrs MILLER:** You don't use sniffer dogs here? They're using them in Darwin.

**Sgt McMaster:** We get the sniffer dogs in. We run operations every now and again, and they have had success. We are also trying to target it now. Rather than coming

here, get it before it gets here, so it's getting the sniffer dogs to do the scheduled flights here more often and going through Perkins. There are only two dogs poor little buggers are...

**Mrs MILLER:** I know, run off their feet.

**Sgt McMaster:** Worked off their feet. Really, it has been the best. The Remote Area Drug Desk, as you know, has been set up and it is a great asset, the dogs. We could do with two or three more, for sure.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You spent quite a few years at Port Keats?

**Sgt McMaster:** Yes, nearly three years.

**Mr KNIGHT:** We are visiting there on Wednesday. Shane isn't going to be there, is that right?

**Sgt McMaster:** Shane Taylor.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** He will be on a course in Darwin on the day.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I think he is making a submission anyway, in writing, but just from your years there, are you able to make any comments about substance abuse at Wadeye?

**Sgt McMaster:** Again, alcohol.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Ganja.

**Sgt McMaster:** Yes, alcohol, ganja. Petrol sniffing wasn't such a bad problem. Again, there was probably a hard core group of five or six and, in a positive mode, we got quite a lot of support from the locals against the petrol sniffing, really keen to stamp it out and really eager to dob them in and say: 'They're sniffing. Go and do something about it'.

The violence and the problems there, the gang-related stuff, goes beyond substance abuse. There's a lot more to it than that. It definitely is inflamed with alcohol. I found the Peppimenarti Club to be a thorn in my side at times. An amazing amount of profit goes through that club, but not much import into any further social development.

We found it hard at times too. I believe Shane Tailor has now got the public in the Daly River to agree to takeaway restrictions, but, yes, the difficulty with Keats is if you restrict it at Peppi, you restrict it at Daly, they go on to Hayes Creek, go to Darwin.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's right, yes.

**Sgt McMaster:** But, again, because it is a restricted area, this thing I am suggesting here, random searches, would really save a lot on resources because now we depend on information coming in, which means we might get a phone call at 2 o'clock in the morning. The guys have got to get up on double time and drive out in the hope that they get a car. If we had mandatory search, we would simply target the times that we know. We'd set up a road block, people would get searched. People coming off the plane would get searched. I understand the civil libertarian type argument, but to me, it's a simple solution to a big problem.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do the airline companies and employees like Perkins, are they made aware of the restrictions?

**Sgt McMaster:** They know there are restrictions but ...

**Mrs MILLER:** We didn't get a list of instructions this morning, did we? Even though we were coming out here for substance abuse, we didn't get the spiel. That is what I am saying.

**Sgt McMaster:** It's not something that is bound by law. There is no obligation, which I would like there to be. Some of the briefings you get do ask. It is not policed. It is hard for an airline because obviously they have to run a business and they get disgruntled passengers that come in there who burr up because they know they have got grog in there. So often the airlines will give us an anonymous call and say: 'We had this guy, cranky. We felt his bag and we think there is grog in there, so over to you.'

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, good.

**Sgt McMaster:** It's great, so we cop the flak, but I think they could take more responsibility; it could be tightened up definitely, all transport companies.

**Mrs MILLER:** Because they can't use the excuse of 'I wasn't aware' if they're give that spiel at the airport.

**Sgt McMaster:** No. I have had numerous, what's the guy called at Air North? Bridge?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, Michael Bridge.

**Sgt McMaster:** I've had numerous correspondence from Michael and the CEO at Vincent, we've had correspondence back and forth. I think they have made a bit of an effort. It is better than it was, but it nowhere near goes far enough.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Dean, can I take this opportunity to thank you. Living on a community myself, I would just like to say that I think the information that you have given us about the Alcohol Plan here, if it does one thing, it gives people respite.

**Sgt McMaster:** Sure.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It allows people to build up their strength again to deal with other issues, and I just want to take this opportunity on behalf of this committee to congratulate both yourselves and Michael. Thank you very much.

**Mrs MILLER:** Hear, hear. I think it takes a lot of bravery.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Good work.

**Mr MILLS:** Thank you.

**Sgt McMaster:** Thank you. I will just add that I think management plans can be adapted to any community really, not just ours.

**Mrs MILLER:** I think it takes a lot of courage to put a plan like that together and enforce it, and I think it is showing great signs of being very successful and should be the leading light for other communities to follow.

*Sergeant McMaster withdrew.*

*Mr Rick Peters and Mr Mark Bushell called.*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I officially welcome you both. I just want to go through the Chairman's opening statement so that it is down on record.

I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives of GEMCO. Mr Rick Peters and Mr Mark Bushell. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish for any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to this committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear today, thank you.

**Mr Peters:** I am Rick Peters. I am the Community Relations, Public Affairs, government Relations Superintendent with GEMCO. Mark?

**Mr Bushell:** Mr Mark Anthony Bushell, Community Relations, Government Affairs and Aboriginal Liaison Officer representing GEMCO.

**Mr Peters:** Why do we appear here? Is that the other question?

**Mrs MILLER:** You're not on trial.

**Ms McCARTHY:** It sounds very formal, but it's just a part of it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, it's just a form of words. We are a committee of the Parliament and you have members of the CLP and members of the Labor Party and we are basically just asking people to tell us if there are any problems with substance misuse, talk about any kind of programs you have in place. Alcohol, ganja, kava any kind of substance misuse, you know.

**Mr Peters:** Yes, all right. I will do it from the perspective of Aboriginal employment. As GEMCO, we have actually just been in the process of negotiating a new Terms and Conditions agreement by which we operate a mine on Aboriginal land. That negotiation has taken place between the ALC, between the Anindilyakwa Land Council, the people of Anindilyakwa and us as the mining operator operating Special Purposes Leases.

Obviously, alcohol and substance abuse are a major concern to the people whose land we operate on. It's been historical that over the last 40 years, we have been asked to manage certain aspects of substance, in particular alcohol and the management of alcohol, hence the Groote Eylandt Liquor Management Plan.

More recently, we have been asked to participate in management of petrol. That will come under the OPAL guise, I think, and that has been supported by government to further fund [*inaudible*], and one of our intents is to introduce that here in the very near future.

As far as Aboriginal employment goes, obviously marijuana has been an issue and so has alcohol. The marijuana issue we manage through an education program at work, and people are well aware that we do random testing and we have a process by which if you come up as positive, this is with employees, you then go through a process of rehabilitation. That has worked. Moreover, what has worked, and it hasn't been a big campaign, it has just been letting people know that if you want a position within a company, we won't accept people's application if they are using marijuana. We went from an 11 out of 12 failure rate of applications to an 11 out of 12 pass rate just by letting people know what our clear expectations are. There was no rocket science in that; it was just a matter of letting people know: 'If you want a job, don't smoke dope' and people have stopped.' So I think there has been a cultural change here. I know there is still a bit of ganja around, but people are aware that if they are going to work for GEMCO, we won't accept that and you won't get a job, I am afraid, if you are using dope. So people are cleaning up their act and those who have applied have all had great results.

The Alcohol Management Plan has had absolute positive impacts on this community. It has assisted GEMCO in reaching its obligations with the Land Council in managing alcohol. It has given us some teeth and it has given us a bit of law to work on because what we were doing before was pushing the boundaries of the law, to say the least. We were barring people, it was all voluntary, we were looking for ways of doing it, we were dismissing people for supply of alcohol and we weren't tested, but I tell you what, if we had been, we would have been pushing the boundaries, as I said, of being legal or complying.

People are aware that when they come here we have rules and regulations because we operate a mine on Aboriginal land and we will make sure that those rules are complied with. So if we need to dismiss people, we dismiss people, but the Liquor Management Plan has given us some teeth to manage it and I think it is things like our own absenteeism, the off-spin has been terrific. Mark, those numbers that you quoted from this morning?

**Mr Bushell:** I suppose financial year 2005, pre the Liquor Management Plan we were at a percentage of 7.1% absenteeism, specifically with Indigenous employment. We are now running at 2.4% over the past year, so it has really had a marked improvement on our Indigenous employment.

Our sustainability, specifically, I suppose it's fair to say previously we were housing Aboriginal people in here and they had well, not just Aboriginal people; everyone, but it affected the Aboriginal people the most. They had open slather to alcohol and, unfortunately, they were getting into trouble either through their family or through their own desires, I suppose, and unfortunately we had to let some people go.

Now with the management policy, it is fair to say that we have been able to stop some of this from happening and continual reoccurrence and it has really stabilised our work force. Now, we are actually at the maximum we have ever been. It's very stable and people's families are happy.

So I suppose from GEMCO's perspective, we've worked very well together with that and in partnership, specifically with the Land Council who have helped us out hugely with that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That was my question, but you have answered it. So the relationship that you have with the Land Council do you have with the community as

well, that enforces the Alcohol Management Plan on the grounds that the community is working also?

**Mr Peters:** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** That is fantastic.

**Mr Peters:** It came into being through consultation. It took 3½ years to get to where we got. Draft 11, 12 and 13, I think, but we were getting to the end. We went through every scenario that could be written about Groote Eylandt. All of the what-ifs were covered and I think, in the end, what we came up with was people actually got sick of actually coming to me about it, which was a really good thing. We wore it out. We beat the drum so that every community group, Aboriginal group, whitefella group, it didn't matter. All got their two bob's worth. Some got 40 cents worth, but everyone had a go at what ifs and 'what about me?' We covered them all.

There was probably some disappointment in the end of what came out in legislation as opposed to what was talked about in the consultative process because it did, all of a sudden right after draft 13, varied, what was tabled, and we were unaware of that. That is probably where the only disappointment occurred because what we were actually trying to do legally couldn't be done, but we got as close as we could. I think we now have a tool we have to work with, but it is not a policing tool. That was really our aim; never to have this as a policing tool. It is a management tool and it's about managing grog, not beating people up with it. we have had a few issues with that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well maybe we need to take you to Alice Springs.

**Mr Peters:** Yes, and I know it is being looked at in Nhulunbuy at the moment as an alternative and I am sure the police would give you the statistics. The statistics are remarkable. The turnaround in just aggravated assault call out [has dropped dramatically], so it gives everyone here some breathing space. Blokes who drink here have come up to us and one comment was from a bloke the other day that 'that grog rule' that he reckons that we implemented or we own or we put in over the top of him, and I thought I was in for a blue when this bloke approached me, but he was actually thanking us for putting it in. He said: 'I am actually sober for the first time in a long time'.

Now, a remarkable statistic with this thing was the one area where I thought we would have an issue an that would be break and enter, but it hasn't happened. One of the guys who has done a lot of breaks here also approached me the other day, and I was in a bit of a quandary as to why this bloke hadn't done any more because his were all alcohol related. His answer to that was that he is sober so he doesn't need to, he doesn't want to because the only time he would do a break was after about five or six beers, looking for the next five or six. Sadly, some of them were mine.

But he is over that, and if he doesn't have the first five or six, he doesn't do the second, he doesn't want them. So he has actually got a bit of meaning to life, not just hunting grog.

So it has had spinoffs. The statistics are remarkable. The domestic violence ones and I'm sure you'll talk about it. I don't know what the percentages are, I haven't worked them out, but I have got some data that is just remarkable. It has gone from seriously high numbers to minimal.

**Mr Bushell:** There's a minimum of 50% reduction, I think. It's huge.

**Mr Peters:** Absolutely. So our guys are working, it's working. Our employees who alcohol has really impacted on, it was impacting on their lives, it impacted on their wives and kids and families, and it's stopped. They were actually coming to us asking us: 'Can you bar me? Can you reduce my take-away?'. 'Well, we can until you get half cut and then you want to re-open it again and it's 9:00 o'clock and it's Friday night and you are ringing me up saying 'Can you come down here and get my takeaway on the ban that I impose?' We went through all of those, that stuff, and it drives you nuts, but now it's the law.

Once you are on Groote Eylandt, it is how we do things and all of our people, non-Indigenous people, they believed it was an imposition of their rights and we went down the union lines, we did all of those processes and everyone. It doesn't impose on you at all. It actually is better because at times we were having to implement across the board banning of all take-away. We don't have to do that any more.

People who abide by the rules find the rules work for them. If you don't want to, you lose your permit, and I see the *NT News* has inaccurately reported some more stuff on the weekend, which seems to be their...

**Mrs MILLER:** No, I can't imagine that.

**Mr Peters:** Their best reporting, they seem to get wrong. It is wrong again, but at least it says something to the effect that a couple of non-Indigenous people have had their permits revoked. I can tell you now, the majority of permits that have been revoked in this town have been non-Indigenous permits.

We knocked five young blokes over. It helps us as a town. We had five young blokes running amok and none of them were Aboriginal, but they were all being stupid, as you tend to be when you are young and charged. Not that I have ever been there; old and charged. We have revoked lots of permits, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This is not determined by race; it is determined by rules of what suits this community, what suits these guys and us, and it works. It is able to be implemented anywhere in the Territory. You will get some push back, obviously, but, I tell you our clubs and our liquor outlets, and I know we are not about profiteering, but they welcome it because it makes their life easier, simpler and clear and it works!

**Mrs MILLER:** Do you think it is easier to implement a management plan like that on Groote Eylandt because you do have boundaries? Do you think it is easier to do that here?

**Mr Peters:** Yes, I probably do. I think that is fair comment but I also believe that all people were represented. It was the way we went around the consultation and it is not a big-stick philosophy; it's about managing grog and having minimum impact on people.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And reduction of supply, that is most important.

**Mr Peters:** You are getting people sober. Once people are sober, they can actually make rational decisions.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's right.

**Mr Peters:** We did meet within clubs where people were not sober and that was interesting. Those meetings went; duration wise, about four times as long as anyone else's meetings, but it gave blokes a voice and it also gave people a clear understanding of what we were proposing and what the alternatives were. Besides the carnage and the hurt, the alternatives in a place like Groote are a left hand turn. If we want to keep hurting people with grog, people dry up in these places. We have an alternative and it is to go dry or manage it. It's simple.

Nhulunbuy and places like Nhulunbuy have the same decisions to make and they should make them sooner rather than later.

**Mrs MILLER:** I think there are a lot of areas throughout not necessarily just the Territory, but in Australia that could look at it as well. I think it is a really good example here, where you are confined by water, to trial something like this and have it working so successfully.

**Mr Bushell:** Yes, there is no doubt. I think the target audience here, too, the local Anindilyakwa people, I suppose it is not such a big mix. The majority are Anindilyakwa people if you ask any of the traditional owners, so you haven't got mixes. There are a few, but there isn't a lot. The majority is local people and they respected the elders' wishes, hence here we are, I suppose.

**Mrs MILLER:** Which is good.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Mr Peters:** We have managed to stop all of the grog running, gradually, just reducing and drying up, isn't it? It is actually the way we do things now, and it is accepted as Groote Eylandt. That is good because we all like our own things here. It is like our terms and conditions on how we mine here. It's not somebody else's, it is ours. So you end up with a sort of a pride of your own thing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes and true partnerships are formed with the Land Council and the community.

**Mr Peters:** Yes, and that is what partnerships are about.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I want to thank both of you on behalf of this committee. It is absolutely wonderful to come out and hear good news stories about what people are really doing on the ground. This is the kind of news that we don't hear in the media and we need to start pushing this good news story out to the media so people out there in wider Australia, wider Northern Territory understand how true partnerships and real engagement with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can get this kind of result. You are wonderful, and thanks!

**Mr Bushell:** Can I just touch on one other thing, and I suppose this touches on the relationship with the ALC and also their subsidiary, which is GIBIE, in regards to our misuse of drugs in the community? As Rick said before, we struggled. Obviously for pre-employment, if a person tested positive to drugs, then unfortunately we have a barrier where they can't get employed with us.

As Rick touched on, we had huge dramas, 11 out of 12 local people were testing positive to cannabis use. Since then, we have developed a Memorandum of Understanding with GIBIE. You obviously know who GIBIE are.

**Ms McCARTHY:** No, they wouldn't know.

**Mrs MILLER:** I don't.

**Mr Bushell:** GIBIE is the business enterprise arm of the ALC and they are developing sustainable business opportunities for the local people here, and they currently have traineeships. 15 people will start training and they are pushing these people out into mainstream areas so it is like a pre-employment policy, I suppose. But when we struggled with the people for our pre-employment and we couldn't get them over that hurdle of the drug barrier, we've actually had discussions with GIBIE in regards to that problem and they are taking these people that have failed on in their traineeship program and are providing quite a good drug education program and getting them up, fit and ready to go to work. Then from that, they do their three or four month program, and then they are pretty much clean and they can go back out and have another opportunity with us. Once again, it has just been a great partnership with these people, thankfully.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's right.

**Mr Peters:** It is about recognising that we have got an issue. We have got a problem. It's a barrier and we have spent a fair bit of time, both Mark and myself, in various forums with mining companies and looking at Aboriginal employment. We have barriers, but none of them are insurmountable.

The drug one, we were honest about it. We sat down and we said: 'We have got a whole lot of people smoking dope. How do we deal with it?' And these guys and ours have all done that as a shared thing and it works. We have actually got those people now, all of those people who've failed are totally compliant. How many of them are on with us now?

**Mr Bushell:** Probably about 80% of them.

**Mr Peters:** So it is not the end of it. You failed. All right. It's easier to write them off. It's very easy ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's right, but you turn around and make sure that with partnership you have got, you put these people back through, you know.

**Mr Peters:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It's not about just throwing them out like a rag.

**Mr Peters:** Exactly.

**Mr Bushell:** Next, they're not smoking dope.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** What about, if through random testing, someone tests positive? Are they out straight away or is there a rehabilitation process?

**Mr Peters:** No, there is a whole process.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** [*inaudible*] rehabilitation.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** But that was for the applicants. I mean in service.

**Mr Peters:** And also within the company, within our own. We random test all the time for alcohol and other drugs.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** I imagine it wouldn't be only an Indigenous problem.

**Mr Peters:** What it has actually done is it has changed the culture of this place.

**Mr Bushell:** We haven't had one Indigenous person test positive through our random testing for cannabis use.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's good.

**Mr Peters:** We had a problem with it and it turned out to be, and typically white blokes, and I am to be accused of this, too, because I was the one who kept referring to 'machines don't lie'. We had one young bloke who tested positive over and over and over, but he wasn't. It was the machine. He actually was passively positive. He wasn't using, and he kept saying so.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** It lasts some time in the system as well, doesn't it, like three or six months, isn't it?

**Mr Bushell:** Three months if you are a continual user, if you are like a daily user.

**Mrs MILLER:** Does it?

**Mr Bushell:** Yes.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** And the test is like a breath test, is it?

**Mr Peters:** We used to use a saliva test, and we found that that was the one that was passively presenting, so you could be near people and coming up positive. So what we have got is a urine test now. This guy, interestingly, asked us to do the urine test, and we did and it came up negative yet all of his other saliva tests were positive.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Wouldn't it bite you if you knew you weren't and you were getting into trouble?

**Mr Peters:** Yes, and we were sitting looking over the desk at each other, but it is long-term, the testing, but between all of us, we have had issues, but we have got over them. As I said, they're not that hard to get around, are they?

**Mrs MILLER:** Communication, communication, communication.

**Mr Peters:** Yes. All right?

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Well done.

**Mrs MILLER:** That was excellent.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you very much.

**Mr Bushell:** No worries. Thank you.

**Mr Peters:** Thanks, guys.

*Mr Bushnell and Mr Peters withdrew.*

*Messrs Fry, Strang, I. Mamarika, L. Mamarika and Matthew called.*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I would like to welcome you Jennifer, Mel, Ida and Lena today. Thank you for coming to talk to us from the Groote Eylandt Milyakburra Youth Development Unit. Thank you very much for attending. I just need to make an opening statement.

I declare this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome representatives from Milyakburra Youth Development Unit. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear today.

**Ms Fry:** My name is Jennifer Fry. I am the Case Manager with the Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra Youth Development Unit.

**Ms Strang:** My name is Melanie Strang. I am the Co-ordinator of the Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra Youth Development Unit.

**Ms I Mamarika:** My name is Ida Mamarika. I am the Youth Development Chairperson.

**Ms L Mamarika:** I am Lena Mamarika. I used to work at the substance issue at Angurugu but now I am working with the trainees with Ida.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you. What we would like to hear today is a little bit about what you are doing in your unit. Your programs, and where you see the biggest problems with substance abuse in the community. What is going really well and what isn't going so well. If you could take it away for me.

**Ms Fry:** My focus is the Juvenile Diversion Program, so my job as Case Manager is working with juvenile offenders. I work with an Indigenous worker, either an interpreter or an ACPO or a youth worker. We get referred juveniles who have offended. The police have the discretion as to whether they get referred to us or go through the court system.

We have looked at the link between offending and substance misuse. Since 2001, we have had 35 young people through our program and, of those, 17 were using substances at the time of their offence. Close to 100%, though, did use substances - in our interview, we ask: 'Do you use substances?' and almost 100% did use some substances but 17 at the time of their offence.

Of those, five were petrol, four were alcohol and eight were cannabis. Three of that 35 offended when cannabis was not available. I think we hear that a bit. Particularly young men get very angry when there is no supply and they take that out on family or property.

We only have three in our statistics, which doesn't sound that many, but my gut feeling is that there are more than that. It is perhaps that our questioning isn't great.

**Mr MILLS:** Jennifer, is that specifically marijuana, or does it also apply to alcohol?

**Ms Fry:** Marijuana, yes. Those four alcohol is pretty unusual I think. Two of those were actually off island when they offended and the other two were in Umbakumba where there is some alcohol. So alcohol and particularly those two were before our new Alcohol Management Plan. Alcohol is a minimum problem.

For us, though, petrol is the one that, even though our statistics don't reflect it, but petrol is the one that is most significant and when I go talk to families, cannabis is there. Families don't really seem to consider it to be such a big problem. It is a problem when young people don't have it and they get angry, but the actual use of it, my impression, anyway, is that petrol is the thing that families don't know what to do with.

I guess for us, trying to manage young people with substance, one of our big limiting factors is treatment facilities. I think you have already spoken to Michelle Clarke and they provide fantastic service, but it is a service for respite and for support and feeding, isn't it?

**Ms I Mamarika:** Yes.

**Ms Fry:** But actual detoxification, rehabilitation, treatment services. Am I right, Matthew? Yes. At the moment, we have got CAAPS in Darwin, but they are not accepting under 18s yet. They may have started in these last couple of weeks, but up until now, that just hasn't been available. We have young people on a waiting list to go to CAAPS, but we are not even confident that they are ready for that yet. That is one of the things, from our point of view, which is a really limiting factor.

I'll hand it over.

**Ms Strang:** I am Melanie Strang, the Coordinator of the Youth unit. At the moment we are endeavouring to provide programs in the evenings at the key time when young people are out walking around in the community with not a lot available for them to do, and to build that sense of pride and achievement and that kind of thing.

We cover four communities, though, so we are really stretched to make sure they are regularly out there. At the moment we are covering Angurugu and Umbakumba every week and Milyakburra once a term, doing a youth program with young men and young women from 12 to 18, targeting that area. At the moment we are focusing on arts and culture and moving into dance and that kind of thing maybe down the track. We are ending each program with some sport, so we do some touch football or basketball with the girls and that is going really well. That teenager group have recently brought together 12 didgeridoos and they are in the process of painting them and that kind of thing. We would like to move into doing more with community radio as well and we bought a camera and film work.

Our challenge at the moment, though, is being stretched to cover four communities and accessing ongoing, long-term partnerships to fund professionally trained staff to work with community people and to train community people to provide those youth development programs for kids. Ideally, we need professionally trained youth development officers and more program managers in at least Umbakumba and Angurugu.

At the moment, we are getting out there Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and from 9.30am we have things happening every day of the week for young men and young women. At the moment it is a bit of a stretch, balancing the two at the same time and just funding proper jobs for youth workers. A lot of our feedback is that people are really not happy with CDEP top up because there is not a lot of opportunity for superannuation and that kind of thing. We are needing to find funding to have programs happening regularly and reliably, employing people from Angurugu, from Milyakburra, from Umbakumba rather than bringing outsiders in; skilling up and training people from the community.

Our main difficulties are funding those positions for staff and then also the facilities. There's a huge lack of facilities at the moment. The sports and recreation shed up in Angurugu is pretty much falling apart, and it is not necessarily safe and of a high standard for the people out there. There are plans for a new sports and recreation shed or community centre, but that will take a while, whereas Umbakumba doesn't yet have a community space for young people to work, and just our little mini-bus van that can't go very far. So another thing is four-wheel drive vehicles to be able to take us in to sporting events or out bush to work on a *[inaudible]* project or artefact making projects.

At the moment we are feeling really stretched trying to cover four communities and ideally, we would have people in each community running programs every afternoon. I think sports and recreation ends up operating like a drop-in centre and after-school care focus, which is not necessarily youth development. It is developing kids, training in skills for jobs and also that self-esteem and sense of achievement of scoring a goal in their footy carnival or showing their film at a short film festival. I am seeking ongoing in partnerships with the ALC and with other bodies to keep that going and to really provide community-based youth development programs that are regular and reliable.

Often, when I am driving around at night, there are lots of kids walking around and often you see young people sniffing as well. There is a real lack of programs in the evening for young people. So with nothing to do, that is a real contributing factor to the substance misuse issue. There is not enough cool, exciting, positive things for young people to engage in the communities. There is also the accommodation thing as well. To attract professionally trained staff to do that kind of work, we have a huge issue of accommodation. We can't accommodate those people.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Ida, would you like to talk to us about some of your involvement?

**Ms I Mamarika:** I have never, ever worked with young kids but like the way I see my people do it. Like sniffing or doing something silly, it's really bad. I think it's about time the towns or families should help each other and see what we can do about them sniffers because they are going around sniffing petrol. They don't eat properly, they don't get much sleep, you know. So we should do something about the fact that the family has to talk to the kids *[inaudible]* just to make them happy because sometimes they get bored, like when they don't have nothing to do, they just go straight ahead and start sniffing petrol. It's up to the family to make the decision.

It makes them hungry. Once they get hungry, they go back and sniff petrol. I feel sorry for them. It is making a shame, you know, shame of our kids and what they are doing.

This is not the only island with sniffing. I know in other regions, the kids are doing the same thing what our kids are doing, you know, but I think we have to still confront, get the community to get sitting down and have a talk to them kids, what they want from their hearts, not us telling them what to do. It has to come from their heart, what they want.

If we tell them: 'You do this or do that', they won't accept it. They just walk away and start sniffing. But it has to come from their heart and make them say it. So if that is what they want, then we can help them out. My sister has been working for substance misuse for how long? Like Matthew and *[language]*. It's been five years that my sister and brother-in-law have been working on substance misuse with them young boys and a couple of young girls. They've been asking them what they wanted, like when they wanted to go out, she used to take them to her outstation, camp there, overnighting.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Do they like that? Do they like to get out in the...

**Ms L Mamarika:** Yes, they like to get out. That is what they said to me. They are looking at people to take them out but like myself *[inaudible]* at the moment, we didn't *[inaudible]*. At least we are going to help them. It's what I'm working with here with the Land Council. I'd like maybe to have a car so we can take them out, you know, away from the community because some young couples, they talked to us because sometimes they're looking at the family, but they need money, they need something to buy some clothes. That is what they said to me.

**Ms I Mamarika:** So for example, a little boy comes up to his mum and says: 'Can you buy me this?', and the mother will say: 'No' and this little kid goes: 'I am going to sniff petrol'.

**Mrs MILLER:** So they're blackmailing.

**Ms L Mamarika:** They shouldn't be there. We have to help them, you know. Like us, you know, Aboriginal people, we have to help each other.

**Mr MILLS:** Ladies, how many do you think are sniffing?

**Ms L Mamarika:** A couple. Sometimes when they walk past, they will be asking for something to eat.

**Ms Fry:** How many do you think? I think around 40. How many do you think? Do you think about that?

**Ms L Mamarika:** *[inaudible]*

**Ms Fry:** How many do you think, Ida? Do you reckon that many?

**Ms I Mamarika:** I have seen only maybe four of them as a group.

**Ms Fry:** Yes, but you know that group is up near. I won't say names, but up at that red house. There are more than four there.

**Ms I Mamarika:** Yes, there is more than four because one day when I woke up, I've seen six of them walking there and one of them was my relation. He came around, knock on the door, he asked me for food. I sat him down. I gave him a cup of tea and

something to eat. I told him not to sniff, and he said 'yes', but to Aboriginal people, it's a 'yes' and a 'no'.

**Ms L Mamarika:** Because it was [*inaudible*], you know. They need to go somewhere else, you know, away from this place. They need an honest person, you know, go with them.

**Ms I Mamarika:** Encourage them, you know.

**Ms L Mamarika:** My side, I want to let their family follow them out there, and it's someone they trust, like me or like Ida or somebody else so they can go with them, you know, just get away. I want them to go somewhere else, you know.

**Mr MILLS:** Ladies, who helps the family? Say the family has sniffers, is there someone helping the family, talking to the family?

**Ms L Mamarika:** Talk to the family. I already talk to the family.

**Mr MILLS:** You are doing that?

**Ms L Mamarika:** Yes, when I was working with the substance misuse at Angurugu. Sometime I went to their place and talk with the family.

**Matthew:** But the family ignore the teacher.

**Ms L Mamarika:** Yes, and you know, like myself, I was upset when I see them.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well, you are getting OPAL rolled out here soon?

**Ms L Mamarika:** Yes.

**Matthew:** OPAL is coming.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That will be good for your community, because I come from Papunya ...

**Matthew:** Alice Springs way.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, in Central Australia where we have got big mobs of petrol sniffing and OPAL has got rid of the petrol sniffing. There are still pockets of petrol sniffing where their own families are bringing it in for the kids. I was just out there on Thursday and Friday, 100% ganja.

**Ms Fry:** So more ganja. That's what we have been talking about, I guess, what to expect when OPAL comes in. I mean, ganja is already huge here, so how do kids afford it? That has been one of our issues. Petrol is cheap.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They are getting their money from their mums and dads, because the mums and dads are still really scared to stand up to their young fellas, you know.

**Ms Fry:** That is when I get to see them, you see, because they get angry when mums and grandmas say 'No', don't they?

**Matthew:** Yes, that's true.

**Ms Fry:** And then they do something silly. Property damage go and smash up the clinic car or the school car or the store. So I guess we, the Land Council, councils, people need to be ready for that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Absolutely so you are not just moving them and transferring petrol sniffing to ganja, because the effects of ganja, and I have seen this over the last couple of weeks in my visits just out to my community, it's terrible, absolutely terrible. Thursday night, I was telling Terry, there was a young fella that was chasing all the community members around with an axe and they all had to run to one house and when he couldn't get hold of his mum and his family out of that house, he started cutting himself up.

**Mr MILLS:** Ganja is what he was on?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, and they had to evacuate him from Papunya to Alice Springs. So just be very, very careful because it is okay to say that the OPAL roll-out is curing petrol sniffing, but all we are doing are moving it from one substance to another and that other substance that kids have, kids are moving to, it's worse than if not equal with petrol.

I think we need to deal with the underlying issues more as well. You know, the fact that people are still living in poverty, over crowded housing. It's okay just to pluck one thing out of the air and say: 'Look, it's a law and order issue'. It's not just a law and order issue; it's poor housing, it's poverty that we see when we go around to Aboriginal communities all the time. Unless you live and breathe the problems, you don't know what you are talking about, you know.

**Ms Fry:** It's also education.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, education, health.

**Ms Fry:** I mean, we have so many kids who are not going to school, and I guess I go through my list here and the number of kids whose literacy and numeracy is so very low that it is very hard for them to get out of the cycle because it's difficult for them to get work.

GEMCO has got fantastic employment program, but you still need to have that level of confidence to even join that, don't you, Walter? So these 14 to 18 year olds, when their literacy is so poor that they struggle to write their name, it makes it very hard.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It's the same everywhere. Schools are going down from a five-teacher school to a two teacher school because of poor attendance. I can say just in my electorate, our school has gone down to a one teacher school. Harts Range has gone down to a one teacher school with a husband that is a non teacher now teaching kids in pre school.

It's just about us community people standing up and saying: 'Look, education is important. It's the key to a lot of things', and encourage our kids to go to school every day, five days a week unless they are sick, and making sure that the health and well being of our people is good too, because unless they're healthy, kids can't go to school sick. Like if they are being abused inside the home and they are hungry, you can't expect kids to go to school. So it's about community people all getting together, saying: 'Look, we have to get away from all this substances' and make sure we keep our law and culture and language strong and force our kids to make

sure that they can live in both worlds like we've had the opportunity through education.

**Mr MILLS:** Melanie, a question for you just to clarify in my mind how these programs are coordinated here. We met, when we arrived here; Michele Clarke, Greg Arnott and Paul running some sport and recreation programs. Are those programs related to the programs that you are involved in?

**Ms Strang:** More recently, we have been collaborating on a few things, but the way that this funding situation works, he is funded after-school care so he needs to provide an after-school care service from 2pm to 5pm, and he has managed the sports by working with the school in school time. Sports in the evenings and we've been working with community people to get that going.

**Mr MILLS:** And are yours in the evenings?

**Ms Strang:** Yes. At this point, I do young men's on Tuesday evenings, young women's on Wednesday evenings at Angurugu and Thursday at Umbakumba. We juggle both young men's and young women's at the same time with support from community people.

**Mr MILLS:** And the young people involved, are they primary school aged or generally high school aged?

**Ms Strang:** Because we are so limited, funding and staffing wise, we are focusing on the teenagers of the community.

It seems that sport and recreation is funded for six to 12 year olds officially, after-school care, but teenagers, there doesn't seem to be necessarily ongoing funding targeted at that group. If there is, we would like to know about it so that we can make sure that there are things, regular programs on for those young people and more community development, celebrating the strength of young people with music, art, sport, culture. There are lots of really talented young people out there, but not necessarily structured developmental programs available for them after school.

**Mr MILLS:** What degree of cooperation is there between programs that you are describing and the school?

**Ms Strang:** In the past, we collaborated on things in school time with teachers and classes, but just seeing that huge gap of not much on offer at the key time, after school and evening, we have moved more into that area and now I am picking up groups of kids at school after school. So it is also a bit of a reward in a way for young people who have gone to school, though we do pick up other young people as well who may not have gone to school as much as we can.

In the past, we were doing it in school time so we were picking young people up from the community and bringing them to school for the program, so that was helping the attendance. The feedback we were getting from the principal - there are a lot of teachers and a lot of resources in school time available for young people, just not much at all in the evening, and we need to focus on that key time because that's often when kids are a bit bored and they get into trouble.

**Mr MILLS:** Is there communication back to the school so kids that come to the program who are not going to school, is there communication from your activities

back into the school so that they are aware of kids that are perhaps interested in some kind of organised activity but are not going to school?

**Ms Strang:** We started keeping some numbers in the last few months of kids we picked up and brought to school, but know we have changed to doing the evening program, it's a little bit different to be working with *[inaudible]* so the numbers and feedback is not happening with the teachers.

**Ms Fry:** With the offenders, though, a number of their outcomes, a result is getting back to school. So, on an individual basis, not on a group basis but an individual basis, if they're at that school age, we will endeavour to link them back into school, and it has worked some of the time.

**Ms Strang:** That collaboration between groups is really important, though it takes a lot of time, but that area really needs to improve, that collaboration, especially when we are holding community events. They don't happen without collaboration, you know. You need a lot of team work and a lot of organising. I think part of why that kind of thing doesn't happen often enough is because it takes a lot of time and energy to communicate and get things prepared.

**Mr MILLS:** I can understand it is easier just to run your own event. So really the broad picture is to talk to each other so that, globally, we achieve the objectives.

**Ms Strang:** I think everyone is so busy.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, it always happens.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks very much for your time and, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Jennifer, Mel, Ida and Lena, and Matthew down the back, for coming in to talk to us. We appreciate your input. I think you are all doing a good job, so keep it up. We really appreciate your help.

**Ms Fry:** Thank you.

*Ms Fry, Ms Strang, Ms I Mamarika, Ms L Mamarika and Matthew withdrew.*

*Mr Geoff Wood called.*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I am Deputy Chair of this committee and I just need to make a formal opening statement, so if you can bear with me for a moment.

I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome Mr Geoff Wood here to provide us with information. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear here today.

**Mr Wood:** My full name is Geoffrey Mark Wood and I am the Licensee of the Alyangula Recreation Club.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks, Geoff. We have invited you here today to have a bit of a chat to us. We are obviously the Substance Abuse Committee, so you would see a lot of substance abuse in your line, and I am wanting to get your opinions on some of the good things and some of the bad things that you see through your position.

**Mr Wood:** Well, I have been here for a period of nearly nine years as the Licensee of the club. Over the last two years, I have seen a major change as far as the consumption of alcohol as a result of the plan that has been put in place by the Land Council conjunction with other stake holders here; the Police and Health department, plus the clubs.

I can speak on behalf of the club. The club took a very pro-active attitude when the draft management plan was brought about, and the committee made the decision that it was in our interest and also the community's interest to take a pro-active attitude to the Liquor Management Plan. We have been involved in the process from its inception and we have tried to put in our input on behalf of not only the club, but the community.

The committee has tried to work with all the communities on Groote Eylandt. We have had discussions and we have also attended meetings with the Liquor Commission and also in the communities. When the Liquor Commission were here, we attended meetings at Umbakumba, Angurugu, Bickerton and also here in Alyangula. The committee, the club made a decision in the initial stages that we'd put in restrictions, self-imposed restrictions while the management plan was being drafted, which we believed would help all the communities in the Groote Eylandt area to address the problems that we were having.

We worked very closely with the Land Council and the police in that when it was requested by us, by the Land Council and the police, on some occasions we restricted take-away sales; on other occasions we actually stopped sales all together. For a period of just over 12 months, we actually self-imposed restrictions. What the club did was we came to a decision through liaising with the other people involved that for a period of 12 months or more, the club restricted take-away sales in that members were only allowed to have a certain amount of alcohol per day. We restricted takeaway sales to one carton of beer or a bottle of spirits or the equivalent in white wine. There was some reluctance by members of the community to start with, but I think everybody could see it was for the benefit of the community.

We then went through the procedures with the other people that were involved, attended the Liquor Commission hearings and as a result of that, there were some changes made to our license conditions. The conditions of our license are now that we have a Permit Committee and a permit system that only members of the club can have takeaways from a licensed premises, and the club has implemented a system where we are now obliged to record all our takeaway sales. So anybody who becomes a member of the club has access to takeaway facilities, but all their sales are recorded. So if someone becomes a 'person of interest' either by the police or the Liquor Commission, we have records for people to come in and check those records.

We also work closely with the police so that if there are any infringements in the community through either domestic violence or drunkenness, driving under the influence or breach of the peace, we work closely with the police and the Permit Committee in that we restrict takeaway sales. The way the club is set up, we can

actually restrict the sales from the club so that people don't have access to the takeaway facilities.

We have also worked very closely with the community in Umbakumba. When I started here nearly nine years ago, the Umbakumba Council were allowed 14 cartons of alcohol per day. In the time that I have been here, I have seen that cut back drastically. As you will appreciate, 98 cartons of alcohol was a lot of alcohol per week that was going out to that community. Now that community have taken it upon themselves to restrict their takeaways. It's a condition of my license that I can supply them 14, that was a condition of the license. The condition has now been changed that Umbakumba is allowed 14 cartons of beer on a Friday, but even I would say in the last six months, I've seen a further reduction in alcohol in that community inasmuch as I believe the ladies on the council out there are now restricting the takeaway and they control it. So that if there are any problems out there, they contact us and we actually stop, if necessary, or restrict the other alcohol that goes in that community.

At the moment, I think that community has been taking on around about eight cartons on a Friday and over the last two to three months on most Fridays, there has been no alcohol at all going out to that community because that is the wish of the community.

The club, as I said, has taken a very pro-active attitude because we believe that it is in our interest also to work with all the communities on the island.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** From a commercial point of view with this new permit system, what are the pros and cons commercially?

**Mr Wood:** I don't think that really came into it. I mean, we realise that we have an obligation to work with the communities and the community as a whole, not just the Aboriginal community, but also Alyangula. I had a look at the figures before I came to the hearing today.

One product here, which was the most popular product as far as takeaways were concerned, those figures have dropped by 48%. That is one product. So there is a 48% reduction in the sales of that product in the last 12 months, so that is a 48% less of that brand that is not actually going out in the community now and I believe that is probably to do with the restrictions.

Not so much with Umbakumba, but also the fact that because we've placed restrictions on takeaway alcohol, there is not illegal alcohol out there; there is less alcohol being supplied to non-members. There has been a major decrease in the bush camps and that sort of thing.

**Mr MILLS:** So it has made a bit of a difference to your bottom line?

**Mr Wood:** Yes. The club is running profitably yes, but we didn't contemplate a commercial decision. We didn't see that. We just thought: 'Well, the market is the market' and our main concern, Mr Mills, was that the fact that if we didn't control it ourselves then other restriction would be brought in and then the rest of the community will suffer.

There was some talk at one stage that there would be no takeaway at all and we took the decision that it was best for us to become involved and be proactive and help and assist. Therefore we could control it and work toward what was best for the whole of the community.

**Mr MILLS:** That is good to hear. Has there been some cost benefit on the other side in terms of managing the club?

**Mr Wood:** We really haven't seen any difference as far as the actual members are concerned. The amount of alcohol people consume on premises has probably increased slightly. The takeaway has decreased slightly, but some of that is to do with the fact that alcohol was being purchased for non-members and then been on-supplied to other people.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** As far as disturbances in the club and property damage and that type of thing.

**Mr Wood:** We are very lucky in that we don't have it because we have got a very static membership. We do have contractors coming along from time to time. Because we are very family orientated, we have a very strict disciplinary code, and I think we have had three minor instances in the last 12 months, which are usually slightly alcohol related, but the committee take a very stern decision that we send out the right message that that sort of behaviour is not tolerated on the premises. We also work very closely with the Permit Committee, that as a result of our *[inaudible]* something happening outside of the club premises, then we take a decision to suspend either people's membership or their takeaway facilities, so it's not an ongoing problem.

**Mrs MILLER:** The restrictions and the changes of the sale of alcohol are always threatening in a community and let me tell you, I know very well from chairing the committee in Katherine, so I know that this always seems threatening. How do you members feel about it now, 12 months down the track with this thing the new regulations that are in place here? Do they see that the committee is actually better off and it's a better environment?

**Mr Wood:** I believe so.

**Mrs MILLER:** How do they feel about it now?

**Mr Wood:** I think there was reluctance to start with, mainly because there was a lot of ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Fear.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's right.

**Mr Wood:** The fear and nothing was actually set in concrete. The innuendo was that there were going to be no takeaways, then there was the fear that it was going to be very badly restricted and we did go through some pain when we were actually implementing the self-restriction and also on days when there have been some issues in the communities, if it's a safety issue, where we have had to shut the bottle shop down. That has caused us some problems and people have expressed their concerns because it is not actually impacting on Alyangula, but we have said that we have responsibility to work with the whole community and the police.

So we have imposed those restrictions and worked within them. They can always come into the pub if they wanted to, but I think now that we have been through the hearings and everybody has had an opportunity to express their views, there haven't been any major restrictions imposed and most people have accepted it. Most people

that I have spoken to believe it is better because the results that we are getting back, the feedback I am getting back and also the others, are that it's been better for the community as a whole, like the Aboriginal workers are going back to work, there have been less disturbances in the community, I think the Health department is saying that they believe it is working, police also say it's working.

It's never been a commercial decision for the club because the club is there for the members and the members are the community. We are trying to give a service and what we are also trying to do is we are also trying to support the community through sporting benefits and donations and those sorts of things. It was never a commercial decision, but I think everyone seems to think it was better for the whole of the community.

**Mr MILLS:** It is not related to this, but do you have pokies?

**Mr Wood:** Yes. 15 poker machines.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And I don't want to see you on there, Terry.

**Mr MILLS:** You won't.

**Mrs MILLER:** I'll lock you in your room.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Does anyone else have any questions of Geoff?

**Mr MILLS:** I was just wondering whether the use of the pokies has gone up.

**Mr Wood:** The poker machines have been very static. We are probably fortunate in as much as other than the normal sporting things like fishing and camping and all those sort of things, the club is a focal point, but I find it strange, actually, there is only a certain group that have played machines. It probably has nothing to do with this, but the amazing part about it is that most of those people are smokers but not drinkers. It is just an interesting take on it.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's true.

**Mr Wood:** Some are drinkers, but a few of them are, as I say, smokers but non-drinkers.

**Mr MILLS:** I think I have heard this before. How does one become a member of this club?

**Mr Wood:** Years prior to my being here, when Aboriginal people had access to the club, there were a lot of problems. Walter probably knows this. The club used to run a couple of sessions, but there was a lot of alcohol abuse and there was a lot of fighting and I think there were a lot of serious assaults.

What took place was that the council and the police and the Liquor Commission and the club, this club, got together and sat down and tried to work out what was best for the communities. So the decision was made and the constitution of the club was changed so that the only people who can become members of the club must live in Alyangula or you must work for GEMCO.

So if you work for GEMCO, that entitles you to become a member, and if you don't work for GEMCO but you live in Alyangula, that takes in the police, nurses, all the

people that have wives and the ancillary people. The Aboriginal people that move from the communities back into town and work for GEMCO, they have membership.

We work with the councils in that if people from the communities wish to come in on special occasions, then they get permission from their council and they can come in as long as they are under the supervision by a member or whoever has invited them to the club or function.

**Mr MILLS:** Someone coming up to buy a takeaway with a permit has to also be a member of the club?

**Mr Wood:** Yes, that's correct. The Liquor Commission looked at that and they looked at the opportunity as to what if the person was a non-member, and I said they would have to change our license conditions to do that because the scenario came up actually with the Liquor Commission that they weren't members of the club and they tried to get access to alcohol.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's what I was thinking about.

**Mr Wood:** And they weren't. It works a little bit different here than in Gove where, if you are not a member of the Arnhem Club, you can still go to Coles or Woolies or the hotel. Here, there are only two licensed outlets, both clubs. As I explained to the Liquor Commission, the only way we can get around that is the Liquor Commission would actually have to change our licence conditions, which I am not quite sure they can do because we are under club licence.

**Mrs MILLER:** So for example, I am not going on a bender tonight. It's okay, but say I decided I wanted to go and get a bottle of wine tonight. I can't do it, can I?

**Mr Wood:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**Mr Wood:** No, what we try to explain to people is that if they are coming over on a regular basis, we can give them Country membership. It might be Telstra contractors, they get Country membership. If people are coming over who aren't members, we tell them to apply for a permit before they come over or the other way is because you are a visitor, you can go to somebody's house and have a drink, but the member is the only one who is entitled to buy the alcohol, and they are also responsible for your behaviour.

We had a scenario here where a non-permit holder was given permission to go to a permit holder's house and there was a disturbance and as a result that disturbance, not only did the visitor have their permit revoked, but the person in the house had their permit revoked. So it is passing on the responsibility to the person who is supplying alcohol to be responsible for their behaviour.

**Mrs MILLER:** I don't think it's bad. I think people need to know what the rules are. It's like going to Bali. You know you can't take drugs there. You know that when you come here that you can't buy takeaway alcohol. I think it's fair enough.

**Mr MILLS:** So no wine for you tonight.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, darn!

**Mr Wood:** I think the statement attributed to Mr Stirling in the paper on the weekend is exactly what has been discussed with us right from day one: it's a privilege, not a right.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's right.

**Mr Wood:** And we have always taken the attitude that it is a privilege. If you abuse the privilege, then you lose the privilege. Whether Mr Stirling has been quoted correctly, I'm not quite sure, but that is the attitude of the Permit Committee.

If I could just say this to the committee. I think it is very, very important the fact that the people who are involved in these issues are having a say in these issues. The Permit Committee is very, very important. It gives us an opportunity, because we are all stakeholders, to have a say in what is happening as far as the community's concerned. We know what is happening at the coal face. It is a good situation where we can actually make recommendations to the Liquor Commission. It is always hard for the Liquor Commission to come over and just hear one or two things, whereas we are hearing things and we know what is happening on a day-to-day basis. By the stakeholders getting together, it gives us an opportunity to pass on our thoughts and the community's thoughts to the Liquor Commission.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for coming and talking to us today and to commend you on your part in this, Geoff. It's obviously great for your community, this Liquor Management Plan, so thank you very much for your time.

**Mr Wood:** Thank you.

*Mr Wood withdrew.*

*Messrs Herbert, Hansen called. Mildred, Sue & Jenny called.*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you, first of all, on the behalf of the committee for coming here to talk to us. I will make the usual Chair's opening statement.

I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community, and welcome representatives of Umbakumba. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced, which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear here today. So every time one of you talk, just say your name so that *Hansard* can pick it up.

Basically, we just want to know what are some of the things that are happening at Umbakumba. You know, is there any petrol sniffing, ganja, grog and what steps you mob have taken to stop all that violence and substance misuse at Umbakumba?

**Mr Herbert:** My name is Richard Herbert. I am the Council Clerk of the Umbakumba Council. Regarding substance abuse, we have had some problems in the past regarding petrol sniffing, but we decided to get all those people that were involved in petrol sniffing to come down and talk to the council. We've asked them to stop sniffing, and they have for a while, but a bit further back we brought the children in

with their families and we have sort of got on top of it through a lot of talking to the kids involved or even the elder children.

**Mr Hansen:** My name is Keith Hansen. I am the CDEP Co-ordinator [*inaudible*] We have got 115 participants on CDEP and we probably have one of the best CDEPs in the region. We are one of the largest contractors on the island. We have created job activities and work activities for the young people and meaningful jobs. We have created seven full-time jobs this year and we will be creating eight more next year, and they are real jobs, not CDEP jobs, real money jobs.

We do a lot of training. We just finished a First Aid course for 10 of our participants. All of the people that work with me, I involve myself in the CDEP and work activities too and they all get inducted through GEMCO inductions which means they can work anywhere on GEMCO sites. We have got the largest building team perhaps around, who are doing a \$2m IHANT project at the moment, which is well within budget.

We were the main contractors for the new government project here. We were the first contractors that cleared the land. We did select clearing of the land. We went into a joint venture project with a company called Earthbuilt in Darwin to do all the earth works because we didn't have the capability of doing it, but we had the machinery and we had the personnel. We had 18 participants working on that project from go to woe.

At the same time, there was a NARS project running at Angurugu and we did all of the plant clearing, site fills, compactions, footings, concrete. We pour all of the concrete on the island. No one else does it. We are it.

We just finished building a Land Management Centre for the Land Council or for GEBIE and we just finished an accommodation centre for the trainees to live in. We are out there now putting power on and we will shortly be putting water on. We do earth works and we do the period maintenance contract for the Northern Territory government in roads and housing. We look after all government housing assets.

So we have created a business activity and every one of those activities has Indigenous personnel working in them. So keeping them active, true, and giving Aboriginal people ownership, that is where we have found our success. We have been tough. Don't believe we haven't been tough. The Council President and the grandmothers have told the boys if they keep sniffing, they are going to flog them. They used to flog them in the past. Not pulling no punches because we have never been a sniffing community.

We are only 50km from Angurugu where there is an epidemic of sniffing at the moment. We don't want it happening out there because it creates too much disharmony in the community.

I would love for you to hear to story about the [*inaudible*] which is the alcohol from the ladies because that is a real good news story.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Hansen:** I will go back on the history and the girls and what has happened since then. Umbakumba has always been a wet community. In the old days, and I am talking about old days.

**Mildred:** It was before.

**Mr Hansen:** Since 1985 I've been involved out here. We used to have unlimited beer, as much as you want, but we had too many problems so the women got up on their high horse and said: 'That is it. Finished'. Then we got the *Living With Alcohol* program started. Bernadette Shields; does anyone remember Bernie Shields?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Hansen:** Bernie Shields has done a wonderful job. She spent 18 months in the community. She got that alcohol down to 14 cartons a day because the women got together and said: 'We are going. We are taking the kids, we are leaving you mob. You men you can stay drinking. We don't care'.

It has gone down now to 14 cartons a week. It has got down now to: 'My birthday is next Friday. Can we get some grog? Can I get some cartons?' 'No'. 'Why not? Come on, tell me. My birthday next Friday night. Fourteen cartons! Can I get five cartons?

**Mildred:** No.

**Mr Hansen:** Why not? Tell the people.

**Sue:** I am Sue [*inaudible*], one of the Council Members. It was already now a few weeks ago, a youth incident at a fight. That's how we stopped the beer for five months.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's good.

**Mr Herbert:** We gave full responsibility to the women councillors now with the ration system.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, that is good.

**Mildred:** When boys or men are swearing in public, that is when we get together, all the ladies and we just stop the grog. Just like that. [*inaudible*]

**Mrs MILLER:** Oh, I love it!

**Mr MILLS:** Can I get clear on how this works? You say there was fighting a little while back and the ladies made a decision, banned it for five months.

**Mildred:** Bang, and that's it. Man have to listen to the woman until further notice.

**Mrs MILLER:** I love it, I love it!

**Mr MILLS:** So what happens, though, if someone tries to buy some? Do the ladies come and get them or what?

**Mr Hansen:** Because Umbakumba is now under our Groote Eylandt Liquor Management Plan, we have the right to have alcohol in the community, which is 14 cartons, right? But everyone has to have a liquor permit. So what the women do is say: 'That's it. Liquor permits are withdrawn for five months' and no one can buy any grog because they have to buy liquor from the council.

**Mr Hansen:** The women. All the women. The women get together. There are a couple more than this. They just get together and say: 'That's it! Finished'.

**Mr MILLS:** An official group?

**Mr Hansen:** Yes, councillors, all councillors. Because what happens is that we send the money in, they come to Richard. Richard gets the name, collects the money and then the money comes to town and the police bring the alcohol out and deliver it to each one of those persons on the list. They have to have a liquor permit.

**Mr MILLS:** Right. So there is no outlet in ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No, only here.

**Mr MILLS:** I understand. Okay.

**Mr Hansen:** But the beauty about this Liquor Management Plan that was developed, if you ever give credit, give it to this young fella sitting at the back here, Walter [*inaudible*]. He was the main one responsible for starting that off. It was giving ownership to Aboriginal people. They own it for their own communities. Angurugu made a decision: no alcohol. Umbakumba made a decision: yes, we will continue with the rations. So you can see two different communities on the island made their own decisions. They weren't decisions made by any white people; the decision was made by the Aboriginal people themselves.

This fella copped a lot of flak. Everyone was criticising, but we all helped him, we all stood for him. We all supported him, and that has been the success. I think you will find that crime has gone down 70 or 80% on the island. Family abuse, everything.

**Mrs MILLER:** Your homes, your family lives are much happier with no alcohol?

**Mr Hansen:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** What happens when the ladies go back home after making this tough decision. What do the men say?

**Mr Hansen:** Ask them!

**Mr Herbert:** Nobody argues with them!

**Mrs MILLER:** Nobody argues.

**Mr Hansen:** We had Elliot McAdam out last week and Elliot spoke to us about the same thing and he said: 'How many people have left and gone to Darwin since you made those hard decisions?'

**Mr Herbert:** None.

**Mildred:** None.

**Mr Hansen:** Not one because the community own the program. It's owned by Aboriginal people, run by Aboriginal people, no whitefella involved at all. They are tough with us mob, too, don't you worry about that, we can't have it either.

**Mrs MILLER:** You are very, very strong people and that's wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

**Mr Hansen:** It's a great success story. I would love Richard to talk about the cannabis usage, too.

**Mr Herbert:** Yes, that's *[inaudible]*. There hasn't been any in the community for a long time, which is really good.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** So how did you get that? Was it the women councillors again talking to the young ones?

**Mr Hansen:** No, a lot of policing, stopping it coming on to the island. We went through a spate about three or four years ago when it was really cracked down on, the cannabis use, and the young fellas said: 'There is no ganja around so they wanted to start sniffing'. Right? That was the weak excuse, but we got them all together the same way we did it last time. We got mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, grandmothers. True story, see? True story. We got them all down and told them.

There was one young fella there, young Tibias, was giving cheek that time to his grandmother and I got cranky and I had a fighting stick in my room. I got down and hit it right there in front of him. He nearly jumped out of his skin but he hasn't sniffed. He knows the story.

Some of these young fellas were using it as an excuse to start petrol sniffing and they were causing disruption to the school, disruption to the community, running around all night. We have got a night patrol. Our night patrol works from midnight every night.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's good. You are doing lots of good stuff.

**Mrs MILLER:** How many young people have you got in the community?

**Mr Hansen:** 217 or thereabouts.

**Mrs MILLER:** There are quite a few.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** How many of those are school aged kids?

**Mr Hansen:** A hundred.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** A hundred. Do you have good attendance at school?

**Mr Hansen:** Shocking!

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Shocking?

**Mr Hansen:** Eighty per cent. It is unheard of in an Aboriginal community. We were running at 73%, but now we have our after-school care and truancy patrol back up and running again, because we lost the person who was running that program and we appointed an Indigenous person full-time to that job. Now he is doing the outstation pick-ups and we now have our attendance up to 80%.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Gee, that's good.

**Mr Hansen:** But while we have got you mob here, we have handed Barb a petition a couple of weeks ago and we are going to talk about it. About our school.

We have got 80 kids going to school out of 100. Wave got four teachers. t's ridiculous! We have got 25 in post primary. We are declared a primary school therefore we have got to one a 1:22 ratio. If we were declared a secondary school or a CEC, we'd have 1:17. We would have more teachers. We are talking about the education of Indigenous people.

Unless we have got the teachers on the ground, it's never going to happen and I'm sick of the number crunchers. I am sick of listening to government and the rhetoric and a bureaucrat telling me that the numbers are here, the numbers are there. I am not interested. I am on the ground. We have got the kids. Wave got the results. We want to see some teachers on the ground here.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Absolutely, that's right, and we will support you there.

**Mr Hansen:** I am real cranky about it and I told Barb. We told Elliot McAdam. We told Paul Henderson: no more, we finished. We are not listening any more. nless something is going to happen pretty well straight away we are going to jump up and down about it because...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Good on you!

**Mr Hansen:** We have done our part of it. If you have a look all around the Northern Territory, this school in here has 88% attendance and that's 98% European...

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, the whole community is running very well.

**Mr Hansen:** We're at 88%, and we are 100% Indigenous. We have a brilliant principal, brilliant. Barb will back me up on that. We have three brilliant teachers. How we did this is give the community the ownership of *[inaudible]*. You have got to. We got the mothers, we got the grandmothers, we got the aunties involved in the pre-school. We involve *[inaudible]* crèche and the pre-school together.

We got Commonwealth funding through *[inaudible]*, and we encouraged the mothers and the grandmothers and the aunties to bring the younger children along, and put them all in one room. We have got 30 or 40 in one room there, but the mothers can speak English. They can speak Anindilyakwa and you want to see these kids, they're just going up the ladder like that.

We put a music program into the school. That is what the young people wanted. Every Friday now we have the band. They jam. The girls are singing, the boys are singing. They are writing their own songs. But we dangle a carrot. No reading, writing and arithmetic, no band.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's good.

**Mr Hansen:** Dangle a carrot. The other thing is that we talk about school excursions. Only the best attendance kids go on the excursions. We have kids waking their mothers up on Saturday morning: 'Mum I have got to go to school' True story!

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, that's good.

**Mr Hansen:** Ownership. I don't know. It's just a good harmony to have within the community. We have had our problems. You've all heard about Umbakumba and the nurses and all the other dramas, you know, but we work on those things.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But you are trying to fix the problems up. You have lived with that problem and you see that those problems are not good for the community and the Aboriginal people themselves have taken ownership of trying to get rid of all those problems and that's really good.

**Mr Hansen:** I go back to the days when there were gunfights at the Okay Corral. This fella here knows about it, eh? There were guns going off in the street every night of the week. There were spears. There was fighting. There were murders. There were rapes. There were stabbings. There was everything, wasn't there? You name it, we had it. The highest incarceration in the Northern Territory.

We got the community together and started putting programs in place, but giving Aboriginal people ownership of those programs, letting them make the decisions in their own time, not immediate decisions. Let them think about it, talk about it, let the groups get together and talk about it and we have come from nowhere to where we are today, and it can be done.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Absolutely wonderful.

**Mr Hansen:** But you have to give credit to these two here. These strong women, eh? We are a slack mob, us men, truly!

**Mr Herbert:** And we've got a pretty strong, really strong President.

**Mr Hansen:** Yes, a good, strong council. We have got some young people on our council for the first time. Good representation, good cross-reference of representation.

**Mr MILLS:** It is perhaps unrelated. I am just curious. Is there a tradition of strong female leadership in this culture?

**Mr Hansen:** Ask this fella here.

**Walter:** The women run the show, not the men.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's really good.

**Mrs MILLER:** Because you wanted a better life for your kids, yes?

**Mr KNIGHT:** You see these members of Parliament here. There are three ladies, two blokes.

**Mr MILLS:** Four!

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Woman power, see!

**Mr MILLS:** So you say this is a recent development?

**Walter:** The women they are strong, they face up to the men.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, they have had enough.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** They have had enough, yes.

**Mr Hansen:** True, that day they sat down and they told the men; 'We are going to take the children and we are going, mate. You mob can have your thing'. Then all of sudden they woke up to themselves. Remember Pauly said: 'Nah, we agree with you'.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's good, isn't it?

**Mr MILLS:** So what caused that shift, though, was alcohol affecting the men. They weren't taking their position so the women stood up, is that right?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes. Gee, they're good.

**Mr Hansen:** They haven't stopped. They are very good about it, but they are very fair, too. You have to give credit. They are very fair.

**Mr MILLS:** So now that the alcohol is under control, will the ladies allow the men to come back?

**Mr Hansen:** No, they never went away.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** They never went. They were too scared.

**Mr Hansen:** The women bluffed them.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Don't tell too many people that.

**Mrs MILLER:** It's an absolutely fabulous success.

**Mr MILLS:** You did it for the children.

**Mr Hansen:** We have got social problems, the same as every other community in Australia, don't worry about that. We have got a lot of other issues, but we work on them. We have family breakdowns. If we see husband and wife having argument, what we do? *[inaudible]* like that one.

**Mildred:** *[inaudible]* the council meeting and everybody could talk with them.

**Mr Hansen:** We see family breakdowns happening, husband and wife having big arguments and that, they grab them in, bring them in, get the right people in to talk to them, get some common sense in them because it is only a little bit. Someone might be telling a story behind their back and they get cranky about it, but then we bring them together and we talk it out, then we solve the problems.

**Walter:** It can be all right *[inaudible]*

**Mr Hansen:** True story, eh?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can I take this opportunity to thank Sue, Jenny and Mildred, first of all, three strong women. Thank you, Richard and Keith, and keep up the good work. That is what we need. We need people to stand up say: 'Enough is

enough', you know. 'We are not going to tolerate violence, we are not going to tolerate abuse against our children', but we need to unite with our men to make sure that we have got that family structure back there because there is a lot of good men as well. So we need to make sure that we plant that good seed again, you know, to make sure that our future generations grow as good people to lead us Aboriginal people forward.

**Mr Hansen:** There is one more thing we would like to make comment about. There is a lot of illicit grog coming on to the community in bottles and things like that. The current law doesn't allow for random searches and things like that. Maybe you guys should look at ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes. We have already spoken about that and we certainly will take that back, yes.

**Mr Hansen:** Some changes have to be made to allow it to happen.

**Mr MILLS:** For sure.

**Mr Hansen:** Maybe de-criminalise it with an on-the-spot-fine or something similar, I don't know. We will leave it to your experts, but if we can do that, it is going to save a lot more problems because we have had people going on Health over to Nhulunbuy and they bring bottles back on the plane charters and they are the ones that cause the heartbreak.

**Walter:** Fine them on the spot.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, that's right.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It has been brought to our attention so we will certainly take it back.

**Mr Hansen:** That is the only other problem we can see. Look, it is credit to Walter and the Land Council and, believe me, Minister Henderson got up at a LGANT meeting a few weeks ago and made a statement, which I corrected him on about it being a police initiative; it wasn't a police initiative.

This body here is supporting it as a community initiative. We had 18 drafts of it before we finally agreed on it, 18 drafts! Because we kept throwing things out all the time, eh? Big mobs of Indigenous people had big input into that, and, as you can see, Bickerton has made their story, Umbakumba has made theirs and Angurugu has made theirs, and each one is different.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is right. Thanks very much, once again.

**Mr Hansen:** This mob hungry; they are waiting for tucker. All right, thank you.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much, and keep up the good work, women.

**Mr Hansen:** See you, Barb.

**Mildred:** Thank you.

**Mrs MILLER:** Never underestimate the power of women. Watch out, mate, watch out!

Mr Herbert, Mr Hansen, Mildred, Sue & Jenny withdrew.

The Committee suspended at 3.30pm.

The Committee reconvened at 3.40pm.

Messrs Herbert, Hansen and Mildred, Sue & Jenny called.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The committee just takes this opportunity to welcome you all to present to the committee this afternoon. I just thought I would do the Chair's opening statement; I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the community and welcome representatives of Bickerton. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege.

For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today just so that when we put the *Hansard* record out, that everybody's name so that we are not asking Barb later on or me or someone else if we remember names of people, so just when you make your comments and state your name so that *Hansard* can pick it up.

Basically, we want to know what things are working, what things are not working to do with any form of substance misuse.

**Ms Castillon:** Usha Castillon. I guess I am here in two capacities: one is I am the Employment and Training Coordinator for GEBIE, and the second one is I am part-time CEO for Bickerton Island, but I have invited Ida and Lena and Walter here because of the employment side, the employment and training, the GIBIE side of it so perhaps that's where I should start if that is okay.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Ms Castillon:** Since August last year, we've started with 15 trainees whom we call them GEBIE Trainees and, throughout the program, I have tried to arrange drug and alcohol training, awareness and one-on-one counselling. I have been struggling with this since that time, since August last year. We did have someone come over from Gove and we have had someone come over from Darwin at odd times, but it's not consistent. This year, we have increased our number of trainees to 30, starting in July.

We really need drug and alcohol awareness and training and one-on-one counselling as a weekly program within our training. It's a huge problem here. We have got petrol sniffing, marijuana and alcohol that people have to deal with, but our focus is to get people into full-time positions within the township in any capacity they wish.

What I would like to suggest that this committee can help with is we actually need someone in Alyangula full-time that will become part of our program. That will assist us and assist the trainees. This is something that we can't get here; we can't get any sort of consistency on the island.

**Mrs MILLER:** Usha, are you talking about a full-time worker for rehabilitation, is that what you mean? A full-time worker in rehabilitation of substance abuse?

**Ms Castillon:** Yes.

**Ms I Mamarika:** Not someone flying in from Darwin, staying here for a week then going back. It's too fast.

**Walter:** It's too hard and it's a waste of time and money.

**Ms I Mamarika:** One person that can be based here and do full-time, run the whole show. It's a full-time person.

**Mrs MILLER:** So at the moment, do you get somebody who comes from Darwin?

**Ms Castillon:** Wherever we can get people from. I have arranged this week to have some trainees see a chap that also goes out to GEMCO, *[inaudible]* Franklin. Last week I had a couple of ladies; I had Liana Haines speak. A month before that, I had a chap come over from Gove. It's just not consistent enough. We need someone that is based here and who can be on call and become part of our training program for the whole program.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Are you getting a core group of people, Usha, into training?

**Ms Castillon:** Yes, we are getting local people into training, but we are having difficulty if they are on drugs and alcohol. We go out to them and we speak to the whole family before they actually join up in our program. I take Lena and Ida and we go out and we talk to the husbands and wives and whoever in the family is around, we talk to them about training and if they would like to become the trainee. Part of that is: 'Do you take any drugs? Are there any drug and alcohol problems?' so we know from the outset what we are dealing with.

We do get people that maybe smoke a bit of dope now and again, but we have to convince them that it is not a good idea if you are looking at this training and to go in to a full-time position because they have got to go through a fairly stringent test with GEMCO. All the trainees do that within a couple of months of starting and if they fail that, then we look at counselling wherever we can get it, but if we are going to move forward with our program, what we need is someone to be here and be part of our program.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What are you training them for?

**Ms Castillon:** Any position that is available on Groote Eylandt. It is for local people. So we have the individual priorities of businesses, we have GEMCO and the ALC. The ALC is going to build a resort, so we need a lot of people in hospitality. It is for any position that is available on-island.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Are there any on Bickerton that have done work over here?

**Ms Castillon:** Sorry. I was talking in two parts here. I'm talking about here, training people here. Since August, we have only taken people that actually live at Angurugu. ALC are just building a training centre and some accommodation at *[inaudible]* down the track here on the way to the airport.

Then we can start taking people from Umbakumba, because then they have got accommodation to stay overnight, and from Bickerton, but at the moment it's just Angurugu.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Who is your principal funder? Is it DEWR?

**Ms Castillon:** DEWR, yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** And have they talked about lifting the remote area exemption here?

**Ms Castillon:** Sorry?

**Mr KNIGHT:** The lifting of the remote area exemption.

**Ms Castillon:** Yes, there has been talk about it, but I can't see it happening because there really isn't enough positions around for people to put them into full-time jobs. There is lots of talk, but I think they will be exempt. So that is part of it. Hopefully your committee can help us as far as our training programs go.

The other side of it is Bickerton Island, my other hat. I introduced OPAL about one month ago and it's going really well. At the moment, we only have one petrol sniffer on the island, but she is from over here. The family sent her over there. We can't work out whether she is still trying to sniff the OPAL or she actually has supplies from this side, from Angurugu, but there is only one there at the moment.

What we do have a problem with is when there is a domestic violence or some sort of violence issue, the police drop Angurugu people off at Bickerton. I don't know whether they think it's a cooling off place or whatever, but it disrupts things at Bickerton Island. They don't take them back to their community. They drop them off there, which we are not that happy about. They could be people that have been in prison for some time, they could be petrol sniffers, they could be anything. They seem to do that; they just drop them off at Bickerton.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Have you asked them why they do that, Usha?

**Ms Castillon:** No, I have yet to meet with the police about it, but it does cause us a few problems. We had heard rumours, some talk about people thinking that because there's still petrol here, maybe they can send them to Bickerton to dry out, but that again causes problems. I think the sooner OPAL is throughout the whole of the island, the better.

**Mr MILLS:** Are you saying that that is occurring with any consultation at all?

**Ms Castillon:** That is occurring without any consultation, yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about ganja on Bickerton, Usha?

**Ms Castillon:** The police have been cracking down on that quite a lot lately, I believe, and a few people have been caught selling. We don't have a problem over there unless it gets in here and then it goes over there by boat. It gets over there by boat, but it's not a huge problem. It's more difficult for people to get than it is here.

**Mrs MILLER:** How many people are on Bickerton?

**Ms Castillon:** At the moment about 120. There used to be 220.

**Walter:** Before.

**Ms Castillon:** Yes, just over 100. I suppose Bickerton has been neglected for quite some time and what happens is there have been no services. People can't take in their... they get notices from CentreLink or something and there is no office there or there is no one to help them, so they come over here.

That is impacting on Angurugu because people come over here to live and just crowd into the *[inaudible]*. We would like them to come back, but we're struggling to get some help to set up some services for people, and jobs.

I just got some training going in driver training, because everybody is interested in that. That took place last week and we had about 12 people go through, but I am hoping to apply for some funding to do some numeracy and literacy for adults because that is, again, a huge problem and there are not that many people that are literate and numerate.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Have you got a school at Bickerton?

**Ms Castillon:** We have a school. We have a wonderful school. All the kids go to school, 100%. We lost a teacher because we were under that formula. There is one teacher there at the moment. What do we do to get some help here? Do we tell the kids stay home from school? That's not what we want. The school is great but we could do with two teachers.

**Mrs MILLER:** How many children are there, Usha?

**Ms Castillon:** Total children? Well, under the primary school age, there would be about 30.

**Mrs MILLER:** How many teachers have you got there now?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One!

**Ms Castillon:** One.

**Mrs MILLER:** You've got one teacher?

**Ms Castillon:** So that is a struggle

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Because under the formula, Bickerton would only be entitled to 1.5, wouldn't they?

**Ms Castillon:** Yes. We have a clinic with one nurse.

**Mrs MILLER:** You will have to excuse my ignorance, but what industry and what commerce have you got on Bickerton? What do people do?

**Ms Castillon:** Well, there is not a lot to do. I am trying to start some things up now, but there hasn't been anything much to do. There is the store, we have four Aboriginal people that work in the store, and that is about it.

I have got 15 CDEP places from Angurugu, so we have got money for the clinic and a couple in the school. It's a wonderful place.

Most of the people, the men on CDEP keep the town very clean and it's mowed and they work very hard, but to get something going, it's really difficult to get funding to get things going. It's an uphill battle.

We have had a problem with our air strip. Medivac wouldn't land there because we had a drainage problem and it was 200m short, so they couldn't land. If we had an emergency, like we did last week where a lady was bitten by a snake, a King Brown, we had to call the police, the boat, to come over. It took them four hours to come over at night.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Is she all right?

**Ms Castillon:** She is all right now, yes, but that also put the police in danger because it was a fairly rough night. That is a long time, four hours.

I have got some money from the Northern Territory government to fix up the airstrip. I am looking for more money to put some bitumen on it so that we can make it an all-weather airstrip. As soon as it rains, we have to close it because it is a dirt strip. So everything is hard to do, it's not easy!

**Mrs MILLER:** It's just challenging.

**Mr MILLS:** Usha, what's the story with Bickerton? Do people traditionally go back a long, long way? What language groups?

**Walter:** Only one.

**Ms Castillon:** There's only one.

**Ms I Mamarika:** Bickerton and here on Groote, we talk one language. That's Anindilyajwa language.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Walter:** That is the *[inaudible]* on the left on the wall *[inaudible]* at Bickerton *[inaudible]*

**Mrs MILLER:** So the people who live on Bickerton have basically chosen to live there from Groote? They have moved from Groote?

**Ms I Mamarika:** Yes, from Groote.

**Walter:** Bickerton was only an outstation before.

**Ms I Mamarika:** But now the members of the community, most of the people go over to Bickerton, stay at Bickerton.

**Mr MILLS:** So how long have people been living at Bickerton?

**Walter:** Since *[inaudible]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** When the outstation movement began?

**Walter:** Yes, the 1970s.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So the 1970s, 1972.

**Mrs MILLER:** So it's been 30 years.

**Mr KNIGHT:** And that is traditional country for some people?

**Ms L Mamarika:** Yes, it is the place for the *[inaudible]* people, you know. The *[inaudible]* owns Bickerton Island. But in a way, like my descendants, my father's mother, she came from Bickerton. *[inaudible]* family. My grandmother on my father's side, she come from Bickerton. That is how I am connected with all the Lalara mob.

**Mrs MILLER:** I've had a good history lesson today; I have learnt a lot that I didn't know.

**Walter:** Bickerton because my mother is from the island, too.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**Walter:** From the island, my *[inaudible]*. From the island my mother and my father is from here.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Walter, the Land Council is fairly heavily involved with business development on the main island here. Are they doing any sort of investigation on economic development opportunities for Bickerton as well?

**Walter:** We are in the same boat. That's why we have GEBIE here, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Enterprises.

**Mr KNIGHT:** But for businesses starting on Bickerton, are there any ideas about starting new businesses out there?

**Walter:** Not at the present time.

**Ms Castillon:** No. I guess once the resort gets going, they are looking at a fishing camp as part of the resort. What we thought, like the one here you may have seen that at the ALC, but what we would like to do is a similar sort of thing over there so people could come over and camp over to generate something. At the moment, we just manage to survive, to keep the community going.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So how many houses do you have, Usha, on the island?

**Ms Castillon:** Thirty three houses.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thirty three houses. And any over-crowding issues?

**Ms Castillon:** Yes. In fact, right at the moment we have got three houses that people live in that have no water and no power.

I have been on to IHANT about it. I have asked for four houses to be condemned because they have just rotted away underneath and people are stepping over boards and it is quit unsafe.

I was told that maybe we had a chance of bringing our 2006-07 IHANT capital forward, but that is only \$500,000. It costs \$420,000 to build a house on Bickerton. So, yes, people are living in those houses.

**Mrs MILLER:** There's got to be a better way of doing it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Usha, I have known you for years and I've plainly said this is maybe the biggest challenge. Just keep chipping away to do this stuff. I know we shouldn't have to chip away to get basic services put on for people, but as you know, you have worked in the system for years as well, so you know that the government system is too slow to react to the stuff that we hear and see on the ground always. I think that if we were a lot quicker, I think we wouldn't have half of the problems that we encounter in remote Aboriginal communities.

It is just the funding cycle, the money that we allocate is always on a trial period; 'Let's see if you can do it for 12 months'. When they know it's working, they cut it off. When it doesn't work, they let it go on for a couple of years. That is the attitude we have to change and I think that our committee will be good in reporting back to Parliament some of the stories that we have heard from people like you.

I urge you to keep on doing it. Keep on getting on the blower to people and say: 'We shouldn't have to live in second rate housing. We want people to start seeing us'. If you don't get anything from people, the best way to do it is through the media. You can see government jumping all over the country when media starts asking them questions, and maybe that is one of the ways to make government accountable.

**Ms Castillon:** Well, I have threatened CentreLink with going to the media. It is a basic thing: give us some funding. We want to be able to set up an office there for CentreLink queries because it takes up hours of the Health sister's time, the school teacher's time, the shop keeper's time and it stops people from leaving because they come over here.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And abuse substance here. And if you have a look, you just said that you have got 15 participants across there from here, CDEP participants. Now, if they go on the basis of what Rob was saying, lifting the remote area exemption on 15 participants, what is your adult population there?

**Ms Castillon:** It would be about 50 or 60. About 60.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Now, if you doing what the Commonwealth wants you to do, put them on CDEP for a year, get them work ready and then put them into real job opportunities, where are the real job opportunities?

**Ms Castillon:** There aren't any.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's right. You'll exhaust your population and they'd break in 3½ years. You don't have to be a scientist to work that out. That is the way they are moving. That is what nobody has picked up. Communities will exhaust their population within two to three years so in two to three years, you won't have CDEP.

**Ms Castillon:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks, once again, for that. Thank you very much, Walter, for your hospitality here. Keep up that fighting spirit, you know. Keep on fighting.

**Walter:** No worries.

*Ms Castillon, Ms I Mamarika, Ms L Mamarika and Walter withdrew.*

*Ms Kylie Slater called.*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks for coming in to see us today, Kylie. I will just go through the Chair's opening statement.

I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community, and welcome Kylie, a representative of the Golf Club, to today's inquiry. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish to have any part of your evidence heard *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to this committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

**Ms Slater:** Ms Kylie Louise Slater; Manager of Alyangula Golf Club.

**Mr MILLS:** How many holes?

**Ms Slater:** Eighteen.

**Mrs MILLER:** Did you bring your golf clubs?

**Mr MILLS:** No.

**Ms Slater:** 19 including the bistro, because that is the Bistro at 19.

**Mr MILLS:** Really? Very good.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We have asked you to come along today. We are obviously interested in substance abuse and we hear that there have been some good things happening in this community.

I will ask you to provide comment on the good things and the not so good things that you personally have experienced through you capacity in the golf club and as a resident, obviously.

**Ms Slater:** I have only been in charge of the golf club for the last six months, but previous to that, I was the Assistant Manger at the ARC for the three years previous. So I am pretty much a long-termer on the island, so I have seen it all go down. I have been here for at least five years.

I think everything that we have done at the moment - it's stopping everything happening before it gets into town. I don't attend anything out at the communities, so I can't tell you anything about what is happening out at the communities. I can tell you that I believe the system that we have put into place down at the golf club and the ARC appears to be working.

Straight up, I go off statistics. My beer sales, since we have put in the swipe card and all that kind of stuff and the ration, where we go from ration to just basically lock-down, that is down 43%.

It's not so much - who cares about money? but that just tells you straight up that this system we have put in place is working. Straight up.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Your bar sales and takeaway?

**Ms Slater:** Takeaways.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You are just talking takeaways at 43%?

**Ms Slater:** Yes, but, once again, you have to be a resident of Alyangula to become a member, so there is no way of getting in the door to even consume on the premises, straight up.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You have to live here.

**Ms Slater:** Yes, you have to live in town.

**Mrs MILLER:** Kylie, have your bar sales gone up; considerably, proportionately?

**Ms Slater:** I would have to go with 'no'. It depends on who they re-employ to come in from rehab to live in town. Once again, the second that you rehire to come in to live in town, you are allowed to be a member at either club, and that's fine. No one has a drama with that, but the proportion of that is so minimal, really it makes no effect on the actual business, so no.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The swipe card, there was some talk about it being improved for some identification purposes. Have you heard that?

**Ms Slater:** Because we are so isolated and we are so remote and there are so few of us, I believe that the simple fact that we have a swipe card system anyway stops people where they stand because we're actually lucky enough to pretty much - you know everybody who you are serving. If you swipe their card and it says a different name, you have got nothing and you get pulled up, you are getting stopped every time.

The ARC, okay, fair enough, they have photos on their card. That is a little bit upscale from what we are doing, but the whole thing is we are in that environment where we do pretty much know everyone that we are dealing with because we are a tiny community. I know if someone is lying to me. I know if somebody has taken somebody else's card. They are pulled up on the spot and, pretty much, I confiscate their card and that is the end of it.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The card is managed by yourself? I haven't seen any of these cards. I don't know if you have got one there at all.

**Ms Slater:** No, I don't.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Do you have your own software there that you upload the information and do it all yourself?

**Ms Slater:** Yes, we do, and every time the police - and this happens once every Friday - give us an update of the liquor permits, so that tells you everybody on island or in the community who has access to liquor as takeaway, and if you are not on that list and you swipe your card, I enter it into my software 'no permit'.

So it comes up and nobody gets anything, unless it says to me that on their card that they are a financial member and an Alyangula resident and have been issued a liquor permit. As I said, anybody who tells me tales or lies, I confiscate their card and that is the end of the deal for both people involved.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** After 12 months of having this system in place now, are you finding that people are still trying to be cheeky and getting around the system, or have they accepted the fact that this is how it is going to be and gone with the system?

**Ms Slater:** They have accepted it. I would say there is maybe 20% of people, but they are born cheeky. So it is always going to happen that way.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So it is a general acceptance. You just have the exception to the rule that every now and then they try and do a shifty.

**Ms Slater:** Yes, and once again, you know who they are and they don't get that. I know who you are before you walk up. That's fine.

**Mrs MILLER:** So at this particular point in time, until there is an influx of another 500 people onto Groote Eylandt, it's working pretty well because you know people?

**Ms Slater:** Yes, I would say that for sure, yes. It really is working. The incidence of violence inside or outside the club, in the community, in town, Umbakumba, Angurugu, like nowhere near as much as what was happening before.

It blows my mind that we have had this system installed for 12 months and then all of a sudden, there has almost been the thought of it happening in Katherine and Alice and it made the front page of the papers. Is that a joke?

**Mrs MILLER:** No, you kept the secret to yourselves. That's what it was.

**Ms Slater:** Well, it works, it has actually been working. Sorry, but I just can't see why that was front page stuff, like everyone is up in arms, but it has worked great for us here.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** They didn't have any crocodile stories for the front page.

**Ms Slater:** Yes, no one was snaffled this week, I suppose, so what are you going to do?

**Mrs MILLER:** That's true. They didn't have a croc story. It is a very good success.

**Ms Slater:** It is when you compare it to the domestic violence rates, you compare it to everything that all us guys discuss, once a month, on the Liquor Commission. It is a great turn down in the trouble that we have been having and it doesn't make it pleasant for anyone to live in that kind of environment ever.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have to remember what we said this morning. The Permit Committee, when you meet, are you part of that as well, the licensees of the clubs are part of that Permit Committee?

**Ms Slater:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you're all involved.

**Ms Slater:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Including health and Police.

**Mr MILLS:** Kylie, from your perspective, is there any way that the system could be strengthened? Would you like to see improvements?

**Ms Slater:** At the moment, I think what everyone has got in place is good. I think if you push it any further, you're really starting to tread on that border line of flat out discrimination. That is what I believe.

I think everything is in place with what we have all discussed and everything that has been done is okay at the moment. I don't think that you can cut it down any further because it is just basically, you know like...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Prohibition.

**Ms Slater:** Yes, it's nearly a deprivation of liberty. You know, like how many cars do you have to have to breathe every day. I think that we are pretty much down on shut down that type that there is not much more that you could do.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It is quite clear that this indicates that partnerships work. It is quite clear that it's about educating people to live with alcohol. We heard earlier about some people saying that alcoholics have asked people themselves: 'Ban me from drinking', and they appreciate what people have done through this partnership, and I think it is absolutely wonderful.

**Ms Slater:** Yes, we offer self-exclusion notices to people who come to us and say: 'I have got a problem, I can't stop' whether it's alcohol or gambling, or whatever. You offer that piece of paper and you can either sign it or you can walk away and if you walk away, then you don't want to help yourself anyway.

It is not my problem if you don't want to help yourself to do that, but everyone has been pretty much good. Anyone who has asked for a self-exclusion has signed it and they have walked away with it and they haven't abused that right or argued with any staff when they have been told: 'No. No more'.

**Mrs MILLER:** How long does that last for Kylie, that self-exclusion?

**Ms Slater:** Self-exclusion? Once again, there is always a loop hole. You get to nominate yourself as to whether or not you would like six months or 12 months. Most people just take it for 12 months. Whether it is off their own bat or whether they are under pressure from their partner or whoever, but there is nothing I can do until they sign that piece of paper to say that they cannot come into that club or they cannot do that or they can't purchase that. You can't do that unless they misbehave on a licensed premises.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So you add that, once again, to your membership software.

**Ms Slater:** Absolutely, yes. Yes, that definitely comes up.

**Mr MILLS:** Kylie you would be in a very good position to report on what the punters are saying on the other side of the bar. Can you give me a snapshot of the conversations at the bar the first time that this was put in place to now?

Granted, you have been there six months, so say you came in half-way, but you would have heard at the other place. What were they saying?

**Ms Slater:** Most Caucasian people thought it was insane and ridiculous. They didn't want a bar of it and half of them thought that they would put their hands up in the air and just go like: 'No, we don't have to do this', but as they have seen that the system is actually working, they have all just come around to the way of like: 'Fill your Liquor Permit, take it to the police station and its fine'.

Yes, they did kick up a stink at the start, but it's all over now. There are only so many of us. It's all over now and everyone just accepts what has been put in to procedure and everyone just takes it on board. That is how it is. If you don't get off your keester and fill in your permit form, then you just can't get takeaways and it's nobody's fault but your own that you were lazy.

**Mr MILLS:** Was there a threat that there was going to be a boycott and say you were not going to co operate with this?

**Ms Slater:** Pretty much as I just said, yes, people at the start just said: 'No, we are not going to do it'. Then they learnt that nobody else was backing down, so they were forced to.

**Mr MILLS:** They were brave at the bar!

**Ms Slater:** Yes, they were forced to.

**Mrs MILLER:** No signature, no grog.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's because there are only the two outlets.

**Ms Slater:** Exactly.

**Mr MILLS:** So the non-Indigenous element on the island primarily work for GEMCO?

**Ms Slater:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Would you say 80%? Are there many non-Indigenous that don't work at GEMCO?

**Ms Slater:** There are a few. You can't really break it down into percentages because you've got your GEMCO workers and you also have your contractors, and you also have GEBIE, Spotless, whoever just took over there. I don't really look at who works for who. I just listen to who's being a person and who is not.

**Mr MILLS:** Just seeing how it works, if you have had all the stakeholders behind the scenes, the major employers, supporting this, it makes it a lot easier.

**Ms Slater:** Well, it would. It would stop me and my girls being abused at the counter because we're the first man to tell someone. We are the first cab off the rank when we say: Apparently, no. As of last week, you can't get grog, you can't do that' and you have got people, obviously, they want to smack your head in. What are you going to do? But nobody informed them first, so it's me and my girls that are the first ones to deliver the message. I can't pay my girls enough to actually stand there and cop that abuse. I mean, that was a bit funny.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Are you saying when people are taken off permit, they are not notified straight up? Is that what you are saying?

**Ms Slater:** A lot of people never were given a permit. You have to apply for it yourself, but that was information that wasn't actually ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You have to go there yourself.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** If there's a lot of people going in and giving you problems, are they people that are off permit or are they just people that haven't had a permit?

**Mrs MILLER:** Weren't aware they had to have one.

**Ms Slater:** Mainly people who land on the island and, as you would assume, anywhere else that you would go, that when you land, you can go down to the club and say: 'Can I just get a six-pack to take away?' and I say: 'No, you can't'.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** So it's not necessarily the local people that have been here and they proceeding in 12 months?

**Ms Slater:** They have just got their backs up because it's a different way of life for them now. That is pretty much it. New people just don't get it until you educate them.

**Mr KNIGHT:** This is a very unique environment here. Could this system work on the mainland in a mixed town, like, say Katherine?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Alice Springs.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Or Alice Springs.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Nothing is impossible.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Yes, with the co-operation of hoteliers, for sure.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It being a region centre, you have a lot of people coming in. You have a lot of tourist traffic. That is probably the biggest problem.

**Mrs MILLER:** Absolutely.

**Ms Slater:** So snake eyes. The house always wins. That just means people can't take alcohol off premises, and nine times out of 10 that is probably the best thing for tourists not to do because they either going to get rolled for it, or end up being forced to hand it over anyway. So of course it can work.

**Mrs MILLER:** It would probably challenge you a bit there because we have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of caravans every year. Huge crossroads in places like Katherine, but there could be some adjustments to the way it works, yes.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Like a temporary permit for interstate driver's licenses.

**Mrs MILLER:** There has to be a way around it for tourists. I had this argument, too, even though I had a licensed premises and agreed to restrictions at that time, and led it, actually, and got castrated almost. I agreed to it, but I also agree that tourists, when they are coming through, have the right to buy a six-pack if they are going to go

on to Timber Creek or somewhere and they are going to be camping overnight and they just want to take a six-pack.

It's something that we could make some adjustments to, but I think the basis is there from all the work that you have done and proved that it works, but there are some adjustments that we could do for communities throughout the Northern Territory.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Of course, absolutely.

**Ms Slater:** Even if it's restrictions, not barring. Here, people fly in and nobody has told them. This is the biggest problem. This is where all your fights and arguments come from. Nobody has given them the information to say that you are not allowed to get takeaway alcohol and so you say: 'No worries, fill in a liquor permit', and they say: 'Yes, okay. So I fill that in and you give me the six-pack', and then you say: 'No, that is going to take two weeks. Then it goes to Darwin then it goes to the Liquor Commission then they give it back to us and if you are approved, then it comes through' and people get cranky! I can understand that because if I was on holidays and I was told; 'No' yet nobody told me, nobody warned me that that was going to happen when I actually got to this island.

**Mrs MILLER:** Because it is in its infancy stages, it was probably just one of those little peripheral things that wasn't really important at that time. It's very important but see another way it can be done, too, and it can be done right throughout the Territory is through the Tourist Commission in their annual book on everything that is available in the Top End, etcetera. In the front, there is 'Beware of bushfires' and 'These are the signs that say there are crocodiles there'. You cannot take alcohol to the island. All of those lists of things should be in the front of tourist information booklets that go out to thousands of people.

**Ms Slater:** And not just at the airport when you are flying out.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's right. They go right throughout Australia and people become aware of it and they say: 'Gosh are you going up there to work at Groote Eylandt? Just remember, you need a permit or you can't get takeaways'. There are ways around it. There are certainly plenty of ways around it, but at the airport, we should have had one big sign blaring at us this morning, shouldn't we? that said: 'Beware! Do not take alcohol to the island' and 'you cannot buy takeaway'.

**Ms Slater:** Yes, that would actually help a lot of the grief that the staff receive from tourists and people that just get off a plane, even new contractors, but, once again, why aren't their employers informing them when they hire them? Why aren't they telling them? It is always point the finger at somebody else.

**Mrs MILLER:** They probably think they couldn't care as long as they do the work first, but you have to put up with it.

**Mr MILLS:** They still can get a drink, though, can't they? They can sit at the bar and have a drink?

**Ms Slater:** Absolutely. As long as you pay your membership at either club you can always have a drink, but you just can't take anything home with you.

**Mr MILLS:** Can that be processed straight away? So if you are a contractor and you have arrived here, you've finished your day's work, your first day.

**Ms Slater:** That's a question maybe you should ask because this is one that I have been ramming my head into for ages. As I said, when they fill in their permit, it has to be personally handed in to the police station, then the police station sends it to the Liquor Commission.

That takes them two weeks to process it, then they send it back to the police station and you must personally pick it up again. So it's a good two, three week turnaround that you have got these people arguing with you about it. Maybe its information that should have been told to them.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** I think Terry was talking about going into the actual club.

**Ms Slater:** Oh!

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, I am a new contractor and I have decided to finish work. I think I might join the golf club tonight. So I go down to the golf club and I join up tonight. Can I do that and have a drink?

**Ms Slater:** Yes, you can, to be a member. But not for takeaways.

**Mr MILLS:** No, that's fine, but I can stand at the bar?

**Ms Slater:** Absolutely. Yes, sorry I got that part confused. I was like didn't we just do that part of it?

**Mr MILLS:** So I'm a member of another golf club.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, you have to be a member of this one.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** All right. Thanks very much for coming in to see us today.

**Ms Slater:** No worries.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Your information has been really important in getting the whole picture of it, because I think it is important to have the people at the coal face.

As you said, you're the one that hears all the complaints and it is really important for our committee to hear that. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for coming in today.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thanks, Kylie. Thank you very much.

*Ms Slater withdrew.*

*Graham Phelps called.*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Welcome today, and thank you for coming to talk to us. As part of the procedure, I need to make an opening statement;

I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome the Northern Territory government Regional Co-ordinator, Graham Phelps to the meeting. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any evidence to be heard *in camera*.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

**Mr Phelps:** My name is Graham Richard Phelps and I am the Northern Territory government Regional Co-ordinator for Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What does that mean?

**Mr Phelps:** What does that mean? That's a good question.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** He works between two communities.

**Mr Phelps:** work between all three communities. The two on Groote and the one on Bickerton, plus the people of Alyangula. Regional Co-ordinator is a position which has broad ranging responsibilities for trying to coordinate Northern Territory government efforts in regional development, and in particularly Indigenous development in Groote Eylandt.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is that one a Commonwealth funded position?

**Mr Phelps:** No, this is a position that was created through a submission from the Department of the Chief Minister and the Department of Community Development a few years ago, and was initially funded as a special allocation to the Department of Community Development, which is now a Department of local government position.

**Mr KNIGHT:** That is only basically the last six months?

**Mr Phelps:** I have been here since January last year. It's a bit like the Development Co-ordinator position.

**Mrs MILLER:** And that is local government Co-ordinator or is it looking at ...

**Mr Phelps:** No, it's cross-agency. I mean, obviously being located in the Department of local government, there is a fair focus on local government activities and of course local government activities out in the community have a fairly wide range of focus, so it covers all sorts of areas. But no, it's cross-agency and I also work very closely with our federal government counterparts in Nhulunbuy and Darwin, too.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So, Graham, how are things basically going here, like between the three communities with substance misuse with ganja, petrol, kava, alcohol?

**Mr Phelps:** All right, I will start with alcohol, I think. The Liquor Management Plan, which people have no doubt spoken to you about in some detail, has been extremely effective. All of the crime statistics that relate to it have shown a positive trend. The attendance records of GEMCO, no doubt they spoke to you about that, their Indigenous employment showed an immediate improvement and there are all sorts of reasons for that.

There are some very good things to commend it. One is Walter Amagula who hopefully spoke to you earlier today, was a leading figure in pushing that, so there

was that local drive behind getting it going. It was developed over years of consultation.

Also, it is a mechanism by which each of the communities can choose a particular way to manage alcohol in their community so the way in which Umbakumba manages alcohol is different from the way that Angurugu manages alcohol in their community and the system allows that to happen. It is also a system which basically says: 'If you do the right thing under the rules, then you can have access to alcohol according to what your community allows you, but if you muck up, we can deal with you as an individual. We don't have to take a broad brush approach to it; we can simply take your permit away and deal with you as an individual'.

It has been really effective for all of those reasons and I think the local Assessment Committee component of it has also fitted in really nicely. We are lucky. We are on an island, so controlling grog coming in from other areas is easier, although I know police have some difficulty with their powers of search, which they probably spoke to you about this morning, too. I know they'd like that looked into. Without a doubt, being on an island makes it easier for us, but that shouldn't take away from the fact that it does work here and has had some really positive effects.

The word in the communities on the streets is strongly positive in favour of it. It had teething problems when it came in. They have been worked through, too, so it wasn't all perfect. In general, that has gone very well.

The next issue would be petrol sniffing, and if I had to list my perception of how the Indigenous communities perceive the substance misuse issues on island in order, I would put petrol at number one. It is the one that comes up all the time, it is the one which people get very concerned about.

Alcohol is the next level, although with the Liquor Management Plan, that has dropped right down from an issue that occupied a lot of people's minds to it is a problem when people smuggle grog in and break the rules. That is the next one. Then cannabis is the last issue. Kava we will touch on.

In terms of petrol sniffing, it is an issue that people area really concerned about. We have been allocated additional funding, or the Department of Health and Ageing has been allocated additional funding in this year's federal Budget to enable OPAL fuel to be rolled out onto Groote. That is worth about \$250,000 to \$350,000 per year. It has taken a fair bit of time to get that agreement but the mob in Canberra, when we eventually worked through some of the arguments with them, became very supportive and worked really hard to achieve that. Health and Ageing are now talking with GEMCO or will, be talking to them very soon, about the logistics of how you get it here. We've now got the dollars, so now it becomes a mechanical logistical problem.

Again, because of our island location, that will stop petrol sniffing in its tracks. I have brought some documentation which we provided to the Department of Health and Ageing, some background information on our communities, on the status on petrol sniffing in the communities, the cost of petrol sniffing. This was prepared in about September of last year, so the figures are a little out of date, but at that time we had - and these are records from the Substance Misuse Program run through Angurugu; I think you've spoken to Michelle.

At that time there were 45 regular sniffers. A core group of that is only about 12 to 15 core and the rest were identified as regular sniffers and another 29 occasional

sniffers, so about 74 all up. Of those, 59 were from Angurugu. These were sniffers that were identified by name by the Substance Misuse Program. This wasn't guess work; this was names off their records. I obviously don't have the names for confidentiality reasons, but they have come off their data base. 59 of those were from Angurugu, six from Umbakumba, one from Milyakburra, three from outstations, five from Numbulwar, which, at that stage, has been on AVGAS for some time so they were coming across here to sniff. 76% male, 78% 10 to 20 years old, 13% over 26 year old, four were in gaol and at least five that we could identify had children, the sniffers.

So that was basically the breakdown in September last year. Sniffing increased over Christmas and has continued to increase this year. Some of the increase relates to cannabis supply. If the cannabis supply goes down, the sniffing goes up. I will leave that document for you, if you would like that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you.

**Mr Phelps:** The Substance Misuse Program focuses pretty heavily on working with individual sniffers and running some diversionary programs and I think it does a pretty good job of working with those young people, helping them to get a feed, getting some life skills, giving them some support, but, really, without taking away the petrol, it is going to be awfully hard to win. Hopefully, this will be one less thing for the community to worry about.

The disengagement of kids from the community seems to be a real big one and that is what fires people up, compared to the level of cannabis misuse according to Alan Clough's figures is huge in the 16 to 24, and it's basically normal I think. If you look at it, it's essentially considered a normalised part of society. People will speak up about that in public forums. When you speak to them privately, there is very little concern about cannabis use. It's not considered to be something that causes a lot of disruption.

This is my interpretation. People don't cause problem when they are smoking cannabis; they cause problems when they sniff. People manage to engage with their families and not separate from the community when they smoke cannabis, but when they sniff, they tend to split away. There is a lot of angst about sniffing that doesn't exist with cannabis, although in public forums you will hear people talk up about it, but the same people, when you speak to them privately, it's just not as big.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Do people recognise the psychosis involved with people who are habitual cannabis users?

**Mr Phelps:** Kerry, I don't think so. I think that is part of the issue. They know about petrol causing brain damage and affecting people, but I don't think there is an overall awareness. People smoking cannabis don't tend to get angry and go crazy and do silly things when they are actually smoking it. The damage from cannabis tends to occur when there is no cannabis around or if people weren't supplying the cannabis then the young fellas get a bit angry and will do silly things. So the correlation between using this product and causing damage isn't a direct obvious correlation and I think that might be why. Also, when you have 75% of the young men doing it, it's kind of normal so perhaps that is part of it.

**Mr MILLS:** Graham, can you comment on the economic effect? Has there been any anecdotal...

**Mr Phelps:** Alan Clough has quantified that and I'd refer you to that rather than me guess at this stage, Terry, but I have heard the figures quoted and it's frightening.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, I just mean in terms of what you hear. They are saying, privately, they don't express a greater concern about marijuana but it is there a...

**Mr Phelps:** A concern about the expenditure?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. The fact that it costs so much. It's going into a system that is productive.

**Mr Phelps:** Terry, the only thing I have heard there, and I think to me, this is where you actually start getting to the crux of dealing with substance misuse. The CDEP program in Angurugu and particularly the civil works program, has been very successful over the last 12 months, particularly since they started on the oval down there.

They have got young blokes there who are working - in fact, when they were building the oval, they requested that they work six days a week. They were doing 37 hours plus, 45 hours a week. CDEP plus top-up. Really active, hard working members of the community doing something that they value. Many of the guys on that program were sniffers and I would say almost none of them are now. So they have given up. Any of worst sniffers are basically not sniffing any more now that they are engaged in that work. Those who smoke cannabis will tell you that they're saving a lot of money, and it is not that they have given up cannabis, but instead of having 10 to 12 bongs a day, they are down to one or two at night.

It has become in the same way that when we knock off work at night and have a glass of wine, these guys knock off work and will have one or two bongs. So not only is their consumption going down, but their expenditure on it is going down as well. That is not through an education campaign or anything like that. It is the fact that these guys are now working in jobs that they are enjoying. They are working full-time.

If I can come back to alcohol and express a personal view, and this is purely a personal view, I think it is one of the failings of the way Angurugu manages their alcohol compared with Umbakumba. Guys in Angurugu will - not in quite these words - but basically say: 'You've have got a legal recreational drug that you can partake in each evening. It's called beer or wine. There are no legal recreational drugs for my contemporaries in Angurugu. Grog is banned, ganja is illegal'. Some of those guys say: 'How does that work? Why is that remotely fair? Why do we get hammered for doing what you do just because our recreational drugs are illegal and yours are legal?'

That is a tough one to argue and I pass it on as an observation of the situation. Alcohol, for all the damage it causes, it is still a legal drug in our society. The *Living with Alcohol* training capacity that the permit system enables I think has some real merit because you can say: 'If you do the right thing, if you don't cause any problems at Umbakumba' and we have seen it. Guys have mucked up at a party and the council has gone out and said: 'You, you and you are off the grog for a month'. Bang! Permit gone for a month. After a month, they have it back, they have another go.

They are restricted permits at Umbakumba. It's only beer because they don't believe they are the situation where spirits or wine can be managed effectively in the community, and given the level of unemployment and those sorts of things in that

community, that is probably a reasonable way to go. It's their call, but at least there is a capacity for managing the legally available recreational drug.

I find it very hard to argue against these young fellas who are saying: 'We are raising our families well, we are contributing to our communities, we are good parents, good citizens of this society. All we want to do at night, is go home and relax and have a quiet one'. Their quiet one, whatever that happens to be, is illegal. My quiet one isn't because of where I live and they live. So I think it is something worth thinking about, it's a real toughie and I am probably walking a really dangerous ground.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Surely it is up to their own community to decide that.

**Mr Phelps:** It is up to their own community and, yes, it is their call but that is the consequence of the decision that has been made by that community. I don't know whether that has been talked through clearly yet and maybe the community isn't ready for that discussion just yet, and will be over time. Maybe the first step was grab control.

**Mr KNIGHT:** At Umbakumba, they obviously have very strong governance there. They have strong ladies and they are able to, I guess, let the leash out a bit in some ways, and allow alcohol to be there, but they have got such a strong council and leaders there that they can manage what little is there. I don't know what the situation is at Angurugu, and perhaps they thought they didn't have that, they couldn't control this thing if it got in a small way.

**Mr Phelps:** They are also further away from the grog supply than Angurugu. There are all sorts of things. I just raise it because it is just one of those interesting unintended consequences of decisions that are made, and it just shows the complexity of it. I think it also shows the awareness and level of thinking of some of the people like those young fellas in the community. I think, importantly, if you want to do something on substance misuse, find people meaning in their lives. Find people activity in their lives and bang down goes the substance misuse.

**Mr KNIGHT:** That is what I was going to ask you. There seem to be some well developed band-aids, like liquor management plans, that are quite effective. I guess giving people some breathing space, settling communities down, and the same with OPAL fuel, but what do you see as the underlying cause and what do you know is happening here to address that?

**Mr Phelps:** I will preface the answer by saying I think we are a bit lucky on Groote because I think one of the causes of the high level of substance misuse and you have read a lot more about this than I have, so if I start barking up the wrong tree, shoot me down, but long-term chronic unemployment tends to be a bit of a factor in all the stuff that I have read, that you are more likely to be involved in substance misuse if you are in that sort of situation. I would say chronic long-term lack of meaningful activity, I don't think meaningful activity necessarily needs to be mainstream employment, but for most of us in Australia, that meaningful activity is employment or raising kids as the key meaningful activities.

Where those opportunities are absent, and whether that is in Mt Druitt that hit the *Weekend Australian* last weekend, or whether that is in Angurugu, there is a fair bit of evidence around the world that substance misuse is higher in areas where chronic long-term unemployment or lack of meaningful activity is present.

Why is Groote lucky? Groote has about 2500 people all up, including the township here of whom about 2000 are local Aboriginal people. There are about 700 mainstream jobs on Groote, perhaps 500 to 700 mainstream jobs. That includes engineers, doctors, a whole heap of highly qualified positions, but it also includes a lot for which the education levels at the moment of local Aboriginal people are a long way behind achieving those targets.

**Mr KNIGHT:** That would include fly in contractors, would it?

**Mr Phelps:** That does include fly in contractors, yes, but it also includes a whole bunch of jobs which organisations like the ALC and GEBIE are trying to target to get local Aboriginal people into. I think in the last 12 months we have gone, particularly through the efforts of the ALC, GEMCO, the councils, we have probably doubled the number of local Aboriginal people who are in mainstream employment.

As I said, we are a bit lucky here because we have got an industry and we have an industry that is going to be here for a long time. What we haven't been good at doing here, over 40 years of mining, is getting enough local people into those jobs. There are a variety of reasons for that, but one of the key reasons is the education standards that kids leave school with, and we need to work really hard on that and there is a whole variety of issues as to why that is the case.

We have an opportunity here to get people into the mainstream western non-welfare economy. That doesn't necessarily present itself in Numbulwar, for instance, across the water because there is no mine over there. When you talk to those young men who are working full-time, admittedly they are on CDEP plus top-up and there are all sorts of issues about whether that is an ideal system or not, but you talk to those young men who are actually working full-time and have meaningful lives, they turn around and say: 'I have cut my ganja smoking by 80%', no education about ganja, nothing. 'I have now got things to do in my day that I feel good about, that I enjoy doing and I don't have to sit around and smoke dope'.

That is the bottom line as far as I am concerned. You are right. The rest is band-aids. The band-aids need to be applied, the band-aids need to go in. You don't turn around to someone and say: 'We are not going to give you diabetes treatment because you should have been working on the stuff at this end', you have still got to treat the diabetes at this end, but the preventative stuff at the base is the area where I think we are often a bit weak. We tend to look at the symptoms. We don't get in and look at the cause. Fixing the cause is expensive and it is long-term and if we spend a whole heap of money on, say; education, that doesn't show up as an outcome in the Health budget for 20 years. It will, but it will never show up in an outcome in the Education budget to a degree. So it is often difficult to get that thinking and it is about those longer-term life spans.

I think we are lucky here, as I said, because we have jobs. The other reason we are lucky is that we have a Land Council that is very proactive and we have got a Land Council that is very interested in negotiating regional partnership agreements with the Northern Territory and the Australian governments, and a key issue within that will be; Education, Health, employment outcomes for Groote Eylandt. The Land Council has money it can bring to the table to add to the mix, to improve the delivery of services in those areas. If we move down that track, we have got a real chance of changing some of those fundamentals and we have got a unique alignment here on Groote that is not available in lots of other parts in the Northern Territory where these problems exist.

Groote is very lucky, and that is great for Groote, but we shouldn't miss this opportunity either. I am not quite sure how you apply some of those things across the rest of the Northern Territory, I have got no idea how you apply those things across the rest of the Northern Territory, but we shouldn't miss the opportunity with those stars aligning to take the benefit of that situation and get some really good, positive long-term outcomes for Aboriginal people on Groote Eylandt. I think we are in a fantastic position to do that just at the moment.

**Mr MILLS:** Very good.

**Mrs MILLER:** You just talked about something that jogged my memory and nobody has touched on it today. We talked on substance abuse, but illness as far as diabetes is concerned, is that a problem here on this island?

**Mr Phelps:** Yes. Again, don't quote me on figures; go to the health mob for that, but chronic disease, in general, diabetes in an issue. I had figures the other day of 10 or 15 people in Darwin on dialysis. I know that people here want them home and those people want to be home, but they're in Darwin and that is a real issue.

As a general figure, Umbakumba has got 450 people and there are 150 chronic disease patients. Diabetes is one of those chronic diseases, but that is the level of morbidity in that community. They are statistics you are going to find everywhere across north-east Arnhem and much of the rest of the Northern Territory, I'm sure. So, yes, it's a big problem.

One of the classics, and it probably doesn't even rate on your radar much, but it is tobacco. We talk a lot about the impact of smoking, but a lot of those diseases are tobacco related.

**Mrs MILLER:** Smoking, it'll kill ya!

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Smoking or chewing?

**Mr Phelps:** It's all smoking here. I don't think I have seen people chewing it here.

I had a couple of things on my list. The only other thing to mention is that there is a little bit of kava sneaking in illegally into Umbakumba occasionally and there is a bit of a debate in the community. Some people are saying: 'We should get it legalised here' and the council has made a resolution to say: 'No, we won't. Not in a million years', but there are some people who are looking at that and saying: 'Well, why not?' and part of that is that story, as it was in the rest of East Arnhem Land when it first went in, that kava is okay. It is safe and it is better and all those sorts of things.

We have had some meetings about that. We have had some discussions and community meetings about kava, trying to raise that awareness of the pros and cons of kava. Ultimately, it has to be the decision out there. Following those meetings, the council passed the resolution late last year and said: 'No, it's not going to happen', but there is that component.

The only other thing that I had on my list that I wanted to add is and it's partly my fault because Pat and I communicated about who might be on your invitation list and I did the classic: I went straight through the organisations. You actually need to go and talk to some of the guys who smoke dope. Talk to them, talk to the sniffers. To be honest, I didn't even think about it until today when I looked at your list. You have all the usual suspects and you are going to hear one side of the story and you are not

going to hear the people who wanted grog in Angurugu. When there were the big community meetings about the Liquor Management Plan, there were a number of people in that community who said: 'No, we want to have access to alcohol'.

At some stage on our trips around, it would be interesting to try to tee up some meetings with those people so you can hear that side of the story. You have your usual suspects hear I'm afraid, myself included.

**Mrs MILLER:** One of the things you said earlier was interesting, that you feel with OPAL being introduced that there will be a shift to ganja. Do you see that as a fairly big problem?

**Mr Phelps:** Fay, if I can just correct you, the issue with the ganja and petrol on Groote has been when ganja is low, there is a group of people who sniff who you wouldn't normally necessarily class as 'sniffers' but they will sniff when they can't get hold of ganja.

**Mrs MILLER:** Right, okay.

**Mr Phelps:** A lot of that, and it would be interesting to know the percentages, but a significant percentage of those were sniffers as younger kids. Will the sniffers go to ganja? I think in some communities, and I think Alison was saying I think in Papunya where that has happened.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Eleven per cent.

**Mr Phelps:** In some of the other communities across the Top End with AVGAS that didn't necessarily happen. Ganja is a lot more expensive than petrol.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It didn't with AVGAS with us, either. The ganja level was right down when we had AVGAS. As soon as OPAL came in, ganja has gone sky high.

**Mr Phelps:** So I don't know what will happen there. We don't particularly want the word to get out that you can chrome or sniff glue or any of those sorts of things because that is not known in these communities. If we can keep it that way, that wouldn't be a bad thing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Tell them not to watch TV because that is who puts it across, the journos, and that is where the kids pick it up, from their tellies all the time.

**Mr Phelps:** We haven't seen any of that. You are then coming back to this issue of what are the recourses and what are we doing to address those? There is some information in this document which gives some indication of the things that people at Groote have done over the years to try to put in a diversionary programs and employment programs and all of those sorts of activities with the Youth Development Unit, those sorts of things.

I think there is a genuine and real effort here by people to put the sorts of programs in place that will minimise the risk that kids want to abuse a substance, and I think we have to keep working on that really hard. That sometimes gets a bit difficult because you only get funding for that when things get really bad, so that's a bit sad sometimes.

The withdrawal of funding for juvenile diversion programs by the federal government and the withdrawal of *Living with Alcohol* programs by the federal government, there have been a whole heap of programs that have underpinned that preventative side that have been reduced or withdrawn that make it really hard. Until you hit the papers *a la* Mutitjulu's sniffing situation, you hardly get any noticed and it's difficult to get funding. That is something that we need to bear in mind: that preventative stuff is the key. That is where you have to work because otherwise, people will look for something else.

With petrol, my view on that is hopefully, if they are going to use something else, given that marijuana doesn't cause the community angst, at least the community can get their head out of worrying about petrol sniffing if we get OPAL in here. It takes up so much head space of people in the community, worrying about petrol sniffing, but at least if we get that out we can get them thinking about other things, and that other thing might be marijuana or it might be diversionary stuff, but at the moment, it takes up an enormous amount of head space and it's a really damaging illicit substance for the individual, too. So I will take it as a win just to get OPAL in and we will worry about the rest later.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you very much, Graham for your insight. We will have a look at the document that you will leave us. We appreciate that and we appreciate you spending your time to come and talk to us today. It has been quite informative, I think.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, it has.

**Ms McCARTHY:** Just before you do go, I would just like to publicly commend Graham Phelps because it is through Graham's tireless work in the last six to 12 months that will get OPAL here and it has been a significant achievement considering Alyangula was not considered because it was a town. I would like to formally put that on the record for the Substance Abuse Committee.

**Mr MILLS:** Well done.

**Mrs MILLER:** Good on you, Graham.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Also, thanks to Barb for coming along with us and introducing us to all the people.

**Mr MILLS:** Are you a member of the club?

**Ms McCARTHY:** Yes, I am. I've come to sign you all in.

Mr Phelps withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 5.12pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Yirrkala Community**

*Tuesday 30 May 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Sharon McAlear, Administration Officer

**Witnesses:** Mr Burarrwanga Burarrwanga, Chairperson  
Mr Djuwalpi Marika, Town Clerk  
Mr Donga Manunggurritj, Community Police  
Ms Jenny Djerrkura

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 10.23 am.

**Mr Marika:** *[language]*

I would like to say a very warm welcome to this special meeting from the Parliament and the Territory members. It is very important, and welcome again to Yirrkala. It is a very, very important case to see each Indigenous area and hope we can make it a better, beautiful, nicer place for people to live and so people who live and understand both worlds are able to help lot of things. I would like to introduce some of us. I am the Chairman of the Council and it's really nice to meet you guys and hear from the members, and it is a good opportunity for me to talk to you the people who have achieved a lot of things in the past, and it's very nice to see you again.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you.

**Mr Marika:** And it's about making better place, the Territory. In the future, we're looking at the future. There are a lot of things that people are seriously looking at changing, and how we can make a better place. It's very important to see the future. The future is very important our people. We can share the knowledge. We look forward to see a lot of young people, like me, we've got a lot of people that are involved in our develop things what happen about in *[inaudible]*. I'd like to say thank you very much.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you. Can I take this opportunity, Mr Chairman, just to make the Chair's opening statement for Hansard purposes, as the Chair of the Committee?

I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community, and welcome representatives of Yirrkala. This meeting is not open to public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may be eventually tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record, I would ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you appear today.

Thanks very much for the invitation, and it's lovely to come to your place and see familiar faces. Hopefully we can get around and see Margaret and Banduk and *[inaudible]* and all the strong women you've got in this community. I've got a long history of working with the *[inaudible]* as well, and that's where we get the strength from, you know, working with each other.

We basically just want to hear from you on substance misuse. So, you know, kava, ganja, petrol and alcohol, things that are happening here and the good things that you mob are doing, too, in this community. We don't want to just hear about the bad stuff all the time, but any of the good programs that you mob got, if you've started to implement things. We want to hear all that. Thanks very much.

**Mr Marika:** I would like to open the discussions. I'll pass to Terry to go through these *[inaudible]* structure. Do you want to go first?

**Mr MILLS:** No, I'm listening to you. We would like to hear from you.

**Mr Marika:** This is a great opportunity to come and talk about having law and order in the community. To have a safe community and to have a better place to live. One

of the things we're looking at is harmony. There's been so much talk with [inaudible] man here. We got a [inaudible] man here. Recently we formed, three months or four or five months now, [inaudible] are volunteer people like myself. I am a volunteer man. We've got men who go around on the highway and we stop vehicles coming in with alcohol, check up liquor licence. We call ourselves the Larrpan Watchmen. We closely work with the night patrol ladies, women, and also we work very closely with the Police and also other leaders in the communities. It's been a very successful job for us and it is very hard. So much life that comes here, our family, that we have to say no to our family bringing grog here.

**Mr MILLS:** That's hard, eh?

**Mr Marika:** Very hard, and we tell the men our responsibilities, our duties. We need to take that. There has been so much talk about our fathers, the pain of my country, and that's where are heading on the fixing of our people. We talk about the pain, we talk about mining, development, and we talk about alcohol. We are trying to follow the tradition of our forefathers. Larrpan men are working from 2pm to 10pm or 11pm sometimes in the nights with pay weeks. We worked also through big operation on Cyclone Monica. Larrpan Men were there helping, working together with other staff members, Police, and the ladies night patrols, [inaudible], Adrian, Terry. Drinking in Yirrkala has become less of a problem because we have good men, people working to fight against alcohol.

We want to stop the suicides. We are in a plan to work to reduce the number of hours of kava sales and the quantities of kava. I need to stop that, to be less as it's taking away too many lives. People at home are not doing their jobs. We're hoping to get what we need from you to support us. Give us the direction how we can go towards that. We are using [inaudible] structure and we're using Yolngu structure in this area.

I have copies here of some of the activities done by night patrol, how many have been locked up, how many statistics, ladies, and we have brief information about the Larrpan Watchmen.

The story of Larrpan is not a new one. Back in 1970s the senior men ensured that respect for law and order to both cultures could be maintained, developed and made by them themselves in the local authority. This is what I mentioned earlier about. This is not a new thing. We are working very closely with ladies to do this. We are working closely with the Nhulunbuy Harmony [inaudible].

**Ms Djerrkura:** Mr Marika, don't forget the education side. That you are working with schools.

**Mr Marika:** Yes, we are working with schools and sometimes... it was last week I took this man and ladies and we went to school and we talked about [language]. [language] is a discipline. It talks about how to behave in schools. It talks about how education is important. We talk about being in school every day and those things were addressing this issue. We were talking to the families, eh?

**A Witness:** I have been in the school. We talked about discipline in school and after hours, when you go home to mother and father to learn what discipline means.

**Mr Marika:** One of the things I am looking into before we can start a new system in Yirrkala about ID card. We are looking into it to cut the number down, less liquor licences in Yirrkala for Yolngu [inaudible]. That gives less of a problem and we want

to make this a place for less people to drink. Still allow people to have a drink, like in functions like parties, but it can be controlled; not too much alcohol taken into communities. That is what we are planning towards, working towards Syd Stirling's harmony groups, Terry. We need to look at tribal law to make it a safe community.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Possibly if we get that takeaway licensing in place, I think we are then hoping that the Councils will take the initiative to either restrict the amount of takeaway grog that their own community members can have at any one time, but that will be up to them to decide whether they want to take it that step further. We are looking at - even though the problem is basically resolved here at Yirrkala, you're not getting all the drunks in here, a lot of it is just transferred into town so we've got huge problems in town at the moment. I guess you could say it's sort of isolated now to town rather than out here, which is a good thing.

**Mr KNIGHT:** One question I didn't ask on Groote. They had a card system for takeaway.

**Ms Djerrkura:** That's what we're working towards now.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes, but what's to stop you going to the golf club and getting your carton and going to the rec club and getting your carton?

**Ms Djerrkura:** No, because there's a computerised system so if you go to the Walkabout and you get your quota there for the day and you think: 'I'll go to the Arnhem Club and try there', it will come up on the system to say that you have already got your quota for the day. There will also be a committee set up with health, Police, someone from the care centre, harmony group. If anyone is seen to be drinking in a disorderly fashion, giving their grog to someone else, domestic violence, anything like that, then their card is revoked.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Have you had the community meetings to talk about this issue?

**Mr Marika:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Are people in favour of moving down that path, like they were in Groote? After listening to all the stories from men and women at Groote, they were telling us that Yolngu developed that and that they all wanted to do that. If we as Aboriginal people want something, you've got to be the driver.

**Ms Djerrkurra:** Most of the people on the sub-committee group, people like Mr Marika, Wally [*inaudible*] yes, so it's a balance between both communities.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, but what I'm saying is that over there, we heard that there were 18 drafts so there was really thorough consultation and every person that presented to this committee yesterday told us that it was driven by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people wanted to see some change, and that's when change will begin, when Aboriginal people are driving it. Just because something is happening over there, that's good, but it's being driven totally by different people here, then I don't think that you're going to see the change that you want to see. We want to make sure that people understand that they have got to continue to feed that information down to their people.

People who are kava users, ganja users, petrol users and alcoholics, it affects the whole lot of them because you can't just transfer one problem from being an

alcoholic to a ganja addict or a kava addict. It's got to be about getting rid of all the drugs to make Aboriginal people free so that they can start thinking about their children and their family and their law and culture.

We've got to back to like you were saying, strong people like our forefathers, like our grandfathers. Our grandfathers and grandmothers never had all this hassle that we've got today. Kava, ganja, grog, petrol, they didn't have that. We've got all that but we've got to make sure that we free ourselves of all those problems.

**Mr Marika:** That's why we need the men.

**A Witness:** That's why we have to work together.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**A Witness:** On the Night Patrol, drugs and alcohol, education, health, it all needs working out together.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is good. Keep telling the people, keep sending the message to the people on the ground that we're going to do the stuff that they're doing on Groote Eylandt, but bring them along with it because people have got to travel this path together to understand what the new changes are because if you've got opposition, then people will start doing something else, and you don't want that opposition.

**Mr Marika:** We are calling for another consultation of community members to bring other people, Yirrkala, *[inaudible]* to a big meeting so everyone fully understands. I think that we are fully aware that it will take place, but it takes time and we are not rushing, but working toward the goal that people don't get the wrong sort of concept. We are working to make this community a better community, a safe community. Law and order, that's what we want. We need people, every man, lady and child to stand for this land. That's what we want.

**Ms Djerrkura:** How long have we been with this harmony meeting for? Two years? When did we set that up? Two years ago?

**A Witness:** Two years ago.

**Ms Djerrkura:** So it has been a slow process, but there are more and more things developing out of harmony, like the Larrpan men and women's community patrol. Lots of things have been established by the Yolngu for the Yolngu. It has to be their initiative for it to really have a hope.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** I think what you say is we need the *[inaudible]* up and running and start to be able to achieve something. I reckon I have seen a lot of the other leaders, like what Mr Marika was saying, about our forefathers and now that is really typical, and especially the young people to have recognised the leadership roles. They probably did not understand, but if 100% Yolngu people from this region, particularly Yirrkala, put no alcohol, even kava, they can *[inaudible]*, you know, the recommendations will get up. Especially kava, getting the future training and involving, it's going to really change. Yesterday I was just crying seeing this on TV.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Oh, yes, last night.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** And I was just crying and I was sitting there on the bed. I was just crying.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Did you watch that?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, we did.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, we watched that last night. That's my community in my electorate.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** We are talking about it seriously. If we make happiness; this community is going to be really bad if anything happens. As I was seeing that, I was just crying. I can feel the pain of the community, and the reality of it if we can go and talk our old people, *[inaudible]*. Like the Larrpan. Larrpan is just not a new thing. It has been in *[inaudible]*, you know.

**A Witness:** Seventies, eighties, fifties.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Fifty years ago, there was no smoke, no petrol sniffing. I think if people learn to understand that there is a gap that people don't understand, and we can see that. I think if we start just a bit easy, we can *[inaudible]* people *[inaudible]* to understand slowly.

**Ms Djerrkura:** The trouble, too, was when kava came into the community. I mean, with alcohol we were basically just looking at a group of men and a few younger people, but when kava was introduced, it became a family thing. So you had mum and dad and older kids all drinking kava. Then we started to see that the whole extended family was breaking down. Am I right?

**Mr Burarrwanga:** It is cultural *[inaudible]*. Yes.

**Ms Djerrkura:** It was just really breaking down.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Social.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes. Kids weren't going to school because mum and dad and the family were up drinking kava all night. It was just a real disturbance to absolutely every person in the family, so then we started seeing kids dropping off from school.

Now gambling is another big one in our community and that also affects school attendance because you've got people sitting under street lamps playing cards and little kids running all over the road.

**A WITNESS:** *[inaudible]* it's illegal.

**Ms Djerrkura:** We have asked, haven't we, Mr Marika? We have asked the Police to come and monitor, but they say they just can't, they haven't got the numbers to resource it.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Sorry. I'm not against kava. I can't stop kava itself, you know, but I think there is a *[inaudible]*

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, I think if people are aware of it and it can restrict the amount they have.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Yes, it worked for a while, if you drink the kava.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** But the reality is people. I'm not trying to stop *[inaudible]*. You can stop grog. We've got to stop ganga and petrol sniffing.

**Ms Djerrkura:** And maybe control kava.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** But if we can control kava just because, you know, there are a lot of old people drinking and they use it for social things.

**Mrs MILLER:** What's your big problem here? Is it alcohol or kava?

**Mr Marika:** There are a lot of things that need to be measured. Kava, alcohol. We are looking into reducing the hours of kava, the amount of kava that's brought here. Also, we need to have some more time with family. When kava came here before 1980s, they didn't have a law. People didn't know what to do with kava, but alcohol has a law. That's why we are working into that plan to stop that kava – selling it or misusing kava. So much money is spent. We had a report from Mal, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, saying you are selling too much. You need to drop from 800 to 400. So, you know, they are things we need to consider.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** I think for this community, Yirrkala, I reckon we can control grog, we can control available kava.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is that a problem here, too?

**A Witness:** Alcohol is most of the problem and ganga.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, ganga and grog.

**A Witness:** That's right. Some people, they are usually under-age people, young girls. *[inaudible]*

**Mrs MILLER:** So they are starting at a young age as well?

**A Witness:** Yes. Old people themselves, they are drinking kava for 24 hours.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One of the things that we heard over there is that if you are going to have an alcohol management plan to control alcohol here, and yet there is nothing in place for ganja and kava. To us it looks like you are trying to solve the alcohol problem, but you still want this other problem to remain there. So people are just going to come back, people who have been drinking alcohol are going to say: 'What's the use? You can have that. We'll just go back to doing kava and ganja.'

**Ms Djerrkura:** That's why Djawalpi is saying that they want to restrict the amount of kava from the outside even further so that it works in relation to the takeaway.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, same principles.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** *[inaudible]*

**Mr Marika:** Yes. We want to try and make it better and try to treat it in the same manner because every time I see people playing cards in the street, right?

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Why? *[language]*. *[inaudible]* people got in my car and smoking ganga.

**Mr Marika:** I say you can't. Cards are not to be played in a public area, in the street light. I told people to walk up and play in your own yards. I'm doing that over and over.

**Ms Djerrkura:** You need the Police to do it, don't you?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, you do.

**Mr Marika:** I have talked to the Police, too. The Police and the night patrol, we're working together to move the people out.

**Ms Djerrkura:** The Police have got the authority to move them on and they just keep saying that they are under-resourced.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Card playing is illegal under the Northern Territory law. Maybe we can talk to who holds the regulations.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Racing and Gaming.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** And honestly, we say: 'This is illegal and this is how we are going to do it'. Northern Territory government has a law. We'll hand over the problem to the government and then say: because you and I were talking about nearly two years now. Police was involved and it is illegal, but I can't remember who *[inaudible]*.

**Mr MILLS:** Tim, I come from Palmerston. If, in the park in Palmerston, all the families came out and started gambling in the park, what do you think would happen? Police would come and there would be some people arrested. Should it be the same here?

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Yes, but for two years, I've been ringing the Police. Sometimes I went down there, I get them two, three they listen to me. Now, some night patrol ladies they were told that to pick up drunk *[inaudible]*. I told them. One day outside, I rang the Police. Police had to remove them.

**Mr MILLS:** So if there was gambling here and the Police came, would the community leaders stand up and support the Police?

**Mr Marika:** Yes. We support that and we want people to go to their own yard.

**Ms Djerrkura:** But it has to be more consistent. The Police have got to start coming out and doing it on a regular basis. It's only when we call that they'll come and do it. We've pleaded and pleaded with them to come out and do a regular visit. It would only take a few weeks and the Yolngu, the families would know that 'Well, we'd better do it the back at home' because the Police will be out again.

**Mrs MILLER:** Jenny, we have this exact same problem in Katherine and when I've spoken to the Police about it, they've said: 'Yes, it's illegal and yes, we're having a campaign'. I've said: 'That's not good enough. We need consistency'.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** What's the campaign?

**Mrs MILLER:** A campaign means they're only going...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The media, radio and all that. No gambling, no nothing.

**Mrs MILLER:** They're just going to do it for that week.

**Mr MILLS:** Just for one week.

**Mrs MILLER:** So they target that week, which they did, but you've got to do it all the time. The Police must do it all the time.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Yes, come here.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, that's right. It's the Policemen's job.

**Mr Marika:** Yes. We were telling the Police and we were asking a lot of questions and they told me that it's illegal in the Northern Territory. If it was that case, we have to seriously to really stop them in remote areas and give them education, you know, because I reckon when we tell these people it's illegal that they will laugh.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, they do laugh.

**Ms Djerrkura:** When they've been charged, then they'll take it seriously.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, that's right.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Maybe there's legal card playing here, you know.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And another thing you can do is to stop buying the cards because then [*inaudible*] bringing the cards in. It's just like alcohol.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Once again, they play the cards and they say 'In Northern Territory, cards are illegal'. When they really listen...

**Mr Marika:** Mr Burarrwanga, another issue...

**Ms Djerrkura:** It's true, but you guys need to make a formal request to the Police to come out on a regular basis.

**Mr Marika:** Yes, I've been talking with the Police; Tony Fuller. We were working pretty closely. He knows me. I work close with him. I only need Police when I feel that I don't have help. But I call [*inaudible*]. The main thing is you've got to stand for yourself. That's what I said. We are working to stand up, Mr Burarrwanga, stand up and make a stand, you know. We need to, you know, because it is the first time that I didn't ask the Police to remove people from the street. It was Gulpi and Bakamanu went around telling the people because we were concerned. We were picking up the rubbish, six million dollars a year, rubbish, cleaning up. I told the people we've got a beautiful country here, we don't want rubbish. We don't want someone to get hurt. They might sue the Council. I've been talking about that type of story. So working close together; Mr Marika, Police, Syd Stirling and the government, you know.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. Can you explain for me, just so that we on the committee can understand, tell me how the system will work? The alcohol management system will work. How do you think it will work? Can you describe how the system would operate here?

**Mr Marika:** Well, how much people living here will be managed by the council, council people, overseeing who will be drinking alcohol here, and how many license.

**Mr MILLS:** So, are there takeaways here?

**Ms Djerrkura:** There will be a permit system here.

**Mr Marika:** No. In Nhulunbuy.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay. So anyone that lives here will have a card?

**Mr Marika:** A card, and it can be monitored by the Larrpan leaders and the council members.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Mr Marika, it won't only be a card. You will also... aren't you thinking of giving out permits to households as to who can have permits in this community and who can't?

**Mr Marika:** We can only give them permits providing they've got... go through his background. What is his background, his history?

**Mr KNIGHT:** What are you saying?

**Mr Burarrwanga:** It's a criminal history. If he has criminal history, he can't. He cannot get...

**Mr MILLS:** No permit. Okay.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** What about the town people, like the Alcan people?

**Mr Marika:** At this moment, they don't need this permit. Once they break the law, for protecting them. Once they break that law, I will take that *[inaudible]*. It's only for the *[inaudible]* own area.

**Mr MILLS:** So you can go and buy takeaway and bring it back here and drink it?.

**Mr Marika:** Into your own house.

**Mr MILLS:** In your own house?

**Mr Marika:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** And have you had meetings with all the communities here?

**Mr Marika:** We have plans to have meetings with *[inaudible]* first.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** *[inaudible]* permits are being *[inaudible]*. This permit system is going to be that not everyone can have *[inaudible]*. Only three people. We want to try so we can manage people drinking here. Particularly Yolngu *[inaudible]* be treated in the same way. If a person misuses, we give them a warning, first, second, third, suspended automatically.

**Mr MILLS:** And you've agreed on that already?

**Mr Marika:** We've agreed on that. We are making agreement between whoever has the licence. We are working towards alcohol management in Nhulunbuy.

**Ms Djerrkura:** So we've got a care centre about to open and this will all work in conjunction with our other rehabilitation centre. We've got our first public hearing with the Commission is in August now. It was October, but it's come back to August.

**Mr Marika:** August now.

**Ms Djerrkura:** So that's when we hope to present our management plan.

**Mr MILLS:** And you have people from Groote Eylandt coming to speak?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Tony Fuller, the Officer-in-Charge here, was part of that process, so we've been very lucky.

**Mr MILLS:** But any traditional people from Groote?

**Ms Djerrkura:** No. We haven't had anyone over from Groote, have we?

**Mr Marika:** Yes, some people come from Groote Eylandt and Milingimbi and Gapuwiyak. They come here to see it.

**Mr MILLS:** Some of the leaders? When they went through consultations, many, many, many times until everybody understood, everybody understood. Then they implemented. So they learnt lots of lessons. I think it would be good if you could learn from their lessons so you make sure you get it perfect here before you start. Otherwise, if it's not proper at the start, it could be a mess.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Well, that's the leader's communications. All the leaders come for one and make the will strong. You know, like people coming in. They never had that, you know.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's what he's saying.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, so you're working together and become stronger, yes, because they have success and their success can help you be also successful, protect the children and the families.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So, Mr Burarrwanga, at the moment, why have this time before you've even... you're only just talking about implementing the alcohol management plan, what's the problems like here at Yirrkala with first of all, petrol, petrol sniffing? Have you got any petrol sniffers?

**Mr Burarrwanga:** No.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** No. Okay. What about ganja?

**Mr Burarrwanga:** It was 30 years or 40 years, we don't have petrol sniffing. It could come from Elcho Island.

**Ms Djerrkura:** That's many years ago.

**Mr Burarrwanga:** Alcohol has been coming here. Put him on the plane and send him back.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Marijuana?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Ganja's a big problem.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Ganga's a big problem?

**Mr Burarrwanga:** No.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Nothing?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** In town. I've never seen it in the last couple of months.

**Mr MILLS:** Last couple of months only? Do you know where it comes from?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, where is it coming from?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Nhulunbuy.

**Mr MILLS:** It comes from Nhulunbuy.

**Ms Djerrkura:** There are people out here who are selling it and we've gone to the Police.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about kava? Lots of people use kava?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Mostly young people, or middle-aged?

**A Witness:** Young people, middle-aged people, old people.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Okay.

**Mrs MILLER:** So that's your biggest worry?

**Mr Marika:** My biggest worry is kava.

**A Witness:** [*inaudible*] lot of families using that kava.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And what does it do? Does it make you violent like alcohol, or is it only when you mix it? Is it good? How do you feel after you take kava?

**A Witness:** Drunk.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** It makes you hungry sometimes.

**Ms Djerrkura:** It really numbs the back of your throat.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** It makes you go to sleep.

**Mrs MILLER:** So it makes you go to sleep, like alcohol? Like ganja?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Yes, sort of like that.

**Mrs MILLER:** It makes you go to sleep.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Yes. With alcohol, like to drink and camp in town. I already get sick next day, I get the shakes, sometimes vomit.

**Ms Djerrkura:** That's the problem without the food.

**Mrs MILLER:** That's alcohol. Does kava make you feel like that, too?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Kava makes me *[inaudible]*

**Mr MILLS:** Does kava make you sick after a while?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Yes. Kava isn't ...

**A Witness:** Nothing to *[inaudible]*

**Ms SACILOTTO:** It doesn't make you angry?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** No.

**Mr Marika:** It doesn't cause any violence, kava.

**Ms Djerrkura:** But it costs lots of money.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** I reckon I'm sort of against kava. It makes people lazy.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Unmotivated.

**Mr Marika:** Relaxed, yes, relaxed.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** If we have too much stress, you know, you get a cold beer. Kava is like that if you drink it in moderation.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is it expensive? Does it cost a lot of money?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** I sometimes sit with older people. I manage a lot of things. When I want to drink, I can drink. Just one or two.

**Mrs MILLER:** What do you call one or two? Like a glass of it?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Yes – no, have the kava. I just have one or two. I can't sit there, you know. I think it is very important for kava is you have to manage it.

**Mrs MILLER:** How much would it cost you to buy that kava?

*[inaudible]*

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Order in the House there.

**Mr Marika:** Order, order!

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, get them under control. They're running amok.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can we please have one at a time?

**John:** As I said earlier, my name is John. Anyway, kava doesn't cause any violence. I'm a drinker. I use kava. I have seen the bad side of kava, and the good side of kava. You now what I mean? On the good side of kava there is *[inaudible]*, and on the bad side there is a lot of bad things about kava. On the other hand, there's a lot of good things about kava. You know what I mean? One side is on the financial side in a family group. Father and mother waste a lot of money on kava.

**A Witness:** Wasting too much money.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And how much does a bag of kava cost?

**John:** Fifteen dollars.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Fifteen? One-five?

**John:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Okay, for a little bag? How big is the bag?

**Mr Mununggurritj:** A small one.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Okay. If you want a big bag, how much does that one cost?

**A Witness:** Four thousand dollars.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** They don't sell it in big bags.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** There's a limit. People drink about three bags. Share the kava with a group of people. That's the good thing about it, you know?

**A Witness:** At the moment, I always buy a little *[inaudible]* two and sometimes four.

**Mrs MILLER:** But where do you get it from? Where do you buy kava from?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Here!

**Mrs MILLER:** Oh, here?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** At the shop.

**Mrs MILLER:** At the shop?

**Mr MILLS:** It's not illegal.

**Ms Djerrkura:** There are two retail outlets, one at *[inaudible]* and one here at *[inaudible]*

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Next time you come here, have a taste of kava.

**Mr Marika:** *[inaudible]* wait until 12 o'clock.

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Taste the kava.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, I'm not waiting until 12 o'clock. I've never tasted it.

**Mr Marika:** We are looking into kava now. So much money's been wasted. We need to look into the hours of kava. The minister wants to ban the kava in the Northern Territory but before we can do it, we need to improve ourselves. Northern Territory government, community in Arnhem Land lets us sell kava, which is too much. They look here.

Another thing I want to talk about is we've got a criminal activity chart here, a criminal activity chart where our boys get petrol sniffing or break into house, we use this information and if we get anyone, we put him on the plane and send him up to other community. We do that.

**Mrs MILLER:** Where do you send them, Mr Marika?

**Mr Marika:** We send them to Ramingining, or other communities or send them to the island, the homeland.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So that costs \$15?

**Mr Marika:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** So which community? Any community?

**Mr Marika:** At Yirrkala, if a person comes from another community .

**Mr MILLS:** Oh, you send them back?

**Mr Marika:** We send him back. We send him to his community.

**Mr MILLS:** Who pays for the airfare?

**Mr Marika:** *[inaudible]*

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, okay.

**A Witness:** The government.

**Mr MILLS:** And you tell the people at the other end he's coming?

**Mr Marika:** We tell the people, we tell the pilot, we tell the Chairman. Be next week, put him on the plane. Work very closely with various communities, and it's working.

**Mr MILLS:** And it's working.

**Mr Marika:** Yes, it's working.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** Drink in moderation. Drinking all night until daylight can be harmful. Always eat because drinking kava all the time with no food, you might have *[inaudible]* pass out. People who drink far more than four of these bags, 400grams, are likely to have poorer health: more sores and scaly skin, lower body fat, and serious infection and liver changes.

**Mr MILLS:** When you say you're sort of against it, are you for or against kava?

**Mr Marika:** I am against it, but I need people to manage it.

**Mr MILLS:** Better manage it.

**Mr Marika:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Same with alcohol. In here, he says it's gone from 3.4 tonnes to 26 tonnes. That's a lot of extra kava.

**Mrs MILLER:** This is from them saying they are banning it. That's what this letter says.

**Mr Marika:** Black market.

**Ms SACILOTTO:** From Fiji? You'll have to go on a big holiday to get it then.

**Mr Marika:** Yes. That's beginning to work and then try to legalise.

**Mrs MILLER:** If that's come in from Fiji, we need to ban the import of it and that's it.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, but then you'll have all the Tongans and Fijians jumping up and down, saying that it's the...

**Mr Marika:** Terry, we're working very closely with the Health department.

**Danny:** We should have like a *[inaudible]*

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, Mr Marika.

**Mr Marika:** We are working closely with Drugs and Alcohol education. We work on education on people with problems with alcohol, marijuana, *[inaudible]*

We work on that with the lady here for three years. She's a cultural *[inaudible]* working with my wife. After a person can come through a course, a person begins with the special care centre, then we send them to this Drugs and Alcohol Education where my wife works here. She long-term *[inaudible]* counselling and then send them out to *[inaudible]*. It's been really successful, my wife's working.

**Mr MILLS:** That's good. I've not met your wife.

**Danny:** You know what they need? Is Gumatj (?) beer.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Gumatj beer.

**Danny:** Only the Gumatj can drink *[inaudible]*. That's what I like.

**Mr Marika:** In our management strategy [*inaudible*], we are advanced, the Yirrkala community, more advanced. We are working with criminal activities, we are working with kava management, working with Nhulunbuy Harmony, work with *Living With Alcohol*. My wife's working with drug education. We even go to school, counselling, so I think we are doing... I know Yirrkala used to be a very bad town.

We used to have a lot of drinking problems here, fighting until recently. About three or four years ago, it is happening now. It is happening and we since it happened we have more safety. People no longer have a nightmare. We just have a quiet sleep at night.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, because it's all in town now. We cop it.

**Mr Marika:** Oh!

**Mr Mununggurritj:** Every morning at around about 2 or 3 o'clock, there's all these young boys and girls. They used to be shouting with this [*inaudible*] full of grog. Partying, talking, swearing and all that. That's early in the morning about 2 o'clock after the disco. Now, not one. Not since us, the men, started working, stopping all the grog that ends up here. It has stopped the arrogant people.

**Mrs MILLER:** So that is the stopping of the alcohol coming into the community?

**Mr Marika:** Yes. We used to [*inaudible*]

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That's good.

**Mr Marika:** Maybe, I'll ask if there any other comments from our visitors, if they want to talk about other things that we missed out? It's good that not only listening to us, but we need to listen to you and get ideas.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well, Terry, do you want to go first?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. Jenny, I'd like to know is this community going to be supported if they develop a good model and it goes through all their consultations so that everybody understands, what sort of support will there be in Nhulunbuy?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, because the group that's setting this up is Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy people all together. They've been in the process since day one. It's never been just town people setting up this process. It's been half and half, Yolngu and balanda people.

**Mr MILLS:** Okay. And how long has it been going for?

**Ms Djerrkura:** About two years.

**Mr Marika:** Three years now.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, maybe three years. And then a few of us set up a subcommittee, which Mr Marika is on, and we had Tony Fuller and a couple other Yolngu men and that's when we decided to take this bold step of looking at the takeaway...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Jenny, I think the reason why Terry is asking you that, we've had the publicans from the two outlets on Groote. They came and presented to us as well. When they made this partnership with the [*inaudible*] at Groote, it was a

partnership that didn't matter about the bottom line. Are they prepared to do the same?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Well, we've had consultations with the publicans but there is one problem, the Walkabout guy. We're just not sure. We had consultants in to do this so it was fair and they could say whatever they liked. Did I email you through Ben Werne's paper?

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** No.

**Ms Djerrkura:** I will ask Jim. Have you got a copy of Ben Werne's paper? I'll get you a copy before the end of the day. That spells out everyone that was interviewed in that process. We're nowhere near finishing the consultations. We still have a way to go.

**Mr MILLS:** Will non-Indigenous residents be actively involved in this, or is it only the Yolngu?

**Ms Djerrkura:** No, its for everybody.

**Mr MILLS:** Everyone?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Absolutely everybody.

**Mr MILLS:** The same as Groote? Everyone has to have a permit?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Absolutely. To the point we're already establishing boundaries to set up a restricted area in north-east Arnhem Land. So we're taking it further. We're not just going to the *[inaudible]*

**Mr MILLS:** Okay, and for tourists?

**Ms Djerrkura:** There'll be visitors, guests. I might see if we can get hold of the powerpoint presentation. That will just explain absolutely everything.

**Mr MILLS:** Right. Has discussion already occurred that brings that same system to take in kava?

**Ms Djerrkura:** No, we haven't touched on that at the moment. Larrpan Men and Council here are already talking about the problems with kava.

**Mr MILLS:** Are they? Good.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes, and of course they know they've got our support. It's one step at a time. The care centre, they've just finished tendering and I think Mission Australia have got the tender so we hope to have that. All the buildings are set up ready to go. The community patrol is working from there so they will be up well and truly established before this takeaway system is in place so we're hoping that that will have some effect anyway on getting itinerants off the street and in to some programs.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is the care centre, Jenny, like a sobering up shelter?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Yes. You'd know probably Maurie Ryan and Matthew?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**Ms Djerrkura:** They are here. They're working with us now and Maggie is very much a part of it. I hope they'll be here this afternoon.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Maurie Ryan?

**Ms Djerrkura:** Sorry, Maurie Bird. Sorry.

**Mr Marika:** We are very confident, Terry, in that area that we will get support as the key people in the area with harmony, myself, Banambi and *[inaudible]* and we do have consultations with people, Margaret and *[inaudible]* from the school so we have the people there.

What we are trying to achieve, what we said earlier, we want to be a role model. A role model as this community have got to have the better. There is a lot of history in this community and we want to make it the best place for people, Yolgnu Matha people. That is what we are trying to achieve. We want to use the Groote Eylandt model but as we earlier said, we want to bring those people, we need to finalise things and have a big meeting here. That'll be a two day meeting. I'm looking at two or three days.

**Mr MILLS:** When do you reckon that'll be?

**Mr Marika:** Sometime in the Dry Season coming up, after the *[inaudible]* has finished.

**Ms Djerrkura:** The only thing we find with public meetings, especially out in these communities, we prefer to work through the community slowly. A public meeting doesn't achieve a lot, so we tend to work through the community and through the Yolgnu groups that already here.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We have to wind this up because we've got to go to other places as well, but I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you. I know that you are going down the right path of doing a lot of good things for your community, for your future generations. It's good to see young people at these meetings talking about how you see it is as a young person, how you want your future to be. I really want to thank you on behalf of this committee for giving us this opportunity. You've opened this meeting and welcomed us in your language, and I'd like to close it in my language. *[language]*

**Mr MILLS:** I wish you all the best. Thank you.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 11.19am.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Nhulunbuy Indigenous Coordinating Committee**

*Tuesday 30 May 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin - Dep. Chair  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Sharon McAlear, Administration Officer

**Witnesses:** Mr John Cook  
Mr Maurie Burke  
Ms Rosa Howard  
Mr Nick Hedstrom  
Ms Simone O'Meally  
Ms Leanne Thomson  
Ms Jenny Djerrkura

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The Committee convened at 1.57pm.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the community. I welcome representatives of the Indigenous Coordination Committee to this meeting.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be in-camera.

I thank you for taking the time to meet with the committee and remind you that evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the Hansard record, I ask you state your full name, and the capacity in which you appear here today.

**Mr Cook:** My name is John Cook and I am the Community Harmony Coordinator for the East Arnhem Harmony Māwaya Mala Group. Māwaya means peace, very much the same as Harmony.

What we will do today in the presentation is go through this Liquor Management Plan I have on the screen, which Tony Fuller, who is away today and is the Senior Sergeant here, has put together for us as part of one of our major projects. Hopefully, I will also introduce you to two or three other projects we have got, which are ongoing, and welcome you to Nhulunbuy.

The genesis of this proposal goes back probably three years to the start of Harmony, which was set up here before the Harmony strategy was put forward by the Northern Territory government. It only pre-dates it by a few months and that was the Administrator here, Mike Hendel (*phonetic*) who had some ethos and discussed the problems we were having with people drinking. They are the same sort of problems as in most of the urban centres and it is developing there. The organisation last year incorporated under the *Associations Act* and the prime reason was to hold money and to pull projects together. The Harmony group has no staff, assets, or insurance so it does not cost very much to run. The largest cost is my salary, and we also receive some assistance through the Department of local government.

We looked at what we might be able to do, at 'Thirsty Thursdays' and other things that have been tried and we figured out the smaller projects were not working and we needed something stronger. The genesis for this idea came from the Regional Manager of the Northern Land Council, who is also a member of Harmony, so you could say we have a wide support in the community here.

One other thing I want to point out with the Harmony group is that it is composed of Yolngu and non-Aboriginal people. Even if we have only got our Chairman Banambi Wunungmurra on our once a month meetings, I can assure everybody that nothing happens until it goes through the communities. That is the strength of Harmony. It is a joint thing and the push for it came from the women in Yirrkala.

As I said, this proposal was prepared by Senior Sergeant Tony Fuller who has been an excellent supporter of Harmony. What we were looking for was a workable community solution targeting alcohol abuse with benefits for all and minimum inconvenience.

Hello Maurie. Maurie Burke has just arrived.

**Mr Cook:** The *Liquor Act* Guidelines. The primary objective of the Act is to regulate the sale, provision, promotion, and consumption of liquor, so as to minimise the harm associated with the consumption of liquor, and the way that it takes in to account the public interest and sale, provision, promotion, and consumption of liquor.

Further options in the Act are to protect and enhance community amenities, social harmony and well being through the responsible sale, promotion and consumption of liquor. To regulate the sale of liquor in a way that contributes the responsible availability of the liquor and associate the *[inaudible]* within the Territory, and to facilitate the diversity of licensed premises associated with services for the benefit of the community.

Exempt areas are within a 2 km area as declared by the Liquor Commission, or the local government authority. In this case, Town Beach shown down here is currently an exempt area. There may be temporary exempt areas, for example ovals during football games, and individuals may apply for exemptions for street parties or private functions on public land.

Restricted areas declared by the Liquor Commission prohibit possession, consumption and sale of liquor. They allow for permit holders to possess and consume as a condition of the restriction, and allows for persons passing through a restricted area to possess but not consume. For example, if you go to Yirrkala you can take alcohol down to the boat-ramp if you are going to sea and take it out that way.

The Commission may grant permits to a person who resides in, or who is temporarily living in, or intends to temporarily live in a restricted area. Subject to sub-section (3), the holder of the may bring liquor in to, or have liquor in his possession or under his control within, or consume liquor within, a restricted area to which the permit relates. The Commission may also issue a permit subject to such conditions as it thinks fit. A guest of the permit holder may consume liquor, and also a person who does not reside in a restricted area to which a permit relates. Therefore, if you have guests coming in for a holiday they can consume liquor with you, and a guest on or at premises which are owner occupied by the holder of the permit can consume liquor at the invitation of the holder of the permit on or at those premises.

A person may deliver liquor to permit holders at his request, and a person may at the request of the holder of a permit bring liquor which is owned or ordered under a contract of purchase by that holder of the permit in to, or have such liquor in his possession or under his control within a restricted area to which the permit relates for the purpose only of delivering liquor to the holder of the permit. That is obviously where you can buy alcohol from, Margaret River for example.

Police powers currently around here are to drink within the 2 km. In this division intoxicated means seriously affected apparently by alcohol and/or drugs and that can be quite subjective.

Circumstances in which a person may be apprehended, are where a member has reasonable grounds for believing that a person is intoxicated with alcohol or a drug and that person is in a public place, or trespassing on private property, then the member may, without warrant, apprehend and take that person in to custody. Usually they stay for six hours but can be held overnight. Generally the answer is to hold them overnight as a few years ago there was a death in custody of somebody who was released at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Drinking in a public place means a person who within 2 km of premises licensed in Part III of the *Liquor Act* for the sale of liquor, drinks liquor in a public place, or on occupied private land he is, unless the owner or lawful occupier of that public place or land, has given expressed permission which has not been withdrawn to do so, or a public place, or part of a public place, in which he drinks the liquor has been subject to a Certificate of Exemption under section 45(e), or is an exempt area under section 45(a) and the drinking of that liquor is not in contravention of a condition of that Certificate of Exemption or a Declaration of an Exempt Area. If guilty of an offence, the penalty for the offence is the forfeiture for the licensee under section 45(h) from the time of the committing of the offence, and effectively currently all the police can do is to tip out grog around town.

In restricted areas, powers of search and seizure where an inspector is satisfied there is reasonable ground to suspect that an offence may exist in part, or has been, or is being likely to be committed he may, without warrant and with such assistance as he thinks necessary, enter with such force as is reasonably necessary at any time any premises, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or place for that purpose to stop vehicle, vessel or aircraft. They are much stronger powers than under the 2 km law.

He may search the premises, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or place of any person found in or on them, and any persons who he reasonably believes entered, or have recently left the premise, vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or both. He may break open, or search, any cupboard, draw, chest, trunk, box, cage, package, or other receptacle, whether a fixture or not, in or on the premises, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or place, basically so he can find out whether there is any alcohol around.

Part C is take, contain, remove and secure any vehicle, vessel, or aircraft, or any receptacle containing liquor, or any receptacle that he reasonably believes to contain liquor, or anything he finds on any premises, vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or place, or on any person searched. If he has reasonable grounds to believe that there is evidence or otherwise that relates to any offence that has been, or is being, committed, against this Part. Tony told us a story of how he nearly got a plane once detained, and as you know that has been the case of aircraft being used to bring in drugs and alcohol.

He may require the master or any persons in charge of the vehicle, vessel, or aircraft, to force it to stop, or bring to a place in the Territory, and to remain in control of either that place until an inspector can commence searching. He may stop, detain, or search any person who the authority believes on reasonable grounds that there is something that is evidence of, or otherwise relates to an offence, about to depart, and take such action as is reasonably necessary to prepare the Commission of an offence against this Part.

The pros and cons, in a restricted area you obviously have much more control, and in exempt areas more freedom for the majority if they are opened up. Currently there are exempt areas which could be opened up but they are restricted. The disadvantages are the restricted areas are more punitive, there are more police powers, and you can argue it is an imposition on decent people to be in a restricted area.

Currently this is the main area which is restricted in East Arnhem, on this side. In effect, the area to the east of that coming down is basically the area of the Gove Peninsula we are now looking to get restricted along that area. There is a small area down at East Woody which is restricted, and there is a 2 km range from Yirrkala that is restricted.

The current situation is five takeaway liquor outlets, five main pubs, one clubs. There are restricted takeaway trading hours, however there are no restrictions on type or amount of liquor. There are high levels of alcohol abuse, numerous domestic violence, high rates of suicide, and three alcohol related fatal crashes in 2005. That is the situation we are confronting.

In terms of the actual outlets you have the Surf Club, Golf Club, Arnhem Club, Yacht Club, Walkabout and Woolworths. There is no takeaway at the Surf Club, restricted takeaway at the Golf Club, Arnhem Club, and Yacht Club, and a public takeaway at both Woolworths and Walkabout and these are the hours up they have.

Only generally minor issues come from the Surf Club and the Golf Club. The main disturbances on the premises and outside are fights and drugs and you get them from the Arnhem Club, Yacht Club, and Walkabout, and from Woolworths you get a lot of drunks and humbuggers around the centre.

So you get mainly drink driving arising from the Surf Club and Golf Club, but most of the problems are to do with public drunkenness, humbugging, fights, assaults, domestic violence, restricted area breaches, major disturbances in the community, sleep deprivation, drugs, in the other places.

This is the protective custody at Nhulunbuy's watch-house up to March 2006, and I have asked people to note the last couple of months. You can see that massive rise in people in protective custody, and also a rise in the next slide, and that is basically due to the Yolngu men of Yirrkala, and an alcohol roadblock at the 2 km limit at Yirrkala. What that has done in effect, very much like a balloon, you squeeze that part of the balloon in Yirrkala and you cop it in Nhulunbuy.

**Mr Burke:** What you said John is the last protective custody figures for April and May have been 350 and 388 so it has continued that massive climb.

**Mr Cook:** And here we have exactly the same. Liquor is tipped out and Tony has said that row of figures, he thinks it actually might, but there has been a massive spike recently. Once again, that is due to the community of Yirrkala deciding they have had enough of grog - we even had complaints it is too quiet to sleep there - but that has been very recent, just the last few months, and there has been a displace of the people from Yirrkala to town.

Possible solutions we have come up with are restricted areas and takeaway permits on our conditions. We did at one stage look at a situation where we were going to try and see if we could exempt Nhulunbuy, but it just would not work. We had a good look at that and there were a range of reasons, the black market etc., and you just could not make it work. This is the area we are now talking about.

For licensed premises, residents and non-residents, there will be no change. People who still want to go to the club or pub can. There is no change to those. Residents will need a permit whether they are at home, outdoor leisure areas, or community recreation areas. Non-residents in restricted areas will need to work under somebody else's permit unless, of course, they decide to get themselves a permit.

Licensed takeaway outlets, residents permit, and non-residents in restricted areas, we get a lot of people who come in a couple of times a year, or sometimes every month picking up mine people, there is no reason why they cannot apply for a permit, and there is no reason why they can't get one in Darwin. What we did look at in terms of the system setup, was that we would have a database here and access

would be provided in Darwin. So it is basically linked up on a computer system, amount and type, so you have a thousand types of vehicles, and there are possibilities of organising changes. For example if Yirrkala decide you can only take a maximum of low cartoon of mid-strength beer, we can actually put that into the system.

Licensed take-away outlets are all linked up by the permits. Permit breaches; allow for immediate suspension subject to review of the Permit Committee, or bring before the Permit Committee. Immediate suspension, subject to review of the Permit Committee, would be by the police or the LLC. The obvious thing there would be when a major domestic violence incident occurs where alcohol has been involved, and the police might want to suspend that person's permit immediately.

All of the conditions suspend or cancel, allow appeal to the Liquor Commission if people are not happy with the process. The Permit Committee meet monthly and there will be some change to this. Alcan have asked not to be on the permit system, unlike GEMCO in Groote, and we would say there would be a core of Police and Health. In terms of Health, that would be a *Living with Alcohol*, and then there would be certainly at least two Indigenous representatives. How that committee is set up, has not yet been settled, but it might well be structured on the basis that if there is an issue from Yirrkala you obviously make sure you have Yirrkala people involved.

There have been some discussions as to whether that committee might be slightly more broken up in the sense that if we are talking about the communities here, which have representative structures, it might be a good idea to get representatives from those communities on the committee, however but where you are talking about *[inaudible]* you might very well have the senior T.O. on there. This is still for the community to decide. As I said, it is a proposal.

When the Permit Committee decides the suspensions, alterations, applications, or cancellations, they can and possibly ask the defendant to take an Alcohol Awareness Program before the permit is re-issued. These are some of the ideas, and some of these might also be changed, but permits should have name and ID number, conditions, photograph, and for many areas such as Little Bondi and other recreational areas look like being happy to allow people to have alcohol there. We are looking at whether we can have planned routes because when there are major ceremonies or funerals, it is often the case that we get requests by the senior people to suspend alcohol for the time the ceremony is on.

A possible solution is facial recognition technology, but at this stage we do not know as there are doubts whether it is useful. It would appear at this stage that the easiest solution would be a plastic swipe card with a photograph on it, but that is something we are looking into.

Our plan is to find a workable solution to ongoing liquor problems in the Gove Peninsula, which addresses problem drinker's ability to access liquor, ability of responsible drinkers to assess liquor with a minimum of inconvenience. Financial viable and maintenance of the plan are also important. As a result of the planning sessions the following was agreed to present to Harmony, and Harmony is promoting this, that the Gove Peninsula, including Nhulunbuy, become restricted areas in Part A of the *Liquor Act* permits. Current on premises licenses continue as already exist under all current licenses, takeaway licences remain as they currently exist, but there is a possibility to extend if required in the future. If we do get rid of the problems, then there is no reason why you necessarily need those restrictions.

Restricted areas do not extend to the sea or to bays, and that includes navigable waterways and things. Takeaway permits are issued by the Liquor Commission and administered by our local Liquor Committee. Takeaways can only be purchased by using a permit card or other systems which would include mail order buying, and bringing back duty free, etc. Nhulunbuy residents who purchase or build accommodation will be able to access permits under existing arrangements for purchase and consumption of liquor in accordance with their permits. This includes fly-in and fly-outs, which we have a lot here with Alcan the residence of friends with their express permission.

All persons living in Indigenous communities to be issued permits on the recommendation of their council homelands, with the approval of the Liquor Committee, only for drinking in their communities and in their residences as per Nhulunbuy residents in exempt areas.

The key there is, if you are living in Nhulunbuy you can go straight to the police station, and we are suggesting we have a person stationed there to issue the permits, and if you are on a community you need to go through community first in case they have specific restrictions they want to impose.

There will be nil restrictions on quantity and type and liquor which can be purchased, unless a community deems otherwise, or for persons coming before the Liquor Permit Committee to resolve behavioural issues, at which time limits may be imposed upon them, or they may be suspended for having a permit to purchase and consume. They do have the ability to appeal if they want to.

Further IT and community advice is required in regards to takeaways as to the type of card and monitoring, system with due attention to privacy issues, with limited access to police upon the receipt of a complaint. The privacy issue is one which has been brought to mind, and there are basic sorts of IT systems you can look at.

One is a stand-alone system, and the other is integrated with TILS. The one which is integrated with TILS allows you to access history of consumption, and while some people might say this is going too far, the largest club, the Arnhem Club, already has that system operating, however the stand-alone one has its benefits elsewhere in the Territory. We are not so much looking at Video 2000 at this stage, but the key thing is protection of privacy which is a major consideration in whatever system we choose.

Exempt areas will include recreation areas specified as suitable for drinking by Dhimurru, subject to Dhimurru permit conditions, approved sport and social functions such as football, special dancing, and beach volleyball. There may be some changes here. Arafura Park and Lions Park have been major problem spots so they may not be put down as exempt, and at Cape Wirawawoi at the moment you are not allowed to drink there between 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm weekdays.

The consequence will be displayed on the people with substance abuse problems. There will be a few who will take off and end up in Katherine and Darwin, and one of the good things about the way we have structured our program to date is that Harmony has a special care centre which is due to open soon. It will be a lot easier to run rehabilitation, which is also designed from the visitors' restricted area. With the Return to Home program we would expect we could take people away and give them programs, so there will be greater ability for rehabilitation.

Some consultation has already been done. We had a meeting with the unions which was very successful and they are online. With councils and homelands, we have had one trip to Yirrkala, we have got Gunyangara still to go and Lanhupuy Homelands. Lanhupuy Homelands is totally on-line, and in Gunynangara about a year ago people will recall and Galarrwuy stood up and said he was promoting to make the place dry. We think there will be a small exempt area near Gunyangara and we believe Yirrkala is also looking at one, but people who have got takeaway permits will be *[inaudible]*. Dhimurru management is ongoing.

At the end of the day, consider this; if we do not change direction where are we going to end up? Whilst we have major problems here, there are obviously other settlements which have greater problems than we do and we do not want to go that way.

That is the end of the presentation. It was not as good as Tony who, I can assure you, is excellent, however, that is what we are proposing and are currently working on. We have the support of at least 98% to 99% of the Yolngu within the Gove Peninsula, and we have a considerable amount of support in non-Indigenous areas. At the end of the day most people are going to be able to wander along to the police station; which means there needs to be a position made available there. They have their photograph taken, fill out a form which would probably say something like; 'Do you understand what you are doing, you do not give this to anyone else, etc., and these are the penalties'. They then sign their name, wait five minutes and get a little card, and that is it.

If we need an expiry date for, it would probably be three years, in the interim because I have got no doubt this would be an initial trial to start with, and then after that permits can probably be issued for five, six, or seven years. It is only if people change their physical appearance they would to get another one, which is not a major problem.

If you lose your permit, you will have to pay \$4 to \$5 for a new one, however we are trying to put a system together where we get this done for free in the first instance. To that end we have already given a 'heads up' to the I.C.C bid, the Northern Territory government and to Alcan. All the projects Harmony does so far have those three groups involved; the Special Care Centre, the community trials, and currently what we are trying to start off with a couple of base *[inaudible]* project. The hope is that we can do it that way so the costing should not be too bad, and recurrent costs should not be very much in-terms of maintaining the I.T system. Paying for a single position is probably all that is going to be required from \$3,000 to \$4000.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The software system, is that like a 'real time' system, so if I walk in to the takeaway, to buy two cartons?

**Mr Cook:** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Where does it go to?

**Mr Cook:** The police station, they will have the server up there. As I said, there are two systems we are looking at. One we is a proprietary brand called QUEST. That software is currently used by the Arnhem Club, Yacht Club, and the Walkabout Hotel. The only two places it is not used are the Golf Club, and at the only problem area we have which is the major shopping retailer who may have Laws, however QUEST can integrate with that and we will be asking the retailer to get that integration. Basically what you have is a card reader, a swipe card and the guy behind the counter has the

screen. You swipe your card and it goes straight back to the parent server and the server comes back and the retailer can say; 'Okay' if you have an unlimited licence, or he can see if there are any restrictions on it.

**Mr KNIGHT:** How often are the licenses renewed? If someone is buying 10 cartons every second day, at what point does that come to the notice of the police and where do they take it from there?

**Mr Cook:** The idea is still under privacy, however we do not want to do is to have some sort of scanning sheet which goes around and tries to pick up those people who buy large amounts of grog. What the police are interested in, is people who try and sell it on the black market and the classic example is seven to 10 cartons of grog.

There are two ways this can work. Systems such as QUEST will keep quantities that an individual has bought for as long as you like, so if the police think someone is causing problems, they can ask for his history. That is one way it can be done.

The other way is if you are aware that somebody might be doing that, and it is very much intelligence to have that awareness, on the other system which is not in comparable data form, on the computer system of the police you can put a star or an asterisk against someone's name and when the person swipes his card, then either that person can check or phone up to check why, the licensee could do so. So there is that, but it is not designed as a system which would scan all purchases from Nhulunbuy picking out the high one.

**Mr KNIGHT:** On Groote Eylandt they are going to renew permits every 12 months, but you are saying three or five years here?

**Mr Cook:** Yes but I think we can get some amendments to that. The idea of having a permit each year is a bit silly and not needed if you think what it is about. It is giving a person the ability under the current circumstances he has, and most people have got no circumstances to worry about, free access to as much takeaway as they want. So there is no real need, and I think the only other area, and that was [declared by the] Licence Commission currently have a one year limit, but I am sure that could be looked at.

**Mr KNIGHT:** One of the other things that came up in Groote was about holding the card which does not have any identifying picture on it at the moment. It is such a small community over there that the bar staff would know who that person was just by sight, however obviously you have a bigger population here and a lot of people coming in and out. Is that a problem?

**Mr Cook:** It shouldn't be, but there are a couple of things we have been looking at. One, you have got your permit system which has got a picture of the person on it, and two, there is no reason with a screen that the person serving cannot pop up an immediate comparison if needed. One of the problems about things such as face recognition technology is if the system goes down, then you have nothing. At least with this you will have a card.

There are other alternatives such as a coding of two or three colours of cards and which mean 'unrestricted', just as there are different types of driver licences. All that is still in the wash and we are looking at it, but we do know that on the stand alone and the QUEST systems we can do it two ways. Our understanding from Groote is that people who have their cards for takeaways tend to hang on to them. Tony

pointed out in his last presentation was that the only two people who lost their cards were non-Aboriginal holders.

So that is what is proposed and we are currently working in community consultation. A lot of it between now and the end of August when the Liquor Commission is due to be here. They will hold their own hearings, and we will hopefully get something from that.

**Mrs MILLER:** One of the areas you are talking about with the permit system was people saying; 'I am coming to this quarry. I have not got a card but I am actually a drunk from another community and I will use his card'. How does that affect him?

**Mr Cook:** He could lose his card. If he played up and caused trouble it is very likely that would happen. There is an onus on whoever has the card, and certainly some sections of population will want to keep that card safe. There has been discussion about what happens if somebody has a lot of friends that might be drunks and the bloke purchases a few takeaways beers. There is nothing wrong that, but would it be okay for that person to leave his card with a licensee? It is not the same sort of thing as if you are a taxi driver. You are only worried if the licensee starts fighting with a lot of other people. But those questions are very significant.

**Mrs MILLER:** The idea of the card of course is to combat the huge anti-social problems caused by drunkenness. Say for instance you have an Indigenous family who are really responsible and they have got a card and are going to swipe it, but they are getting a lot of humbug from family members to drink at their place. How can those people be protected because these people who have come onto their property do not have to have a permit to drink because they are visiting?

**Mr Cook:** There are a couple of ways. Possibly one is they can restrict the quantity they have, which means even if the [visitors] are first in to the fridge there are only six or a dozen beers sitting there and it is unlikely they will cause problems as a result of having that grog. It is a real problem for people with strong Indigenous relations to say no, as we are all aware. I have been with a group once and experienced it, but Tony assures me that people who have got their permits really try to look after them but it is a problem.

At the end of the day they have got to go somewhere so what do you do? If you have a permit in all good faith and are good persons having a few beers and relatives come in and decide they want to take the grog and go on a rampage somewhere, under that circumstance it is a problem because you are holding the permit.

**Mrs MILLER:** Did I understand it right that everybody has to have a permit? I just cannot come in from a community and decide I was going to stay at my relative's place and drink under his permit? I would have to have my own.

**Mr Cook:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is this going to operate the same?

**Mr Cook:** Yes. If you are a visitor, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, and you come in to town on a regular basis, there is no reason why you cannot apply to get a permit.

**Mr MILLS:** A tourist calling through, do they need to come under the permit of a resident?

**Mr Cook:** Currently the only place affected is motels as hotels can sell alcohol to their own clients. The only thing that would stop them doing it is if you come in for one day and want to get a bottle of whatever at Woolworths and want to bring it back as takeaway. They would not allow that. At the Walkabout Hotel and you want to buy alcohol as a guest then that would be fine, but if you are at the lodge up here then that would not be the case.

**Mr MILLS:** A lot of tourists are very budget conscious and want to get the best price. Could they show their driver's licence and clearly show they are a non-resident from somewhere else?

**Mr Cook:** No. There is a cost obviously in producing the cards and there are times the police station would be open, so if someone has come in for two, three, or four days it may not be a big deal. As a tourist, it is not constrained by time. They can spend 10 minutes in the police station and get a permit.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you can get one that quickly if you go to the police station and prove that you are a tourist?

**Mr Cook:** Exactly. The problem is that there was no way we could do the *[inaudible]* system, and the change to make this viable was when the Racing, Gaming and Licensing said they were happy if we had our modem and database here. So the modem and database have come down here and allows the senior police officer to be, if you like, the agent for Racing, Gaming and Licensing. This is very viable. Currently Racing, Gaming and Licensing have all the databases in Darwin. In Groote you go into the police station, fill out a form which gets faxed to Darwin, and a couple of days later it comes back.

**Mr MILLS:** Two weeks later.

**Mrs MILLER:** Two weeks later, yes.

**Mr Cook:** Two weeks okay. That is the major difference and there is no reason why the server cannot download that same information to Darwin. Therefore, providing there is an ID card system in Darwin the visitor could get their card before they even left.

**Mr KNIGHT:** There are two clubs and five what?

**Mr Cook:** No, all up there are five clubs and one hotel.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Who owns them? The clubs are member owned and the pub is privately owned?

**Mr Cook:** Yes the pub is privately owned.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Has the pub got a takeaway licence?

**Mr Cook:** Yes.

**Mr KNIGHT:** How does that publican feel about it?

**Mr Cook:** It was remarkable, we had a licensee meeting and I went along because at that time I was acting licensee of the Yacht Club.

The licensees there were from the Walkabout, the Arnhem Club, the Yacht Club, and me for the Golf Club. The only one that did not turn up was Woolworths and they were more than happy. In fact it was the Walkabout Hotel that suggested photo recognition technology which they are currently putting in, and they want to join Harmony. There was no negative view there as they suffer equally.

The other thing from their perspective is that whilst their takeaway sales may get affected in the negative, on the other side of course is that there will probably be more people inside and there is a higher profit margin for that.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Can we stop there for a minute and get Rosa to present the Raypirri Rom so we cover everything just before these guys have to take off, is that okay?

**Mr Cook:** I was going to say, that was one project and Rosie is going to talk about Raypirri which is another major project.

**Ms Howard:** Thanks John. I am not quite prepared for this but I have brought a couple of handouts and I just happen to have my stick with me. I have only got about four copies of hand outs. We will set up the powerpoint presentation.

**Mr Hedstrom:** My name is Nick Hedstrom I am the Manager of Family and Children's Service in East Arnhem. I have been working with Harmony for several years to get this project up. It had its origins a number of years ago when Mr Djerrkura was commissioned by Miwatj Health to put together a project and he came up with a proposal called Raypirri Rom. Raypirri, loosely translated is discipline and Rom is law in Yolngu Matha.

To cut an exceedingly long story short, it is about Yolngu people using traditional methods of conflict resolution to resolve issues their way. The overlay with this project over the last few years is that it is supporting all who do business and resolve conflict their way and is also linking in with non-Indigenous agencies, FACS, Police, and Crisis Accommodation, where their services are required.

For instance in the situation of a child abuse matter, it is providing a way in for FACS to conduct an investigation in the culturally appropriate way and to come up with a resolution that will hopefully be more satisfactory toward parties. Rather than has been the situation in the past where FACS get a notification and come into a community cold and conduct an investigation which, without any sort of lead in and preparation, is hard work to get a positive outcome.

The Family Wellbeing Group is a sub-committee of Harmony and it is this group that has been charged with the development of the Raypirri project. In February this year a submission went to both the Northern Territory and federal governments for funding of this project under Family Violence, and the main drive of it is dealing with issues of child abuse and family violence. There have been meetings in Darwin between NT and federal FACS and we are currently awaiting the outcome of that submission for funding. For the actual project details I will pass over to Rosa?

**Ms Howard:** My name is Rosalie Howard and I am working as Raypirri Rom Project Coordinator. I have been doing this since 9 January and working with Yolngu to address Yolngu problems in Yolngu ways and as Nick was saying, that was underpinned by Mr Djerrkura's document which pointed out how mainstream services do not work for a lot of the Yolngu people.

I will put these main points up there to hurry through them. You can read them so we are all conscious of the issues behind the Indigenous law, justice, and social problems in communities.

There are to be linkages when the project gets up and running with Elcho who were advised mid-2005 that Galiwinku would be an important partner, in addition to Yirrkala and [inaudible]. The model is supported by the Harmony Group, and the sub-committee of the Family Wellbeing Group who I am directly professionally accountable to.

The Raypirri model is to be a cultural way of doing business, and to help Yolngu people to address issues related to family violence and substance abuse, in a way that is about promoting safety and wellbeing. It is also about disciplined ways of mind, body and spirit, as different to the cultural transition process.

It is meant to avoid the silos of problem solving so we are not just on about alcohol or child abuse or family violence. We hear Indigenous people across Australia saying they are all connected, there the project is meant to be solutions focused and using coordinated approaches. That coordination might be at the community using the [inaudible] leaders and other important people in the community. Coordination can also happen outside the community using mainstream services, as Nick was referring to. It is a pilot project and it is anticipated the development will happen across the region, based on those principles of shared responsibility because, as we all know, we need communities to be on board and supporting and contributing to something to have a life.

How will it function? This overhead is meant to give you a picture of one community and the yellow oval, the red circle, the red triangles, and the blue clouds with the cranky people sitting in them is basically one community. It is anticipated funding will be channelled through to a community council who will employ a Family Wellbeing coordinator and a number of Raypirri facilitators.

Each of the three communities may well develop the model and may have their own number of facilitators, however what is intrinsic and under-pinning is there will be a Family Wellbeing coordinator as it has been demonstrated it is not possible for the work to be done without there being somebody over-sighting the work in the community.

Those components are an example of one community, for example Yirrkala. Sitting external to that is me in the Raypirri Rom coordinator position. Off to the right it would be replicated in two other communities, and part of my role is to support and then report on, those activities.

Where are we at the moment and what do we have right now? We have current one-off funding, \$60 000 from the federal and \$20 000 from the Northern Territory governments, which support the current project work. That money goes through to 30 June, and there is a small amount of carry over money which will give us a bit of grace.

I have been taking a community development approach to my work. I cannot go out there and do all those things facilitators will be doing in the communities for a range of reasons, so I have focused on strengthening the existing foundations, those existing community workers, the wage and voluntary ones, and to be undertaking activities. It is about increasing commitment and focus on wellbeing.

What we hope to have soon is the fully funded model as a pilot across three communities. It will have salaries for myself as a coordinator, external to the community, and then within each community a Family Wellbeing coordinator and probably two Raypirri Rom facilitators, however it may be more according to the need and clan requirements in each of those communities.

Within that, while each community might decide how many facilitators, etc. there will be the same key outcomes, but how those work arrangements happen will suit the needs of that community. The oversight by the Raypirri coordinator using those actual learning processes of what is working and how do more of that, and what do we avoid doing that is not working. Again, the guidance and support from Family Wellbeing as a sub-committee of Harmony.

In the last point there, you can see that the Family Wellbeing coordinator will be coordinating the work internal and external to the community, and it will be drawing on the skills and knowledges within that community to work on their problems.

To conclude, the model is at the prevention and early intervention end of the service delivery continuum. Of course there will be some crisis response because often problems happen after-hours and that is when those workers will still be in their communities.

Broadly speaking, any problem situation will be resolved by those community workers, but if there are issues of personal safety, physical risk, or risk that cannot be assured within that community, then that is when outside services will need to be involved. That is part of the capacity building work as we are setting up that commitment and partnership towards working on those problems.

Where to now? We are waiting for advice about funding submissions which is the big one where we hope to have the pilot across the three communities. In the current situation I am not sure what that is going to mean. We were expecting the funding would be through for a March starter, but that is still with the Minister I believe.

In the meantime I am continuing with the capacity building work, and having the communities ready to run with the project. We also have a back-up submission with the Northern Territory government asking for another lot of one-off funding as a Plan B. If that is the one that comes off, we will have to think about how I do my work because I cannot keep on doing *[inaudible]* work the whole year without getting some sort of runs on the board at a community level, that is what the community wants.

To finish off, Family Wellbeing and Harmony have been the linchpins in the project and my compass, together with the Yolngu people I have been working with. Without them the project would have been impossible. There are a heap of people out there who are really committed to the project, both waged and voluntary, and they are all just waiting to get their boots on and run with the fully funded project.

That is it and I can take some questions.

**Mr KNIGHT:** How much have you applied for?

**Ms Howard:** For the external to the community is about \$80 000 for my position plus operating costs, and per community it comes up about \$170 000 for a full financial year.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Half a million roughly?

**Ms Howard:** I can't do my numbers in a hurry, but it was about \$170 000 per community across the three communities. We had also talked about an implemental start-up as it is almost impossible to get three communities running at the one time; that is to start with one community and then work up to three communities, and it was \$170k per community for the financial year.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Obviously sexual abuse of children is fairly high and it is on the national media at the moment, however it is not a new thing. How is this model going to truly protect those children, and how is it stronger than what was there before?

**Mr Hedstrom:** One of the issues from a FACS perspective, and it is our responsibility to investigate child sexual assault, is that we get very few notifications of child sexual assault in East Arnhem. The notification rates are substantially lower here than in other areas in the Territory.

The conclusion I draw from that isn't that we are necessarily living in some sort of nirvana, rather that the lines of communication are somewhat more difficult. That is what this is about; this is about building lines of communication between Yolngu and non-Indigenous agencies. Primarily it is also about capacity building within communities so they can resolve issues themselves. However, they still have a statutory responsibility under mandating reporting to report child abuse and sexual assault, or any other form of abuse.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I will play Devil's Advocate here. I am not saying in these communities here, but in some communities, their leaders are the problem, and intimidation in those communities is fairly high. You are involving the leaders in the whole process of notification, and the community people. How can you guarantee that that process cannot be corrupted by the very perpetrators being involved?

**Mr Hedstrom:** I cannot guarantee it.

**Mr Cook:** We can say the key people we are appealing too, is those Yolngu people in the communities who want to keep the peace. In the case of Yirrkala for example, I will just talk briefly because while we are talking about Raypirri [we are] very close. The community patrol was started by women and after 14 months the men [came on board]. So what we try to do here with the community patrols, sexual abuse and most of our other stuff is appeal to those elements within the communities that want to do something. They are the ones who get our support.

As Nick knows, on most of the communities in East Arnhem there are a few people, predominantly women, who try to keep the peace. It is our job is to support them, and that is where we think the policy should be going; supporting the people who want to do something on the communities.

**Mr Hedstrom:** I want to say to that we need to be careful, particularly in the current political context, that we do not demonise Aboriginal men. There are some Aboriginal men who are doing exactly what you are saying. Nobody has 'perpetrator' written on their forehead, but I feel very comfortable in working with those men and women who have been involved in this project, and God knows it has got to be better than sitting on our hands and maintaining the status quo.

**Ms Simone:** As well, this project is definitely a living breathing document, or project and it is something, and there are enough Indigenous people out there who are now willing to let somebody know who the perpetrators are which does get back to people

like Nick, Rosalie, Jenny and others. Those people will very quickly be taken out of those positions if there is a problem, but it is very much a living, breathing, active document and project.

**Mr Cook:** In regards to the position of coordinator, we make an assumption which I suggest is history, but since the days of welfare there has been no push for law and justice on communities. There is a carpenter, a plumber, and a CDEP Coordinator, but who is there looking after law and justice? That key person needs to be there reporting to the council and making key leaders understand what is going on, and supporting those Yolngu people on the community who try and do something about it. That is an essential need out there.

While every promotion has gone to towards economic development, if you have not got safe communities you are going to get nowhere. To make safe communities you need to support the very people who are trying to make it safe. There are men and women and they are the ones that need supporting.

We are saying that way we can get communication flowing and some capacity building on the communities to help themselves as there have been no resources put into communities. From Yolngu perspective if you do not put resources there, it is obviously it is not important, and there has been very little importance attached to law and justice on communities.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We have to allow for some of these committee members to ask questions, which is why you have the committee, so we can ask our questions to progress what you have presented to us, rather than people who have turned up answering each other's questions.

I have two questions. If you have a look at any report which has been conducted on any Indigenous people worldwide, it tells you the basis of the social impact we see today and that the underlying issues are many things. It does not just refer to law and order; it is a multitude of issues. It is to do with colonisation of some people, with poverty, with poor housing. All the reports you see on the socio-economic indicators of where any Indigenous person is, is based on a multitude of issues. It does not specifically pull out one little issue like law and order and say this is the issue.

Just going back to the reporting, I am an Aboriginal person who was born and bred and lived on a community. I know some of the things you are picking up are really good and I hope they work. There are some things that we have trialled in our area and they have not worked but I am not saying they are not going to work here, especially in this time of debates around abuse, dysfunction in Aboriginal communities and abuse against children.

You had the federal Minister Mal Brough, come out and say that we are many tribes, but we are all Australians and he is not prepared to look at anything that is Aboriginal versus Australian law, so you have that big obstacle to get over. He only said that last week and you are going to have to be ready for a fight. Where you have the Aboriginal Affairs Minister set in his mind where he thinks Aboriginal people should be heading, and that it is a nation of one people and not about being Aboriginal or being white. It is about addressing the issues of child abuse and violence against women.

As an Indigenous woman who lived and breathed these problems everyday on a remote Aboriginal community, it is good to talk about these issues but like Rob Knight said, some of the men and women we deal with everyday are perpetrators of these

very things we sit down and talk about. They tend to just brush it off and say 'it is not something we need to talk about; let the whitefellas do that.'

When it comes to abuse against children there is no other way but one way to do it. There is not a black way or a white way, but there is a right way to do things. I truly believe that. It does not matter if you live on an Aboriginal community for 45 or 75 years or you die living on a community, you never know the problems because you do not live and breathe the problem - we do.

**Ms Thomson:** What you are saying is very true, but it is important to understand that a lot of us have spent a lot of time on communities building trust and good strong relationships...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I have lived in your society and I feel the trust too, but I do not pretend to know your culture. I just know I can survive in that culture, and the same opportunities and choices have to be given to Aboriginal people.

**Ms Thomson:** I agree I do not think any of us go out there pretending to know the culture, but I hope all of us have a willingness to try and learn about the culture and gain an understanding so we can work alongside the Aboriginal people to facilitate some of these changes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, but just remember one thing. There is not a black way or a white way of doing things, but there is the right way. When it comes to children, I think that we really have to remember that.

**Mr Hedstrom:** In response to that, you are absolutely correct and when FACS gets information in relation to alleged abuse of children. That is it. We assess the level of danger the child is in, black or white, it does not matter, and we then take action. What this is about is before that investigation commences. This is about opening lines of communication which do not currently exist, and unless FACS can get that information then the abuse continues. I am not saying I have a magic wand to stop it, but if I have the information then I can conduct an investigation.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But you at FACS know, if we continue to stereotype abuse against children or women as only in Indigenous populations, you are sending a strong message to non-Indigenous people to abuse children and their wives inside their houses, because ours happen out in the open. Believe me; white people do it as well. We have to try and stop stereotyping Aboriginal abuse. We know it is higher, but we have to deal with abuse in a wholistic way as abuse.

**Mr Hedstrom:** I worked with DOCS in New South Wales for 13 years, so I can assure you I do understand it does happen in non-Indigenous communities.

**Mr MILLS:** If the intent of this is to open and improve lines of communication, what level of attention is given to the acquisition of Yolngu language by non-Yolngu?

**Ms HOWARD:** I am learning and doing a workshop next week which is focusing on children; the wellbeing and development of children. I am asking the people who are coming; what they wish for the children, and what can they as a leader contribute towards the wellbeing of that child. From there the workshop is going to grow into strategies and actions for that community.

While I am not very fluent in Yolngu Matha at all, I have worked at putting the workshop together with the people. You will see there are a couple of words there in

Yolngu Matha they helped me with. The brochure is going out to people in communities and there are key words for them to know that the workshop will be fun, it is going to have them thinking about things, and it is going to have them joining up with other people who want to be strong about this.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The two positions you are going to place in the community, will they have language?

**Ms Howard:** They will be Yolngu people. One of the things I have been looking at in the developmental work I have been doing, is preparing a whole lot of stuff and one of those things is the training. Today I was talking to a lady in Alice Springs about the Family Wellbeing material and wondering how we get that here when we get fully funded and have the workers on the ground; and if we do not get fully funded is there enough money in the budget to do it anyway so these people who are waged and voluntary can have those skills. You know, having them get stronger and join up together, get the glue stronger. So that is starting next week.

**Mr MILLS:** What degree of focus is there on the acquisition of Indigenous languages amongst those working in this area?

**Mr Hedstrom:** In relation to the Raypirri project the people on communities will be Yolngu, so language is not an issue. As the manager of the FACS office here with non-Indigenous staff, if I can keep a staff member for 18 months I am doing well. I am not sure that there are going to be too many people who will be fluent in Yolngu Marta unless they are going to focus on it to the exclusion of most other things.

What I am saying, is that I do not have an answer. Language is a major problem, and impediment to us doing our work. There is no question about that, and I do not have an answer.

**Mr Cook:** From Harmony's perspective, if you have a look in that brochure you will see communicating in Yolngu language. Currently there is a [*inaudible*] program as we speak, but what you are talking about is a couple of programs including the takeaway liquor licence, and we have a number of Yolngu people on Harmony who get the message across and out there, and obviously get the feed back.

It is very much a two-way process. It is not a lot of white people telling black people what to do; it is a lot of white people sitting down and trying to sort out what we can do to help.

**Mr MILLS:** It is not a technical matter of someone who speaks English communicating with someone who speaks Indigenous language? There is actually another issue is there?

**Mr Cook:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** If there is a commitment, or intent, to learn the Indigenous language of the one you are endeavouring to speak to, you at least understand. There is cultural stuff which comes with learning the language.

**Mr Cook:** That is absolutely correct.

**Ms Thomson:** It does actually open doors. I am trying to learn the language and that has been a big part of building a good strong relationship, to have that commitment.

**Mr MILLS:** Because it conveys respect for them?

**Ms Thomson:** Yes, they appreciate the effort.

**Ms Howard:** I can say; 'see you later'.

**Mr Cook:** The problem is there is a massive turn-over, and at the end of the day, whether you learn it or not, the programs which go forward need to have aspects of communication building.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Is there only one language spoken here? How many dialects?

**Ms Thomson:** There are 13 different dialects just in this area.

**Mr MILLS:** Is there one dominant?

**Mr Cook:** local one would be Yolngu, but there are a number of them. It depends where you go as to what dialect.

**Ms Djerrkura:** Then as you move over to Milingimbi and Ramingining you have others.

**Mr KNIGHT:** This workshop is good, but given the current environment has there been an attempt at explaining in Yolngu or whatever is the most appropriate method, clearly what the Act states for children, and what the expectation of Australian law is for every child in Australia to parents?

**Mr Hedstrom:** We run workshops on a fairly regular basis on communities. We currently have two community based workers, one at Numbulwar and one at Galiwinku who are Yolngu people from those communities, or Aboriginal people from Numbulwar, who have been trained and have a thorough understanding of the act on child abuse. Also Nancy at Elcho Island is on the council and regularly meeting with young mums and working with them and other Yolngu families.

We had a workshop towards the end of last year out at *[inaudible]*, so yes it does happen, but not as often as we would like.

**Mr KNIGHT:** With the notifications you get how many of those are alcohol and drug related?

**Mr Hedstrom:** Funny you should mention that. I did a survey on the six months of last year for all notifications we received. In 53% there was a direct relationship with substance abuse; in another 22% substance abuse was not a factor; and in the remaining 25% there were no substance abuse issues, so in 75% there was some substance abuse issue.

**Mr MILLS:** Kava, would that be included?

**Mr Hedstrom:** Including kava. It is predominantly alcohol, kava and marijuana.

**Mr MILLS:** In that order?

**Mr Hedstrom:** No, I did not drill down that far. They were factors, but as to which was the predominant, anecdotally I would say alcohol.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What is the rate with young girls being pregnant under the age of 16?

**Mr Hedstrom:** I do not have those statistics in front of me. Again, anecdotally, I can say there are a significant number of under 16 pregnancies.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Are those people reported to FACS?

**Mr Hedstrom:** The clinic, every time they get a girl under the age of 16 and find there is any form of STI or pregnancy, any suggestions there has been sexual intercourse ...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Are they included in the statistics that you just gave us?

**Mr Hedstrom:** They are. To give you the technical side of things, a notification is any piece of information which someone brings into us about a child at risk. We then make a decision as to whether we will conduct an investigation as we do not necessarily do so on every piece of information we receive, however those figures are based on every piece of information that came in.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Are there any other questions for these people here?

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you for your time today and for showing us the work you have put together. It would be good to keep up with the information and see how it goes forward. I am hoping for positive outcomes for both the Alcohol Management Plan and the other plans.

Thank you very much for your time and sharing your information with us.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 3.14pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Wadeye**

*Monday 31 May 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Mr Chris Natt, MLA, Member for Drysdale - as observer  
Mr James Burke, MLA, Member for Brennan - as observer  
Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Sharon McAlear, Administration Officer

**Witnesses:** ***Makura Wanthay***  
Ms Stephanie Berida, Coordinator  
Mr Jan Wetzel, Centacare Coordinator  
Mr George Cumaiyi  
Mr Adrian Lantjin  
Mr Richard Tchernia  
Sister Yvonne  
***Port Keats Health Clinic***  
Dr Pat Rebgetz  
Mr Terry Dwyer, Remote Area Nurse  
***Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School***  
Ms Ann Rebgetz, Co-Principal  
Ms Ursula Kantharri, Assistant Teacher  
Ms Rosarina Tipiloura, Assistant Teacher  
Ms Zaverine Bunduck, Assistant Teacher  
Ms Scholastica Kantharri, Assistant Teacher

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

The meeting convened at 10.30am.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you ladies for allowing us to come into your community and talk to you about substance misuse. I will go through a statement the Chair has to do, telling you certain things.

On behalf of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the community, I welcome people from Wadeye to this meeting. The meeting is being recorded, and at some time the transcript may be made public. Please advise us at any stage if you want what you say to remain silent.

For the *Hansard* record, I ask you to state your name and your position when you first speak. Whatever you say here is covered by Parliamentary Privilege.

For people who have not been introduced to the committee, the members are Fay Miller, Terry Mills; my name is Alison Anderson, James Burke, and Chris Natt. We want to talk to you about anything to do with substance misuse on Wadeye; such things as petrol sniffing, ganja, kava, or alcohol problems, and [would like] you to tell the committee what things you have here, and what programs you have got in place, or would like to see happening, here.

**Ms Berida:** My name is Stephanie. I am the coordinator for Makura Wanthay, and I welcome you here. We have a few problems with alcohol and drug problems, and we have programs. Monday morning we do planning, and Tuesday we do school programs and bring the school kids down here. Wednesday we have sharing-group meetings, but these last two months we have not been doing much because of the community programs, and we just started again last week.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Stephanie what kind of problems do you have here; do you have a lot of alcohol and ganja problems.

**Ms Berida:** Yes, ganja and alcohol.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** How much of it is getting into the community.

**Ms Berida:** A lot.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** From outside of Wadeye?

**Ms Berida:** Yes, people are bringing it by plane, or truck, and they sell it here. The planes sometimes have sniffer dogs in Darwin, but some people bring it out on the other company planes.

**Mr MILLS:** Does any come in from the sea, from the water?

**Ms Berida:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** Stephanie in the last few months when the roads have been blocked and they cannot get in because of the water, is it all coming in by plane?

**Ms Berida:** By plane.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do you think it would be a good idea if they had the sniffer dogs at the airport checking the planes everyday?

**Ms Berida:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** In Groote Eylandt they said exactly the same. Tell me, when the money goes to buy ganja what problems happen in the family?

**Ms Berida:** It is not good.

**Mrs MILLER:** Not good?

**Ms Berida:** Not good, yeah.

**Mr MILLS:** A lot of money goes to ganja?

**Ms Berida:** Yes like \$100, \$50, \$200, more, or if they win card games the money goes straight to the dealer. The family hear words. It goes around and they tell them how your husband or partner won \$1000 or so. She goes and asks him and he sometimes says I have lost, but he has spent that money on the dealer. The ganja.

**Mrs MILLER:** What happens when you do not have any food, do you go hungry?

**Ms Berida:** Our family helps us.

**Mrs MILLER:** Other families?

**Ms Berida:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Does that cause problems if you get the help from the others?

**Ms Berida:** Yes it does, they start arguing.

**Mrs MILLER:** Because sometimes that other family would not have money either because that has gone with the dealing and they might not have the money either? You reckon lots of money goes on ganja

**Ms Berida:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Are there families here that have no gambling or ganja, and they control their money? Families who control their money, and other families then try to get the money from them?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** Yes. To a point, yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Are there many families that say; 'We do not gamble, and we do not spend money on ganja', and then other families come to that family?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Who stands to support the good family; who fights for the good family?

**Mr Lantjin:** Us mob here.

**Mr MILLS:** Just this mob here?

**Mrs MILLER:** Just you mob here?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** Um hum.

**Mr MILLS:** It is a tough battle?

**Mr Lantjin:** A tough battle.

**Mr MILLS:** You live close together?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** No, separately. Some live down the bottom.

**Mr MILLS:** So it is just you mob? There is one man here, where are the other men, they outside? Tough men?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** Yes, tough men.

**Mr MILLS:** How many children are represented here?

**Mrs MILLER:** How many children are we talking about?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Live in this family with you mob?

**Ms Berida:** Grandchildren?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, grandchildren.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Nephews?

**Mr MILLS:** Children, grandchildren, how many?

**Mr Lantjin:** Myself, I have six children, and three grandchildren.

**Mrs MILLER:** You are too young to be a grandpa, aren't you?

**Mr Lantjin:** I was born in the 1950s.

**Mr MILLS:** Same here.

**Mr Lantjin:** I left grog; I had to work myself through this problem.

**Mr MILLS:** Good on you.

**Mr Lantjin:** For roughly nine years.

**Mrs MILLER:** Are there other men like you that are now off the grog?

**Mr Lantjin:** A few.

**Mrs MILLER:** Just a few of them.

**Mr MILLS:** And do you talk to each other?

**Mr Lantjin:** Sometimes.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is grog a problem here as much as ganja?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** Yes, ganja and grog.

**Mr MILLS:** But this is a dry community?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** We have a dry community here.

**Mr Cumaiyi:** But they travel to Peppimenarti or Daly River,

**Mrs MILLER:** And they bring it back, do they?

**Mr Cumaiyi:** In the dry season it gets worse. It is approaching dry season now and the river is not open because of the creek, but when the river opens a lot of the money will be spent on grog, and during the dry season the main problem would be grog related problems. That means whether we have a problem here, or on the road; people having accidents or fighting on the roads, things like that. It is a major problem this grog.

In the wet season it sort of goes away, and the ganja comes on the plane. People use a lot of tactics, like hiding their ganja in the baby's nappy and carrying the baby with them; things like that. Right now we do have sniffer dogs in Darwin, but sometimes ganja still comes in.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Could you say your name for the *Hansard* record.

**Mr Cumaiyi:** My name is George Cumaiya, sorry, I have been working here since 1982.

**Mr MILLS:** So a lot of money from this community is spent in Peppimenarti. Does any of that money come back, the benefit from the club, to Port Keats?

**Makura Wunthay volunteers:** No.

**Mr MILLS:** Nothing? I have been from here to Peppimenarti and there are a lot of broken cars. That is also wasteful for the families.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** The people pay \$25 to go in to Peppimenarti; if they pay \$50 they take people in and back. The money is paid for the transport and also the *[inaudible]*.

**Mr MILLS:** So does that mean that Port Keats and Wadeye become poorer, and Peppimenarti becomes richer?

**Mrs MILLER:** What would you people like to see happen here to make it better; sniffer dogs in Darwin, and what else would you like to see?

**Mr Lantjin:** Train our local people to become NT Police, both male and female, so it would make a better community for us.

**Mrs MILLER:** You need some more community control people, community police?

**Mr Lantjin:** NT Police, local Aboriginal police. To train them, and to support our community to make it a better place without grog and ganja as far as I'm concerned. We will have less trouble and problems.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you would have more people here to protect you.

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** Protection.

**Ms Berida:** Night patrol.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do you have a night patrol now; there is no night patrol here?

**Ms Berida:** There is, but we do not know if they are doing it.

**Mr MILLS:** I was there about four or five years ago and there was a good night patrol.

**Ms Berida:** There was.

**Mr MILLS:** It stops and starts does it?

**Ms Berida:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is there no funding?

**Ms Berida:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about with all the government people that have been coming into Wadeye over the last couple of years since you have become a COAG trial; has that changed anything? Have you seen a difference?

You know when Prime Minister came about 1 ½ year ago now and he got you mob the swimming pool, and the Commonwealth and Territory government start to work together. That is why they call it a COAG trial; both governments, the Commonwealth and Territory working together to make your life a little bit easier. Have the people been talking to you about the COAG trials, what you want to see come out in Wadeye, or has it been people flying in and out without talking to you mob?

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** Nothing.

**Mrs MILLER:** Nothing has changed?

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** No, nothing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So all you got is a big \$1m swimming pool?

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** Yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You ladies look like really strong woman that can drive your community forward. I know, because I come from an Aboriginal community too in central Australia.

Anybody that is coming into your community, the health of the whole community, you mob need to sit down and say; 'Look can you sit down and listen to us and implement what we want to see happen in this community', your dreams. That you want to see the health and education of your children improve; you want to see a good safe community in Wadeye; and you want governments to listen to you and not the other way around, you listening to governments.

For far too long we have done that as Indigenous people, and we need to stand up for ourselves too. Do not be ashamed to stand up and go to these meetings and say

to people; 'You will never understand what problems we live in, so you need to stop and listen to us for a little while'. Make sure you implement some of the dreams of people sitting around inside this room, because your dreams are important too. Your dreams are true to your people, your dreams are true to your country, and your dreams are true to you children. We need to keep this law, culture and identity, of who we are strong and our community strong. So we need to stand up and tell people that message.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** You mob talked about how Aboriginal children go to school, was that one of the things?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** I think the committee [should] do something about that. Stephanie, she is one of the ladies before the inquiry, and she told us about the children going to school in the *[inaudible]* in Alice. So we made this trip available in the mornings to pick up children and take them to school and it went well. The school mob had their trooper going around picking up children, and we picked up some of the children from our area, from *[inaudible]*, to the school and that worked well.

It is because there are problems that have been going on for a long time, fights. It is either here around the community, or at the school; young children fighting each other, imitating the older boys outside. In the school the children now form their own gangs, so other children just went home and did not bother to go to school because that is where more accidents happen. That is the problem with school; children fighting each other, imitating their brothers, and they are out of control.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Can some kind of thing happen at the school where we teach our children that it is not part of our culture to have gangs and be violent towards other kids? You know, leaders and parents going to the school everyday and saying to children, what you are doing is wrong.

It is about uniting this whole community to live together with one people'. Maybe that is another solution you need to have a look at here. Everybody going to their elders and talking to those kids, and even getting their parents to go in and talking to the kids too, saying; 'What you are doing is wrong'.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** We even tried to do our parts here, getting the school children back, and a person here in this office. Getting the white board and educating them about alcohol and its effect, and how people react from ganja and that sort of thing. Talking to them about being friendly with each other, that sort of thing. We have been teaching them both at the school, boys and girls, when I feel ill I do come and talk to them, but I rely on Adrian and his woman to get the job done, because they are trained to do that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And they look like strong women, too.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** They are, yes.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** And good strong men. But we have to make sure that you will grow it like, you make sure that you mentor all the young fellas behind you that come up, and other young ladies that come up, so that you are planting the seed for future generations in this community to lead it.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** What I would like to see from the justice system here, because a lot of people around this camp are in denial, they think they do not have a problem here, and this [threat] is just in the corner of this beautiful place, hidden somewhere. If the justice could be very strong and tell them that; 'you must know you have got a problem'. I do not want to send them to jail. Instead I send them to Makura Wanthay to get some education.

I would like to see that happen because we cannot force people ourselves to come here; they say no, but the police and the judge can. The more people who come here for us to work with, the better.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do the young people respect the police; would they respect the police if they tell them they have to do something?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Oh yes. I have been working on young boys who are sniffing petrol recently and bringing them here, but because those bottom camp boys do not feel right being up here with these other students so then my cousin, she took them out bush one time. We did not want them to get involved in the fight with this mob around here because this is more the [Top End mob]. So she took them out bush where it is quieter for them, to get that sort of thing. We are trying to do something for the community, but there are not enough resources around.

**Mr MILLS:** Do you guys get tired of people coming to talk to you like this?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** You mean people like you guys?

**Mr MILLS:** Like us, people always coming here to talk to you.

**Mr Lantjin:** This is our first time I think, with you people.

**Mr MILLS:** With us, yes that is right.

**Mrs MILLER:** The things you would like to see are more trained police people, your own people trained, to be able to make sure there are more here in your community, and then you think you would have more control over the young ones, if they trained you as police officers? And you want to see sniffer dogs; before the aeroplanes come here you want to make sure they are all checked?

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteer:** We want more training about alcohol and drugs so we can pass the message to our friends outside who are affected, more training.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Okay, that is good to hear...

**Mr MILLS:** You know, in the last two days we have been to Groote Eylandt, Yirrkala, and Gove at Nhulunbuy, and it is probably good for you to know there are other communities that have been struggling too, and they have been making some progress. You are not the only ones struggling. We have been listening to the stories and there is some hope that if you keep fighting, you keep strong, there will be progress because we have seen it already. In the last two days, particularly on Groote Eylandt, there are some wonderful things happening. They had some terrible problems, however they were strong and stayed together, and they have begun to make some progress.

If you have an opportunity to hear what happened in Groote Eylandt, it might be good to give you some encouragement. We have taken those lessons and we be going to

parliament and saying; 'Good people need support'. There is cause for hope as we heard some stories in Yirrkala as well, and it is really encouraging for us to see good strong people here representing good families, and you should be supported. We have not come here to have listen, we are going back to talk to parliament.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Can I point out that with this problem going on with the boys, they are a mixed groups, some from Jawoyn and Murinh-patha. In this group there is good mix of people of *[inaudible]*, Murinh-patha, Jawoyn, *[inaudible]* so we try to educate our own boys in our own way. Even if they are fighting each other, we try to get them to make peace within themselves.

**Mr MILLS:** Are you saying in this room there are a number of different languages; how many?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Hands up, hands down *[laughter]* two or three.

**Mr MILLS:** Is there one common language in Wadeye that is the dominant language?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Murinh-patha.

**Mr MILLS:** At the school if you are teaching bilingual, do you teach in that language?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Then at home the other ones?

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** As a white Australian I am ashamed because do you know how many languages I speak; one and a little bit of another one but you would never understand it. How many languages do you speak?

**Mr Lantjin:** Two, my own language and Murinh-patha.

**Mr MILLS:** You speaking to me, English. Most of you speak three or four.

**Ms Berida:** Three or four yes. My mother language.

**Mr Lantjin:** Our children's problem is they need to go to school for their education, learn more English and writing. That is the main basic for our children to learn before it is too late.

**Mr MILLS:** How many are going to school now?

**Mr Lantjin:** Less children.

**Mr MILLS:** We heard last year, that we had to bring extra desks to Port Keats because of too many children, but now that is not a problem?

**Mr Lantjin:** It is still there, they do not go to school because of that problem.

**Mrs MILLER:** How long since they have been to school?

**Mr Lantjin:** Last month, but this problem is continuing.

**Mr MILLS:** Has anyone been thinking about the school at *[inaudible]* and I understand some families here have been thinking about their children going to that school?

**Ms Berida:** Some kids do.

**Mr MILLS:** Some kids do already.

**Ms MICHELLE:** My name is Michelle *[inaudible]*, and we have another problem here too. Even though Wadeye is a dry community, our young boys break in to white people's houses and get alcohol. We want to try and stop them; we want to be equal.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One of the things Terry mentioned about Groote Eylandt, we heard stories there yesterday, and they are starting to implement that everybody gets a permit, and you set the rules and boundaries of how that person uses that permit. If you get a permit Michelle and I come over to your place and I start drinking, I am the one without a permit, you are in trouble if I start making a mess in this community.

That is the kind of rules they have, and that is why Terry was saying maybe what needs to happen is a core group of people; like you mob go over to Groote Eylandt and see what they are doing, and just get some ideas. Not implement what Groote Eylandt is doing, but you do it your way, how you think it is going to happen here at Wadeye. Even whitefellas there have permits, exactly the same across the board for everybody and since that permit system has been in place, no Aboriginal person there has messed up, but they caught two white people. Aboriginal people are starting to work through the new rules, but the rules are working only because Groote Eylandt Aboriginal people were there at the front, and all the white people went behind them and helped Groote Eylandt do that, implement it.

It might be a good idea if a core group of you go over to Groote Eylandt and find out.

**Mrs MILLER:** That is one way where that problem would not happen, where the white people of the community have their alcohol and nobody else is allowed to have it. On Groote Eylandt you have to have a permit for everybody.

**Mr MILLS:** Michelle are you saying that you do not like it because some can have it, and the rest not?

**Ms MICHELLE:** It is our young boys, when they break in get drunk, then that happens, and that is when they get in to trouble and drugs.

**Mr MILLS:** So you also think there should be the same rule for everybody?

**Ms MICHELLE:** Yes, because we wonder when these boys get drunk, where they get this grog from, and we ask them. That is a problem too for our young boys as well.

**Mr Lantjin:** We need our local Europeans without grog in our community, as a dry area. When they finish their job, they can go back and can look after themselves, in Darwin or Queensland. We need those permits, because I do not think they know we have problems with our young boys bringing in here.

**Sister YVONNE:** I have heard Michelle's husband talking at council meetings many times saying the same thing, but I think it is a bit more the other way around from what you are saying. This being a dry community, they want everybody to not have grog.

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** Yes, yes.

**Sister YVONNE:** That is what you are saying isn't it, I can you clearly saying it; it is not right that you have grog. It is a dry place, so everyone should not have grog.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Sister, what we are doing is suggesting other ways of doing it, whether we educate people to live with alcohol. One incident was when we were all signed in by the local Member for Arnhem, and she signed a few other people in as well from Groote Eylandt, she could not leave the pub until the last person that she signed in left...

**Mrs MILLER:** She was responsible.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** She was responsible under her permit to make sure that everybody has gone out of that pub safely before she left.

**Mr MILLS:** And if anyone runs amuck, she loses her permit?

**Mr NATT:** Is there any petrol sniffing in the community, is it a big problem?

**Mr Lantjin:** No. We do not have that petrol sniffing problem here.

**Mr NATT:** You do not have it?

**Mr Lantjin:** Before, but now, it is been stopped.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** You got Opal fuel?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Yes, and that has probably made the difference. But they can still get it from Palumpa from the *[inaudible]* super.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So there is still a little bit of petrol sniffing from Palumpa?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** It could be, I would not really know.

**Ms Berida:** Maybe some boys might go there and get it for them there.

**Mr Lantjin:** Petrol is not for human being; it for transport, a car. We are human beings, petrol is for transport. It is funny but I am serious; it causes much damage to people's individual lives, inside here *[indicates his head]*.

**Mrs MILLER:** Now they cannot get petrol, have any of those gone to ganja?

**Mr Lantjin:** We need to stop that ganja from flying in, and growing it.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What we are asking, is have you seen the kids, or the young fellas that were sniffing petrol, now moved on to ganja? Are they the same ones now?

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** Yes, they move on to another one, ganja and grog.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So we have to understand that all we are doing is removing our kids from one substance abuse to another abuse. It is about stopping it across the board so they do not go from petrol to ganja to something else. It is about education, and making sure we as parents are responsible for our children. Always making sure we can see our children and making sure we can put them inside a safe environment, always.

We cannot afford to just keep on moving them from one drug to another because we are all part of killing our own children. They are sitting there watching people do this, but we are part of that system as well. We have to make sure we get up there and say; 'No, if you have given up petrol you cannot go on to ganja'. It is happening everywhere, even in my area; Papunya has just come off 80% sniffing to 80% ganja now. All Opal has done is shifted the problem.

**Mr Lantjin:** Because one silly person taught our children how to smoke, from that side, from Darwin. They are caught up with that problem, and it caught up with us.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** If you know who the dealers are, you have to make sure you tell the police who the dealers are too.

**Mr Lantjin:** Call the police, police got their list.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Okay that's good.

**Mr Lantjin:** We need this community without ganja, then we can continue to have our free lifestyle with our tourists, and our future generation to come.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We got the turning point soon, so yes.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** I want to say something about after-hours, setting it up five miles that way. Recently the land owner of that land told us they do not want us living there anymore, helping people, or something. They told us nicely but firmly to leave that country alone. I started that place in 1994. I took 14 young boys out and looked after them.

I have been asking the government to give us, because we were living in bark huts before, but I kept asking for two proper houses to be built. But this other one, it is a halfway house that was to help people or families with alcohol problems to move out there, and to have a rest, and also have some counselling by the group. That was back in 1994 when the house was built, but we are not allowed to have that place anymore. The landowners have told us to move the house, but to do that we need money, and it is going to cost a lot of money. If you want to decide to have that house built where my cousin *[inaudible]* lives at her country, we need a lot of money to pay the workers, clear the road, and to make a wider road out to her country. I do not think *[inaudible]* has that much money. We need help.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** We will certainly take your messages back to the appropriate people. You would have heard that the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, said a week a half ago after he visited Wadeye that there is not going to be any more houses being built here until all this violence stops. What it needs is this community to get together and fight the Minister back, and say; 'Look we are

starting to do these good things'. Show him the good side too; because there is always a good side [but] it is the bad side people pick up on really quickly.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Wouldn't it be good if say Adrian wants to take some of his boys out, to have a halfway house that way, and to see a halfway house in her country that way so that people that go out to their own outstations and have their own place set up on their own land.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** When we go back, we will report all the stuff you have said to us to parliament. We have just got more business to do with a couple other communities; we have to go to Elcho Island, and one more community, or two more in my area of Central Australia so we have a good core of communities with issues we can put up. One of the recommendations might be that all we have seen out of Opal rollout is the move to ganja, and petrol has legislation and money now. We need to, at some stage, leave petrol alone and go on to ganja. To start having a look at ganja laws seriously, and putting tough recommendations to government on marijuana, and the supply of marijuana.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Some of these good ladies and myself are now working here full-time, and we only get \$60 per day.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** CDEP, or just \$60?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** Just \$60.

**The Committee's Driver:** \$60 per fortnight; that is on top of whatever they get from other sources.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** From CDEP?

**The Committee's Driver:** From whatever it is, but there is no CDEP. The people you see here are mainly volunteers who get \$60 per fortnight.

**Sister YVONNE:** The only two employed are Stephanie and myself. The rest is top-up from Centrecare, on top of the employment or pension money they get. But they work full-time, and there are more that could be on full wages.

**Mr NATT:** I have one question; part of my role is that I head up the Sport and Youth Committee, of which Fay Miller and Terry Mills are also members. We are looking at ways we can get youth involved in sport, and whether sport can make a difference in some of the problems you are having. Do you have a Sport and Recreation Officer here at the moment?

**MAKURA WUNTHAY volunteers:** Yes, we have one, Steve and one local fella.

**Mr NATT:** Does the community play any sports at all?

**Ms Berida:** Yes they do, in the afternoon. They like playing softball.

**Mr NATT:** And do the girls play basketball?

**Ms Berida:** Yes.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** They sometimes play down the oval, and they go there so everybody has the chance to play.

**Mr NATT:** So do they have teams, or do they just have a kick around?

**Ms MICHELLE:** Just kicking around, no teams.

**Mr Lantjin:** Before our young boys could be professional footballers, but that has been wrecked by ganja. We need that sport, we need a team.

**Mr NATT:** Our committee at the moment is going to take submissions from around the Territory, but we are going to be visiting communities as well later in the year and asking a lot of questions about sports to see if the government can help with more resources, and anything else we can do to get kids involved in sport. Get them back to school and out of trouble, so we will be talking to other communities as well.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I take this opportunity to thank you ladies and gentlemen for the presentation you have made to this committee. It is an eye opener for some people to come out to Aboriginal communities and see the things which are not happening. We have to see it for ourselves as well, and it is a failure of generations of governments through lack of investment in the Aboriginal communities. If you do not invest, then you get the devastation you see; not just here in Wadeye, but there are a lot of communities in Central Australia that has been on the news just lately as well. If you want good things, they require a lot of infrastructure, and a lot of commitment from all levels of government, and commitment from people living inside the community too.

First it has to start with you, the pride you have in your identity, in your community, and your children going to school, and we have to always remember that we have got to force our children to go to school. You and I are thankful to the mainstream education system because [without having access to it] we would not be sitting here talking in this language, but we still have our law, language, and culture. It is about living in both worlds, and we find that Indigenous people can between these two worlds. I take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of our committee.

The Clinic mob sitting in the back listening, can we ask that you move forward so we can pick you up on the recording? For *Hansard* purposes I have to go through this

On behalf of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the community, I welcome [*inaudible*] Clinic to this meeting. This meeting is being recorded, and at some time the transcript maybe made public. Please let me know at any stage if you want what you say to remain private.

For the *Hansard* record, I ask you to state your name and your position when you first speak. What you say is covered by Parliamentary Privilege.

**Dr REBGETZ:** My name is Pat Rebgetz, I am the local doctor [at Ports Keats Health Clinic] and I have been here since about October last year.

**Mr DWYER:** My name is Terry Dwyer, and I am the Remote Area Nurse.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Basically, the committee wants to know about any substance misuse, problems you see, and what presents to the clinic; are you seeing kids coming in hungry because parents are spending their money on grog and ganja? What is it that you can tell this committee about substance misuse?

**Dr REBGETZ:** Petrol sniffing has been a big problem here in the past. I have seen people who in their past history have had petrol sniffing as a problem. We do not see it much at all at the moment; I have never seen any children brought in intoxicated, or anything like that.

I remember a report from a petrol sniffer who is in gaol, and his discharge letter said that his goal in life was to come back here and start petrol sniffing again. That was about a month ago, and I do not think they have let him out yet. I assume it could be a problem in the future, and one would have to be weary of it. One of the District Medical Officers, Rosemary Lee, who continues to visit here, notices people at Casuarina sniffing aerosols over the past couple of months.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** People from here are going in to Darwin?

**Dr REBGETZ:** They are people who are in town anyway and I do not know if they travel in for that reason, but she has run into Port Keats groups where kids were sniffing aerosols. She has passed that information back and we have been aware of it, and ask around regularly but we do not see it is a problem here from what we have been told. Do you ever see that here?

**Mr Lantjin:** No.

**Dr REBGETZ:** Spray paint and stuff like that?

**Mr Lantjin:** Spray paint. It has not happened here yet.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Where is it happening?

**Ms Berida:** 15 Mile Dam.

**Mr Lantjin:** We have got to watch our eyes, to bring that city stuff to our people here. We need to be aware of ourselves. Something has not arrived yet, but we need to listen and look to protect our children, and ourselves, and our European staff here at Wadeye

**Dr REBGETZ:** We have not seen any of that stuff here, but we continue to ask the health workers about it. Ganja is a big problem. In our male health surveys when you ask; 'Do you smoke ganja', probably 80% - 90% of the males say yes. I do not know how much they are smoking, or whether they would smoke it if it is available, or whether they are heavily into the ganja.

I know there are certain groups that are heavily into the ganja, and we see acute mental problems. People with a past history of psychiatric illness who are in to the ganja are far more likely to go psychotic, and we see that on a regular basis. Those people are flown into town, and within 48 hours they are sent back. There is a core group of mental health patients and their relapse tends to be related to ganja use. Terry does a lot of the mental health stuff with the males.

**Mr DWYER:** Yes it is one of the ongoing things, about the mental health in this community. You always have to decide how much substance abuse is influencing what you see, and how much is what you would call 'straight mental illness'. There always seems to be a blend as it appears that most males over 30 use cannabis quite regularly, and they will tell you so when you are going around. The question for us as health professionals is how much cannabis is impacting on mental health in the community. It does seem that when there is a lot of cannabis in town, things tend to

be reasonably quiet, but it is when the supply gets disrupted that the riots and disturbances begin.

We have not seen much in the way of craving of petrol through inhaling or sniffing. It is rumoured that it is around at different times, but we have not seen any of it.

One of the ways it impacts, is that there is a generational thing happening where the younger males are likely to stand over their parents, particularly the women, to get money for ganja. There is a fair bit of that happening, and that impacts on younger children. It means that usually they have made *[inaudible]* agreements and there have been definite instances in the last few months, where babies have come into the babies' room and they are failing to thrive, but it is beyond that; they are actually starving because when you stop getting the maintenance they are not getting fed.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Is that high, babies failing to thrive.

**Mr DWYER:** There are six or eight babies I am aware of that are failing to thrive. There have been a couple of months where that has been the case. I would not go beyond that; of course because it is anecdotal, but I see the nurses talking about family situation.

**Dr REBGETZ:** We get probably about 10% - 15% of children. It is a significant problem, the amount of money spent on ganja.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One of the reasons we are asking you that question is, Terry asked earlier, how much money is actually been taken out of the community for ganja.

**Mr MILLS:** *[inaudible]*

**Dr REBGETZ:** The families do not have enough tucker.

**Mr MILLS:** Do you visit the homes, or is it generally [at the clinic]?

**Dr REBGETZ:** A bit of each, mental health people are pretty notorious for non-presenting, so you can go around a lot looking at them.

**Mr DWYER:** We try not to go into the homes. We go to the front yard and blow the horn and try to get people to come out. If I am invited in the home, I will go in.

**Mr MILLS:** Doctor are you able to give a general profile of the health of children here; what you think, anecdotally, and what your assessment is in the time you have spent here assessing the health profile of children up to primary age?

**Dr REBGETZ:** The patterns of drugs are very similar to what they were 20-years ago. The problems start with weaning, when you have to actually provide food so most children grow well for six months, and then they plateau out. All the action in infant health is really between six months and two years; if you have not allowed the child to grow at that time, the child will always be smaller than what they would have been if they had grown at in a normal fashion.

What I am talking about is 10% - 15%; there are mobs of children, well over 70%, who grow well. There are real problem families for a variety of reasons; young mothers, educational things, and that is where our focus is; on that 6 months to 2 years.

**Mr MILLS:** Hearing?

**Dr REBGETZ:** The incidents of otitis media is high, as are the incidents of epidemic gastro enteritis, respiratory tract infection, chest infections, pneumonia. Bronchiectasis, which is a severe disease where the lungs get wrecked, and that is permanent, is still high and you just do not see that in European society. Rheumatic heart disease has been reported as the highest incidents in the world that is known about. The epidemic of *[inaudible]* frigus from skin sores occurs regularly, and that may have some bearing on the incidents of chronic renal disease.

The child health picture is poor, and a lot of that is related to the environment of people living in over-crowded house.

**Mr MILLS:** Nutrition?

**Dr REBGETZ:** Probably about 70% of children grow in an acceptable way, but with 20% there are major problems and these compounds if you have a child that is failing to thrive, who gets gastroenteritis; they become critically ill fairly early. The same with a child who is failing to thrive and gets a chest infection, so the admissions to Royal Darwin Hospital are very high.

These problems have been well recorded in Aboriginal Health the whole way through. It is disappointing they are not improving, and they are exactly the same as when I worked at Bathurst Island in the 1970s. The key to it is environmental conditions. If you have 30 people in the house, you are not going to be able to live in a way that stops you getting a lot of skin sores; infectious disease just circulates. You have to remember that 50% of the people are under the age of 20, so a lot of people in that over-crowding are young children.

**Mr MILLS:** Can you tell me about the diet.

**Dr REBGETZ:** It is very expensive to live out of the shop. The cost would be 50% higher than Darwin, and the range of food is pretty much what you would get in Darwin. The fruit and vegetable aspects are good, but a lot of people eat out of a take-away, much the same as in European society, but it is the quality that gets to a lot of the children that is the problem.

You will have periods where people are eating well, and then later on in the two week cycle, people are hungry.

**Mr MILLS:** The mental health factor. Can you give us a profile of the issues you deal with?

**Mr DWYER:** Schizophrenia is prevalent in all societies and all races around the world, and we have our share in Wadeye. Schizophrenia runs in some of the families here and it is complicated by substance abuse.

We get good support from Darwin Mental Health Services. They are out here every fortnight or so, and we are able to maintain people in a reasonably stable condition by using the drugs we have available. Up to this point in time we have been reasonably successful in getting people to have their medication when they require it. It is not without drama at times, court orders and what have you, but least we are able get the outcomes we want around that, however, when there is civil unrest and

substance abuse, it is never really stable so we never really know what each day is going to bring, especially around mental health.

**Mr MILLS:** Are you both here full-time?

**Dr REBGETZ and Mr DWYER:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Can you give us an idea of your working a timetable, if you are working days, nights?

**Dr REBGETZ:** We just work and have an encore. It is a pretty heavy encore with the nurses and the health workers as well; they do first call and get me in if it is needed, but they do most of the work. The problem is that if you are up all night, you are not there the next day from the nurse point of view. Often the programs fall down because if you have your anti-natal nurse doing her share of calls and she is up until 5 a.m., she is out for that day, and plans for that day in that area do not get done.

I would not say we have got it all together as far as all the head-programs, because the encore is so bad. That is aggravated by the gang stuff, because a lot of people will not come up during the day if there is unrest, so people will start coming up at about 5:00pm, 6:00pm or 7:00pm, so it has been very disruptive over the last month to six weeks.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** What about abuse that is related to substance, in violence against women or children?

**Dr REBGETZ:** We do not see much direct; no more than what I would consider normal. There are people under stress can lash out at their kids, but there is not a high instance of systematic abuse. People have arguments and often that can be ganja related. People wanting money. Someone will come up and say they were hit by someone because they would not give them money for ganja and stuff like this. That certainly happens.

There has been talk about childhood sexual abuse as if that is epidemic in Aboriginal people, and that is just so wrong it is abhorrent. In my experience with Aboriginal people, and may be that is limited to places that are pretty dysfunctional because of lots of alcohol, but I think that would be reported and we do not see that.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** George do you want to ask a question?

**Mr CUMAIYI:** The women or girls who get bashed up by young men, even when they have not had ganja for two days, stress comes in when the person is stressing at him, even when there is no ganja.

**Mr NATT:** Is there anything that you need? There are probably all sorts of things, but is there anything specific that you can see would help your working conditions?

**Mr DWYER:** We would like to have a men's clinic in a designated area where the men can come.

**Dr REBGETZ:** That is being addressed. COAG have given \$12m to the health services, and that is in the process of being rolled out. It has been talked about for years, but it is just starting to come through now and hopefully we will have a men's, or have some more staffing to allow the after-hours pressure to be relieved so people can do more of the preventative stuff. There will be a change in the clinic hopefully

over a period of time, but that is all promise although we have no reason to believe it will not be delivered.

**Mr DWYER:** We have six nurses and Dr. Pat. If someone goes on leave, there is always somebody on leave, the numbers are down, and if someone gets sick or they were up the night before and they cannot work the next day depending on how late it was, you can find yourself down to two or three nurses, and whatever portable doctor came around.

**Dr REBGETZ:** That is fine for a kids doctor, but all the programs you pick them up and then they drop; things like anti-natal care, and all the infant health screening, skills screening, a lot of the preventative stuff. People come out and say we should be running programs on this and that, but it is difficult at the moment. It is more just treating all your acute stuff and trying to do the best you can.

There are plans in the pipeline if they are brought to fruition, and it varies too on the aspirations of the community. If the community wants to disperse a bit, that will create challenges for health care delivery. We are happy to meet them, but we have to see what evolves, and also make sure government stays on side with that so we are given the resources to provide the care.

**Mr NATT:** Of the six nurses, are any of them local women?

**Mr DWYER:** No.

**Mr NATT:** Would that help if local women were trained as nurses?

**Mr DWYER:** It would, yes. We have local women as health workers. The obstacles in the path of a local woman to become a registered nurse are quite substantial. It would improve if we could get Aboriginal people as nurses and doctors all through the health service. It would make things better, but we will not say too much about that.

The question is how to do it. People have to have a certain standard of education to be able to become registered nurses and doctors, and they have to have the commitment to do it so it is not easy.

**Dr REBGETZ:** The health workers are probably the most key group of our people, but we do not have enough, and they are not coming through. A lot of the health workers have been health workers for 20 years and they are incredibly, but it is really hard on them, particularly when they do first call. With all this violence that has been around, it is an incredibly difficult job.

**Mr DWYER:** We would like to think that the clinic was neutral, but it is not. It is on a certain bit of territory and our health workers have got relations and family, so they are not neutral, and neither is our clinic.

**Dr REBGETZ:** Or not perceived as neutral, yes.

**Mr DWYER:** People are afraid to access health services when they should. We see a lot of instances where a baby comes in with the early days of pneumonia. We treat it, but it needs to come back the next day for an injection, and the next day, and the next, however we will not see it for three or four days. Suddenly they present the baby at the end stage of pneumonia, and you have to fly them to Darwin. If they

were able to access the clinic, they would come every day to have those injections and it would never have got to that stage, and we see quite a lot of that.

**Dr REBGETZ:** Well we have over the last month.

**Mr NATT:** Because of the unrest?

**Dr REBGETZ:** Yes, people were not able to access. We did not go to pick people up, and they were not happy to come to the clinic because of the threats.

You were talking about sports before, they have had football games here but the police say they just end up in a big brawl. They even have games of footy at school, and one kid will knock another kid over as part of the game of football, but if the kid gets hurt the kid who knocks him over runs home because he is worried he will be to blame. Before you know it, you have two families at school arguing. Sport is really important, but it is not being able to be done here since I have been here anyway.

The police said they would be willing to referee and everything, but at the moment the level of angst is such that it would end up in a brawl.

**Mr BURKE:** I want to ask about the incidents of depression; what that is like. At one stage there were fairly high incidents as I understood it, across communities. What has happened with that image and psychosis and schizophrenia, or about depression, or even if it is not clinical depression people's feelings of helplessness?

**Mr DWYER:** From my perspective, I think depression is undiagnosed largely. It complicates so many conditions and outright [*inaudible*]. I think there are probably higher incidents of depression across the community.

**Dr REBGETZ:** I would agree with that.

**Mr DWYER:** It complicates a lot of medical conditions that affect people's lives. One of the problems is getting people to realise they are actually depressed and to seek treatment. A lot of people who are depressed just go, it will be alright, and it is very easy for them to externalise why they feel the way they feel, but it is certainly in there.

**Dr REBGETZ:** It is difficult to diagnose any cross-cultural setting. I do not have any language, so it is very difficult. You have to get to know people sometimes too before they will talk to you. I think there is a high level of un-diagnosed depression.

**Mr BURKE:** Does that lead to self harm?

**Dr REBGETZ:** Well it can, but we have not noticed. Most of the threats of self-harm have usually psychotic people here aren't they?

**Mr DWYER:** They are a psychotic presentation.

**Dr REBGETZ:** We have been very fortunate, given other communities in the Northern Territory, that have other problems are not as prominent here as they are in other places.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you both on behalf of the committee. It was such an informative session about what happens in your environment, and it is good for us to understand that part of it as well. It is also good to get a professional point of view

of what happens if people are forking out hundreds, if not thousands, for ganja and grog, and we want to know if children are suffering. Thank you very much.

Shortly are going to ask you some questions, but I have to make a statement.

On behalf of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the community, I welcome the people from the Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Port Keats for taking part. This meeting is being recorded and at some time the transcript may be made public. Please let me know at any stage if you want what you say to remain private. For the *Hansard* record, I ask that you state your full names and the capacity in which you speak. There is Parliamentary Privilege on the information that you give this committee.

We want to know about substance abuse, and if you see kids who are abusing substances in the community and inside the school, and we want to know about your attendance and what the community is doing to encourage the kids to go back to school

**Ms REBGETZ:** My name is Ann-Marie Rebgetz and I am Co-Principal of Thamarrurr Catholic school.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** I am Ursula Kintharri. I was the last teacher Year 6 and 7 in Indigenous leadership.

**Ms TIPILOURA:** I am Roseria Tipiloura. I am the *[inaudible]* teacher and so I am leadership.

**Ms BUNDUCK:** I am Zarerine Bunduck. I am the teacher of year 1 and I am leadership.

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** I am Scholastica Kintharri. I am also a teacher, teaching transition and I am also part of the leadership team.

**Ms REBGETZ:** In terms of the problems we experience at school, attendance is a big one for us. It is related to a range of issues, and in particular the unrest in the community. There are also other basic issues such as transport, housing, and environmental issues, and people seeing a purpose for schooling.

In terms of substance abuse, at school we have not caught many kids who are actually smoking ganja or drinking at school, but when you mark the roll in a senior class, and say to the kids where is so and so, [and they reply]; 'They are on the ganja', or that person is staying home because her boyfriend might be smoking ganja, or she is, or whatever. The kids are quite open about telling you and they know what the others are doing.

Alcohol is still a problem in the community when the roads are open, and that affects things. I have not been here too long, but the others will be able to tell you much more about that. It is also a problem with people going to Darwin from the community and problems associated with that, which means they may go away, and then stay away, or then come back. The others might have something to say about that also.

We had a meeting a week or so ago where all of the indigenous staff got together about all the unrest in the community, and I documented everything from that meeting.

The major thing that came out of it was that it made them feel very sad about what is going on. This probably links into what Pat was saying in regards to the amount of depression in the community.

These women are all qualified teachers, so it was interesting the question about the fully-qualified nurses. At the school we have nine fully qualified indigenous teachers. This is probably the highest of anywhere in the Northern Territory, if not in Australia. We do have such a strength, and they are very professional about their approach. Amidst all the fighting and everything, they are always at work, and very rarely do they miss a day. I cannot remember many days off that you guys have had, so they can have horrific nights sometimes, but still come to work the next day.

One the major problems we have is the lack of recognition of this work. Roseria and I visited Kuy, which is an outstation of the school, yesterday. We were discussing on the way that she has written a letter and had her name on a housing list for 10 years. The whole time she has been a fully-qualified teacher, and we have just had six new houses built for our non-indigenous staff. I find it really difficult, as the school principal, to see these new houses going up and yet these teachers who have given more service than any other teachers in this school, are denied housing. That must hurt inside when they see what is happening. Roseria, do you want to talk about your housing?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** My name is Roseria. I have worked at the school for 20 years. I did my training through Batchelor College with these other local teachers. I have a housing problem. It is in just bad condition and is breaking up and is full of people.

**Mr MILLS:** How many people in your house Roseria?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** Some live in the lounge room and we got three rooms, full.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** How many children inside the house?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** There are lots. It was 74 years built. It is an old house.

**Mrs MILLER:** 74?

**Mr MILLS:** Built in 1974.

**Ms TIPILOURA:** Yes, it is an old house. It leaks, and is breaking up.

**Mr CUMAIYI:** The house she is living in, I probably was working there when I was young and healthy. It is a little brick house that we used to make. If you go into the house it is cracked all over. It was the first house built in this community, while other people were living in corrugated iron houses. That is what she is living in.

**Mr MILLS:** Can you say roughly how many people live there?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** Maybe 20.

**Mrs MILLER:** And you have children of your own?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** I have two girls.

**Mrs MILLER:** Two girls, and yet you have a house full of 20?

**Mr MILLS:** And who is responsible for the cooking and the meals?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** Myself and my sister.

**Ms REBGETZ:** You get an idea of what it is like to come and do your job as a teacher all day, and then go home to that situation. On top of that you had to move house sometimes with the fighting that was going on?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** We have got some families where their house has been trashed. Last week more families came to that old house.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** So she had more people inside that house.

**Ms REBGETZ:** They are still there aren't they?

**Ms TIPILOURA:** Yes they are.

**Ms REBGETZ:** Because their houses have not been fixed, and there has been no relief to address that situation.

**Mr BURKE:** The comment made at the federal level was that [they] refused to build more houses because exactly what has happened to existing housing, would happen to new housing. What you are talking about in relation to providing housing for teachers, how do you respond to that sort of comment, or what is the response to that; is that accurate?

**Ms REBGETZ:** I guess there is the sense that new houses may get vandalised, but I think it is an easy way out of not building new houses.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Absolutely!

**Ms REBGETZ:** I believe the whole thing has to be approached from a multi-faceted point of view. There are many issues involved in what is happening, and it is a catch-22 situation. A lot of the problems that come in the community are because the young people feel alienated from the school process, and they leave school. There is not much to do, so then they start smoking ganja or they do other things.

If we could re-engage those kids, you would not have the problem of vandalism as much. A lot of that is their inner anger of what is happening, and that is a problem which started only in the late 1990s according to Toby, who is Co-principal with me. At the moment, it is at this level where there is a lot of fighting and yelling and screaming, and not too many people getting hurt, but property is getting hurt.

This year it has escalated, and that is why there has been a lot of attention; us crying for help. It was a cry for help when I met with my staff, and the community is crying for help. If you go two years down the track, it will escalate further and who know what will happen in the future. It will not just stay at houses getting hurt; it will be more people getting hurt. There is great worry about the educational levels of kids coming through, and education is their key to the future, so these are very real issues.

Scholastica, some of the problems you have had you might like to share them. She has had a lot of problems this year, and how many years have you been teaching at the school?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** Maybe 30 years. I have known a lot of young boys who are doing the damage around the community. I taught them when I was a teacher's assistant. A lot of the things I see today worries me. I am thinking about the futures for my grandchildren; what will they be looking forward for? Plus, if my family leave the community and go out bush, what kind of education will they get?

There are a lot of other things that worry me too. My family on ganja, plus all my brothers go out to Peppimenarti, and there are only two of us. That is my sister sitting next to Ann. All of the children, and we are supporting our brothers, but their kids are like our own grandchildren. Their monies are spent maybe on ganja and grog. When we get our pays we buy food for our own family, but we have to support the rest of the family too. It is hard to save money these days.

Not long ago I nearly felt sick about the way people are treating me with my children, and not only at home. Each morning I have to get up and go to work to teach the kids. While I am teaching I am thinking about my family at home with the problems that are going on, and it is really hard. What can we do? Is there someone around who can help us?

**Mr MILLS:** Scholastica how many in your house?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** In my house, there is only my brother and his three kids, I have four rooms. I have got my son and his girlfriend. He has four children, and all his children are living with me. At the moment I am not staying at my place. I am staying with my brother in the other house. Just trying to protect my grandchildren, I moved away from my house.

**Mrs MILLER:** How many are in your brother's house?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** In my brother's house he has his own family, his two girls, and now he has me and my son and his kids, and my son's girlfriend. That will be maybe 10, and it has only got three rooms, but I am living in the lounge room with my family.

**Mr MILLS:** So when you are preparing lessons, you prepare them back at school?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** At school.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Sometimes we do planning on the weekends. When it gets a bit quiet, we usually go up and do our planning.

**Mr MILLS:** So the school would be a good place for you to have a break?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes, it is much quieter up there. Instead of staying at home with a lot of noise and kids running around. You want to concentrate so you need to go somewhere where there is peace and quiet.

**Mr MILLS:** Ann, you raised a very good point about teachers coming from outside and being provided for with quality accommodation, but the respect afforded to those who are local and qualified teachers who have served for 20 or 30 years. I do not know about Zaverine?

**Ms BUNDUCK:** Same I reckon.

**Mr MILLS:** About the same?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes because Roseria, and myself, and Zaverine we did training at Batchelor, and we did Stage 4. We have been to other communities and seen what they are doing, and then we came back, and we do here what is right for our kids.

**Ms REBGETZ:** In terms of the stability in education, it is these people that keep it going, because most non-indigenous staff come in, stay a while, and then go.

**Mr BURKE:** You mentioned a change in the 1990s which I know you were not here for, but was there anything in particular, or any range of things that you noticed, that changed in the 90s?

**Mrs MILLER:** What made it change, when did you notice that?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** 1990's it all changed. We became Deputy Principal and leadership seconds. That is when Jan was here. Things changed for a little while. We were like curriculum co-ordinators, English, maths, special needs, all those things. We were taking over those roles, but we needed more training and people to come out and teach us more things so we can do what is best.

The attendance was high at that time, but then it dropped because of all the violence, and like young kids were joining in those gangs. We would see them with our own eyes during the night, or even during the day. Some of the other kids would be at the school doing work and those kids were the good ones, but the ones that stayed home just were not interested to come.

**Mr MILLS:** Do you think that change you have seen came as a result of ganja?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes. Most young kids would smoke. The ones at the school no, but they see it at home. Young boys sitting around with the bucket, and they see them smoking and that is what they do.

**Mr MILLS:** So you remember the time before ganja?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Before ganja was around, there were lots of kids.

**Mr MILLS:** I heard a few people talk about the club, when the club was open. Some people say it was a good time, but then it became a problem. So there were some good times when the club was here. Do you remember that, or was it all bad for you guys?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** Bad for us.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** When there is ganja and alcohol, it is not very good.

**Mr MILLS:** No, not at all?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** No it is not good. We needed our kids to go back to school. That is where we want them to be. We do not want ganja in our community, even the alcohol.

**Mr MILLS:** Can you tell me about when the club was open, what was it like here?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** The grog came in.

**Mr MILLS:** So there was drinking here. What was Wadeye like then?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** Maybe during that time when the club was open, mostly we felt fear.

**Mr MILLS:** Fear?

**Mrs MILLER:** Were there many drugs?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** Fear, that is how I felt, and we got that same feeling again today with all this violence, and ganja going around.

**Ms BUNDUCK:** I feel scared because people who are my family are smoking. Also I went to work and keep them. Most of that time there were not many kids coming up because they had a problem in their community. Also I feel happy when I stay with my family.

**Mrs MILLER:** Zaverine have you got lots of people in your house too?

**Ms BUNDUCK:** We have got my brother, his wife and her kids, me and my two kids, and my sister.

**Mrs MILLER:** You have got three rooms too?

**Ms BUNDUCK:** We have four rooms. My brother used to drink beer before, but now he has stopped and he stays at home.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do you have any other members of your family that are involved with Ganja or to Peppimenarti?

**Ms BUNDUCK:** Only my niece.

**Mrs MILLER:** So your house is fairly okay with people being involved with substance abuse?

**Ms BUNDUCK:** My house is okay.

**Mrs MILLER:** Just got too many people in it?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** We do have problems when about 20 men are smoking at our homes. That is a bit of a problem too.

**Mrs MILLER:** They do not respect you and go away?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** No, they won't. It is hard for you to get out of your room and cook food for the kids when there are 20 men sitting in the lounge room.

**Mr MILLS:** Then after they smoke do they want something to eat to?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** They would be eating with us too.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, they get very hungry.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** They would go looking in the fridge, asking you if there is any food and we would not get them any.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Ursula, what happens with money? It must be hard with so many.

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** That is where most of their money goes, on ganja, and then when we get our pays, they wait for us to get money from us.

**Mrs MILLER:** They wait for you?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** That is what they do, and then that person brings it back and then sells it, and they make money for themselves. That is what they do.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Do they put pressure on you mob for your money?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** I buy food for my grandchildren. I got seven grandchildren; all boys, no girls. I have got a 29-year old son living in my house, and just my grandchildren, because my daughter and her partner moved out to her mother-in-law. He smokes ganja, and he has got four kids, so I take the other three. I look after them and they look after the little one.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you make sure nobody takes your money, Ursula, you feed them. Good on ya!

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** You have to be hard not to give your money to someone else, helping them out to buy ganja. That is wrong. You cannot do that.

**Ms REBGETZ:** But some women would not be game to say no, would they because they might get hit. Have you seen anyone get hit, or hurt?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** I have one son and he is on ganja. He pressures me for money, but he has never hit me yet. If that happens, I kick him out of my house and he can go somewhere else.

I try to protect my grandchildren, that is his son I am looking after. I am trying very hard to keep them away from seeing these young boys smoking the ganja near them, and it is really hard.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Even some young girls are smoking too.

**Mrs MILLER:** They are smoking ganja in your house, not cigarettes?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** No, young girls.

**Mrs MILLER:** They are smoking ganja in your house are they?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** They are.

**Mrs MILLER:** You want to kick them out?

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** How could I do that when there are 20 men sitting there?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** They will be like layabouts if they keep on smoking, and they will not be thinking about the family, and all that culture stuff will be gone away from them. They will just be thinking about those things.

**Ms REBGETZ:** One of the things I wondered is, from so much smoking of the ganja and the way you see this fear in the community, whether that is like an effect of some paranoia which the drug affects. From the moment I arrived, I could not get over how much fear there is here. Like the fear that they cannot send their kids to school because they are worried about them getting hurt; that it is not a safe place. Or the fear that if they send them to school, if he just does some little thing to another kid that could result in a big fight.

It is only little things that start fights and I wonder how much of that was related to the affects of drugs, in terms of that fear? It seemed quite strange that it was so prevalent because you know how much people here do love sport, and how good they are at it. The fact you have this problem with football games when it should be just a fun thing, but they really are scared. The fact that I tackled so and so, and that tackle might mean the whole gang will be on to me. We have had that happen at school this year.

**Mr NATT:** What has the attendance rate been since you have been here? You said you got here in October was it?

**Ms REBGETZ:** No, I started in January. Our highest enrolment this year has been 630 students. With what was happening last week, we are probably at about 120. My big concern is that every kid deserves an education and has a right to it, and at the moment they are being denied that right.

I have a problem also with the fact that if they say the best way is to move everyone out, exactly what Ursula said in terms of what education they will get out in the bush. They get not a Western education but obviously a very good education in terms of culture, but the problem is they are living a Western lifestyle generally. They are exposed to TV and everything else, and Toby thinks that the TV and the American influence has really effected; the fact that you have so many gang culture things happening.

So how do you provide good services to people in the bush? When I went out to our out-station at Kuy yesterday, there is not much money poured into that education and there are about 20 – 30 kids there. There were there of us who went out and we took one of our musicians with us. They were just fantastic; all these kids were so keen to learn, weren't they Roseria? They were at us the whole time; 'Can we read this book with you, can we do this'. All those young men were singing and doing everything, and they were so happy.

The difference I noticed was just how relaxed the kids were. They were on their land, but they also felt very much at home and you could see they were much more extroverted and outgoing, and just so healthy in the way that they approach things.

**Mr NATT:** In confidence?

**Ms REBGETZ:** Yes, but there are some real anomalies there. For example, today I have eight students in the school who are from non-indigenous families, so we are trying to provide a good education for those students who are enrolled with Katherine School of the Air. It just happens today, that I have three teachers visiting from there, but I find the money that would be poured into say, Katherine School of the Air and delivering those services to bush kids.

I am not convinced the same per capita money is poured into delivering those services to those kids at Kuy, or any other outstation, for that matter. I am just trying

to understand why there is such an anomaly of money between the white kid in the bush, as opposed to the black kid in the bush.

The teacher at Kuy is teaching off a veranda. There is no school room there. He has to sleep on the veranda to provide the schooling. All of that happens, and it is accepted. I said I wanted some technology out there as if you get these kids on computers, they will just take off. We have four old computers that were found, but to get money for that is like getting blood out of a stone. Our school, as you are probably aware, is in a mission agreement which is coming to an end, but in that agreement the re-investing in our schools program for capital grants, which went to every other school in Australia, the five mission schools missed. That would be something like \$130k we could have had to buy computers, but you are not even getting that money coming in.

In terms of the per capita funding and the way the school is funded on attendance, we are going over to a new funding formula which is going to award attendance. I am very uncomfortable with that as it is saying it is the teacher's job to make sure the kid is at school, whereas, the teacher does not have control over a lot of these things that happen in the community. I think there are other ways of doing things that would get better outcomes. If you increase your attendance by one, that will get you an extra \$12k per year.

Also how we record things. The situation is that most people do not have the telephone on at home and if a child is not attending school they may be sick, but to find that out you have to go out to the house, or the people come to school. In an urban situation, if a child is away from the school more than three days, then the school would contact to see what is happening, but it is very different here.

A lot of times kids are away from school because they might be sick, you have heard the high sickness rate, but none of that is recorded in the statistic, so the statistics will reflect attendance, without reflecting whether the kid is absent because they are unwell or for some sort of cultural reason. That is not even looked for.

The fact there is a law that says kids should attend school is a joke. It is not an enforced law, and until that law is enacted, how are we going to protect children's rights, because you are talking about their rights being neglected. Unless we do have some sort of law, I think in terms of global the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, those kids rights are not being allowed to happen.

**Mr BURKE:** What dreams and aspirations do the students have, particularly the older ones who are looking at finishing their schooling soon? What do they look for in the future?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** We want them to be teachers, shop keepers, police, whatever they want to be.

**Mr BURKE:** But what do they tell you?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** They do not tell us anything.

**Mr NATT:** Do you try to push them in a certain direction, say you will be a good policeman?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** It is up to them. They have to make that choice themselves. We cannot make that.

**Mr NATT:** So you do not give them any hints?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** No, it is up to them.

**Mr BURKE:** Are those opportunities available though?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** They will be when we retire.

**Ms REBGETZ:** I guess the pathways in the school are there, like your daughter.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes my daughter. She has finished Year 12 and she is a TA (Teacher's Assistant). There were seven of them.

**Ms REBGETZ:** Seven graduates last year?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes.

**Ms REBGETZ:** We are very proud of the programs we are offering at school; they are good quality programs. We have in the secondary school a lot of specialist teachers and we are trying to encourage kids to develop their skills in a range of areas in terms of; art manual arts, physical recreation, a whole range. We take those groups of kids all around town, and one of my teachers the other day, took her group of secondary girls and they counted up something like 26 outlets where they could have got a different position, to try and show them what is there.

We also had a group that went into Darwin last week to have a look at the Charles Darwin University open day and went to a youth leadership forum. The more exposure they get the better so we are really trying to push that but things like transport which I mentioned before, I am amazed there is no school bus or public transport in the community. The council has just got a bus, but it is not actually on the road yet so we are looking at ways we can try and gather them in.

A few weeks ago we had a march to school day, it was part of the National Walk to School thing, and we decided we would do this march around the community. We went into houses and pulled kids out, and even doing that the biggest concern was about the fighting wasn't it?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes.

**Ms REBGETZ:** Until the fighting is fixed, or calms down which seems to be happening now, and people feel there is some control, they are very reluctant to let their kids come if they think it is going to lead to a fight. Then that fighting is related to the ganja a bit, isn't it?

**Mr NATT:** Is that fear always here?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Always here.

**Mr NATT:** Even before the ganja, was the fear always here?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes.

**Mr NATT:** Because of the grog I suppose?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Grog and ganja.

**Mr NATT:** So there is always that underlying fear that something is going to happen?

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** Yes, like people destroying houses and properties. It is making us really scared.

**Mr NATT:** Do you think that fear would subside if the ganja did go and the grog were not allowed to come. There still would not be that animosity between the two groups?

**Ms BUNDUCK:** It would be good.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** They would go off to Peppimenarti, or Daly River, or Kununurra that is another thing. We would hear of accidents on the road and someone has died. Things will never get better if things like that happen.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** One of the good things that has come out of last weeks media publicity that Wadeye got, even though it was bad and they concentrated too much on the gangs and negative stuff and not on you strong women who are trying to do something, is that a guy called David Coles has been put into place, and I think he is here today, by the Northern Territory government to help heal Wadeye, and see what you people want. Every single one of you presenters who sat in front of this committee here this morning, you need to go and talk to this bloke and say it is not about you coming in and saying what is right by government or your eyes, it is about what is right by you people.

They need to start implementing some of things you women want. One of things I said earlier which I do not think you heard, is that it would be good if this community could get Mal Brough the federal Minister back on good terms. He came in at a very hard time when the gangs and the fighting, and it would be good if you can extend an invitation to him to come back when things have calmed down to sit down and talk with people yourselves. People that have a vision and are helping kids, and thinking about the safety of women and children; that you want a future for this community.

**Mrs MILLER:** We have learnt this morning that there are different languages spoken here. In those different languages, how elders in there in each of those; are there good strong elders in each of those language groups?

**Mr Lantjin:** A few of us senior elders.

**Mrs MILLER:** There are senior elders in each one of those languages, and do those elders go and speak to the young ones who are causing so much trouble?

**Mr Lantjin:** They do talk to them, but young boys do not listen.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** They do not listen to their elders.

**Mr Lantjin:** They tell us; 'It is our business'.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** That is what they would say; 'It is my business'.

**Mrs MILLER:** They would say that to you. With the elders, do they still take the young fellas for ceremony, because if they do you would not have this problem?

**Mr Lantjin:** We did that many years ago, but the problem has not been cut off, as well as women's ceremony. But our culture needs to be strong, and a focus to our children. They are not the bosses; we are the bosses.

**Mrs MILLER:** There are elders in each one of those language groups?

**Ms MICHELLE:** Yes some of the elders, they do not stay here. They fly to Darwin and drink grog.

**Mrs MILLER:** They are not good examples?

**Ms MICHELLE:** No, terrible.

**Mrs MILLER:** So the elders do not actually live here?

**Ms MICHELLE:** Some do.

**Mrs MILLER:** But they go in and out and they are not a good example?

**Ms MICHELLE:** Yes, that's true.

**Ms S KINTHARRI:** And that is the problem, they just take off.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It is good to hear you mob talking about where the problem begins. By saying that you cannot just pick out one bit of problem to do with law and order, it is a multitude of problems, and people are dealing with the symptoms rather than having a look at the underlying problems. You were not here, but earlier I said it was about investing in these communities. We invest in the whole of the Territory when we put it on the market and sell it to our tourists not just nationally in Australia, but internationally. We say, come to the Territory for these reasons, and one of those reasons is Aboriginal country and Aboriginal people. If we cannot invest as a Territory into the very people that we advocate outside, then you know.

**Ms REBGETZ:** That is a very good point. This morning when I heard the news and I did not see it on TV last night, they have opened this new museum in Paris and they named all the artists from different communities. There was not one artist named from this community, and there should have been because this is the biggest community. Why, because what is being done to promote arts in this community? We have the women's centre which is great, and there are some wonderful artists here. They should be pouring money in to this sort of thing. All those kids who are smoking ganja, a lot of them are artists. At school, we have the literature production centre which is a cultural centre as well, and we looking to expand that as, as I said to the people, if no one else is going to go and do it in the community, we will. Why is this happening?

I have an artist, someone coming in who is going to work at the school for two days a week as an artist in residence with some of our students. He is an artist in the community and he is so good he produces art work nearly every day, but we are supplying him with canvas and paints to be able to do that. Why is that not happening here? There is so much that could happen. The potential is here; you see all these achievements, and the kids that we have, and how well they are able to do things. There are some wonderful achievements and, as you said the positive things really need to be acknowledged.

The big thing that has happened, we were mentioning the tribal elders and Toby and I have discussed this at length, is the imbalance. You have 50% of your population under 20, and the average life expectancy for a male is 49, the number of elders related to the amount of population is very small, so the social structures become quite imbalanced.

Also the other thing that has happened, is you have your role models in the community being the leaders of the gangs. That is all the young kids are seeing as the role models out there, so what do they try to do? We walk into the yard duty at lunch time, and there are two little kids having the same fight as they see their brothers, and sometimes sisters. It is not just young men in these fight now.

**Ms U KINTHARRI:** It happens in the afternoon when they come out of school, out the back. True.

**Ms REBGETZ:** Yes, so what we have to provide good role models that they can see and say, well I can actually be like that, and develop leadership within the community and get that happening. If there are brilliant artists, lets say; 'Look at this they are doing wonderful work', and it brings in the culture and it makes them feel good.

That has not been invested. I think the problem is the infrastructure on the ground; there needs to be a huge number of more resources on the ground here. Everyone talks about this normalisation, and if it is a normal community you need to have the ratio of police, teachers, doctors, and nurses, to the population in the community, not for police for 2500 people when the ratio in urban Australia is 1:100 police.

These are all well documented stats, and that is what is not being looked at. In terms of the school also, a lot of stuff in education and health has operated on how do we get through this, rather than let's build the infrastructure which will cater for it.

Look at the road situation. The whole infrastructure; the streets do not even have street names. You teach mapping to kids at school and you use your example of your local community, so much could be done to improve that. There are just so many steps forward that have not been taken that is there waiting to happen. The fact that the Administrator will come in hopefully that will be soon, but that is why last week we were calling for outside resources. Why do not we bring in the army to help build the houses, to do the work, the positive work that army forces can do. They are doing that at Borroloola I believe, and there is so much can take people ahead.

That is what people need here, the lift. The depression aspect really starts to get to people when they see they are living in a house with 20. Roseria has said to me; 'I have been trying this for 10 years, I may as well give up. It is not going to happen'. I said; 'How can you give up?' Last week I saw there were nominations for unsung heroes, and I thought there are probably at least 50 unsung heroes in this community. When you have worked in a school for 30 years, or whatever, and no one hears those stories and lived in the conditions that are just third world, appalling, conditions.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** That is why it is really, really important that you meet with David Coles. I think that one of David Coles' goals should be to meet with each clan group, at the school, at the health service, and to hear the voices of these people as well. The only people who can do that are you. He is at the office now having a meeting and it is important for you say to him that you need him to come back tomorrow, or the next day, to sit down and talk with the school'.

**Mrs MILLER:** Is he going to be based out here?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I don't know. Your local member is here also, Rob Knight, and he is over at that meeting also, so get in and push him along to make sure he sticks up for you mob.

It has been wonderful seeing strong women, and strong men too, that are helping this community move on, and I want to thank you on behalf of this committee.

They have to start listening to Aboriginal people, and stop thinking what they think is good for you is always going to work, because it does not. It is a multitude of issues, a lot of you said it is about putting the infrastructure on the ground first and let the people start healing.

Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 12.41pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination - Racing, Gaming and Licensing**

*Thursday 19 October 2006*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer

**Witnesses:** Dr Ian Crundall, Director Office of Alcohol Policy and  
Coordination  
Ms Elizabeth Morris, Executive Director Racing, Gaming and  
Licensing Policy

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

Meeting convened at 12.30 pm.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** On behalf of the Committee I welcome you here this afternoon and thank you for attending.

I declare open this meeting with the Select Committee on Substance Abuse and welcome Doctor Ian Crundall, Director of the Office of Alcohol Policy Coordination Northern Territory Treasury, and Ms Elizabeth Morris from the Liquor Commission. Dr Crundall is appearing before the Committee to brief members in relation to the operation of that office and in particular the current situation in various communities regarding alcohol management arrangements.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be in camera. A decision regarding this is at the discretion of the Committee.

You are reminded that evidence given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege. For the purpose of the *Hansard* record, I ask that you state your name and the capacity in which you appear today.

**Dr Crundall:** Ian Crundall, I am the Director of the Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination.

**Ms Morris:** Elizabeth Morris, Executive Director of Racing, Gaming and Licensing.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you. You have the floor.

**Dr Crundall:** Since I was here last, part of what the office has been concentrating on has been trying to shore up cross government networking which is supposed to happen so there is a more coordinated approach. We have also been following up all the recommendations from government which came out of the Alcohol Framework, and how they are progressing. We have had two progress reports based on the activities reported to us from the key agencies involved in those recommendations. Treasury, Department of Health, Police, and Justice are the key ones.

While that has been happening we seem to be getting caught up more and more in servicing alcohol management plans which were very much about local communities addressing local issues. There are about ten of them which are in various stages of existence. The first one we have worked on is Katherine, and what we have done is funded a consultant to go there for three months to canvas what the issues are from various perceptions, the various ideas people have for what should happen.

That consultancy finished a month ago and there was a meeting yesterday where the local Crime Prevention Subcommittee on Alcohol Management was to start to go through that report and pick out some of the strategies we should first try. We see all these plans as being living documents of as you try something the circumstances change and you try others.

My understanding of that meeting was that it was not all that productive and I need to follow that up this afternoon. There did not appear to be much consensus about what the next step forward is, or what was in the report from the consultant. We had feed back up to that point that the entire town was pleased with the process and they

talked up alcohol issues so everyone was very focused on what should be the matters should be addressed, so we are following that up.

Also in that region we have been working with Timber Creek, and they have put together a fairly extensive management group who will now oversight the similar process for developing a regional plan for Timber Creek. We are about to visit Mataranka which is also looking at developing a plan that will be consistent with some of the supply issues in Katherine and, again, they are talking of things such as limiting how much takeaway there is to the locals, particularly the Indigenous population. They have even suggested no sales on Sunday which will be interesting to see.

**Ms BRAHAM:** Good idea.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, a good idea.

**Ms Morris:** Particularly from drive through bottle shops.

**Dr Crundall:** We have to look at the detail, and we will go down and actually discuss with the people exactly what they talked about.

Borrooloola has been quite problematic for the office as we have never been quite sure who we could rely on to manage any sort of process there. Things are fairly up and down which had something to do with the current licensed premise which was operating, however I have just heard that that premises licence has been suspended indefinitely which means a major source of problems has been removed from the scene for a short time, and it is probably an ideal time to pursue a plan and consider whether a licensed premises like the Hotel is to be part of the township.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Where is that again?

**Dr Crundall:** In Borrooloola.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is that the only pub?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes it's the only pub. There is one other licensed outlet that sells takeaway, and in the interim she has agreed she will voluntarily put limits on sales and not take advantage of the situation so we are trusting that will happen.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The same with Heartbreak. Is that getting restricted as well?

**Ms Morris:** They have not imposed any restrictions at the moment, however the licensing inspectors are in close contact with them to monitor what might be happening so we can deal with a problem there if it arises.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Would it get suspended?

**Ms Morris:** The licensee ended up walking; putting her things in the car and driving away. Therefore there is no licensee on the premise therefore the Commission suspends the licence. What led up to that was a difficulty with the licensee having a licensee or nominee on the premises. The Commission imposed a series of very strict restrictions on the licence and they were not able to meet them in relation to security, or having a properly qualified and appropriate licensee or nominee on the premise, and in relation to restrictive hours. They were only able to open for very short periods of time and only able to sell very small amounts of alcohol on the

takeaway basis because they were not able to meet any of the standard set, so they left the premises.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Very unusual.

**Ms Morris:** Yes. The licensee is actually eight months pregnant and there were a lot of serious personal issues and factors involved before we reached the situation we have now. It is a good situation for the community to have a period of calm, but as well as the good spin-offs, there are some bad ones with people moving to perhaps, Katherine, or going down the track and driving and drinking and all of that kind of thing so we need to monitor that and try to assist the community where we can

**Mr MILLS:** How long is that situation likely to be in affect for?

**Ms Morris:** It is hard to say. The licensee is obviously trying to sell the license and there are a couple of people who are interested. There will need to be probity checks for those people and that can take a while. At this stage the hearing is still going ahead and the hearing is listed for five to seven days at Borroloola around 21 November as it is important the complaints against the licensee and the difficulty the community were having with alcohol, are heard by the Commission. Even if a new licensee comes in who is squeaky clean and approved by the Commission, the Commission may still want to consider placing restrictive restrictions on that particular licence.

**Mr MILLS:** So it is a strategic time for the community to really think about alcohol isn't it?

**Ms Morris:** Yes.

**Mr MILLS:** Is that effort being brought to bear on this strategic opportunity?

**Dr Crundall:** It is a bit fortuitous we have had such problems in deciding which way to go at Borroloola. We have got to the point of saying we need to get someone in there to do the plan, and now is an even better time to do that. A consultancy is the way to go; someone who will spend time down there and actually draw up a plan and hopefully by early next year there would be a fairly considered plan by the community of how they want to go forward. It allows them to put the whole concept of a licensed hotel within the plan. It is not a given that it is there. It is all about whether it should be there, who might own it, and all sorts of things. In many respects the delay has been a benefit in the long run.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Are you able to advise who the consultant is?

**Dr Crundall:** No, we have not advertised yet.

**Ms Morris:** The other difficulty was that we were about to proceed with a payment to the council, but the CEO of the council resigned and so the council was in a bit of disarray as well. It would not have been good to plug money in as they would not have had the capacity to go out and organise something.

**Mr MILLS:** Is it likely to be out of normal operation until Christmas, or beyond Christmas?

**Ms Morris:** It could be. It is possible they might conclude a sale pending acceptance by us of the licensee. If that licensee is okay, the hearing happens in November, and then in considering the new applicant, the Commission works with that licensee for the licence in relation to imposing some restrictions. So it is possible it could be operational before December.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is it still operating as a hotel rather than a bar?

**Ms Morris:** No, because they all walked off together and the staff have gone.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It is a colourful licensee history isn't it?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Remember there is still a takeaway licence. Do they have a restriction on how much alcohol they can sell?

**Ms Morris:** That licensee is very responsible and, in conjunction with the Commission, has determined to self-impose restrictions in relation to what she sells. In the past when conditions for emergency or for being naughty were imposed on the one pub, she has imposed the same on herself which is a responsible attitude from her.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It would be nice to have it the other way around. Suspending the takeaway licence from the whole lot and have something in-house where you could change the management?

**Ms Morris:** She does not have an in-house. She is a store and only has a takeaway component.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What is the store called?

**Ms Morris:** Borroloola Bulk Discount or something like that.

**Dr Crundall:** The evidence a while ago was that there were some emergency restrictions put on the hotel and they were delivering a benefit to the community in terms of law and order, however there were some concerns expressed about people accessing Heartbreak Hotel and even some drift towards Tennant Creek, but that could have been for other reasons. Our concern is that while it is a good time to have the licensed premises shut, these people are going to move around and if it is for an extended period and will end up somewhere else. The flip side of that is that there might be some people who might decide it is a great time to give up drinking, and they need support to get through that. It is quite a sensitive period and Borroloola is so far away from everywhere.

**Mr KNIGHT:** There should be baseline data on domestic violence, sexual assaults, child abuse, drink driving, and things like that. It would be interesting to see how that changes over this period of non-availability and also data for clinic admissions, Police attendances and all those things. When did the licence get suspended?

**Dr Crundall:** Monday?

**Ms Morris:** Yes, but even though it was suspended on Monday they had not actually traded for about two weeks.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It would be nice to have those figures.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** I agree.

**Mr KNIGHT:** For Katherine and Timber Creek, the two times the pub got suspended in Katherine it was so peaceful, and during the floods it was wonderful. The good thing about the floods was that no one could get any grog.

**Dr Crundall:** The Research Evaluation Information Unit at RGL have responsibility for the alcohol indicators which are quite global, but in speaking to them and all these other things that are happening around town, they are building relationships with Health and Police and for the benefit of the Commission in particular they have been able to get regular informal updates of what is going on. That is happening on the Tiwi Islands in Nguiu where there has been the imposition of only mid-strength beers and all the evidence is showing...

**Mr KNIGHT:** When you say Health, do you mean FACS?

**Dr Crundall:** It would be FACS and Alcohol and Drugs in regards to who is attending their services, going into the clinics, and those sorts of things.

**Mr KNIGHT:** There have been reports that 17% of sexual assaults on children are alcohol related, so if you are linking those agencies, FACS needs to be there strongly.

**Dr Crundall:** We always like to get something out to the schools as well to see what impact it has there. There is an effort to try and get that regular reporting and that is currently happening in Tennant Creek where new restrictions were brought in in July. Anecdotally they have said there has been a bit of a shift towards mixed sprits, and glass apparently, in Tennant Creek.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Mixed sprits seem to be a lot cheaper now. Certainly [Aboriginal people] I know of are buying cartons of Bundy and Cola rather than a carton of beer.

**Dr Crundall:** It probably tastes sweeter, too.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Really, with the Alice Springs restrictions...I flew home on Friday and on Saturday went around all of the town camps to find out what people are drinking. They have gone straight onto the Rum and Coke and the thirty pack VB's. Within 20 minutes there were fifteen cartons of 30 VB's that walked out of Woolies at the same time of doing the town camp surveys. My daughter works there, at Woolies so I am getting her to keep an eye on it as well. They have even gone onto Stoney...

**Mr KNIGHT:** Green Ginger wine?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, and they are not going to get the two litre cask after six. They have given up on that as is too late for them. One of the things I have noticed in this short period is that there are a lot more sober Aboriginal people in the morning.

**Ms Morris:** Yes, because a carton of VB is 5% alcohol, whereas cask wine is anywhere between 10% and 20%.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I want to declare something here Madam Chairman. I have already flagged to the Minister for Racing and Gaming that I am going to ask a question on the decision of the Licensing Commission in regards to the Stuart Caravan Park. For

that reason I will not be asking Elizabeth anything. I wanted people here to know and not think I am asking that question in the House after attending this meeting.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you, because you cannot use the information you get here today for purposes of government. Member for Braitling always remember breach of confidentiality of the Committee.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes I know, which is why I wanted to flag today what I intended to ask in the House, however the decision in regards to the Stuart Caravan Park has now been made public.

**Dr Crundall:** That was is a good lead-in to what is happening in Alice Springs. The plan there was developed in quite a different way. The Chief Minister established a taskforce and government officials drew up a plan which was launched. I have some pamphlets here.

The plan was announced, along with the Commission's decision to limit takeaways further, and these pamphlets were in a letterbox box drop just the other week so the whole town is now aware of what is going on. There will be ongoing monitoring, and there is a community representative group being pulled together, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director of Licensing Centre from RGL. That will be the forum for people to have ongoing input and understanding of the current situation. These measures will be in place for 12 months. What you said you observed is interesting feedback as I have not heard anything else...

**Ms Morris:** The anecdotal feedback I have heard is that Alice is a bit quieter.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** It is.

**Ms Morris:** The Manager at the Hospital Emergency Unit said there were less alcohol admissions. All of this is anecdotal.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Well it was funny because when I flew home on Friday it just happened my son was really crook, so as well as going to the town camps I spent hours inside the hospital seeing less people presenting with gashes to the head and broken arms. I think the Police only brought one person in during the six hours I was there,

**Ms Morris:** The adverse stuff is that we are getting photos from the Council Rangers about rubbish, both bottles and cans.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** The Police were saying there were some disturbances late in the evening which they attributed to *[inaudible]*. But it is a bit early to make comment. You have to give it a bit longer.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, you have got to give it another six weeks or a couple of months.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Of course the other people who complain are seniors who cannot buy their cask wine.

**Dr Crundall:** In August the Commission had a hearing there and gave in principle support for the introduction of a permit system for East Arnhem. It will be computer based but the in principle support is based on a number of other things happening,

including extensive consultation, detail on how it is going to work, and the pragmatics and logistics of it, etcetera.

I have recently been there and people are working feverishly to address those things. There is a lot of positive support for the notion of people having to have a permit to be able to get takeaway, and they will only be able to drink it at their residence, or there may be a few exempt places. At the same time, there was a voluntary withdrawal of large wine casks from the licensed premises and apparently that has already had an impact but, like you, I saw there had been a big shift to the green cans, I think Jack Daniels and coke, and a couple of the smaller port casks.

**Mr KNIGHT:** When you are monitoring anything, whether it be a bore or whatever, you have test bores. That is not a very good analogy but if you ...

**Ms Morris:** You need a control...

**Mr KNIGHT:** A control, yes. Do you have people that you would go to, and perhaps you would pay them for their time, people you can ask what their drinking habits are now this has happened? Alison has talked about her experience of going around and seeing what is happening, but do you have older people, young people, middle-age people, married, not married, who you can go to and ask 'what has changed in your life and your habits now this has happened?'

**Dr Crundall:** It has never been approached that way and it is usually more at the end of the period you allow people to make their comments about how it has affected them or not. People are welcome to make comments throughout the period, and in Alice Springs they have through email, a forum which people can attend which should encourage anecdotal reports, but we have no sentinels, if you like, placed in the community to ask how it is affecting people at this moment.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Those people would not be on email, and they would not come to a public forum, but they would be people you could quietly move in to have a chat and ask how it is going to get a sense of it. Drinkers are really smart people. They will shift this way and that way and you can get ahead of them sometimes.

**Dr Crundall:** It really comes out on trips such as we have just had where you go out and talk to a whole bunch of people, but you also rely on networks within the community.

**Mr MILLS:** Like local members for example? It does not matter what side they are; some will see it from one way and some will see it from another, and they balance together.

**Dr Crundall:** Yes. You need to make sure you have got a range because some people will tell you certain things and you cannot afford to think everything was glorious or it was a total disaster when that was not usually the case.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Could you tell us how often you collect data from the suppliers on the amount of alcohol that is provided?

**Ms Morris:** They are required to provide under the Wholesaler's Suppliers every three months data of what they are supplying to all the retailers. It is not something we release apart from on a regional basis, but we get down to a particular outlet. How much they are purchasing of each of the particular kinds of alcohol, mid, light, heavy, mixed, straight, wine in casks, wine in bottles, and fortified wines.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That will show trends that people had moved to different substances?

**Ms Morris:** Yes, and in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek the licensees have agreed to give us monthly data in relation to that.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do wholesalers order their liquor from out of the Territory, or only within the Territory?

**Ms Morris:** Out of the Territory, except say a corner shop that has a liquor licence might get some of their alcohol from another retailer so there is a small percentage that we cannot cover at the moment because of that. They might go to Coles when Coles have a big special, buy up a range of bottled wine and then sell it for twice the price at the corner shop and we do not capture that at the moment.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Ian, we have got some concerns about the Alcohol Indicators and were wondering if Brian can ask some questions on behalf of the Committee on the trends of the indicators.

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, but before I do, Elizabeth reminded me that earlier this year we conducted a household survey of drinking patterns and attitudes which carries on from what was done in the 1990s. That gets closer to individual drinking patterns and we are putting the final touches to a draft which will present what is the average consumption, what people are drinking and where they are drinking, etcetera, for the Territory plus each of the five centres. That will be valuable information, certainly for monitoring.

We are also obligated to do one with Aboriginal communities which will be a lot more complicated, but we hope to get it started shortly, and one with young people in particular. They are to provide baseline measures of if there are changes in the Territory, where they are happening, etcetera.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thanks Brian.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** Yes, all of those surveys are in line with the recommendations of the framework report which is great. Before I begin, the other pertinent point to make in relation to your question Rob is the forthcoming evaluation of the Groote alcohol plan. That is important to answer your concerns.

**Dr Crundall:** Groote over four years has voluntarily decided it wanted to have their own permit system and took it to the Commission who approved it. It came into affect in June or July last year. I think you have the paper on it?

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Yes, we visited there.

**Dr Crundall:** The feeling there is that it has made a huge difference. That has been the stimulus for the Nhulunbuy proposal, and there is also talk in Katherine and in Alice Springs. We are just waiting for Tennant Creek to come on board, but I think there has to be a lot more consideration of how it works as Groote is so contained. That is not to say it cannot work, but every place will be different.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Could you have a look at it based on a licence, because you have to have a licence to drive a car. If you give an alcohol licence per household it does not restrict anybody from purchasing alcohol, but it makes sure

only householders, or the owner of the house, actually purchases alcohol. If you are trying to deal with alcoholism or abuse against Aboriginal people that is how you at least get it down. You are not going to get rid of it, but you can get it down because most people live in the rivers and they would have to apply for a licence. You are going to get some people come out and say it is racially motivated, but when you are looking at their health, wellbeing, and survival of Indigenous people, then you put that on the backburner.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You have to be careful because you have tourists and other people travelling into major centres...

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** But you can organise things for tourists. They can pick it up at the Police Station or anywhere.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The system we have for people coming to Katherine is basically a machine which will recognise an interstate driver's licence, 18+ cards, passports, and a whole range of things, so you do not necessarily have to have a 'drinking card' and can use your own ID. I still have to get some more information from the Police about management orders, or prohibition orders, because that is where it has its effect. It taps into the database which says you can have this much alcohol, or you cannot have any at all, so for Interstate people they can just swipe their ID. There may be some inconvenience at the bottle shop, they will be saying 'why do I have to do this?' but I think the benefits will outweigh the inconvenience.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Brian can you ask some questions?

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** Again I will just add another comment. As well as the alcohol plans there are the Alcohol Accords, which I maybe able to advise you about. That is a further string to the bow in what OAPC is doing and is rather important.

In relation to the Terms of Reference of the Committee, there are obligations to report on matters relating to alcohol consumption and harms, as there are for other drugs. With that in mind, the Committee's attention has come to the Alcohol Indicators and if I may ask, on behalf of the Committee, if you could comment on the overall trend of per capita alcohol consumption which, as the indicators show, has been on a steady rise over the last few years. Can I invite you to respond on that?

**Dr Crundall:** The whole idea of having the indicators was to be public accessible so people knew exactly what was going on with alcohol. It is up to the Research Evaluation Information group to negotiate with the actual sources of information, and they are doing their best job possible to keep them up to date, but there are always lag periods.

From what we do know, and unfortunately they are all about 12 months behind, per capita consumption has been steadily on the rise since the start of the Century, that is pretty plain, however it is not the same across each region. Obviously it is more the case in Alice Springs, Katherine and those sorts of places. What we do see some change in the type of beverage. There was a big trend early on for light beer to be an alternative to heavy, but mid-strength beer is much more popular now and displacing light beer as the preferred choice, but both of those are reducing the amount of full strength beer which is a good thing.

There has also been a steady increase in spirits, mixed spirits in particular and bottled wine but this might come from the deals of 20% off and Vintage Cellars is around the corner, etcetera.

There is a very interesting paper which has just been put out which I will get to the Committee. It has a look at people who have been put in the cells over the first nine months of the year and shows in the Darwin region that beer is accounting for a lot more of the drinking in those people than it was previously thought. There has not been a huge growth in wine casks, etcetera, however there may be questions about whether they are the real source of problem. Mixed spirits are on the increase.

**Ms Morris:** That is not a singular Territory phenomenon. It is, in fact, an Australian and worldwide phenomenon.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** They are heavily marketed, and for some reason attractive to younger drinkers as well... Can I rephrase the question a little and ask; it is clear there have been structural changes to the creation of the office itself and it is clear that other initiatives recommended in the framework report have been implemented which is really encouraging, but at the same time we are also witnessing this steady rise of consumption.

As I have made plain to the Committee, the indicators also show there are a number of indicators of harms that are entirely consistent with that trend. So are the present policy settings having the intended affect, or is it just the case that the structural changes have been put in place and in the future we will see, after a certain time lag, an improvement in the rates of consumption? Can you give us a lead on that?

**Dr Crundall:** I could give you my understanding, but Elizabeth might like to comment?

**Ms Morris:** I would say the second of what you said. The first major restrictions in the Territory which might affect per capita consumption were put in place in July last year. Unfortunately we have not got the 2005-06 final figures yet. Our figures only go up to the end of 2004-05, therefore on a regional basis the data is not finalised as yet.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** It is just not in at the moment?

**Ms Morris:** No.

**Dr Crundall:** The actual pre capita figures of 2005-06, I was told, could be next week. They are there but just have to be put up and done. I have no indication of whether it is going to go up, down, or whatever. Certainly, the trend would suggest it would go up, but I take Elizabeth's point that a lot of these things, even the office itself, really only started operating November last year.

A lot of the focus to date has been on supply control which is an area where the Territory had not done a lot before, but it is trying more and more of those things. From my point of view, they achieve some very immediate gains, some of which are quite dramatic but I think in long-term cultural change business, there is still an element which needs to be hammered home. More about the understanding of alcohol and where it fits and it's association with so many activities in the Territory and that is probably the area which is looming.

It is not just about hammering licensed premises and stuff. We know about 70% odd of alcohol in the Territory is takeaway, and in Nhulunbuy you have to drink it in a house, but there is going to be a lot of people that do not have houses and what happens to them? I think there has been a focus on looking at a lot of measures in

terms of law and order, and you talk about Aboriginal people dying and things, but there has been less attention given to the health aspects and it is how you incorporate the whole lot and I think the people who suffer badly in the health sense are also those who have law and order problems, but to just focus on one thing is that you may push those other problems away until they do not come to the fore. The other thing is to remember that there are issues within the non-Aboriginal population as well.

There are still things to do, but I think we have to wait for some of this information to come out, and I would reiterate that it is early days since there have been major changes to how things are being done. It is a 'watch this space' sort of thing...

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** Have you got plans for those strategies to change cultural settings on drinking?

**Dr Crundall:** We make suggestions to our Minister and to Cabinet for them to either accept or reject, but we are working through it. There are commitments within the framework, and even in this document, about those sorts of strategies so presumably it is a matter of deciding what they should be and what are most effective.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** The funny thing Ian, with Aboriginal people, and I do it all the time when I go around and sit down with them, like last Saturday. I ask them what they are drinking now because of the cask not being there and they say they just go and get beer and Stoney. And then I ask what happens if we take the next step and you cannot have grog. They say we will go to places like Adelaide and Darwin. As we are planning to look after their health, they are already planning another move against us.

I agree with you. It is about having a two-prong approach to this problem and having a look at consumption and all the aspects of it, and really hammering home the information strategy and getting it out to these communities. Using CAAMA and IMPARJA and sending all the material to the schools and the health services and just plastering remote Aboriginal communities and the shops with this information. Somewhere along the line it has to sink into these people that they are killing themselves.

**Dr Crundall:** It is about stopping people wanting to drink. You can go so far as getting them to pull up a bit, but there is that last bit of getting them to decide for themselves that they are not going to drink, or I am only going to drink a little bit.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** Surely these things work in concert. If you reduce supply and you are able to reduce demand, then the norms start to change; what people think is normal drinking behaviour starts to shift in a positive direction. That is the hopeful outcome isn't it.

**Mr MILLS:** I am sorry I have to go, but this is being recorded so I will have the transcript.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** It is true, isn't it, the rising trend on the graph of per capita consumption starts with the absolute end of the Living With Alcohol Program; that coincides with that doesn't it? I feel I need to raise this as an issue. Could there be a perception there was something in LWA that is not being addressed now and that could possibly have something to do with the present trend? That is a logical question to ask. What do you think about that?

**Dr Crundall:** I think it is a huge coincidence and my take on it would be that the funding for LWA and the range of strategies it could have actually were there for a few years once the levy came off. What is interesting is that when the trend starts going up is when the number of strategies got reduced because the money was not used for that and there had been a concentration on treatment. And there has been a focus. Controls have always been there, and they have always been fiddling with the licensed premises hours, drinks and things, and certainly there is a much more strategic approach to that now I think.

I look at that graph and I think the one thing which has gone missing is the cultural change element and to me it says that it did add something, as much as some people might argue against it. I go back to that if you want to change a cultural it is a constant. It is not one or two programs here or there, you just keep it in people's faces. I certainly support the whole notion of you having to come up with all your strategies at the same time.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** And that is to do with the size of the pool of money devoted?

**Dr Crundall:** Obviously you need money to do some things. I think we can be a lot more creative and strategic now. When you have less you are quite focused, and there has been a lot of things done through the cooperation of communities, but there has to be some investment.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** The only other questions I have are to do with some indicators that seem inconsistent with that trend, and I believe I raised this with you when we spoke on the phone. As the Committee are aware, on one hand people are drinking more and on the other hand there appear to be fewer people going through rehab programs, and sobering-up shelters are more or less flat within a certain range of variation. As well, road fatalities and injuries appear to be going down.

One could reasonably expect that if drinking was going up, then the harms would consistently go up across the board and I just wondered if you might be able to give a bit more 'fine grain' on those indicators that appear to be inconsistent.

**Dr Crundall:** On treatment services; there is another graph we asked for but have not been able to get as yet and that is the total number of admissions into treatment services. During the period shown on the graphs there has been a greater emphasis, or I should say, a greater availability of money for illicit substances and petrol, and so while the capacity can be the same they are going to take on those sorts of clients at the expense of alcohol clients. That is not saying there are less people out there wanting treatment, but that their beds are taken up by other people. We also understand there are a growing number of Correctional Service clients and they may not necessarily be affected by alcohol.

I would not take that graph as saying there are less people who need help. It could be they are being displaced by other people as I am not sure there has been an increased capacity.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So for example it could be petrol sniffing people?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes. There has been an increase in alcohol beds through the Alcohol Courts and it will be interesting to see whether the graphs make a scrap of difference over the next two years. The drink driving one... did you say fatalities and injuries?

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** Yes.

**Dr Crundall:** Just looking at it quickly... this one graph is dead straight. Is this the one you are talking about?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Do we know Ian, whether Correctional Services put people through an AA or rehabilitation course, and is that included in the statistics?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, they are the ones that are going into treatment services. I am not aware of anything within the prison service itself.

**Ms Morris:** It is fairly limited within the prison service.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Can I ask if you are able to get those 2005-06 figures, are you able to add them to these graphs?

**Dr Crundall:** As soon as we can get them. I asked before I came over. The per capita one can go up and I know there are one or two others. It is a matter of getting them up, but we will make sure you get them.

The fatalities graph, all I can say about drink driving is that part of it is about enforcement. The horror about that is, if you compare it to anywhere else it is double the figures, so even though they may not be going up they are still worse.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** They are starting from a high base.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** If you compare it, it would still be the worst?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, but who knows, maybe the slight decline is because of actors and actresses against Drink Driving running ads; however I do not think the drop is too large to be against the per capita increase.

You have to look at each of these and there can always be something else that explains things, but what you look for are whether things all seem to be going in the same direction or not, and it may be that more people are drinking at home and are not driving. That brings up the issue that it is not law and order; if they are in their house drinking two dozen cans of beer a night and whether that is an issue or not.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** The only other point I was going to make, and this is not really a question but an observation, in the breakdown on per capita consumption I think it is true that the Katherine area, the lower top end, accounts for a massive amount of the aggregate score overall and it is not entirely coincidental that the Katherine takeaway outlet is also, is it not, the biggest outlet in the Territory?

**Ms Morris:** It was, or one of the Katherine outlets was.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Woolies. You go through the main grocery shop there and a little 16-year old kid shoves a foldout voucher system for discounted liquor into your hand.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That is a promotion of Woolworths around Australia.

**Ms Morris:** In relation to that, both the Commission and RGL, wearing my RGL hat, have been dealing with Woolworths at a high level. Their National, State and Australian Managers in relation to liquor and how the Territory is different, and getting the Territory taken off national promotions and things like that. They, surprisingly,

have been very receptive to that. For example in Alice Springs prior to the restrictions coming in they took cask wine specials off their catalogue. Even though the ad was still there in the catalogue, at the bottom it said, 'not available in Alice Springs', and we have also just started dialogue with them about Katherine Woolworths are very shy of being involved in liquor accords.

They have had several findings against them in various courts and tribunals because of being found to be uncompetitive and they will not enter into liquor accords with other people in a particular region, however they have been quite receptive when we deal with them on a one-on-one basis in relation to changing some of their practices. For example in Alice and Nhulunbuy taking all cask wines off their shelves, so we hope to make some improvements in those areas and in Katherine.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** To clarify that, are you saying that from certain perspectives entering into an accord can be perceived as collusion between suppliers under anti-competition legislation.

**Ms Morris:** Yes.

**Dr Crundall:** In New South Wales there is even some legislation about their accords which tries to protect them isn't there?

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** Yes. The point of me raising that was to highlight how important takeaway is in the whole scheme of things. In this case it is quite likely that it considerably contributes to the overall figures for the Northern Territory as a whole, so they have a special place in the whole mix.

**MR KNIGHT:** We are very keen to have a liquor management plan in Daly River.

**Dr Crundall:** We are due for a visit there next week.

**MR KNIGHT:** I have been invited to a meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Is that it?

**Dr Crundall:** That would be the one.

**MR KNIGHT:** That is Peppimenarti, the Daly, and even Adelaide River, and it would be good to get them together.

**Dr Crundall:** The office is working hard and we have got more than we can cope with. We are getting another worker in Alice Springs so we will have someone on the ground that can implement some things and get things going.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Have you, through this experience as a group, seen what the cost is of the restrictions, and the savings in Health, Police and other things over time?

**Dr Crundall:** We can certainly add that to the brief for Groote Eylandt as that has not happened. We have not done so to date, but it is possible. Anecdotally talking, as you would know having gone to Groote, the policeman was quite enraptured.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** From the health perspective there must be a huge saving?

**MR KNIGHT:** Yes, and that is the selling point. Ideally we would have Territory wide some sort of permit or card system and we could say to people that if you reduce this much in alcohol it means this much in health, education, Police and other areas. The Groote experience is one place where you can actually find that out.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** Ian, one thing you and Elizabeth might want to do is fill the Committee in on the administrative changes that are happening at the Office of Alcohol, Police, and the Liquor Commission.

**Ms Morris:** government has made a decision to move the functions of Racing, Gaming and Licensing, including all of it's various agencies, from Northern Territory Treasury to the Department of Justice. It is anticipated the Administrative Arrangements Order will be finalised on 2 November and we will shift from Treasury to the Department of Justice, however the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing will retain the portfolio.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is the Minister Syd Stirling?

**Ms Morris:** No, Chris Burns is the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing and he will maintain the portfolio. It is a bit like to Health and Community Services where one department reports to two ministers. The CEO of the Department of Justice will be reporting to the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** The reason for the change I imagine is to give it a different focus away from Treasury?

**Ms Morris:** One assumes there are areas of Justice which embrace many functions of Racing, Gaming and Licensing, and Justice already does a lot of regulation in relation to some of the units and divisions that are under that department.

**Ms ANDERSON (Chair):** Thank you very much. I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Committee to thank you both, Ian and Elizabeth, for your attendance and giving evidence to this Committee.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 1.10pm.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Professor Jon Charles Altman**

*Friday 23 March 2007*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Ms Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Ms. Pat Hancock, Secretary  
Dr. Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Mrs Joanne Burgess, Administration/Research Assistant

**Witness:** Professor Jon Charles Altman

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of proceedings*

**Briefing commenced 9:23am.**

**Professor Altman:** Thank you very much. Jon Charles Altman; I am the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research and I am appearing as a long time researcher in the Northern Territory but also in some ways, I am not appearing on behalf of CAEPR I am appearing in my personal research capacity. I just like making that clear because sometimes people think that CAEPR has a position on things and CAEPF as such, doesn't. We have a diversity of views. Would you like me to start?

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Yes.

**Professor Altman:** I will try not to talk for too long because I know there are many issues we will want to discuss. I just thought I would make a few opening remarks and then go through a brief powerpoint presentation.

Firstly, thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to this committee. It seems to me that I end up talking to numerous committees that deal with issues of Indigenous Affairs in Canberra and probably not enough in Darwin and Alice Springs and in that sense, maybe that says something about the political economy of the Northern Territory and Indigenous Affairs of Australia.

As Alison said; I have got a background working on Indigenous Economic Development issues in the Northern Territory for a long time; since the late 1970s. I have looked at a lot of different sectors in the Northern Territory economy and particularly in relation to Indigenous engagement in them; in the mining sector, the arts sector, tourism and most recently I have been looking a lot at issues to do with natural resource management and national parks and Indigenous protected areas.

My work has mainly focused on the Top End in the tropical savanna part of the Northern Territory, but I have also worked over the years in Central Australia and obviously I have worked outside the Northern Territory.

The issues that are at the heart of my research and I should say, I come from a background in economics and in anthropology, are probably four-fold. I emphasise the issue of cultural difference, very strongly in the work that I do and there has been a lot of debate about history in Australian society but I have worked in this area for about thirty years so I am both a part of the history in terms of the Indigenous policy debate but also I have a particular take on history which I don't think, from my point of view is very challengeable, which is that Indigenous marginalisation and under development in Australian society is closely linked to the colonial process.

Whether we admit it or not, that history is short in Australian society; 200 years, but of course in parts of the Northern Territory the colonial state has only arrived in the last 50 years so in historical terms you are talking about a very short slice of time in terms of rapid transformation for Indigenous communities and societies.

The third thing that I emphasise very strongly is structural factors; and I think that our discussion today is an example of what used to be called 'the tyranny of distance', but I guess certainly in the Northern Territory you have got a vast land estate, very thinly populated and that influences the nature of the economic development; particularly when the Indigenous population is predominately rural based. An estimated 70% live outside the urban areas.

And the last thing I guess I would emphasise is I have had a long standing interest that has been part of my research related to land rights and to Native Title and I started working on Indigenous issues, almost exactly at the time when the federal Land Rights Legislation was passed in 1977 and I guess again I have been around long enough to realise that land rights at that time was certainly introduced as both an instrument of social justice and also as an instrument of economic opportunity or potentiality. There seems to be an emerging dominant discourse that 'Land Rights' was only introduced as an instrument of economic development.

I have already mentioned that the nature of my work in the Northern Territory focuses much more on the rural and remote sector, rather than being urban focused which is probably why much of my engagements in the Northern Territory are with more remote communities rather than places like Darwin and Alice Springs.

This doesn't need to go to Hansard but it can. When I came up here a couple of weeks ago to do some work up here, because sometimes I commute up here quite regularly. A senior academic from Charles Darwin University saw me on the plane and I thought rather unkindly said to me; 'You are coming up here to research us again'. Given that I actually do have an adjunct appointment at Charles Darwin University, I thought this was very unkind and my response was; 'Well I am actually coming to do research with you, not on you'.

I guess what I want to do today, and I am aware of the committee's focus on the issue of substance abuse, which is not my area of speciality, my area of speciality is much more to do with issues of economic development. But what I want to share with the committee is the concern that I think we all share about Indigenous under-development, unemployment, inactivity and in a general sense, a recognition that this can lead to deep and at times some tractable social problems in Indigenous communities.

I am reasonably guarded in saying that, because I think that there isn't academic research that can draw a direct link between inactivity and substance abuse issues, but I think that there is recognition that inter-generational inactivity can be enormously problematic for some people. It does not mean that societies that have high levels of work and economic engagement don't have substance abuse issues, I think we are all very well aware of that. So I think we have just got to be a little bit careful with the causality, but I think that like you, I am certainly very keen to see the issue of endemic inactivity in Indigenous communities addressed as a social and economic problem.

What I would like to do today is to provide a slightly different envisioning of Aboriginal economic futures. I think that the mainstream and mainstreaming discourse has been around for a long time now and in my view mainstreaming has had some successes, but it is certainly not the only answer and it seems to me that a different discussion, you know, a subordinate discourse on Indigenous development also needs to be thought about and heard and it is one that I think many Indigenous people don't get an opportunity to articulate.

I think that we are seeing many Indigenous people who have been successful participating in the mainstream discourse but we are just not hearing much about alternative development options and I guess that is at the heart of what I want to say today; just what are some of the alternative for Indigenous people living in remote communities, generally on Aboriginal land, looking forward in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Just to make it quite clear, I frequently commentate and I am on the public record so I shouldn't hide the fact that I am very strongly pro land rights and particularly I have been quite a spokesperson for ensuring that land remains inalienable.

In terms of some of my interventions of late in policy debates, I have certainly articulated a pro CDEP position. I see very many positive things in the CDEP scheme; again particularly in relation to remote communities. I am very pro economic diversity and development, I am pro the Indigenous Arts Sector and I am pro strong Indigenous organisations and organisational capacity. I am pro Indigenous representative organisations and I am pro Indigenous choice and the development of a strong Indigenous sector.

So I just wanted to be very up-front about some of those things before we started and if we want to discuss some of those and what I mean by some of those things, I am very happy to do that as well.

So what I thought I would do is just go through the powerpoint very quickly, that is just all by way of introduction and I should apologise. I have actually made this powerpoint presentation at a national rather than an Northern Territory level. But I think that from a Northern Territory perspective, it will tell you a lot about some of the comparative advantage that the Northern Territory has. Also in the presentation I have put in some photographs that I am sure people here will be pretty familiar with, at least Members with rural electorates. I just thought I would put them in there, if you like, to give a perspective on some of the statistics. I think sometimes we put up tables and I am not going to put up too many of them, but sometimes it is useful to have some pictures to get a sense of; 'what are these tables really about?'

I am not presenting these photos to patronise anybody, they are just there as a reminder. So just to start with; a five year old map, I am not sure if people can see it.

*Professor Altman commences powerpoint presentation.*

This is just a slightly dated map, but it is probably not outrageously dated for the Northern Territory of Indigenous land holdings and I guess what that is showing, is that there is a lot of Indigenous held, freehold, Indigenous owned national parks, Indigenous held lease hold in the Northern Territory. The little blue dots are Indigenous land. Some of those dots are purchases of properties and some of them are just small community holdings, they are really of more relevance to places like NSW where you have a lot of Indigenous land corporation activity. This is from the Atlas of Indigenous Australia, I don't know if people are aware of that atlas but there are better maps and more up to date ones and I think I will put some of those up in a while.

Again, this is a little bit out of date; so using 1996 census material again, from the atlas. But I guess what this just shows is that proportionately in the Northern Territory you have much more Indigenous land and I am aware that by now that percentage is close to 50%. But I think that from a Northern Territory perspective and I know that there are positives and negatives to this; one just needs to contrast this with other states where things are very different in terms of Indigenous land holdings, particularly in the southern states.

Major Indigenous owned pastoral properties - this is again 2002 - and significant Indigenous pastoral state in the Northern Territory. This is probably a more up to date map on some of the latest Indigenous protected areas but also shown on this map is Indigenous land and Indigenous protected areas and national parks. That is

where you will start seeing that about 50% of the Northern Territory is under Indigenous ownership or management or co-management.

This map shows - which I think comes from the Community Housing Infrastructure Needs Survey - the distribution of Indigenous communities again, Australia wide, but I don't think it is difficult to see that in the Northern Territory you have got a slightly different distribution of discrete Indigenous communities, particularly small homeland communities which are most pre-dominant in the Northern Territory for a range of reasons, mainly historical, in terms of land rights legislation and the timing of the homelands movement.

What I want to do is very roughly overlay of some of the chunky bits of the Indigenous estate. The intention of doing this is not in relation to population, it is in relation to some other features of the Indigenous estate that I will put up in a while. I apologise for the chunkiness of this because I have actually been involved in a research project for about six months that is trying to refine this and it is surprising how difficult it is to get inter-agency agreement about the overlaying of Aboriginal owned land and native title determinations over Australia.

My particular interest in doing this is actually with resource atlas maps and that has proven to be enormously difficult and some agencies have actually helped us. Some Commonwealth agencies have wanted to walk away from the mapping they have done for us, which I find rather disappointing after a lot of effort.

In some ways when I show you these other maps you will see why this might be a slightly contentious issue.

Another map that I think people here would be very familiar with and again it is very relevant to the Northern Territory. It is the way people move between urban areas and home communities and between home communities and smaller outstation communities. This again is from the Atlas of Indigenous Australia but in some ways this of course, is just very stylised; you can get some regional versions of this that have enormous details in terms of peoples movements.

I guess one of the things I would emphasise in this is that you have got to be very careful not to somehow view Indigenous populations as bounded, because these populations can be highly mobile between home communities and other places. While much western ways of thinking, focus on bounding populations and most clearly in survey instruments like the census try and focus on houses and households and families. This doesn't accord well with the contemporary Indigenous ways of living and it does present, I know, policy challenges.

Moving on to slightly alternative envisioning of Indigenous futures. I just thought I would put up some resource atlas maps and then say something about the Indigenous estate in relation to those. So this is a Land and Water Australia map from 2006 that looks at the condition of Australia according to various criteria and I have just selected a few.

I guess what you can see from that is that there are parts of Australia that are in good, or what LWA calls 'near pristine condition'. It is an interesting term 'pristine', but clearly Australia may arguably have been pristine 60 000 years ago or 100 000 years ago, but since you have had human habitation of course it hasn't been pristine, so it is an unusual term to use but nevertheless what you can see is that in much of the Northern Territory you have got in this case important wet lands in very good

condition and I guess part of what I am arguing here is that there are other parts of Australia that are in degraded or poor condition.

I am partly making this argument in relation to some recent policy debate emanating from Canberra about moving agriculture north and making use of the Northern Territory; as it's apparently abundant in water for use for both commercial purpose to the north but I think there is also a suggestion that Northern Territory water might be useful in other jurisdictions of Australia.

They are just overlaying on that, those chunky bits of the Indigenous estate and I will try and focus just on the Northern Territory. You can see that things look pretty good in much of the Top End and parts of the centre. But there are also parts of the centre that have got either unknown or only in fair condition; again Land and Water Australia makes some judgements about land being not nationally important and this is very much in terms of biodiversity values, it is not in terms of the value to people themselves who live on the land. So I think that I make that quite clear.

I will just go through these quite quickly. Average condition of riparian zones, the banks of rivers and you can see that it is good, near pristine in much of the Indigenous estate in the Northern Territory. Vegetation cover which is very important in terms of potential industries like carbon abatement and carbon sequestration, so I am not putting this up necessarily in relation to recommending native vegetation clearing, which is illegal these days. But again you can see in the Northern Territory there is enormous vegetation cover in terms of native forest in the Top End, tropical savanna, obviously in the centre you have got a very different vegetation cover.

Rivers and drainage - so back to the water issue. This is about where rivers are; it is nothing about the quality of water, it would overlay the Indigenous estate and it wouldn't surprise you that the centre is relatively dry but the Top End and the Indigenous estate has got some entire river catchments within it. Again, you could look and just go to every one of those rivers in the Northern Territory and you will see some Aboriginal land overlaying some of it.

There is some bad news too. Range contraction is not bad news yet; but it is loss of species and again in the Top End I think you are seeing some of the most robust biodiversity in Australia. In the centre you certainly see species loss owing to issues to do with over grazing and issues to do with introduction of feral animals, etcetera.

Just moving quickly on to threatening processes; weed threats to wetlands are enormously significant in the Northern Territory; particularly, obviously in the Top End, feral animal threats to wetlands again are enormously significant particularly in the Top End. It is not very clear in the diagram, but the pink which isn't very clear is where you have got issues with exotic weeds. That is just everywhere, as a threat.

They are just some of the threatening processes for threatened species, we have got quite a diversity here across Australia but focusing on the Northern Territory, change of fire regimes is a big threat, grazing pressure is a threat in some small places. This focuses on the primary threats and pollution, including marine debris as a threat; particularly you can see in north east Arnhem Land and around the Gulf.

What those slides are doing is trying to give a slightly different view of Indigenous estate in terms of some of its environmental and biodiversity values. What this overhead tries to do, is just to put this in an Australia wide picture and really what I should have here is the Northern Territory proportion of some of these areas. You

can see here that the Indigenous estate covers about 20% of Australia now; 1.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and probably about half of that is in the Northern Territory.

What this diagram tries to show and it was shown with that cadastral map earlier, is the linkages between the Indigenous estate and the Conservation estate. The reason that I think that this diagram is important is, not only because it shows the linkages between the Indigenous estate and the Conservation estate in terms of jointly managed national parks, which obviously are very important in the Northern Territory, but also in terms of Indigenous protected areas. What this overhead really is about though, from a national perspective is having some handle on the issue of climate change and what impact that is going to have Australia wide on biodiversity. The latest climate science is predicting a warming in Australia; it is predicting a drier south east and a wetter north west.

With warming there is no doubt, biological scientists have got no doubt that there is going to be species lost in Australia and the issue is how do you minimise that. The way you minimise that is managing the Indigenous and Conservation estate in a strategic way and that estate covers 30% of Australia. It is very significant and we can manage that estate in a way that will minimise impacts of climate change for the national benefit.

What is underpinning, what I am going to argue is that there is a significant role for Indigenous people in managing the Indigenous estate in a similar way to the way that we look to manage the Conservation estate and I am going to make some comment about some of the employment opportunities that that might generate.

I just wanted to shift here a little bit and we will look at how Indigenous people in rural areas live today. What I am going to pull out is just two or three slides from the National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002 and the reason I am doing that, and I will come back to that, is that there is much focus on providing mainstream opportunities to Indigenous people. That is predicated on a view that Indigenous people who are not in the mainstream don't have livelihood opportunities and don't have economic futures where they live. What I want to do is just present some statistics that show how people live today.

There has been much research done at a case study level about remote Indigenous communities and how they still participate with customary activity; which I will put some pictures of in a moment. We haven't had, if you like; broad-scale survey data about the significance of this and the data that comes out of the NATSISS isn't particularly good information, but it is at a broad scale. What it is saying is that, you don't worry too much about recognising whether they do live on homeland or do not live on homeland because the way that question was asked is quite problematic.

The most important thing that comes out of this is that Indigenous people surveyed in remote and very remote Australia, 82% said that they fished or hunted in a group and for the first time you are getting some statistics and this is replicated in another survey that was done on Indigenous fisheries; that you have got a high level of participation and customary or non-market activity.

This is where I will just put up some pictures because it's useful to remind ourselves what that means, I need to remind myself of what this means. These pictures I should say, are from my own field work in Central Arnhem Land; some of the pictures are from 1979 and some of them are from 2003, 2004, 2005 that are recent and they cover quite a long time. This is not a very comprehensive presentation, but sometimes I use these pictures to make commentary about sustainability and from a

biophysical perspective, if you have got similar practice over a 25 year time frame, then that is suggesting that you have got biological sustainability.

Some of the stuff is; 'what is this hunting and gathering stuff' or 'hunting and fishing.' NATSISS didn't ask a question on gathering unfortunately in 2002. I am just showing some of the foods and I emphasise this is highly contemporary practice; people use trucks, they use guns and people here are aware of this, this is not pristine archaic hunting and gathering, this is contemporary hunting and gathering some of it utilises introduced species like; feral water buffalo and feral pig, etcetera.

Just put some life to the statistics, people and kids hunt and fish and gather and a lot of non-Indigenous people do this stuff too, for fun. But this is a little bit more about livelihood about dietary intake. This is not catch and release Barramundi fishing.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It is also about their socialising as well. Even as they get all of those food stuffs out there... it is people doing stuff together. I mean, it would be interesting to see what they are doing today, what has happened in the last five years? I think there would be a migration away from collectivism to individualism, when you get into it.

**Professor Altman:** Not in these places, but certainly in some places that is a possibility and you are quite right, there is a potential that NATSISS when it is done in 2008 again, will show change; if it is sensitive enough to pick up those sorts of changes.

I will just rip through and put up some more NATSISS data; participation and payment for cultural activities. The NATSISS data on hunting and fishing is focused on remote and very remote. This actually looks at the whole of Australia which is positive and it shows a high level of participation in the range of cultural activities and this is estimated population of 15 years and over.

What is particularly important are the activities where people are paid for participation and I will show you some particular Northern Territory statistics on this in a minute. But clearly art and craft stands out. The little stars just refer to statistical significance. But over half the Indigenous people who participate in an art and craft activity are paid for it; so it is not a hobby and it is not cultural activity that has just under taken for cultural purposes, it has also got an economic purpose.

Again, I will just go through these quickly; what does that mean in reality? It means that people produce things for the market to sell. That is actually Jon Marwurndjul in 1979, who is probably at the moment the Northern Territory's most famous artist. Interestingly, his wife Kay and his daughter Anna (in the photo) are also highly accomplished artists. Kay won the Aboriginal art award for best bark painting in 2004 and Anna is now an artist who is highly regarded in her own right.

So again; a bit of inter-generational stuff going on with art; it is a picture of Maningrida Arts and Culture just to show that, it is actually shown at Maningrida arts and culture's shops or centres looking very crowded. But just to show that there is a lot of this art activity going on, yet dependent on institutions like Maningrida Arts and Culture to get the cultural products to the market.

This is a picture inside somebody's house. Another very well known Northern Territory artist and then just some of the products, these are actually from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards.

Just some final statistics, looking at the Northern Territory, which we can do out at NATSISS for some information. And I should say that from a Northern Territory perspective, it might be very interesting to look at NATSISS data in some more detail because it is a very rich data set that we don't hear enough about. And it is very much targeted at Indigenous people to pick up cultural difference but in the Northern Territory people in remote and very remote areas - 84% hunted or fished.

This is higher than anywhere else and obviously the other States' statistics refer just to remote and very remote areas and this doesn't have numbers, just percentages. A total state participation; arts and crafts, one in five Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory with some participation and payment.

Here I think the Northern Territory stands out; nearly 70% are paid for their participation, literally we are talking about thousands of people here and again this is not a message that is picked up and instruments like the census do not pick up these sorts of statistics.

Just a model of all this; in relation to what is the Indigenous economy about today? An Indigenous economy has got a state sector like many remote economies. It also has a market sector and it also has a customary or non-market sector and we hear very little about that customary or non-market sector. We also hear very little about the overlaps between these different sectors and they're enormously important.

This is just an abstract conceptualisation of what is many Indigenous peoples' reality. And some Indigenous people participate in each of those seven segments on one day; so people can have their livelihoods under-written by the state, they can participate in customary activity, like hunting, they can also participate in production of art. While they are hunting they can also be generating natural resource management benefits for their environment, but also for the nation.

There is nothing static about this model, it will vary from community to community and I actually tend to draw this diagram more with 1, 2 and 3 being of a similar size...

Just some take out messages from all that and then I guess we should open up for some discussion.

The real Indigenous economy today includes the customary sector, includes the non-market sector and in some places that non-market sector is enormously important. The free market alone will not deliver pro-poor outcomes and will not solve the Indigenous poverty problem in remote Indigenous Australia.

There are many livelihood opportunities and sectorial articulations between market state and customary sectors. That is quite a clumsy sentence, but what it is saying is that if we just see the opportunities in the market, we are underestimating the opportunities in the customary sector, we are also underestimating the worthwhile work that Indigenous people can do with state support.

Policies need to be crafted that recognise this reality and diversity and it is really important to emphasise that there is enormous variability between different Aboriginal communities and their particular mix of livelihood options. Communities need to be empowered to pursue a livelihoods approach and this is a slightly different take on saying that what we need is statistical equality.

I don't believe that statistical equality is achievable while Indigenous people make choices to live in particular places, but I do think we can have a much more robust livelihoods approach for people. That doesn't necessarily mean statistical equality.

I think the issue that is at the heart of why you want me here, is that inactivity in Indigenous communities is clearly a problem, but the correct policy settings can help to address this and I think that is what we sort of want to tease out.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Thank you. Maybe it's the economic background with how people couldn't [*inaudible*] unless they have established policy development by state and federal government, because we tend to blame the victim. Because it is easier to get ourselves out of the mess that we have created so that we can continue to blame people.

**Mr MILLS:** Jon, if I can ask a question. Your second point; can you convince me of that?

**Professor Altman:** The free-market alone will not deliver pro-poor outcomes.

**Mr MILLS:** So therefore, the reverse of that is that the customary economy will assist in delivering pro-poor outcomes. Can you just 'flesh' that out a bit further for me, so I can see it?

**Professor Altman:** Yes. I guess if you think in terms of the hybrid economy model. It has three sectors; state, market and customary. If you look at the Indigenous economy with the market lens of what you see out there; is too little market and commercial opportunity. You have opportunity in some places in tourism; you have opportunity in some places where you have got a mine; you have got opportunity in some places where people might get employment working for a national park, but there is a market problem if you like. The market is not delivering economic development to the Northern Territory. There is a higher level of state dependence in the Northern Territory, generally.

What I guess I am saying is that there are activities that can be undertaken in remote places that will assist peoples livelihoods and if I can simplify a little bit; participation in hunting, gathering, fishing will assist peoples livelihoods in terms of their dietary intake, but it will also assist their livelihoods, in terms of not having to purchase food, so there is a strong import substitution being undertaken.

If people participate in arts production for sale, that will earn income. But like most Australian artists they won't earn enough income from their arts production to make them independent of some employment or state support.

Most Australian artists are able to get part-time employment to off-set their income gap, but where Indigenous people live you don't often have those opportunities, so the majority of Indigenous artists get their income support from the CDEP scheme – but as we all know it is now under enormous pressure from the federal government.

Where I envisage this getting bigger is that firstly I see potential for some unrecognised and unrewarded Indigenous activity to be formalised. So when people undertake natural resource management activity on their land, frequently that is either not recognised or if it's a caring for country unit they are funded under CDEP. But there is still often a lot of voluntary work that has been undertaken that is not rewarded.

So what I am saying is that there is opportunity to engage people on country on those sorts of activities. The Indigenous estate in the Northern Territory is not pristine. There is a lot of work that needs to be done on it. Some of it is done but a lot more could be done if it was formalised and by formalised I don't mean necessarily state controlled but certainly state underwritten. So we have anomalies, particularly...

**Mr MILLS:** Before you go, that is the point that I want fleshed out. I can understand the words, but I still need to see that in concrete terms; how would it work, give us a practical way of seeing it that we can increase activity.

**Professor Altman:** Well, in Kakadu National Park you have Indigenous rangers that have full-time paid work as Indigenous rangers. In western Arnhem Land in parts of Kakadu National Park you have some Indigenous people getting some part-time work, working as rangers on Indigenous land. Many of those people are saying that we want our positions to be more full remunerated and to become, the terminology that is used is 'become proper jobs'. You don't get proper jobs without what they have in Kakadu, which is the wages to pay people for full-time rangering work.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes ok, I understand that.

**Professor Altman:** So there is a gap there. Some Indigenous communities are able to fill the gap between part-time CDEP work and full-time work by some top-up activities, commercial activities, but others aren't. The federal government is busy in consultation with the Northern Territory government and Indigenous land owners in setting up Indigenous protected areas. But each of these protected areas only gets something like \$100k - \$200k per annum to run the IPA.

The rest of the IPA is run on the back of CDEP that the Commonwealth government is indicating it is not very happy with the CDEP program because it doesn't generate real jobs. So what I am saying is that; yes CDEP can generate real jobs but the problem is meeting the funding shortfall between part-time work five days a week and full-time work in actual resource management.

I should say that obviously there is also strong federal NT issues here; because a place like Kakadu is largely funded by the Commonwealth and its level of funding of about \$20m per annum; that it is 20 000 km<sup>2</sup> gets \$20m – if you extended that to Arnhem Land 100 000 km<sup>2</sup> at the same rate pro rata you would need \$100m for Arnhem Land. Clearly the Northern Territory government can't provide that sort of support to look after Arnhem Land, so there needs to be some bilateral arrangement with the Commonwealth.

I am not saying that Arnhem Land needs to be funded at the same level as Kakadu because it doesn't get the visitor pressure, but it does have a similar environment and the environment of Kakadu is highly interdependent on the environment of Arnhem Land. Species migrate between Arnhem Land and Kakadu for example, so if you don't look after Arnhem Land, Kakadu is not going to necessarily look that good in twenty, thirty, forty years time. In fact your Kakadu may be threatened by sea water intrusion with global warming, which is a real concern.

The other thing I should say, because I don't want to leave the market out of this; but I also don't want to over emphasise one very exciting pilot project that you have got happening in western Arnhem Land which is the Western Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project. But you are all probably aware of this project because I think it has had a fair bit of media coverage here, but there is a Carbon Abatement Project

here that is being funded by the private sector, by Conoco Phillips to the tune of \$1m per annum for seventeen years.

I have my own views about whether that is a good commercial deal for Indigenous people or not, but I won't say too much about that. But what that \$1m is doing, is paying rangers to maintain particular forms of fire regime that minimise late dry-season burns that generate a lot of carbon that people in Darwin are all too familiar with when you get a smoky atmosphere here. That project is about abating 100 000 tonnes of carbon per annum, but again there are researchers at Charles Darwin University who have written about the positive spin-off or externalities you will see for that in relation to the people who turn up in Royal Darwin Hospital with asthma. Because less late dry-season fires in Arnhem Land mean better health for everybody in Darwin.

So, an opportunity cost argument might say to you; 'Gee if we could abate more and more fires across Arnhem Land, because this is only over a part of western Arnhem Land you would actually see health benefits in Darwin. Maybe some of those health savings should go to pay those people in Arnhem Land for doing less burning.' Does that help?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes it does a bit.

**Mr KNIGHT:** If you rent cattle out in Arnhem Land you would have no grass left. I guess it is very sight specific. You have got the different histories of the different people, the cattle industry or whatever in family dynamics. They will look at that hybrid probably in a different way, you might have a clan group and there is no middle aged generation there that is capable. So they might rely on market moreso than other groups. But you need all those three parts to support them though don't you. If you decide you want more money and you don't want to be dependent on government. If you want more you bring it in through another area of money.

**Professor Altman:** I certainly agree with you and you could do that model for a pastoral station and I am trying to emphasise the flexibility there and I guess certainly, as a policy aspiration and I am sure as an Indigenous aspiration people do want to be less State dependent. State dependence has got costs and I think people, for instance who have now been under CDEP for a long time and have been threatened with losing it are becoming very aware of some of those costs of State dependence.

I have got to be careful of what I say because politicians are an arm of the State but it does allow intrusion in to people's lives, there is a literature that says that that dependance isn't necessarily good for people in relation to their sense of well-being, having too much intrusion in their lives.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** And internal injuries.

**Professor Altman:** Yes, but the thing is that there will be people and I am certainly not trying to exclude in this model, the fact that there will be people who want a future in the market. There may be people who live in Papunya who want to move to Alice Springs get a mainstream education get a mainstream job and, I will emphasise, buy a private house in the Alice Springs housing market, which doesn't exclude Indigenous people from buying their own house and there will be people who can do that.

The reality is that those people do face many, many structural and historical legacy problems because they are going to come out of school where they have had a poor education, they are likely to be in poor health, they are likely to be relatively uncompetitive in the Alice Springs labour market, we know these things.

And if they want to buy their own house; it seems to be the current policy obsession that everybody should own their own house, they are probably going to find it very hard to get a mortgage because they are going to have a poor credit history. They have got a life expectancy of mid fifties. So actually banks are going to be a bit reluctant to lend people money for thirty or forty years to repay their mortgage if they are more than twenty five, etcetera.

So there are plenty of impediments and again, the fact that those impediments exist doesn't mean that policy shouldn't focus on addressing those impediments; what I am trying to say is that too much of the discourse at the moment (and it is not necessarily emanating from the Northern Territory Parliament, but it's rife across Australia) is that Indigenous people will find their economic futures as urbanised Australians participating in the mainstream.

I guess part of my argument is; if people often have fought for decades to get their land back, if they live in the rural sector, if they have many reasons to live in the rural sector and we know they won't make the transformation to urban living easily, shouldn't we be thinking about giving them economic futures where they live?

One of the things that we could think about, is giving those economic futures a market opportunity, but whatever we all think the free market finds its own way to opportunity. Sometimes we have a path full of lollies for the market through subsidies, but we are trying to move away from that way of thinking; where we have got this strong neo-ideology that the market will find its own way, but it's not finding its own way to Indigenous Australia or on to Indigenous land and part because there is an absence of opportunity out there.

The opportunity is limited but if it's not totally absent and again, serious policy should look to support the opportunity that is out there and build it and if you have got potential to build new industry. Imagine the new industries like; carbon abatement, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation all for national and global benefit, why not invest in some of those things out there?

**Mr KNIGHT:** This is a two part question; have you done any work on the dollar cost to the different associated groups, a dollar figure? Also, have you looked at any policy for full employment?

**Professor Altman:** You mean if we had full employment? The only place that that has been done is actually in your electorate at Wadeye, where there was a study done on the opportunity cost of the status quo. You probably know that report and what that has done is look at the cost of keeping things the same way for people and for the State and then it does do the opposite thing, which is saying that; if you then look to investing in an equitable needs basis in Wadeye and do some scenario building of people moving into employment, these are some of the cost savings that will generate for the state both in terms of fewer problems, but also in terms of ultimately tax revenue for the state from people paying income tax. You know moving from being state dependent, to being less dependent and being able to pay taxes like other citizens to the state.

It is actually quite an innovative study; it was based on some methodology imported from Canada where such a study was done. And interestingly even though it was commissioned for by the COAG trial at Wadeye by Commonwealth, NT and the Thamurrurr Regional Council. When the study first came out besides Thamurrurr every body else wanted to walk away from it a bit, because what the implication was that governments face a huge bill to meet both the historical deficit, but also the future expanding deficit in relation to the need for investment. I think the main investment that was identified was housing infrastructure. To house people at Wadeye until 2020 or 2025 is going to cost government 'x' number of dollars.

**Mr KNIGHT:** ...Tennant Creek at that time.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** I am really interested when people talk about passive welfare. I know during our time in ATSIC because they had people abusing their Medicare cards. There was cash in their Medicare. When they paid cash back to Aboriginal communities and primary health care, which then enabled independent medical services within the last couple of years have shown results under the Commonwealth Access Program and Utopia was a perfect example; people living out of town, family groups in outstations were more healthier than people living in the local communities, by far.

Why can't the Commonwealth government, because it owns the Centrelink legislation; then cash in unemployment. You are not touching disability or family loans all you are doing is cashing in unemployment. So, DCAP is pooled like our shire model, that then enables us to fight with the Commonwealth or argue our case as a state to continue to have CDEP left there and not deteriorated and taken away.

If you have a look at the Commonwealth planning package that has now come out; the figures of participants accessing through training; you could have people in the workforce getting \$1200 - \$1300 per fortnight, just under these three programs; they cash in unemployment nationally; so it is just not seen as an Aboriginal issue but they would be doing it for non-Indigenous people in eastern states as well. That then enables us with that one pod of cashed in unemployment to encourage the Commonwealth to keep CDEP, with just an annual top-up portion to unemployment and then access the training so you are getting training, employment and education in one.

**Professor Altman:** Of course what you are describing in relation to CDEP, is of course how CDEP started.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Absolutely.

**Professor Altman:** Which is cashing in unemployment benefit entitlements on a community wide basis and then giving a block grant to the community.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** With the on costs portion of the two, accessing capital, but this would be totally different. We are asking the government to keep CDEP, but to cash in the unemployment that leads to disability and family allowance and everything intact for our elderly; it is not affecting them. And you are absolutely right, that was the whole intention of CDEP when it started and it just lost its force because people didn't know how to operate it. They just thought; 'Heres the perfect opportunity, we have got cash to buy graders, trucks...' but it really didn't move people on to the permanent full-time, full wage employment. They were just stuck in that rut of painting rocks and painting tree stumps, you know...

I just thought that if we sort of work this out properly, this would really give you an opportunity to get people back in to the cattle industry, in droves. Because you would need at least 150 people doing fencing in the cattle stations, every where in the Northern Territory, drilling bores, doing road strategies, housing strategies; this would be a really, really exciting package to move people out of that passive welfare.

**Professor Altman:** I agree with you. I think one the problems that arose with CDEP. Organisational capacity was certainly an issue, but CDEP in some ways, particularly in remote communities, what brought about its decline in some situations was its popularity and what happened was that you started having too many people wanting to be participants, then you started having CDEP siting alongside Centrelink in remote Indigenous communities. So people could get active welfare or passive welfare and people started moving between the two and it is very hard to administer a 'no work no pay' rule when you have got a Centrelink office in the town.

When CDEP was first established it was 'all in or all out.' Clearly there are issues there about whether you can impose CDEP on people, but I think again in the current mutual obligation environment a federal government wouldn't have problems with saying; 'Your CDEP is your work test or your activity test, if you don't turn up for CDEP you don't get income support'.

I still think that what you are hinting at is that, and I agree with you, that a lot of these remote communities are always going to need some sort of fiscal subvention, they are always going to need some level of state support. You have already got cases of successful CDEPs that do generate many full-time jobs for people, through CDEP and top-up. This is one of the successes of CDEP that just isn't being recognised; that yes you can get the best people from a community and grab them and move them some where else and give them full-time work, but you are likely to be taking people who have already got full-time work in the community through CDEP and top-up. What you want to do is, support organisations that are generating top-up to give people more activity to generate more income locally.

**Mr KNIGHT:** We have got a situation at Daly, we have got a road crew and they have had eight to ten guys working on there and they receive top-up. Now they are being told that they can't have any CDEP participants, they have got to crack full-time jobs but now they have had to lay a path for [*inaudible*], they only generate a certain amount of income and they put it straight back in to the wages... so now these four other guys have now got to go and sit down and do nothing.

**Professor Altman:** So they have created unemployment?

**Mr KNIGHT:** Yes. Whereas they were all happy to go out together and the government was paying the same amount of money, but now those people that aren't going to be working on the road for a long time.

You have seen the situation at Wadeye for example, where you have 1000 – 1200 adult population and you have got to see 130 people; so that step from being generationally unemployed to a job is vast. Whereas if you have a CV and you have got that behaviour and skills development and regularity at work or working part-time...

**Professor Altman:** I think that again, the challenge for you maybe as Northern Territory politicians in these bilaterals that you negotiate with the Commonwealth, is to make some of the beneficial flexibility of CDEP quite clear because I think the Commonwealth mind-set is very much in terms of chunky real jobs.

The more chunkier real jobs are created the more unemployment you are likely to create and there just isn't recognition of again, the reality of people's preference in terms of forms of work, so you are hinting at a form of work where people work in groups and work more flexibly possible, part-time which may suit them very well.

I think that in debates about CDEP, we are just hanging much too much on the one program. Historically it has been very flexible and for some people it is a stepping stone to so-called 'real' jobs, but for many people it also creates a form of work that is quite acceptable. Again, some of the statistics I was putting up were suggesting that you have literally got thousands of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory who are artists, who get their income support from CDEP but then can choose how much top-up they get through their arts engagement. There are enormous numbers of different models you can have to facilitate participation.

With arts for example, what we don't want to overlook is that you need a robust Indigenous arts organisation to then assist those people, to market their art, to get a fair return from their arts production. Under the guise of choice, which is a word again that has got a lot of currency, we have got to recognise that in some ways choice works in various ways. Much government policy is about saying that people have got restricted choice in relation to mainstream opportunity. What they don't see is that people may have choice in alternative forms of livelihoods and if you only allow people the choice and I had some debate here with Amanda Vanstone – the previous Minister for Indigenous Affairs who envisaged futures for Indigenous people as lawyers; doctors and plumbers.

My line was that, there is nothing against Indigenous people being lawyers, doctors and plumbers but if they make that choice it is highly unlikely that they would be an artist, hunter or a natural resource manager on their land. Because those things also require skills and investments and forms of training and again, I guess in terms of some of the investments we can be making, I know that there is some creative thinking going on in the Northern Territory in terms of the sort of skills people need to be an effective land manager. The Indigenous people are not saying; 'we are going to do this the old way', what they are saying is; I think the West Arnhem Fire Abatement Project (WAFA) program is a good example of that.

They have got customary fire regimes there, but they are doing it with helicopters, they are doing it with trucks; they are not doing it just through walking, lighting fires and they are monitoring their fire regimes with very highly sophisticated satellite technology. That is how you are measuring the carbon that has been abated. So I think some of these capacities need to be built and I think that you know somehow, I know in the Northern Territory you have got enormous pressures about where you make your investments between urban and rural communities. But it seems to me that if some of those investments were made with the mindset that these people are going to be living on their land in twenty or fifty years time, doing a diversity of things that they need training for.

That is different from a mindset that says; 'these people's economic futures, they are all going to be in Darwin and Alice Springs and out there is going to be empty and so what we need to do is equip them for Darwin and Alice Springs and not for living where at the moment, the majority are saying they want to live.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** And then we go back... sorry Loraine, or Fay...

**Ms BRAHAM:** Sorry, could I ask the Professor a question? Jon have you looked at what royalties have done for the economic development of communities. As far as I understand in Central Australia, most or all royalties are paid by the Land Council and they are paid to individuals, which may be good for the retail market in Alice Springs but in fact have not generated any economic development within communities. Have you looked at the way perhaps royalties could be better used? By going into a community trust or is it tied that it will always go to individuals and not to community blocks, so that we would see it leave some benefit from unit royalties going in to communities, assisting in that sort of economic development you are talking about.

**Professor Altman:** Look I think that is a really good question and it is certainly something that I have done a fair bit of work on. I am actually rather surprised to hear you say that in Central Australia the CLC pays the majority of mining royalties to individuals, because that is certainly not my experience. My experience is that the majority of royalties that are paid in relation to oil and gas and gold-mining in the Tanami go to incorporate Indigenous organisations like they are required to under the Land Rights Act and in fact, one of the best practice royalty organisations that you have in Australia is the Ngurratjuta Aboriginal Corporation based in Alice Springs and Ngurratjuta does not make payments to individuals.

It invests its incomes in a number of ways and I have to say that some of their investments haven't been enormously successful, but that is the nature of business in the Northern Territory and in remote areas that business can be risky. But nevertheless, historically Ngurratjuta has invested in infrastructure in Kings Canyon, through Centrecorp there has been investments, invested in the resort out at Glen Helen, it invested in Ngurratjuta Air; is that still going?

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** No, it has just flopped at the moment...

**Professor Altman:** But again, in some ways...

**Ms BRAHAM:** I guess Jon, there are other royalties paid rather than the ones you mentioned; the Ayers Rock royalties from Uluru go to individuals and I think the ones from building the railway – they have been going to individuals.

Alison I thought there was still some property; Hermannsburg, the oil going to individuals; you would probably know more about that than I do, so I don't think it is all going to Ngurratjuta or to Centrecorp. But even so, Centrecorp haven't put the investment in to communities to assist the communities and the people out there, they may have invested strongly in Alice Springs and in Glen Helen, what have you; but from those investments you are not seeing jobs, you are not seeing a better life for people out on communities. So I am saying; 'are royalties being utilised in a way to advantage the Aboriginal people?'

**Professor Altman:** I should clarify my response because when you mentioned royalties I was interpreting that to be mining royalties, which is where we use the term. But certainly you are quite right that payments are made in relation to Uluru National Park, to land owners for leasing their land back to the Commonwealth and they get a share of the gate.

I think that you are alluding to something that is problematic which is; how do you get people who receive individual payments as land owners to utilise their monies for collective community benefit? That is actually quite difficult to do with land leasing payments, like we have got to be a little bit careful here legally, because you may find

that you also might want to influence how non-Indigenous people use their land leasing payments.

I think the challenge that we face with a place like; Uluru National Park is actually working with the community on the governance of those resources and again, I actually worked at Uluru in 1985 at the time of the 'hand-back' trying to predict how some of those payments might be focused on community benefit. It is true that the way the law is structured made that extraordinarily difficult, except if people wanted to do it on a voluntary basis.

I am not saying that we don't want to make those sorts of payments; we don't want to see those applied more positively. And I guess what my response would be, is that through some of the better functioning organisations and the ones that come to mind are ones like Ngurratjuta and the Gagudju Association in the north, I think you are looking for a mix of organisations investing some of those resources in business opportunity for the community; some of those resources possibly in providing services to community members, but I don't think that you want to leave out of the equation the possibility to also provide people with some income support out of those payments to top-up...

**Ms BRAHAM:** Or take those, I was going to say; also looking then at the royalties coming from mining; that still we do not see benefits for Aboriginal people on their communities. What is your comment about that?

**Professor Altman:** Well I think my comment would be that again, there are some positive and negative examples; I think that when you look at places like Kakadu National Park in 2007 we tend to overlook the fact that places like the Crocodile Motel there and Coinda were funded out of mining royalties, so infrastructure that has served the Northern Territory economy very well was underwritten by the Gagudju Association and mining royalties. We forget that now, but they were the people who made the investment and that infrastructure. I am not saying that they haven't had governance problems and I am not saying that inter-generationally there haven't been tensions in relation to those business investments, but they did do it at a time when neither the Northern Territory government, nor the Commonwealth was going to undertake those sorts of risky investments in those remote localities.

I think that you have got some positive outcomes, I think we tend to focus a little bit too much on the negative and because we are starting to look now at a long time frame with some of these royalty payments, we do tend to overlook some of the historic successes that may now not be quite as successful for various reasons.

I guess the other point I would make is that I see what I would argue as fairly irresponsible use of ABA monies, by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and I wonder what sort of message that sends Indigenous people, in terms of their governance of mining royalties when the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs wants to use what is arguably Aboriginal money, significant quantities of Aboriginal money, to offset what are arguable legitimate state expenditures on Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure.

Mining royalties are a very complex political and economic issue in the Northern Territory, at the heart of them is some issues to do with Commonwealth/Northern Territory relationship. Those mining royalties also largely support the operations of Land Councils, the only statutory authorities in Australia that are funded from mining activity on Aboriginal land.

Historically the funding of Land Council budgets from mining royalty equivalents gave them a degree of independence, that seems to be rapidly being undermined again by Canberra politicians who want to have a major say under amendments to the Land Rights Act in how Land Councils should operate and how those Land Councils should expend their mining royalty equivalent.

I am not discounting that we could get better economic development performance from mining royalties, but I do think that this is a very complicated area and to again, ask Indigenous people whom in some ways have got the least capacity to understand these complexities and utilise these monies in that way, I think is quite difficult.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** And one of the things, Loraine, can I just come in here? Because one of the things is, regardless of whether people get their private individual royalties paid to *[inaudible]*, the only people that benefit from that is white people that go out there to Ayers Rock and sell the cars at the Rock. So really those people are left with nothing; so they are really building the economy of the Northern Territory or the Central Australia or Alice Springs.

If you have a look at the investments in Alice Springs alone, just through royalty mining in Central Australia you have got 'Oscars'; lots of wealthy white people go and sit and eat in. That is owned by Aboriginal people, the cinema complex is owned by Aboriginal people, the National Bank building is owned by Aboriginal people, the whole Yeperenye complex.

So the money, through royalties has really gone in to buy a lot of businesses that were currently owned, if you have a look back at the investment, were owned by CLP people, so we bought all that out ages ago.

**Ms BRAHAM:** But Alison do you see benefits for the people themselves on the communities with all the money that they have received? I am sure they have got the investments in town, but what benefits are they receiving back home?

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** That annoys me, because in actual fact are you saying that because we get royalties, we should be using that money to boost up our education and our health and stuff like that so Aboriginal people are to put private money in to what governments are responsible for.

**Ms BRAHAM:** Why not build infrastructure on Aboriginal communities when you have got all this...

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** They have, they have Loraine.

**Ms BRAHAM:** ...what better than flowing back to the Aboriginal people who receive the royalties. What I am saying is; 'Ok sure, generate economic development in Alice Springs, but not on communities'

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Yes they have. If you just had a look at the *Australian* on the weekend. On the Saturday, Sunday, Monday in the *Weekend Australian* there was a \$1.8m arts centre that was open to Aboriginal people's art being collected by dealers and business out at Kintore just a week ago.

So that is the investment that Aboriginal people are putting into communities. If you go in to places like Docker, Aboriginal art is actually put in to the youth centre at Docker along with government. So if you have a look at little things that are

happening in communities, Aboriginal people have put so much in, like the proposed swimming pool at Yuendumu. That is going to be mostly funded by the Tanami mines, so it is going to come out of Aboriginal peoples royalties.

**Ms BRAHAM:** Well that is good.

**Professor Altman:** I also think that you have got to put...

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Well get the Alice Springs town council to start rating us more. We need a swimming pool in Alice Springs.

**Professor Altman:** I also think that you have got to put these things...

**Mrs MILLER:** Can I have something to say?

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Yes, Fay...

**Professor Altman:** Can I just make one more comment on royalties? I just think that we need to be realistic about the amounts as well. Sometimes people get very excited about the notion of royalties, but when you actually look at what is paid in the areas effected monies, which is the element that is discretionary which is 30%; it doesn't often amount to that much. In some places the lumps have been big enough to facilitate investment, but in many situations the amounts are so small that they don't actually allow you to make a major investment on the back of royalties.

And I guess the other thing I would say is that; again, thinking back to Ngurratjuta; they certainly have provided services and housing and infrastructure for their members from mining royalties. And I think that that is an important benefit, but I think it is also just again, as Alison was saying a little bit dangerous from mining royalties to offset legitimate Northern Territory and Commonwealth government expenditures.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Yes, Fay...

**Mrs MILLER:** I am here, believe me. I have been biting my bottom lip here on a couple of issues. I kind of agree with some of the things that Loraine has been saying, because my experience in Katherine is that yes, there have been a lot of money paid in royalties to individual people and substantial amounts of money and you can imagine the frustration that is felt when you don't see that actually go back to that community. The community that those people come from are suffering. That is not the question that I was asking though.

Professor you were talking earlier and saying that there was over 70% of Indigenous people live outside of the main urban centres. Now we have been targeting and speaking to a lot of people in remote communities throughout the Northern Territory in relation to substance abuse. Now one of the things you said this morning was that economic opportunities are available or should be available through customary activity that you would like to see development of policy on those lines to address those communities that don't have an opportunity in other areas.

How would you envisage the development of policy to address customary economic opportunity in those remote communities, to make a significant or even a small difference? How would you like to see that policy developed?

**Professor Altman:** In the Northern Territory, I think you have already got some best practice examples that you could look at. Obviously there is currently a tension in policy between whether policies targeted at individuals or targeted at community based organisations. But I have no doubt that policies and programs have to be channelled through Aboriginal community based organisations.

In situations where for example, you have projects under way, like caring for country units. These are projects which are just enormously under-resourced; not just in terms of payment for people to undertake activities, but also in terms of their infrastructure, in terms of their management capacity.

So I think where you have positive things happening, in particular situations; what you do is create programs that support what is successful and clearly some of what I am talking about is also a little bit blue sky and that means that there is risk attached to it and I think that is something that governments' naturally shy away from.

Again, I am sympathetic to that. There are other sources of capital, we have just been talking about mining royalties; there is \$100m sitting in the Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA) that the Minister for Indigenous Affairs seems to think are available for him to spend as he sees fit.

But I would think that that \$100m is a source of capital; that is annually enhanced by mining activity on Aboriginal land that could be targeted to some of the riskier enterprises that one might want to undertake on Aboriginal land.

We are not looking for magic bullets here; we are looking for incremental improvements in the way people live. It seems to me that much policy is a real disjuncture between the very impoverished lives that we know people live at the moment and some goal of well-being and economic status that somehow matches some mythical Australian average.

I guess what I am pushing is that by looking at where we have had success, we actually improve peoples' well-being in relation to some of the issues you are looking at in relation to substance abuse. We hear communities, about the sorts of activities that they want to participate in and I am highlighting customary activities, but I also try to emphasise it doesn't just have to be customary activity, but we have a form of participatory community based development that we support what the community wants to engage with. We can then look to see what difference is that making to peoples socio-economic status, broadly defined.

But also what difference is that making in relation to ameliorating some of the costs to the Northern Territory economy from some of the more negative outcomes from inactivity, but also much more positively what is it generating in terms of, in relation to Katherine; what is it generating in terms of a more robust Katherine regional economy through having people participating more in cultural tourism at Nitmiluk National Park; by having robust arts and crafts organisations in the main street of Katherine.

What is it that tourists coming to Katherine for? Part of it is to do with the environment but a big part of it is to do with the fact that that environment has been and continues to be inhabited by Indigenous people. Again, in the Katherine region you have had some very, I think some very successful ventures which I haven't looked at recently but at Manyallaluk at Eva Valley you had a robust cultural enterprise that has been there for over a decade.

One might look to replicate some of those models; what has underpinned that success and again, you might comment whether that is currently perceived as being a successful enterprise; I haven't looked at that enterprise for a few years. But certainly historically it has been something that has generated spin-offs to the Katherine regional economy.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes you are quite right. I was not actually referring to the closely associated communities around Katherine, because I am well aware of those. What I was referring to; what we are looking as a committee, to the regional or remote communities right across the Territory. I am looking and considering those that are much further out and more isolated, that is what I was saying.

How can policy be developed to address those communities that don't have access to a regional area, such as Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Katherine? That is the area that I am interested in.

**Professor Altman:** Well I think the more isolated they are, the greater the challenge. But also I suspect that the more isolated they are the more historically they have been neglected in terms of housing infrastructure, educational services, health services. So some of those isolated communities have got legacies in terms of catch-up, but also I think that they have legacies in terms of making investments in building their economic base.

What I am arguing with that hybrid economy model is that, that model exists every where. What we have got to find is, which of the sectors should we be making the investment to get the best outcome and clearly your concern is; the best outcome for local people. So if people in remote communities need assistance with setting up 'Caring for Country' units, setting up or getting income support that doesn't restrict them from participating in customary activity, then you should be championing that sort of policy framework. You know, it is not easy for some body who is told; 'you have got to turn up at X hour to work for your dole through CDEP, to then feel that they are unencumbered to go and fish if the tide is right at that particular point in time.

We have sort of got a lot of mechanisms that actually send signals to people not to participate in customary activity. If that is where their particular remote community advantage lies, we could change the discourse by saying; that if you have got a robust customary economy, we see the health benefit of that, we see how that generates imputed income because you don't have to go to the shop to buy your food, so this is helping your well-being; we see this as a positive thing. You rarely get that message either in policy rhetoric or in program support to facilitate those sorts of activities.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** One of the things Fay, I keep asking myself with all this debate of anti-social behaviour and the increase and influence that we have of Indigenous people in towns like Darwin, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs, we don't see business in this debate at all. It is always government versus town council versus ordinary interested people in the town that just don't like Aboriginal people or want to go back to the old way of living with just a small amount of Aboriginal people that they know. Yet business has not been engaged in this debate. Businesses like pub owners and corner shop owners. They are quite clearly telling us... I mean, I go to my little corner shop all the time in Larapinta. I shop there because I refuse to go to Coles because it is too far and I feel a bit lazy, actually.

So I would rather be putting the money in to my little corner shop, but I will go and do \$170 worth of shopping there that I know that I can get at Coles or Woolies for \$80; but I am bringing business there. Now that guy has told me the only reason why he survives in Alice Springs at the corner shop in Larapinta is because of Aboriginal people. Non Indigenous people go to that little corner shop, the only thing they buy is; cigarettes, one toilet paper, one milk until the next day when they can go to Coles or Woolies. People like us, we go and spend \$170, \$240 at the corner shop. We are his market.

**Mrs MILLER:** I can't dispute with that Alison; I don't have any dispute with that at all. I mean, without the Indigenous community and the money that they put in to regional areas there would not be a lot of businesses. There is no dispute about that. But I am trying to work out what the connection is. What did you want businesses to do?

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** No, no. I am just trying to say that sooner or later we are going to have to engage them in a debate, because they are a prime mover in the development of the Northern Territory, because it is about their survival. Because Aboriginal peoples disadvantage factor determines how many houses people own, what kind of car they drive around in, where their kids go to school and whether they have caviar on the table, you know.

So really we have become an industry and we have to make sure that people that are the prime movers; that are the drivers of economy in the Northern Territory are in the debate. That is what I am saying. Because as government, as individual people we are always talking about the anti-social behaviour and the amount of people we have in our towns but we never ever talk to the prime movers.

**Professor Altman:** I am concerned Fay, but I haven't made clear what some of the opportunities are in remote communities...

**Mrs MILLER:** That's right, yes.

**Professor Altman:** Have I made that clear or not, I am not sure?

**Mrs MILLER:** No. That is actually what I was after, what opportunities there are because we need to; we are looking at factors of trying to keep people occupied and interests in what they are doing, in their health and their well-being, so that we can reduce substance abuse across the Territory. So what I was asking and I didn't word it very well obviously is; how do we get the program into remote communities so that we can reduce the incidences of substance abuse, hopefully.

**Ms BRAHAM:** I was going to respond to Alison, that the economic development on your community Alison, even though you have contributed to the town; private business cannot get in to these communities, sorry.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Alison has just stepped out for a second.

**Professor Altman:** Let me respond to that...

**Ms BRAHAM:** Alright, I will talk to Alison later.

**Professor Altman:** Yes, let me respond to Fay because I wouldn't want to leave without it being clear that part of my presentation was about suggesting that there is a lot of opportunity in remote Indigenous Australia. I think what we need to do is

listen to Indigenous people in terms of what their priorities are and what they see as their livelihood futures where they live. I guess what I have tried to emphasise was areas like customary activity, participation in the arts industry, cultural tourism, which occurs in some very remote localities. But also some more innovative thinking about natural resource management, about some blue sky industries that exist out there.

I think that one needs to develop programs across a whole range of areas, but I will speculate and some of my speculations are based on evidence, that if you listen to people about how they see their economic futures and they are realistic about the fact that there are opportunities out there, you will get people participating in education and participating in employment.

You see this with programs like; Junior Ranger programs through some of your community schools, where people actually aspire to be rangers working on country; they have a high level of participation in school activity, less absenteeism and again it is incumbent on us to provide a pathway for people so that they can see a future living on their country and that we don't continually demean them by saying that; 'your future is actually some where else irrespective of what your aspiration might be. We don't see a future for you where you live'.

So I guess part of what I am saying is that I think you need a high level of community consultation, case by case about where economic futures might be if people are provided with a little bit more of a blank slate than they have been in the past.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** And just always to keep something in the back of our minds is that Aboriginal people are the biggest participators of the Territory economy, because Aboriginal people are the only people that don't go to Bali and spend their money in Bali or Singapore or Thailand.

**Professor Altman:** They rarely move interstate as well.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** That is right, yes. So they will be here forever and the money stays here, whatever they get from their art collection. Poor buggers, their money stays in the Northern Territory. They are really big participators in the Territory economy.

**Professor Altman:** And that is the different nature of Indigenous investment, where as any one of us, bar Alison, would look at a return on our investment for the next 10, 15 years so that we can retire on that. The nature of Indigenous business is that, you never sell it. They go on for hundreds of years, so you can afford to over capitalise now because you are not expecting a return in your life time. The Crocodile Hotel, perhaps poorly advised in the beginning, there is a court case about it I believe, but it is a significant icon of the Territory now and it will pay for itself over time thanks to Cooida.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Where do we all stay when we go to Jabiru?

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** And one of the things Loraine, I was actually part of setting up Ngurratjuta Aboriginal Corporation. I was the first Chairman when it started. We actually come in to have a look at Cooida and the model of Cooida to start up Ngurratjuta because that model was so good and that is how the investment of Ngurratjuta came in to the Territory economy, we started Ngurratjuta coming in and have a look at Cooida's model.

Can I take this opportunity to thank you Jon for a broad picture. You have come from the environment to the economic argument and we must not forget that. Whether we are talking about one little issue to do with Indigenous people, we have to bring in all these marks that we have seen on the maps. Because that really gives us a broader picture of how to deal with Indigenous people in the Territory and we need to get our arguments right about the way that Aboriginal people have participated in the Territory economy. I really believe, as a person that has been in this area, that people just sort of go on hear say; 'you know they spend their money on other things', but there is more money going in to investment in the Territory than what people understand.

Loraine, you brought up the 'gate money'; when you go out there and you see \$14k given to a family head that \$14k has to be divided amongst thirty five to forty people. So when you divide that, individual people are only getting \$375 or \$220 and that is really just pocket money and that is legislated under law by the Commonwealth and there is nothing that we can do about that. I know there are moves by the Commonwealth to try and stop individual payouts, but if you had the same ability to have mining industry or a mine appear on the back of your land, then as a person that owns the land, you have rights to that money and you would not be expected to put your child through school or pay for your education or any thing like that. I think that we have to step back from sometimes, the anger, the frustration that we all have in what we see and really make our judgements on facts. And it is about stepping back.

**Ms BRAHAM:** Perhaps we can debate this later Alison?

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Yes, no problems.

**Professor Altman:** I guess I would like to condone what you are saying. It seems to me that in Indigenous Affairs we have got to a point where there is far too much negative anecdote based policy making and there was a time when good public policies was evidence based policy making. We really need to focus on evidence before we start making policies and I think it's a very worrying trend that there is. I say this from the point of view of an academic and academics don't have all the answers, but nevertheless I think there is quite a rich research base that could be utilised a lot better and those who make anecdote based policy tend to demean the evidence base and the research.

I guess I would encourage the committee to use the evidence that is there, some of the evidence I have presented is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics; it is official statistics that we should use. Maybe just to take a step backwards, thinking about the time since 1971 when we first had official statistics on Indigenous people, there have been many improvements at the national level, there have been many improvements in lots of areas even at regional and remote levels that we tend to over look. Nobody wants to look at the now, thirty six year trend line which will be augmented again when we have the 2006 Census data. We just want to focus in on some of the undeniable negative things that are happening, but they shouldn't be the sole basis of policy making; we should be looking at the broader evidence base and we should have a historical and comparative perspective.

**Ms ANDERSON (CHAIR):** Well can I thank you Jon.

**Professor Altman:** Thank you all very much. Good luck with your enquiry.

The witness withdrew at 11.20am.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

**Associate Professor Dr Alan Clough**

*Thursday 3 May, 2007*

**Present:** Ms Alison Anderson, MLA, Member for MacDonnell - Chair  
Mrs Loraine Braham, MLA, Member for Braitling  
Mrs Fay Miller, MLA, Member for Katherine  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary to the Committee  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Kellie Trout, Administration/Research Assistant

**Witness:** Associate Professor Dr Alan Clough

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of the proceedings*

Meeting commenced 12.23pm.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome Associate Professor Dr Alan Clough (PhD) from the School of Public Health, Tropical Medicine & Rehabilitation Science and School of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be *in camera*. A decision regarding this is at the discretion of the Committee.

You are reminded that evidence given to the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the *Hansard* record I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Dr Clough, thank you for taking the time to meet with us today and welcome.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Alan Robert Clough, I am a PhD and Associate Professor at James Cook University at the Cairns campus and I have submitted a letter for you explaining those details.

In the letter I just summarised some papers that I have also submitted to you which I believe you have now got in your hands. These are just background evidence to some of the things that I will be presenting in this powerpoint presentation. In addition, based upon your responses plus what we might end up talking about specifically, I could turn this presentation in to a formal written submission for you as well if you would like that.

There will be some sections of the presentation which I will need to keep confidential; the reason for that is identifying localities in communities is part of our research agreement with those places. So primarily hopefully it will become obvious but I will try and emphasise those places that I need to essentially have not mentioned in the record.

While that might sound very conservative, it is important because we have built up a relationship of trust with many places now and if we undermine or destabilise that in any way, however simple or trivial, the doors suddenly slam shut on us to continue getting this information.

The other point I would like to make is that what I am submitting to you here, is not the view of my colleagues past or present and it is certainly not the view of the Menzies School of Health Research and certainly not the view of James Cook University, it is my view based on the evidence and information that I have compiled over almost twenty years of experience in the Top End of the NT and I apologise to those from south, having not done too much from the south of Katherine. So I can't really comment on much by the way of...

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** So with those introductory remarks I will open the presentation. I want to talk about some formal studies and some experiences that I have had dealing with these substances and the community issues that relate to them in these Top End, largely remote communities. As I said this experience goes back over almost twenty years of formal research, combined with a large component

of working in Top End communities as a Community Manager – most prominently as the Council Clerk at Maningrida between 1992 and 1996.

So it is not just based on formal surveys from an objective stance, it is based on essentially participant observation at the sharp end of doing business in those communities with these very important issues.

No need to remind you, the Top End is about the size of the state of Victoria, but it has only got about 3% of the population and outside of the main urban centres there are some 26 000 people scattered across small communities that range up to the size of Nhulunbuy, with about 4000 these days and a lot of small single family outstations. So the types of facilities are quite varied, which makes for problems in itself sometimes.

Large mixed communities like Nhulunbuy and Alyangula, the places of residence for non-Indigenous populations and out of the 26 000 Indigenous folks across those communities, 16000 are Indigenous. I will be referring to some of these places where I have lived and worked and done research.

As I said, I was Council Clerk at Maningrida from 1992 to 1996 and this is the football field in Maningrida early in 1993. What is going on here is that the Gunavidji and Nakara landowners are celebrating a whole range of things, but amongst other things they are celebrating opening the football field and indirectly they are celebrating the end of petrol sniffing in that place.

What we did there, and we were fortunate enough to have Dr Chris Burns monitor it for us and evaluate it for us back at that stage, the community decided to substitute aviation gasoline in the fuel supply because we learned that it couldn't be sniffed or at least sniffed to make people intoxicated. Alongside that we decided to implement certain employment and training strategies including developing and improving the football field.

That had a whole range of ongoing effects, some of which we anticipated and many of which we didn't. Petrol sniffing virtually disappeared, literally evaporated within three weeks. Within four months the practice had almost been forgotten about. It was a dramatic change in this place where petrol sniffing had been rife for almost thirty years.

**Mrs MILLER:** What year was that again?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** The change was made Christmas 1992, so everything was in place by about March 1993. A dramatic change in that place and that allowed a whole lot of other community development themes to take place. As the manager of the council over the three years, subsequent to 1993 we expanded the budget of the councils' operations from \$600k to \$6.5m and employed essentially anybody who wanted to be able to be involved in constructive activities in that community, primarily on CDEP but also with real employment on housing construction, which was a feature of our operations. We could do everything in that place, except put the roof on a brand new house with local people involved almost at every stage alongside skilled tradesmen.

Also important, as Chris reports in his paper which I have included in the package for you, the social effects, the crime generally in the community went down. Not just crime from petrol sniffing or petrol sniffing related crime, largely break and enter to steal petrol. It declined so much that the regular monthly court turned in to a three

monthly court and later it turned in to one every six months; because the crime rates had plummeted.

Most of the people who were formally in the petrol sniffing group, were employed in these sorts of activities and there was, as well something of a cultural revival, especially amongst the Gunavidji and Nakara people who are the landowners for that particular place where Maningrida was constructed. And for many years they have been written off as essentially having lost their culture and having a pretty dismal future.

Chris also did some evaluations of blood lead levels in petrol sniffers and showed that they were declining and was also interested to learn that some of the more intense neurological problems seemed to be, if not fixing themselves, then being adjusted amongst the petrol sniffing groups. Biologically and medically it looked like a major move forward as well for the first time and the forerunner of hopefully what might happen in many communities once non-sniffable Opal is available.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can I ask what else did you introduce for the younger group?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** We had organised sport and recreation activities largely focused around football for men, but basketball and other things for women. Sport and recreation officers working in that function. There were more of them so they were able to provide more organised activities for young people.

Also very important was breaking the cycle between Berrimah Gaol and the community in terms of administering community service orders. The magistrates, instead of sending people to Berrimah suddenly had an option to divert people from the criminal justice system into local work programs and activities that could acquit their penalties. That was a very important move, it broke the cycle between the gaol and community and it just fed the whole process.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Can I ask; the funding was provided by a different Northern Territory government departments, like Housing and Corrections...

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I pulled everything I could and it was a real challenge to keep up with the community's ambitions to do things, so there was a lot of Commonwealth money from CDEP and ATSIC in those days. The Territory Housing allocations, instead of employing contractors from outside the community, we gradually shifted towards building up a skill base in the community so that we could do it ourselves. That was very important. Also road contracts funded by Territory government, the same sort of strategy instead of outsourcing when we use local people.

This whole process took some years to shift, so it wasn't an overnight opportunity. But the initial support came from a grant for the football field. I think it was about \$30k in those days and Steve Hatton made that available to us in his role as the Minister then. At the same time I managed to get some deaths in custody in money that was available in the early 1990's to essentially support the initial programs, so that we had a base to move from. But essentially Loraine, I would pillage whatever dollars I could from wherever I could.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Which you have to, as you would.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** It was a very fast five years there in Maningrida, I can tell you that, but what all that experience taught me and what the subsequent researchers

taught me in these places is that, in order to prevent substance misuse problems, you need a combination strategy and ideally they go together at about the same time, this is my suggestion and I have had the chance to think on it a little bit.

Clearly it is very, very important to control the supply of psychoactive substances, extremely important. Not only controlling supply in terms of regulation and enforcement of things that might be illicit, but also doing what we can to limit peoples access to them. That might involve, as Noel Pearson is recommending, strategies to help people manage their cash.

There is not a drug dealer, either legal or illegal who will give you credit for too long to buy any drug. That managing cash would have many, many ramifications downstream for people and particularly have a very direct impact on the drug trade both legal and illegal. Then also alongside that, although we don't have a lot of this education we need something to educate people to reduce their demand and to provide reasons for people to reduce their need to use these substances and that is where those peripheral strategies come in.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So at that stage they would have been getting their cheques in the mail and cashing them at these central offices.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** That's right and straight into cash.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes straight into cash. How did you reduce that cash?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** Well this is a long story. I am happy to talk about it. In those days at the council we didn't actually have a registered agency at the bank, so the council was running what was essentially a cheque cashing service because nobody else would do it. We had to buy cash from the store, we were keeping up to \$150k at a time in a cash box, in what we called 'the bank' and people would trade their cheques for that cash. We would then deposit those cheques into an impress account and redeem the value of what we bought from the store and that came with all sorts of difficulties, not the least of which was administering and auditing the amount of dollars that were there.

We then basically invented a Maningrida Council Bank Book and instead of having people have all their cash in their hands straight away, we gave them the opportunity to put some in a bank book so that, if you like, it was embargoed and nobody could touch it in their individual accounts but all inside the larger impress account. So that allowed people a bit more of a trickle effect on their money rather than having it all in their hands at one time. Then later we managed to organise an agency, as our credibility was re-established and people would rather actually regular bank books. Simple strategies but very, very important for community people.

Alongside controlling supply and other things, treatment for dependent users where there are dependent users is absolutely vital; especially when we are talking about alcohol. If we are going to expect people to suddenly abstain who may have been dependent users for many years, there needs to be a way of making sure they are taken care of because of the very serious medical risk that they will run.

This may be less of an issue for an other drugs, something like cannabis where the effects of withdrawal are not necessarily life threatening and tobacco use can now be supported with things like nicotine replacement therapy for dependent users. But whatever the substance really, there needs to be some thought given to treatment for dependent users in a sweep of strategies.

Then here are the meaningful employment skills training and the information programs, essentially diversion. At Maningrida what was also very important and is likely to be important in many Indigenous communities. Diversion from criminal justice and trying to break that cycle between the gaols and communities.

So there is my model, they are my suggestions and I would stand by those. Ideally they go together at the one time because they have been shown to have immediate and dramatic effect. If not then a sweep of what is possible is worth investing in.

Just to give you a snapshot of the substance use patterns in the Top End, when I first started to do formal research, I was studying kava and I did my PhD on kava through the Menzies School of Health Research. *The Health Effects of Kava in Eastern Arnhem Land*. Through those studies I was able to determine the prevalence of kava use and other things in eastern Arnhem Land during the mid 1990s. It is a long story but I was doing a retrospective study on people's kava use and the health effects of that, in terms of people going to hospital for pneumonia and skin and heart disease. That was the target of the study.

But this is the pattern in the population and it is just a population pyramid with males on one side and females on the other side and the different age groups. The outside border here represents the total number in each age group. These are the females, these are the males. We didn't survey or get any information for people under the age of 16 as part of this study, but for essentially the adults 16 and over, that was the pattern of kava use in eastern Arnhem Land communities including the Groote Eylandt communities where kava hasn't been used very much at all. In some of the more established kava using communities like Galiwinku, rates of kava use were up to 70% in the males and about half the females.

There is the same sort of picture for alcohol use in that region. Alcohol use there, because of its restricted availability is really alcohol use that is binge drinking when you are out of your community or when you smuggle some in or when you go to town, you drink as much as you can, so it has got problems with it even though it is apparently quite low and apparently severely restricted in the region. That is the level of impact on alcohol use in those places.

Tobacco, you would probably know this story. But it is hard to find somebody who is not a cigarette smoker in the Indigenous communities, male or female. Those rates at about two third of the adults, males and females are probably at the lower end of things. There are communities in eastern Arnhem Land where almost everybody smokes cigarettes. I will tell you a little bit more about what we are trying to do about that later on.

During the course of this study on kava, we detected for the first time; community concerns about cannabis use and also we were able to determine the population that this a pattern of cannabis use around about the mid 1990s. This was brand new, as we were doing the study on kava the communities were saying to us 'what about this other thing that has just come, that has just arrived, you should be studying that.' So it was a bit of a surprise and we were able to document that pretty thoroughly and alert commissions and policy makers to the fact that it was becoming a rising problem and the Substance Abuse Committee detected the same sorts of things in its consultation throughout the Territory.

Petrol sniffing in the region was at a quite low rate in the mid 1990's and that was largely because of the initiative that was inspired at Maningrida and spread very

rapidly across the Top End, other communities took it up in their own way. So petrol sniffing was much reduced by the mid 1990s in the region, even though there was still a background of former petrol sniffers and that has its own problems too.

**Mr MILLS:** Alan, wouldn't you have users that consume every substance?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** Can I show you the next picture? It will help to answer that question. But before I switch to that slide, there really wasn't any evidence of other substance use. There were stories about amphetamines and speed, but I could find at that stage no convincing evidence that people had either tried or used those sorts of substances. So that is the pattern for the Top End.

If you take kava out of it, for the kava using communities in Arnhem Land you have pretty much got the pattern in most of the communities that I am familiar with. This is where it gets, the poly drug use issues.

From 2001, I was able to do some intensive surveys in the communities around Nhulunbuy and Alyangula. I am not going to name those communities and I would like to keep them out of the record, but we were given a mission in those places to investigate patterns of cannabis use. What I am going to show you here is the question that Terry has asked; the overlap in the substances and the poly drug use patterns. We were able to interview people in these age groups 13 to 36 years, so it is not everybody but it is a key substance using section of the population.

If we let the cannabis users be that big... I am going to compare everything else to cannabis use. Incidentally, there were about 20% of the people we surveyed who had never used any of these substances and about 20% of lifetime abstainers from everything. They were mostly women, some men about 1 in every 5 individuals.

When we put the tobacco circles alongside ganja, we can say that; 'if you are a cannabis user, you are also 19 times more likely than a non cannabis user to also be using tobacco.' That is just technical speak for virtually every ganja user blends their ganja with tobacco.

The cannabis users were also very likely to be using alcohol. The cannabis users were also very likely to have had a background of petrol sniffing and those who we did find were currently sniffing petrol were all ganja users and in fact the young petrol sniffers switch depending on availability between the petrol and the ganja. Unfortunately they are still doing that in some places.

For the first time, I found reliable evidence that some young people could access speed. Not a lot, just isolated evidence but I was able to confirm that it was being abused from medical records and admission to go to the district hospital. The clinician recorded that the patient told him that they had been popping pills which they called speed which was probably methamphetamine. This is only isolated evidence and I have really not come across anything since that time, a student of mine is in communities in east Arnhem Land right now and she hasn't found any further evidence of that either. For some reason or another, there is at least at the moment, a barrier up in terms of those other kinds of substances.

I do know that there have been direct attempts to try to introduce methamphetamine and I also know from the consumers telling me that they didn't like the experience, they prefer the more relaxed experience of cannabis than alcohol to a certain extent. They don't like that racy experience of amphetamines. What is interesting is they also don't like needles.

The kava users tended not to be the cannabis users; the kava users tended to be older, the kava users tended to be located in just some communities, not Groote Eylandt for example. It is younger age groups that were cannabis users.

Hopefully that answers your question, Terry. It is not the entire population but it's probably the susceptible population.

**Mr MILLS:** I am just interested to know whether you did any analysis of those that didn't consume any substances and what prompts that stance?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** We didn't systematically study that, no. But that raises the prospect of investigating factors that are resilient, creating resilience to substance misuse. Nobody has done any systematic work on that and certainly it would be worth a go.

Just to flick back to the previous graph. Not all of the young people are for example, taking up tobacco smoking and they are not all drinking straight away. So I think there are opportunities with those younger age groups to intervene, even though they have got ganja, there would be serious opportunities to intervene before the opportunity to take up the practice...

**Mr MILLS:** Well I suspect that cannabis is a popular culture for youth with reggae music and the like. But it prompts the question that a good education program could also be effective to run against the popular culture messages for young people and cannabis.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** The opportunity is there and I think for young men, in particular; connecting with sporting performance is very important and I am sure they would respond to that although we haven't tried anything with it, it is just my gut feeling.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** There has been a very big push also, in the urban community to do away with young girls and smoking. There has been a lot of campaigns on that but I just wonder do that flow in to other places like Maningrida, I suppose...

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** They don't, that is unfortunately the case.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I think it has targeted remote communities, with regard to smoking.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** The non smoking messages would obviously be received by people on the packets and the media, whether they have meaning or not and whether they strike a chord or not.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** You also get used to it I think, don't you? Those visions on the packets are a bit shocking the first couple of times but then they are just sitting there...

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** Yes, I think we need messages that are going to hit home somehow...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Specifically type of images we need, don't we?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** And also what has not been available systematically is nicotine replacement therapy. Here in Darwin we can buy it at the supermarkets or go in the chemist. Out in the remote communities, it is much harder to access.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That would be an idea. Why don't we just give them out in the remote communities in Alice Springs. They do with condoms don't they?

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** It just seems to be on par with how much it costs to buy a packet of cigarettes.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** My understanding is that in the remote communities, the clinics and clinicians still need to consult before handing out the patches or especially things like the anti-anxiety drug. Zyban, that is the one.

For people to access the nicotine replacement therapy is easy enough, in terms of the patches, but the follow up which is necessary for people to continue to be supported is just not there. We are actually trying to address that in some localities. Moving on from just describing a broad pattern and clearly that has stimulated some thoughts I have had for interventions, as it always does.

When I spoke to this committee previously in 2003, I did so in two capacities. I did so as a researcher for the Menzies School, but I was also a member of the Liquor Licensing Commission in those days. I had the privilege of being involved in some restricted area hearings, in remote areas; and two decisions that I wrote, one for the Emu Point Outstation in the Daly River area, I thought was illustrative and I also wrote the decision for the Groote Eylandt restricted area. You might have heard about this.

I just wanted to show you those two situations, because they illustrate nicely the polls in the issues and the complexities and also it illustrates that we have moved along, I think in the public discussion about liquor and its effects.

I think the discussion is shifting, as I have said in one of the papers that I have submitted for you. The discussion is shifting from a conversation about whether or not it is a basic right to have it and to sell it, or whether or not it needs to be a condition of privilege. A greater focus on that.

We have typically thought of it as a right and I don't think the general population has really shifted in to thinking that it might be a condition of privilege, but in fact it is.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But unfortunately we can't jump to that right off.

**Mr MILLS:** That is a big question. They have...

**Mrs BRAHAM:** They have the right, same as you and I do.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** People feel like their rights are infringed, but in fact our legislation restricts access or holds the potential to limit access to people that are problem drinkers. Like the thing in the Liquor Act is; 'you must not serve somebody who is intoxicated', that constrains the opportunities. So it is a conditional privilege, but we haven't really thought of it as being a condition of privilege.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Our legislation also says; 'you must not sell to an intoxicated person', but if I am not intoxicated and I buy it you can't read my mind to know that I am going to give it to that intoxicated person.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** There are huge difficulties in administering and actually dealing with the issue on a face to face basis with a customer, a very difficult situation.

**Mr MILLS:** You wouldn't do that though, would you?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I am no longer a member of that commission, but these decisions are public and I am quite happy to talk about them because it was a very enlightening experience and it might give you some ideas.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You know, there is a question we would like to also raise; when you talk about 'dry areas'; no alcohol beyond this point, but we don't actually, in that decision say, 'No one who lives in this area may drink in or off this point', which is really an infringement again on peoples' rights, but we are just talking about the substance not being on the community.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** The act of drinking?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Yes.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** Yes, but I am big fan of Part A of the *Liquor Act*, 'the restricted area provisions'. It has enormous flexibility for the community to construct its own rules and to have those turned in to law. Part of what I learnt from this process was the extent of that flexibility; I am a big fan of those provisions.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I don't know whether communities know all about that...

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** They don't.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I think we have just said; 'you're right, full stop'. Whereas we should be educating them more about rights.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I couldn't agree more, I think there is just a huge education exercise about the condition of privilege.

That 'no alcohol beyond this point' sign is at the boundary fence of the Emu Point Outstation and what that represented was the local community saying to the drinkers that that was their rule. They enforced it in the way that was socially and culturally appropriate for them.

The applicants wanted to have the strength of the *Liquor Act* behind them as well, to enforce this and in practice that really is very symbolic in these isolated spots because the Emu Point Outstation is about half way between Port Keats and Daly River and off the main road and for the police to access the place and to enforce, is essentially very impractical.

But nonetheless, the community saw it is valuable to reinforce their own stance on alcohol. I have put that photo of that shelter in there because in this community I was stunned. The appointment for the hearing was 11 o'clock, a very informal hearing, as formal as I could make it in that setting.

Had the tie on, all the rest of it... recorded it... Holy Bible on the bench... within five minutes of taking that photo, every person in the community was there, even the oldest frailest person walked across. There were 120 people sitting under that shelter

so it was something that the whole span of generations was very keen to hear about and think about.

They got their restricted area, they didn't want any liquor permits which are possible under Part A of the *Liquor Act*, but they did want to allow the option for a future commission to consider allowing some people to have liquor permits, at a future time after consultation.

They wanted to keep it dry, they wanted no alcohol beyond that point, they wanted no drinking beyond that point and now their moves and initiatives are backed up by the moral authority of the Northern Territory law and they are very happy with that.

Now they would have a sign like that one here on the right hand side which warns people formally, hopefully a sign like the Yirrkala one that I have used to illustrate, also has some language in there that communicates the message and nobody gets confused. That is one extreme. The other extreme is the Groote Eylandt restricted area; a far more complex situation. There was a restricted area in Groote Eylandt, unlike Emu Point where there was none. There was an informal application of local rules.

On Groote Eylandt there had already been a restricted area declare in 1980, under Part A of the *Liquor Act*. But there were some complications. The three Aboriginal communities on the island, Umbakumba and Angurugu and Alyangula have suffered the consequences of some inconsistencies in the way this worked for many years. The mining town, with a population of about 1100, was victim of these inconsistencies.

The restricted area included two exempt areas, one of which was Alyangula and in Alyangula you could possess and consume liquor in your own home and at public events in accordance with liquor licensing laws, inside the township boundaries essentially the town lease. So you could go to one of the two local licensed premises and purchase take-away with no limit and drink it in accordance with the laws that existed.

You could also bring it in to the barge landing with no limits on quantities and some people occasionally would buy pallet loads because they would get a discount and they would want to bring it in for Christmas and then they would need to store it, which created problems. So Alyangula, unrestricted.

Umbakumba was restricted except for beer prior to the application; the reason for that was that Umbakumba, back in 1980 had decided that they wanted to continue to have what they call the 'Umbakumba beer ration.' They wanted to continue to have access to that and up until 2002 that access represented something like 14 cartons of beer a day transported from one of the licensed premises at Alyangula down the road past Angurugu and then across the island to Umbakumba.

As I mentioned, two licensed clubs. Not taverns, clubs with membership rules in those places. One of the issues was the pressure on residents of the restricted area of Alyangula. In particular for Indigenous folks this represented pressure, those people who were trying to improve their lives by getting a job in the mine had access to accommodation in Alyangula by virtue of the mines employment policies. Of course their family sought to avail themselves of the extra opportunities that represented for them, including access to take-away liquor from the clubs.

Enormous pressure was put on those workers at GEMCO to provide extended family members with liquor. Unfortunately there grew an illegal trading in take-away grog from the licensed premises which was very difficult to police and then large quantities coming in on the barge that I mentioned were a problem for police in terms of security and those sorts of issues.

Community problems persisted in a place like Angurugu which had for many years suffered seriously from alcohol abuse or the consequences of that. So that people who could still access liquor in some way or another at Alyangula who lived in Angurugu would usually be intoxicated by the time they got home to Angurugu and the consequences of that remain severe, even under these restricted area provisions.

Another issue was for the police in particular enforcing this. You weren't breaking the law if you had alcohol in your car and you were driving from, for example Alyangula to Umbakumba to go for a picnic on the beach. So it was a defence and it was raised as a defence by some people who in fact were taking the alcohol to Angurugu. It was the defence that they raised in court that they were actually on their way to Umbakumba and so, therefore the police didn't need to seize that vehicle or the alcohol. So the police found great difficulties in enforcing the provisions of the restricted area and there were other issues as well, but I won't go into those.

The applicant, which was the Anyingini Land Council wanted that whole area to be restricted, including the outside of the islands which is actually Milyakburra, included with the boundary of the Land Council. The whole area was to be restricted with no exempt areas, remove them all. No unrestricted access to liquor outside the licensed premises in Alyangula. You can still go in to the licensed premises. Same conditions, also removing the exempt area around Umbakumba.

At the same time introduce a system of liquor permits, which are possible under Part A of the Act and make those available by the Commission on the recommendation of a local permit application and assessment committee, which was convened by the local police. I must mention the work of Senior Sergeant Tony Fuller, who was prominent in developing this whole initiative at the time, and is now at Nhulunbuy. Sergeant Dean McMasters has carried on the work there and it depends a lot on the hard work of those people and the people on the committee to maintain this initiative. It all hinges on almost a day to day management of the permit system.

Under these permits, the applicant wanted no limits on quantities except on a case by case basis that could be recommended by the permit committee so the problem drinkers across all sectors of the community could be dealt with in terms of their access to take-away liquor through the permit system. The permits were requested to be strictly in accordance with conditions which were opposed initially. If there was a history of violent behaviour or a perception that people may become violent if they have unrestricted access to liquor than they might not get a permit or get an adjusted one, get one adjusted with quantities reduced. If anybody was supplying dangerous drugs they wouldn't get a permit, people involved in motor vehicle or traffic incidents, you can read the rest of those.

One of the interesting ones was the littering condition. I thought that was very important too. That is in place from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. It is a little over a year now. One of the big advantages of the permit system was that it could actually specify where liquor can be taken. Instead of the two exempt areas, the application asks for permits to be able to possess and consume liquor in those former exempt areas. So it

was no longer unrestricted. To have access to alcohol in those places you had to have a permit. Quite simple and straight forward really.

The committee was able to advise of any changes to this particular condition, that is if they either wanted to change an area where people could take liquor or to add an extra one, which they did in due course and that aerial photo was of Bickerton Island, the community of Milyakburra. The community considered the arrangements and requested through the permit committee that resident staff only in that community could be considered to apply for a permit and I believe since that decision was made they have made that adjustment, so resident staff can have access to permit liquor if they feel like it in those places. Again, the flexibility is pretty important.

The whole decision and the whole process was supported by a liquor management plan which was developed through consultations over almost three years, largely featuring the police but involving key personnel from GEMCO and the licensees needed to be cooperative and in particular the community council and the Land Council.

Colleagues of mine are evaluating this at the moment, Peter D'Abbs and Associate Professor Kate Conigrave from Sydney University. They have been collecting information about how this works, how this has operated. I can't formally be involved in that because I wrote the decision that they are evaluating. But my intelligence tells me because I have been there since, that it is operating very successfully. It has particularly reduced alcohol related problems, particularly in Angurugu. Alcohol related violence, domestic violence.

The numbers of employees for GEMCO and their capacity to turn up to work in a state fit for work has soared. GEMCO now boasts 20% Indigenous employees in their mainstream workforce and I think a lot of that has been accelerated by the control and access to liquor; not just for the employees themselves but to their extended families.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** But has it also caused a drift away from the community for those who want to drink?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** No it hasn't. There are still people who will visit other places and drink and there are still people who try to bring alcohol back, but the police are able to vigorously enforce that. It does depend though, completely almost, on the very robust local management committee and just consideration of permit applications and assessments. It would become very fragile and unstable if there wasn't the work being put in to this management committee. They meet monthly, they consider permit applications. They are doing the on the ground administration. Early on it was 1200 permits, there may be more there now. It is a lot of work and I don't know if they have actually got external resources to do that, it is all done within internal resources. But it is the key of having this continue to work. If it is going to fall over it will fall over because of the lack of maintenance of that committee.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Has the consumption of alcohol increased as permits have increased .... that sounds silly! What I mean is, we judge how much pure alcohol is being sold. Have you seen a huge increase in that?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I haven't seen that data. My colleagues are going to be collecting that data. The intelligence I have though is that the preferred brand which was usually consumed by problem drinkers, I think was Melbourne Bitter, dropped off

dramatically. That is one indicator. But I would think that there would be some pretty dramatic changes in the quantities of absolute alcohol consumed.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** I might have missed that; did you say light beer only or full strength?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** In terms of each permit; that is the option for the committee to recommend on a case by case basis. So some problem drinkers may be put on light beer for a while in order to maintain the permit.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Are any picked up in the supermarket sales?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I don't know that either.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So where would that money have gone if it wasn't going to liquor in the community?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I have no intelligence on that. They are the kinds of indicators though that you naturally go for when you see jumps and spikes in those. But it will be a very interesting story, I think. A positive story to come out of that environment.

**Mr KNIGHT:** When is that going to be?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I am not in touch with people. I have tried to stay away from it completely because I have got quite a bit of ownership in this really and I don't want to influence their views. I understand that a report is to go to the Racing, Gaming and Licensing Commission at some time before the end of August. Whether or not there is the opportunity to publish from that I don't know, hopefully there will be because it is such a powerful story and just underscores the debate about conditional privilege.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** I just thought I might bring to the attention of the committee that I spoke to Dean McMaster yesterday and one thing that he raised that was interesting about the activities of the liquor permit committee is that they remain somewhat uncertain as to the legal status of their decisions. That seemed to be the biggest challenge really. If a decision were tested, where would they stand and where would those individual members of the committee stand in terms of their legal liability. That is something that is appropriate to the business of the committee.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I have a view on that. Really, the committee unfortunately has no power, apart from the power that the police have. The power of the committee comes through what it can recommend to the commission and what the commission determines. The Liquor Act says that it is the Liquor Commission that issue permits; it is not a local committee. Unfortunately, there is the perception abroad, both in the committee and I think in the community that the committee has the power and it is truly not the case. The police had their own powers.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** So formally speaking, do the committee make a recommendation to the Liquor Commission about each individual permit and the Liquor Commission ratifies that?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** Yes. The Act is pretty specific about that.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** Could the Act be amended to delegate that power?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I don't know but the power has already been delegated from the Commission to elements of the Racing, Gaming and Licensing Division which I am not totally comfortable with myself. The commission loses intimate contact with this and I am speaking as a former commission member now. I really tried to keep intimate contact with the permit applications and we were not able to do that because the power had been delegated, prior to my being on the Commission, to the bureaucracy. There are risks in some of that, there may be conveniences practised that the Commission might not be comfortable with.

So actually delegating the power to a committee, I think will be fraught with difficulties because, apart from everything else the individuals who might be on that committee will turn over regularly in these places. How do you elect or appoint people to those committees? They're members of communities as well, they have to live there so there are all kinds of conflicts that they would be exposed to, I think if they suddenly had some real power. Unfortunately the perception is out there that they actually had that power but they don't.

But ongoing management and maintenance of committees like that in support of them to answer those specific questions about the legal status would be very, very important to provide some clear advice for them and some guidelines.

**Dr Lloyd (Research Officer):** It sounds as though there is an authority standing behind them in a process. Technically a process of review that absolves committee members to some degree of absolute responsibility, so the status quo might be quite ok.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** In that particular case, it's ok and I just repeat as long as the committee remains robust and vigorous it will continue to work. But they do need advice. They are just community people who are taking on a very important role and if they perceive that they have got a legal ... then they need to be educated.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** So the process, does that involve the Liquor Commission going over there and sitting down with a number of applications and looking at the recommendations. Whether it was a rubber stamp...

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** The process doesn't involve a visit by the commission. It has been set up so that the permit applications are administered by RGL here in Darwin through communicating with, essentially, the police station. So there would be a list of new applicants, new permits recommended to be issued along with perhaps a list of cancellations or expired permits. These are also renewed annually, so it is not a 'forever' permit.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** That is probably a safeguard.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** It's a safeguard.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Is it a tag ... how do I know that you have a permit to take it to...

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I have a card which is a membership of the Alyangula Recreation Club, and I can avail myself of the privileges of that club, as a visitor there. If I want to I could also apply for a liquor permit to access take-away while I was there but I chose not to. The magnetic card will open the door of the club for me but it won't open the door of the take-away outlet. Even if I somehow got in there and tried to purchase take-away liquor, I would need to slide my card under the register and there would be recognition that I wasn't a permit holder at the register.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Ok, so that is similar to what you are looking at in Alice Springs.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** And that has worked extremely well. And it hasn't intruded on peoples' convenience and their perception and their rights. Nhulunbuy is attempting to set up a similar arrangement and I understand it will be in place before the end of the year. I am hoping to be more formally involved in evaluating that whole process. Nhulunbuy will be a different situation, a much larger, far more complex...it is a tavern and it will depend on the ongoing cooperation of the licensees to make sure it commences.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I thought it started in February.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** No, it has been stalled. I was just speaking to a resident at the airport on the way here. They're still implementing the management arrangements for permit management, exactly what they are.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Because there is a cost.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** There will be, an administration cost and I was thinking that a place like Nhulunbuy; there could be several thousand liquor permits to look after and the ongoing turnover of new applicants and people who have expired; especially with fly-in fly-out arrangements.

Some good news, generally. It is coming with some risk but certainly it is lifting the tenor and quality of the debate; about whether or not it is going gaining some privilege. How am I going for time?

**Mrs BRAHAM:** You have got about ten minutes.

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** Ten minutes. I will move on to perhaps the most important one and if I need to, I can write something to you later on.

Somebody might recognise this sign; it is at the gateway of Port Keats. I took this photo in 2005 when I was there for a restricted area hearing on the liquor commission. Very clearly the community has taken its own stance about Ganja and they are quite keen to make sure that its availability in that place is limited.

I was in the fortunate position of being able to be funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, in order to do the kinds of studies that I have already reported on here for you to look at ongoing changes in cannabis use in eastern Arnhem Land.

When I started doing that research, mostly around Nhulunbuy, more recently I have focused on communities in the Groote Eylandt precinct; none of which I am mentioned by name.

But some of the results of this research are in the report here. I also have a student who is continuing with this work. She is on Groote Eylandt as we speak, doing continuing follow-up work with cannabis users and others there.

This is what we found back in 2001 to be the case, in terms of cannabis use. In these eastern Arnhem Land communities we had something like three quarters of the males in those age groups 13 to 36 and about one third of the females using

cannabis, which is an extremely high rate. Amongst the highest we know about anywhere and also an issue for the local community.

From the earlier studies in the eastern Arnhem Land region, going back to the 1990s. I was able to document about half the males and anywhere between 10% and up to 30% of the females were using cannabis. I think the variability in the figures for females illustrates that back at that time we were just seeing the practice being taken up by most of the community population, with the women possibly being a bit slower than men to get in to it. So it really was an epidemic and it expanded very rapidly across the Top End communities and elsewhere. I am learning from my recent consultations in Northern Queensland.

If we compared the available data for the whole of the Northern Territory for similar age groups then we are looking at a higher rate in those communities that we have documented. The Northern Territory with those sorts of prevalence figures is already a fair bit higher than the rest of Australia, but in these Indigenous communities as I said some of the highest rates we know about.

There is also another difference which is hidden by the statistics and the question that is asked that people in the Northern Territory and Australia is 'have you used cannabis in the preceding twelve months?' Whereas the cannabis users in communities we have studied have used very regularly almost all of them, on at least a weekly basis and half of them on a daily basis, so that kind of cannabis use is far more regular in the population than elsewhere in the NT and in Australia.

The age of first use, is quite similar to the rest of the world. But the number of years that people have used ganja, turned out to be quite short. On average about four years in 2001.

If we take a look at this picture here one of the questions we asked in our survey was 'when did you first start using?' and we were able to extrapolate any information about when people kicked off their cannabis use for the first time. You can see the spike in 1998 and that fits with the picture of suddenly, even though people knew about ganja in their communities and would occasionally smoke it when they weren't there, suddenly there was a local market for it.

The dealers got smart and they provided local people with the opportunity to make some spare cash and that has been an ongoing pattern, dealers in Darwin and elsewhere providing community people with ganja for a certain price. They then go back to their community and turn it in to enough money to pay for the next trip to Darwin to do the shopping and that is a pretty powerful force, it is going to be difficult to over turn.

So, it was an epidemic. An epidemic of marketing cannabis as much as anything else. They made it regularly available to anybody who wanted to try to use it in those places. The typical 'baggy' that was available at that time and probably still is was something like this; it is a small postage stamp size plastic bag that you can buy in a newsagent. Those days, the material in the bag would be \$50 if it was regularly available and up to \$100 if it was scarce for any reason.

That material in there is not actually cannabis, that is me simulating what amounts might be in there. Very tiny amounts, I used Alcans beam balance to measure the amounts, very, very tiny, not even a gram.

The dealers have enormous flexibility to charge basically what the market will bear because they can stick tiny amounts of ganja in these packets and still sell them for the same amount of money. I estimated that at least twelve times the going rate in Darwin is probably what community people have been paying for their ganja out there. The financial drain on communities I estimated and it is your papers that I have submitted, about \$1 out of every \$6 is probably going into the ganja trade, some of it obviously leaving the communities, eventually all of it, but some of it also just concentrated into the hands of a few local dealers, which comes with its own problems.

Violence. This is unusual. It is hard to convince people down south that we needed to investigate cannabis in these communities because the perception from southern funding bodies, is that alcohol is the main issue and why should we worry about something which we think is quite benign anyway. That is the attitude that came through to me.

But in these communities especially when ganja is in short supply the users, who are dependent users, will exert pressure on their family members. I see Alison nodding. And if the family members aren't forthcoming with either cannabis or the money to buy it then there will be violence and this was a serious problem in these communities where we studied and clearly it is still a serious problem.

Also challenges to the local service system, particularly the health centre and the police in terms of trying to police what are really quite small physical amounts of material going in to these places but causing enormous damage in terms of the financial impact and these other impacts.

The earliest report in some of the clinic data we looked at of issues related with cannabis. This one in 1993, personal danger and fitting according to the clinician after sniffing petrol and using cannabis the previous night. Then the next case, an individual who had reoccurrences of presentations. In 1997 first began using THC and then five years later is suffering from drug induced psychosis in 2002.

A patient in 1999 who was pregnant with not enough money to buy food, gets headaches from not smoking, chest pain etcetera, her mother is concerned, it is not just a problem for men. Patient number four - abuse all day every day showing insight into his cannabis use and in 2005 strange behaviour, weight loss, disturbed sleep, getting aggressive quickly, killed a dog with a machete and they considered evacuating him to Cowdy Ward.

Often what happens when these psychotics get evacuated to Cowdy Ward from this place, by the time they get there they have sobered up and it may seem dramatic for no reason to be kept at Cowdy Ward, so they are essentially sent back to the community or turned loose and the cycle has started all over again and all the costs that go along with that.

Clearly you can see that there were some very serious issues being confronted by the service providers in those places and obviously the families are suffering the brunt of that because they have to live with that. Harmful effects on the individual include them possibly spending between 30% - 60% of their cash, if they are a CDP participant, on buying 'baggies' like this. Most [users] bought two to three bags a week. So a lot of the cash from an individual consumer going out of their pockets, which makes them short and so they then go and put more pressure on their family.

The implication of cannabis abuse for self harm, while it is always difficult to make a direct 'cause-effect link', I am convinced that there is enough circumstantial evidence to condemn cannabis in terms of its impact on self-harm, especially when it is related to alcohol abuse and any self-harm in these places, we don't need to worry about whether it is scientifically proven. It needs to be addressed.

The acute psychotic episodes, which have been illustrated to you and we also have documented more subtle effects. Early on I was able to document that the regular cannabis users were suffering more frequently, fragmented thought processes, memory disruption. They were clearly dependent users and they were suffering things like auditory and visual hallucinations.

So we were able to dig through these more serious obvious concerns into the more subtle effects and document those for the first time and my student, Kylie, is at the moment investigating more closely the effects on symptoms of depression and cannabis use. She has got good data that we are just about to try and publish in a very prominent international medical journal that documents for the first time. The Indigenous populations, women and also men to some extent.

Women are six times more likely to suffer moderate to severe depression systems if they are cannabis users on a daily basis; there is no data like that out there. There is no data like that out there. There are implications in the literature for the other populations, this is the first time that we have really very clearly been able to demonstrate it in Indigenous populations. So the mental health effects are subtle as well as obvious and it is going to be a difficult problem in the future to try and deal with.

I won't dwell on this but the clinic records cannabis users were also more likely to have a record of having been in gaol or go to gaol, suffering those hallucinations and were more likely to have either threatened or actually harmed themselves. For the first time, again, a unique study. We were able to follow-up, I did this in 2004 and Kylie is continuing it now. We were able to follow-up the cannabis users and what happened between 2001 and 2004 was that we brought the attention of committees like this and the policy makers to the issue of cannabis availability out there in the communities.

The NT Police to their great credit took on the role of developing the main community drug strategy which has had very important effects on the availability of cannabis out there and it has really peeled back some of the more serious issues, like the acute psychosis particularly in places we have looked at. I am not sure about elsewhere, But it has been really important to have that response and we have been able to document some of the effects of that.

I won't dwell on how we collected the information, I will go straight to talking about its content, but basically we worked closely, consistently with community people to collect this data. We built up relationships. We trusted people and they were very forthcoming with providing us with this information.

We have been fortunate enough, and there is Kylie on the left and there is Betty Herbert, the police aide over there. We have been fortunate enough to work with ladies like this to document these issues and collect the information. These ladies as a team have now got their own funding from the National Crime Prevention Authority to extent their initiative to a nearby community on the mainland and they are going to be taking their approach over there to start discussions about cannabis use

problems. This is the tool they will be using, I won't go in to detail about this, but we have been trying to translate some of these issues in to peoples' own concepts.

**Mrs BRAHAM:** Are we getting a copy of your presentation?

**Ass. Prof. CLOUGH:** I will certainly send you a copy and I will attach a written submission to it and complete the information for you. The story I was going to tell there was that, there were some positive changes as measured by the more subtle mental health effects in terms of the communities we surveyed. I attribute those directly to the intervention by NT Police, alongside the community efforts to educate people about cannabis use as well as people making their own decisions to change their lifestyle.

Unfortunately that is the only place where we have been able to document the changes reliably. I fear that other communities might not have been so rife as these particular ones, because they get close attention. I will leave it at that.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** On behalf of the committee I would just like to thank you for coming along today and sharing your information with us. It has been very interesting and just from a personal point of view, we attended Groote Eylandt and heard a lot of evidence from the people in Groote Eylandt and as you are being a part of that I would like to also convey our thanks to you for the role you have had over there as well.

The witness withdrew.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Dr Ian Crundall, Alcohol Policy, Department of Justice**

*Thursday 26 July 2007*

**Present:** Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin (Dep. Chair)  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary to the Committee  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Kellie Trout, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witness:** Dr Ian Crundall, Principal Advisor, Alcohol Policy, Community  
and Justice Policy Division, Department of Justice

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of the proceedings*

Meeting commenced 9:20am.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Welcome Dr Crundall from the Department of Justice. This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be in-camera. A decision regarding this is at the discretion of the Committee.

You are reminded that evidence given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary Privilege. For the purposes of *Hansard*, recording, I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today. Dr Crundall, thank you for taking the time to meet with us, and welcome.

**Dr Crundall:** Thank you. Dr Ian Crundall. My current title is Principal Advisor in the Community and Justice Policy Division for the Department of Justice. That division is a new amalgamation of the Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination Community Harmony, and Office of Crime Prevention. Thank you for inviting me along. This presentation relates to a report we released earlier this year that assesses drinking patterns in the Northern Territory. I have given the title to this report of *Lakes of Liquor*, as there has been a lot of discussion about 'Rivers Of Grog' in Aboriginal communities. What this report highlights is that there are a couple of major centres across the Territory where there are just as many problems, but no one seems to talk about them.

The report is a household report, where interviewers went to households and did face-to-face interviews. We ended up with a sample of over 1200 people, which is large enough for us to be quite confident with the results we have. It was restricted to the five major urban centres, and it excluded town camps and itinerant people living there. They had to be within a household, so it is mainstream Territory. Within that, there was about 13% of the population that was Aboriginal people. So we have some information about Aboriginal drinking, but it is a very small sample and therefore it is important to keep in mind this is about mainstream Territory households. We asked a whole range of questions, and there is a report which has been sent to Pat.

So; 'Who is drinking what?' That first table gives a breakdown of those who said they have never consumed alcohol. All of these people are 18 years or over. People who said they have drunk at some stage in their life and the recent are people who reported drinking in the last week. More than half the population drink weekly, in fact. What this tells us is what people typically do. It is very unlikely that it is exceptional behaviour. I should also point out it was done at the start of 2006.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Are they percentages?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes. They are percentages. Two things I would like to point out from that table is that here are far more males than females who are regular drinkers. That is 62% versus 48%. That is fairly typical, although we are finding across the country that that difference is diminishing over time; that is, more women are starting to drink like men. The other thing to point out is the number of Aboriginal people who said they never drink, or certainly are not recent drinkers, which is consistent with previous work saying that fewer Aboriginal people drink. It is only a small number there, but it is in the right trend.

We are commissioning another research project to look specifically at Aboriginal drinking among town-camps, itinerants, and remote communities. There is however

a hiccup progressing that study because of the Commonwealth deciding they are going to ban grog in all sorts of places. We have been tossing up whether we should go ahead as we may get very artificial results. Ultimately we decided we do not have any information really about Aboriginal drinking, therefore it is better to do something, and within that try and accommodate what might be any effects from the current measures being put in place, and also try and capture what has happened beforehand. So at least we will have a better idea and more information about the extent and nature of Aboriginal drinking. There is a lot of anecdotal stuff, but not a lot of hard information.

We asked people what is it they drink. These again are percentage figures, and they relate to pure alcohol. That total line, for example, if you take all of the recent drinkers, says; 'What proportion of your consumption is made up of these different products?' You can see 62% of people usually drink beer; 14% is wine; and 21% is spirits and cider. That is overall.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So that is like ...

**Dr Crundall:** That is overall, not per person.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So, a carton of beer is how much pure alcohol?

**Dr Crundall:** Each little stubbie is 4.9% pure alcohol. So it is taking out the amount of liquid as such, and only focusing on the alcohol. Two glasses of wine would equate to just under two stubbies of beer.

**Mr MILLS:** That is standard drinks?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes. It is clear beer is the predominant drink of choice for people in the Territory, and that is mostly amongst males. Nearly half of what females consume is beer, but there is a pretty even split between wine and spirits. If you look at the age differences, you will see it is the only area where spirits is the greater beverage of choice. If you go down by age, it slips back to wine and spirits.

**Mr MILLS:** So that is those - what do you call them ...

**Dr Crundall:** Ready to drink: RTDs.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Dr Crundall:** I was at a conference recently where I heard that about five years ago the mixed spirits weren't of interest to young males; they still had beer as a preference and the spirit producers were very concerned about this. Apparently young males saw UDLs and mixers as too girly and too sweet, so there was quite a concerted campaign to put out bourbon and whisky with cola, etc. They are now the biggest spirit mixers, and predominate the youth market. So there has been quite a conscious effort to shift that market away. It is evident in the data we have in the Territory, so we are no different to anywhere else.

I would like to point out the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal difference here, remembering we are still talking about Aboriginal people living in mainstream suburbs. There is a high perception and connection of wine and Aboriginal drinking, and if you look at those figures non-Aboriginal people drink more wine than Aboriginal people who are much more into beer than wine. It is interesting that even spirits makes up a bigger proportion of what they are drinking. That might be different

if we do this other study and look at people who are living in town camps and temporary accommodation, but I just think it is an interesting observation which doesn't quite fit the stereotype many people have.

We asked people when they drank. It is unsurprising most of the drinking occurs on Fridays and Saturdays. I think Sunday drinking is an extension of Saturday night, and then it drops off during the week, even though you are still getting four out of 10 people drinking Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. On average, drinkers will consume on over 3½ days of the week. Given that is an average, there are a lot of people drinking a lot more than that, and some less. In fact, nearly a quarter of the drinkers have no alcohol free days or only one. It is recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council that you have at least two days off, so a quarter of the drinkers are not doing that. Not giving themselves a break and allow their bodies to recover.

What was important in doing this study was trying to find out exactly how much people are drinking, and how many are putting themselves at risk. You can use per-capita figures but they are population based so, on average a Territorian drinks 17 litres of alcohol, but it doesn't tell you exactly who is doing it. It is made up of some very low drinkers and some very high drinkers. This is trying to get more information to target people.

This next slide is the number of standard drinks people reported having every week, and how many, on average, they would have on a day they would drink. If you look at what is recommended for both males and females, those figures should be about 15 drinks per week and about five drinks maximum anytime you do drink. If you look at the total figures there, the average Territorian is drinking nearly two-thirds higher than what is recommended on a weekly basis and nearly 40% higher on a day they actually do drink.

**Mr MILLS:** Ian, the people who regularly drink large amounts and know they shouldn't be, if asked to reveal how much they drink, I found in many cases they mask that. How did you come to the truth of what people were consuming; apart from taking their word, is there another way?

**Dr Crundall:** We simply did face-to-face. With these sorts of things you have to make allowances. There will be some people who exaggerate what they drink, a very few. I must admit we threw out about three people from our calculations because in theory, they would be dead as they were drinking so much.

**Mr MILLS:** They were trying to impress you?

**Dr Crundall:** We did struggle with whether they were real or not but we decided they physically could not be consuming that much. Traditionally with these surveys, what they find is that people tend to underestimate what they are doing. All of these figures I would say, are very conservative. While they are not pinpoint accurate, what is interesting is that you can build a picture over time. That is how they are useful. When they do the survey, all the information comes from people that drank in the last week, and you take people back each day and say 'How much did you drink yesterday? Was it beer, wine, spirits, and did you use a glass or a can?' It goes over seven days, and it should be at the forefront of their memory. Whereas if you get beyond that, people start guessing more and more. There are some slight variations across the different regions. Whatever it is, it is still above what is recommended on a medical basis.

**Mr KNIGHT:** There is a perception that Alice Springs has the greater consumption. Here, Darwin is the highest.

**Dr Crundall:** I think part of the perception - and at the end we can talk about this - is how much is public drinking and how much is behind closed doors. This an important point, and there are certain perceptions about how bad certain places are. That is why it is important to gather the information: to dispel some of the myths and verify some of the others.

The National Health and Medical Research Council does set standards to define people who are at risk of short-term and long-term harms from their drinking, which are the things that start costing the community and individuals. Short-term harms can be anything from getting into fights and arguments, trouble with the law, having arguments at home, domestic violence; all those short-term things including blacking out, falling over and vomiting. It is a range of things which come from short episodes of drinking. The longer term harms are the classic physical conditions such as liver problems, brain damage, divorce, etcetera. Calculations have been done and they suggest these harms cost the NT about \$130M a year.

These next slides are the percentage of people in the Territory that were found to be at risk from short-term and long-term harm from drinking. Again, because we have a fairly limited sample, these are quite conservative figures and are only based on the people who drank in that weekly period, so it is not the whole population.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So Tennant Creek did not drink as much, but they were at greater risk.

**Dr Crundall:** More of them were drinking at higher levels of risk. If I go back to the last slide, they were the second highest consumption level.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Darwin is obviously the highest, but then slips below Tennant Creek in the Risk.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** On the most amount of days, as well - 7.6.

**Dr Crundall:** Part of it is working with averages. What this is based on is taking each person and counting them as at risk or not. To put this in perspective, it does not look like anything, but the National Australian level of short-term risk of harm is 20.5%, which means there are 70% more Territorians drinking at levels that put them at risk in the short-term.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** What level is that, sorry?

**Dr Crundall:** 20.5%. The long-term is 9.9% nationally, so again we are 66% higher in terms of how much risk people are drinking themselves to. In terms of these risks, this is where it starts to cost the community, and individuals. It can impact on their family and friends, their finances, traffic accidents, imposition on the rest of the community, and ultimately it puts drains on the court system, poor performance at work, and the medical system. All of these costs incurred are quite preventable if people drink more responsibly. There was a very quick calculation done of the Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal split and according to both of these categories, there were more Aboriginal people drinking at short-term-harm and more of them drinking at long-term harm. Again, emphasising these are people living in mainstream communities, there is still a difference.

We asked people if they ever got into trouble because of drinking. Four out of 10 people said they did, and most of their experiences related to fights and arguments or coming to the attention of police. They also rated things such as turning up late for work, incurring injuries from falling over, attracting unwanted sexual attention, and getting into financial trouble, etcetera. There were fewer of those people experiencing that, but certainly around the fights and arguments I would say it is quite common place amongst that group of people.

We asked everybody to rate how seriously they thought each of these outcomes of drinking was. That was on a ten-point scale from zero to nine. They are all serious to the extent they are all rated over the half-way mark, but obviously some things are rated more seriously than others. If you look at the breakdown of how those things pan out, the first six or seven from the top down, all relate to quite individual experiences and they are saying they are serious. But they are not as serious as the next group of behaviours which are more social oriented. That is the domestic violence, anti-social behaviour and public violence. Then they rate the long-term health damage as the second most serious outcome of drinking. But the most serious thing people looked at was drink driving. They thought that was the worst thing that could happen to you from drinking. So, it wasn't the health aspects and getting into fights and arguments; it was the drink driving.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** That indicates a whole change in attitude over the years, doesn't it?

**Dr Crundall:** Well, there have been a series of these studies done since the early nineties, and one of the questions which has been asked in each of the studies was a statement: 'If you are not driving then it does not really matter how much alcohol you drink'. In essence, this is saying 'the only time you have to be concerned about how much you drink is when you are driving.' I find it a bit disturbing that nearly half the population agreed that is the only time you really need to be concerned about your drinking. That is a major shift in the last 10 years.

In 1997, only 25% of the population agreed with that, which implies people were more aware there are other things going on that they should be aware of. In looking at how seriously they rated some of those outcomes, it seems it is not very much in the forefront of peoples' minds the short-term harms they can get into; it is the drink driving. What is more interesting, if you look at that whole table, is that the strongest agreement is in Darwin and it drops off in the smaller urban centres. In the more concentrated areas where you do not have to drive as far, people do think there are other things to think about. But in Darwin where you are more reliant on your car to get places, it is seen as one of the most critical things.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It is also the consequence. You are more likely to perhaps be caught in Darwin than in Tennant Creek. As a consequence, perhaps they are more worried about losing their transport, and know that the more likely they are to be caught driving from the city to the northern suburbs.

**Dr Crundall:** I don't know what the policing is like in Tennant Creek, but I think part of this is showing up the effectiveness of the drink driving campaigns. It is the one part of alcohol consumption that is really focused on. Our accidents and deaths are linked to alcohol, as well as sleepy drivers, so it is really up there in peoples' minds these days.

**Mr MILLS:** I reckon that reveals a very selfish mindset because you could be caught and fined and bugged it, who cares about my liver. There is no immediate consequence. Those figures are quite concerning.

**Dr Crundall:** In fairness, the Territory population is a bit younger. I should also point out that the people in the survey are not just recent arrivals. I think the average time in the Territory is over ten years, so these people have been here for quite some time. Alcohol is part of the Territory; it is seen as what you do. Yes, you are pretty resilient when you are younger, but these things add up. Even those short-term harms people dismiss: so there is a bit of violence, but that is just what happens when you have a few too many.

We are very interested in finding out where these people are getting their alcohol from, so we asked where they usually buy it. 85.5% came from takeaway outlets. Only 10% was bought at a licensed premise where you actually stand there, or sit down, and drink it. This just reinforces that takeaway is the choice of people in the Territory. Nearly 70% of alcohol sold in the Territory is takeaway alcohol. That is somewhat different from other parts of the country, which means there have to be different strategies put in place.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** That would link in a lot with the marketing for the drink driving. Years ago you would have people go to the pubs for a few drinks after work, whereas now they go and get a six pack and go home.

**Dr Crundall:** Agreed, and there is the thought banning of smoking would do more in getting people to take their takeaway and drink at home. What it is saying is, that people are taking it somewhere else and are drinking at high levels of risk, yet the major strategies that are in place are aimed at licensed premises. The other thing we asked about was home brew of beer and interstate mail orders. What is interesting about those figures at the bottom is that they have doubled in ten years. They weren't an issue, or they were minor alternative sources before, and they just seem to be growing in popularity.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So is that home consumption and home brew an indication of the cost factors? You know getting a takeaway stubbie for a dollar compared to \$3 or \$4?

**Dr Crundall:** I am sure. I presume it is younger people who drink on the licensed premises, whereas others will buy a carton at the end of the week and take it home. You are at home, it is comfortable, price is a factor, being in a place you feel comfortable with your friends, and you don't have to pay ... I presume there are all sorts of things on why they do it. Also, being caught by the police, and how do you get home...

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** So the home brew doesn't have the excise tax on it, that is why it is cheaper, and in theory the excise tax is to neutralise it a bit so it is not just \$4 for a carton of VB, like it would be if you were not taxed on it?

**Dr Crundall:** I am not quite sure how the excise works, but it used to be one of the functions in the Territory to make light beer more attractive. We are now involved in a project with the Commonwealth trying to work out whether there should be a one-off cost per millilitre of alcohol, and then everything is judged on that. But no one can quite work out what that rate should be. The industry is a powerful lobby group, and they have their interest in how much they want to be charging, so I don't know. Fortunately I am going to visit the producers and retailer's interstate next week, and hopefully will find out more. The thing about home brew of course, is that we do not

know how strong it is. So the figures about how much alcohol people are drinking could be quite distorted.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Everyone I know who has ever brewed home brew has gone; 'I will just put a bit more sugar in'.

**Dr Crundall:** We specifically asked everybody about the number of liquor licenses in their area. This is an ongoing debate and some people say there are too many, and others say there are not enough. We are collecting this information to inform the Licensing Commission as they tend to get arguments for one place at a time, and they look at that. Interestingly, these percentage figures show again there are 35% of everyone surveyed said there were too many liquor licenses around. This says 65% thought there were enough, or not enough, but 35% is still a substantial number of the community. What is interesting, is that they vary across the different regions; particularly Alice Springs stands out that nearly half of the population are willing to say there are just too many.

What is more interesting out of this whole thing is that fairly, consistently, except for Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek where you do not have corner stores, is that there are seen to be too many corner stores with the licenses - the little suburban grocery shop. I think that has a lot to do with people not expecting to go and see people hanging around, and have their children go and see that. Even though alcohol is locked in a separate area, obviously they are in your face, and that is where you are going to get your alcohol. These people are saying, if you are going to get rid of licenses these are the ones we have that concern me.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Most people buy alcohol at the supermarket with their groceries for the week, or something like that; only 8% bought it at the corner store takeaway. If you did not have those corner stores, the presumption of getting less liquor outlets is that it is almost impulse buying; if it is there you see it and you buy it. If all of the corner stores close down, and there are only a couple of outlets in Tennant Creek that sell takeaway, and you halve the number of takeaway outlets in Tennant Creek, does that mean you are going to halve the amount of drinking? I think, personally, people will just travel that extra distance to get it.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** It is probably convenience with the corner stores.

**Dr Crundall:** There has been some work done looking at density of liquor outlets and this notion that you have a magic number. There might be a magic number when you are starting from scratch and there might be a magic number such as one, two, or three in a place like Tennant Creek. However, once you have seven, eight or nine, and you take one away, it won't make a scrap of difference. Take two away, and this is my understanding, it won't make a difference, because we know in remote communities that if people want to drink, they will go and find a place.

Perhaps if you took out all of the licensed premises in Tennant Creek and you left the one at Three Ways, you might get a bit of a reduction, but essentially the numbers do not relate to how much drinking is going to occur. It relates to some of the problems which might happen, however it is more about how well those outlets are run and what they do. It is pie in the sky to say remove them, but what this information is telling us is that they want to see less of those store licenses. As we know, most people will still go to the big supermarkets or the drive-through bottle shops to get their grog. What they are saying is; 'yes, I might go there and get it sometimes, but I would rather it disappear and we don't have the attraction and the anti-social behaviour, and that sort of stuff.' Remember this is only relating to a third of people

who said they want less licenses. But I think it is driven more by not just wanting less licenses but why they have specifically chosen stores...

**MR MILLS:** Humbugging?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, humbugging in the suburbs.

**Mr MILLS:** That is exactly it. It is nothing to do with alcohol.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** And expectations. If you go to a hotel or bar, you expect to see alcohol. If you go to a restaurant you would normally expect to have wine, etc., whereas if you go to a store with your kids the expectation is that you will not see it.

**Dr Crundall:** They do lock it away, which is good and removes some of the impulse, but it is very much you go in and say 'oh, I should buy a bottle of that wine there'. Whereas if you go to a dedicated drinking outlet, you have to go there for it. It is a very conscious decision. Interestingly, in Victoria just recently, Woolworths and Coles are now allowing liquor to be sold off the shelf in the main supermarket. It used to be separate, and now you can put it out with the rest of the grocery products.

**Mr MILLS:** I was going to say if you go overseas to Europe, Indonesia or China, there is no shortage of opportunities to purchase it. It is on the grocery shelf and it is no big deal, but you do not have people sitting in the park drinking themselves silly. The deeper question here is why we have such a strong demand in our society for alcohol. If we change all of that, it is the demand issue. What is driving us to drink to these levels?

**Mr KNIGHT:** We can argue about it, but this speeding and stuff like that, and road safety, a lot of it is cultural, I believe. You can argue stats for open speed limits and stuff like that, but it is culturally entrenched in some ways, and drinking would be somewhat the persona wouldn't it?

**Dr Crundall:** My strong belief is that it is. It is a cultural change we should be tackling. I think that difference between where people drink; most of it is away from licensed premises, yet most of our strategies are aimed at licensed premises. You have to teach people about how they value alcohol, and how they use it when they are not being watched all the time, and that is the cultural thing. I think there are a number of reasons why drinking is so entrenched in the Territory, but until you start addressing some of that you will get little changes, but you certainly will not get anything sustainable or significant. That is my view. We asked people would they like at least one day a week when there is no takeaway liquor allowed. Surprisingly, 60% disagreed with that. They did want to have takeaway every day of the week so if they wanted it, they could have it. There is some reasonable difference there.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It is interesting in Tennant Creek. They have had experience with it, obviously. Thirsty Thursday.

**Dr Crundall:** In Alice Springs and Katherine there is fair agreement with that sort of stuff and I think it is a sign of readiness if you want to do something drastic. There seems to be a growing myth that alcohol has always been available in the Territory, but you only have to go back about 16 or 17 year, and Sunday trading did not happen. I think people forget that and see it as recent, and we deserve to have all this sort of stuff.

**Mr MILLS:** Just on that, I remember as a kid that there was no reference to alcohol at all on the radio on a Sunday. In WA I remember you could not even have a song that made any reference to alcohol.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** You have to have a 'cuppa' with Duncan.

**Mr MILLS:** The pub with no beer is okay. The pub with beer on Sunday is a no go.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** Not even if you are travelling. Didn't they have a travelling thing in WA? You could get alcohol on Sunday; I think QLD had it too, if you were a genuine traveller. You had to establish you had driven so far from your home base.

**Mr MILLS:** I do not recall that.

**Dr Crundall:** We know where people usually buy their alcohol, but we asked where do they usually drink it? Again, it is in private residences. Either in your own home, or the home of a friend. For 70% of people, that is where they usually drink.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** The trend with the hotels and pubs, how far does the national data go back in relation to premises and where people drink; if it is at home or the pub?

**Dr Crundall:** Nationally. Not very much.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** It is interesting. If you look at the producers of alcohol, like Fosters and those other big money lobby groups, they all own hotels. Like 90% of the hotels were owned by Carlton, then they sold them all and are now starting to acquire them again. I am wondering whether they are ahead of us in their figures, because that is their business, in saying that may there is a shift back to hotel and pubs.

**Dr Crundall:** I think there are a few things going on. There is this rediscovery of making hotels family-friendly and more social hubs so you can attract people back, because they went through that phase of just being drinking places. I think that is when they sold them out, and now there is more attention on alcohol premises.

There is an experience in Queensland which is instructive. They did not allow alcohol sold in supermarkets until about four or five years ago. Woolworths were concerned about this as they realised alcohol is a big money spinner. They bought up a whole lot of hotels, and ended up with about 150. If you buy a hotel, you can have an attached takeaway outlet, as well as three stand-alone outlets. Therefore all of a sudden they had these alcohol outlets, but more than that, they discovered if you have a hotel you can also have gaming machines. They have discovered this wonderful stream of revenue which comes in. The thought is that even though they might have gone in and bought the market up and that sort of stuff, now they would be reluctant to sell the hotels as this is like a gold mine. So, I think, that is part of it too. If you own a hotel, and every State now allows gaming machines in, there is multiple income to be generated. It would be fascinating to look at it all.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** The big companies like Fosters Australia and Fosters International are always going to have a lot more money for research than any other organisation will have. Their research points to money-making and it makes you wonder. They have not been too wrong so far.

**Dr Crundall:** We would all love to get our hands on their information.

**Mr MILLS:** Rob is a bit concerned about the one that is drinking in the car.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Also the one that is 'drinking at work.' 130 people drinking at work?

**Dr Crundall:** There is more at work than in the car.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** They might work at the pub?

**Dr Crundall:** It is a bit terrible when it is the usual place that they are drinking.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** That could be social clubs and stuff like that, couldn't it?

**Dr Crundall:** It could be someone who is a 'cupboard drinker' who doesn't like to drink at home or let anyone know.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So they will drink at work.

**Mr MILLS:** Or in the car.

**Dr Crundall:** One of the questions we repeated from earlier surveys is; 'Do you think there is too strong an association with sport and recreation and drinking in the Territory?' This really reinforces what has been found time and time again: that there is. I think it is a combination of sports clubs often seeing alcohol as a revenue, and people see that as a problem. They see it as a problem that alcohol is always involved when you go fishing or hunting, whatever it is that you happen to be doing, even playing sport. There is also the issue of crowds and drinking. There have been a lot of steps in various competitions to try and limit that impact. There have been limits on light beer and mid strength beer and all sorts of things. Obviously there is a lot of support out there to try and break that nexus and that is a strong area to work on.

**Mr KNIGHT:** In Katherine, the football league banned grog and the crowds just dropped away.

**Dr Crundall:** There is the argument, and we had letters last year saying we want to do the right thing, but everyone is concerned about losing revenue. Does government sponsor that? I do not know what the answer is. There is a program called *Good Sports* which is run in every other state, and government has made funding available to introduce that in Alice Springs. It works with clubs to try and reduce their reliance on alcohol money. We will see how that goes. It has had varying levels of support.

I just want to finish on the last attitude statement we put into the survey. It was a statement that 'most of the alcohol problems in the NT are Aboriginal problems'. Nearly half of the population agreed with that. There are some very significant differences across those regions. In the smaller regions there is a lot stronger agreement, and Alice Springs stands out head and shoulders above the rest. In Darwin it is not so strong, but it is certainly there. The other comment to make is that the perception is one that is growing stronger and stronger. When this was last asked 10 years ago, it was under 40% who agreed, so there was a realisation there was more to alcohol problems than Aboriginal problems. Part of the response to that is going to be people's experience; what they actually see. It is the sort of media and political attention which has been given to Aboriginal drinking in particular. Two other things are that we know many people like to focus on Aboriginal drinking because it

deflects attention from their own drinking, and all of the preceding figures say there is a proportion of mainstream community who are drinking at high levels of risk, but they can always say 'my drinking is not as bad as those people that are sitting in the park, or whatever it happens to be. It becomes a convenient way to deflect attention from their own behaviours.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is it also that drinking is a very public, and very much a daytime, visual? If a general man and woman went to Mitchell St at 4.00 am, your views might change?

**Dr Crundall:** Exactly. From talking to people around the Territory, often there are a number of strategies put in place. They are fairly blanket, especially the control ones such as 'you cannot buy this' and 'you can only go to the shops at this time...' With this sort of perception, it is creating tensions that we are all right, and you should be dealing just with these people over here, therefore it is creating more and more tensions. This is all coming to the fore with what is going on with the Commonwealth government at the moment, and who knows what the outcome will be. However there is a strong risk that there will be a drift of drinking into towns, and there will be more of that demarcation of why aren't you dealing with this problem, and why are we having to suffer it, etcetera.

There are some complex questions and issues there that I am not confident that people have been addressing, or trying to anticipate. I do not want to say that Aboriginal people do not have problems, or are not contributing to a major part of the problems in the Territory, but I think the value of this survey is saying there is also another big proportion of the population which also needs some attention and cannot be ignored. They are the people living in the suburbs of Darwin, Palmerston and Tennant Creek. They are just less visible and less public.

While we need to be looking at the rivers of grog, we cannot ignore there are these lakes of liquor as well. Whatever is happening with the Commonwealth government initiatives, if they are going to ban alcohol everywhere else in the Territory, there is this opportunity to focus on those five centres and see what can be done. So those are the results of the survey which I came here to talk about.

**Mr MILLS:** Thank you for that, Ian. That last question is an important one. They are probably, I suspect, answering another question, which is their attitudes of anti-social behaviour and itinerancy. That is what they are saying, and they have not reflected on the personal implications of alcohol in a health aspect, therefore to anyone who is drinking above healthy levels, because they are not running in the street or rolling in the parks, there is no real issue. They are not aware that it is a serious health issue, and is contributing, perhaps, to problems on the road. I think they are really thinking of it in those terms. They do not like seeing people in Alice Springs wandering up and down the mall yelling and screaming, obviously drunk. I do not think they are reflecting deeply enough, or are aware, or thinking about ...

**Dr Crundall:** I agree, and I think most people are binge drinking during the week and they are feeling all right about it. They have the occasional problem, but from the earlier stuff we have had, you rate the seriousness of the problems people encountered. All of those health issues, apart from when you are decrepit, people are just missing. It is, 'I know it will not happen to me'. To a degree, when you are younger that's okay, but eventually it catches up and we know people only really stop and consider what they are doing when there is a crisis.

What I would like to see out of this is that people start getting the information to make those choices. At the moment we know an understanding of safe drinking levels is just woeful in the Territory. People are not aware of all of the little things which connect to their drinking, and what they can do to reduce their drinking. I think it is about that while people have every right in the world to do whatever they want to their own bodies, eventually the community will pay for that. It is also all of the other short-term behaviours which impact on neighbours, friends, and social events that people need to be aware of. Some of it does not compare to what we see in the parks and the streets, but at the same time, some of what is occurring in the parks and the street is not related to alcohol. There now seems to be, as soon as there is a bit of kaffuffle it is all driven by alcohol, when in fact there are a lot of other things driving some of that behaviour.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, it is just too convenient to judge.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** There is plenty of that behaviour behind doors, and that is the thing isn't it; I beat my wife but it is at home, so it is nobody else's business, however if it is happening in the park then it is a big issue.

**Dr Crundall:** Like you say, in Mitchell Street you get a very different perception of drinking in the Territory than if you went to the Stuart Park shops, or into the mall in Alice Springs.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. If we had that happening in the middle of the day, not under the cover of darkness at three o'clock in the morning. I have done my research and have seen it happening, but if it was in the middle of the day with people wondering up and down the streets, staggering and carrying on, it would be so different.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** In the town centres too. I had this conversation at a meeting a couple of months ago, and I grew up in Stuart Park so if we are talking about Stuart Park specifically I think some of those problems around those shops have been there since I was a kid, but it was the problem at the shop and then the people would disappear. Now because of infilling and declaring of different bits and pieces, people are more visible. They are not hidden. I am sure people would rather go and have a drink in the bush rather than sit on the footpath and be moved on by the cops, but because things crowding-in, it is a bit like wildlife; it is all being moved out. Do you mind if I ask a couple of questions from the Committee's point of view?

**Dr Crundall:** Could I just add one thing. While I have painted that picture, I need to emphasise there is also a proportion of the population who are responsible drinkers and seem to be doing the right thing. I am not painting everyone as the same, but I would like to say there is a balance between Aboriginal problems and non-Aboriginal problem, and there is a significant number of the population that is not engaged in this at all.

**Mr MILLS:** Good point.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** I have some questions mostly regarding the Office of Alcohol, Policy and Coordination (OAPC). We are interested in hearing about the changes you have seen since with that program moved into Justice, and wondered if you could tell us about the changes?

**Dr Crundall:** It is a change which started late last year, and the following amalgamation occurred around April or May. We were of the understanding the functions of the OAPC would follow through, and there would be greater integration

between those three programs because alcohol linked to each one of them. The *Harmony Program* was about looking after itinerants and getting them back home; alcohol contributes a lot to the crime scene; and seeing if you address alcohol issues you will have an impact there. At this stage there has been no clear document to say what the focus of this new unit is, and I think it is still finding its feet. The functions which have come with us which we seem to be focusing on are the *Alcohol Management Plans* which were being introduced across the Territory; and generating and maintaining some better data sets about alcohol. That seems to be the focus, but there are a few things that have not transferred over yet. Whether they will come back I am not sure.

One of the things which stands out to me, is that the one of the key purposes of the Office of Alcohol Policy and Coordination was coordination across government to make sure there was a whole-of-government approach. It seems to me, now we are back to having lead agencies. Each agency will engage others as they see fit and the risk of that, in my view, is a whole-of-government view is that a department will not go ahead and do something without considering its impact on everyone else, whereas with a lead agency approach you tend to get back into that silo thing of we think we will do this, and you can come with us, or not come with us, and we will see where we go'. That has been heightened by the current situation with the Australian government. Where is that coordination coming from across alcohol issues at least? There are committees in place, however, it just seems to be that one thing which is not quite on the agenda. I think the division is still finding its feet, I think, unfortunate it has not been expedited quickly.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Would you comment on the degree the *Northern Territory Alcohol Framework* is being implemented under the current arrangements?

**Dr Crundall:** I had a discussion about that the other day and was told the *Alcohol Framework* is still central and it is the basis of the strategic approach to the alcohol issues. But until that point in time there had been no reference to it. It is now back on the agenda to make sure everything in it is followed through, and back to regular monitoring of how it proceeds. There are a number of recommendations out of that which link to the new *Liquor Act*, which is still in process. There are a number of recommendations which have been completed, but there are still about half that are in various stages of being implemented. It will be a matter of pushing those along and making sure of that.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** The NT indicators, are they still going to be published as they were before?

**Dr Crundall:** The indicators have a bit of a sad history in as much as we managed to gather a lot of data and decided to put it on the web, but unfortunately it was tucked away deep, deep, deep within the structures of the Internet, and no one really knew it was there. We are reinvigorating that and there will be a regular publication. Not just the website but actually a bulletin which will update all our stakeholders about what is on there and what the data means, etcetera. I am currently discussing with some departments about trying to get more localised data. We are finding more and more people are asking about specific communities and areas. Whether that is possible to get I am not sure, but wherever we can get it we will try to add that in. We see it as vital, certainly to try and measure what is happening.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Is there enough coordination, in your opinion, being applied across the alcohol policy in the Territory, and are the most important

areas, of the intervention into alcohol getting the right emphasis under the current arrangements?

**Dr Crundall:** I cannot comment on how much coordination is going on. I know that sometimes groups meet, and sometimes there is not. I can comment from my position, which apparently has been set up as a particular expert on alcohol issues. To be quite frank, I think it is underutilised and undervalued. Whether I am not part of knowing all the other bits and pieces I am not sure, but it would seem to me that if you are creating a position like that; you would want to be involved. That makes me worry, but I cannot say it means nothing is happening. In talking to different people across departments, there are obviously discussions going on. Now how good the actual coordination is, I am not sure because not everyone seems to be talking from the same prayer book. That is why I say I think there is a fear that the whole-of-government concept has dropped off a little bit, so that might be improved.

Having said that, this trip next week is to re-establish some dialogue with the producers and the retailers, which I think has been lagging a bit. There are now persons placed in each region to follow through the work of the Community and Justice Policy Group. They will be a local connection for the development and implementation of alcohol management plans, and other safety plans, or whatever they are called. If they can do their job well, there will be better networks and coordination at that level. Part of it is still finding our feet, and unfortunately our director is leaving in September, and it might be we need to wait until that more permanent position is filled. The last question of emphasis, there is very much this local solutions for local problems approach which is fine, but if anything there has a tendency to rely on that and ignore there is some broader 'big picture' things which should also be happening across the Territory.

In regards to alcohol management, the only one that has been in place is the Alice Springs one, and while there has been various parts of the demand reduction, harm reduction, and supply reduction things put in place, the emphasis has really been through the changes to takeaways, and the introduction of the Dry Area. A formal evaluation of that will be due in October. What is happening is that even though they have the plan written there, the balance of activity is really about the controls and regulations, and that is what we will be assessing. It is good to have all those other things in place, but I am not sure that they will be followed through.

I am about to put a paper up about community education strategies, which will try and address some of the demand issues. We have secured funding to put something into Alice Springs, however if we are going to do it in Alice Springs, you would think the same sort of thing might apply elsewhere. One of the very first things we are doing in the next month is, will be background research with the community about what are they key messages they need to know; what is going to make people take in whatever it is the messages are; and what are the best modes of communication? We are not talking just about mass-media stuff, we are talking about face-to-face sessions, use of the internet, and any range of things. We will go to each of the communities around the Territory and work out what is what. Out of that should fall what are the sort of things which can happen across the Territory, and then support all the local variations, and local solutions for local problems.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** That leads into my next question, and you have given us one of those opportunities which is the education which you have just got funding for, but are there other opportunities to improve that you see are there? Is there something you think could help with the alcohol harm and the rates abuse that

they were not doing or could try? Perhaps we might be doing it but not in a strong enough way; scratching and not digging?

**Dr Crundall:** It will just qualify; it is a bit complicated by the Australian government at the moment; the uncertainties of what they intend to do, what they can do, and whatever legislation they are going to bring in. Part of me believes it is time to take a stocktake, but it may be after the computer permit system being introduced, hopefully, in Nhulunbuy after a hearing in August. I guess it would be really important to see how that is received and how it works. I think it is this thing of local solutions and stuff, that once that is in place, we need to take a stocktake of what we apply everywhere, and what do we really need to be focusing on. You have the Commission doing a little bit here in this town, and little bit here, and then they modify the restrictions in Alice Springs again. Maybe it is time to say, with the Australian government doing its business, what can we really do to complement or supplement what they are doing. And, even moreso is, what is the risk of what we are going to be left with? It may be happening, but there is a need for a bit more brainstorming and stuff going on.

However in regard to community education, my feeling is there has been a sort of acknowledgment of doing things in that area but I do not think there is an appreciation of if you do it well it is going to cost a little bit of money. I would like to think there will be more resources available. You have to start painting the alcohol issue as more than a law and order issue. I think there needs to be a place somewhere: if you have alcohol issues, this is the 'go to' place for it. In talking to the people interstate from the retailers and producers, that was the one thing they were saying. They have no idea who to approach in the Territory if they have got issues, and I can only then think, well what do you do if you are a Territorian? I think if the Community and Justice Policy group, who as I understood are supposed to have that function, it needs to have more of a profile. And I think there probably needs to be some more regular dialogue across departments and things, but I think they are all a bit sidetracked at the moment responding to the Australian government.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Do you think there could be more done within the legislation that is already there from a point of enforcement and mainly drilling down into it a little bit? One example is, there are a lot of these little mini-markets that are just catering, quite blatantly, to Aboriginal people coming in and dragging them into those alcohol outlets. You walk in and about 5% of the mini-market is food and drink products, like soft drinks and stuff. Then there is a whole heap of cheap clothes, and big alcohol area. Do you think anything could be anything done under the legislation currently in to try and get some sort of balance back?

**Dr Crundall:** Under the current legislation, I do not think you can. All you can do is enforce it better: who they are selling to, and who is getting it, and stuff like that. Getting evidence to charge and show there have been breaches is difficult, so you need resources for that. I think we would all be looking forward to what this new *Liquor Act* is going to be. That is going to set up the Territory for the next twenty years, and there is now a good thirty years of experience overseas, interstate, and here, of what you could you put into that Act. Unfortunately, there are only about six people who know what is in it at the moment. I think it is really important it gets out and is looked at strongly before it goes widely public. Once it goes out there, I tend to think it will sort of be, it is all too much and, yes, go for it. It is a great opportunity if we can get it right. It needs to give the Commission more teeth on which to say no, you have done a wrong thing and here is the punishment. I think there needs to be those audits on places, and it is within that, that you can start talking about defining what is alcohol incidental to the other groceries and things. It is an opportunity to start

talking about dedicated alcohol outlets, rather than those mixed businesses. I know our Ministers have talked about buy back of licences, and I am not sure if that is really feasible or not, however, you certainly need to start having some more avenues by which licences can be removed.

There needs to be a vision of what you want in the Territory in twenty years time, and it is amazing that even the planning, whoever is in charge of planning, we were talking about Mitchell Street. There is no vision for whether they want it to be an entertainment precinct with a licence here and a licence there. They just say that is not quite their business, and we would be saying that you need to look at alcohol as a special thing and take it into account. Where do you want that place to be in ten years time. So it is connecting all those little things together, I suppose.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** It is a bit more of a science isn't it? It is like having serving times. If you are going down Mitchell Street, and I do not know what the serving time is because I am not hanging out there at two or four o'clock in the morning or whatever, but I am sure there would be different hours on different places so people would filter from one and it would close, and they would go to the next, and they go to the next, and they go to the next. In the end it would be pretty ugly.

**Dr Crundall:** They are trialling lock-downs now where you can stay at a place up until three o'clock or something. You can stay longer, but once you leave you cannot get in anywhere after that, and you have a period of time where you can sober. This stops the big exodus of people all at once from going from place to place. That has worked interstate.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Is that something that anyone here is looking at?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, they are having a trial there which is...

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Already!

**Dr Crundall:** Yes. If I just go back to the original question, under the current Act. We are getting a new Act as this current Act is so out of date. What you can do within the current one is amend it and give the Minister some powers. With the new one there is this opportunity and you can put into it things about how you advertise and promote alcohol; all those sorts of things which at the moment have all just sort of been a little bit of something here and there. I think you need a much stronger Act and the opportunity is here now.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Just with the Australian government Intervention, from my own personal view I do not think it is going to change a great deal out on the communities. Most of them are dry, and illegal drinking will happen anyway no matter if there is a ban or no ban. As far as the three cartons registration, it is easily flouted and very unworkable. What is your perception of the outcome, or the implications, if they would go ahead?

**Dr Crundall:** I must admit, when it came to my attention they were *[inaudible]*. Apart from the initial thing of feeling like a second-rate Australian when someone else could come in and tell you what to do, I did not quite share the same thing of the sky has fallen down. When I looked at the alcohol things, I thought banning alcohol; most places are dry anyway, so what is the effect going to be. It did cross my mind there are some places that have licensed premises, and I understand at the moment there is a very quick assessment being made of those communities to see whether they should be retained or not.

**Mr KNIGHT:** This is the wet canteens?

**Dr Crundall:** Yes, licensed clubs and all permit systems. Personally, I am torn between the Australian government, because if they are going to take responsibility and say here is this golden opportunity that will change the face of things, and you can focus on where there are these five areas of licensed premises. On the other hand, I think everyone deserves the same sort of access and rights and things, and if the community really want those things; that is okay. I am not sure where that one is going to fit, and whether they are going to retain those licensed premises or not. The three cartons; it is whether it is workable and all those sorts of things. I do not think what they actually said, apart from all the buying back of land and all that sort of stuff which is a separate issue, but in terms of alcohol I thought this is not so drastic; it is not so contrary to what we were pursuing. As it unfolds I do think there will be this shift towards towns, and I think what is happening is that we are focusing on regional centres but not Darwin itself. My sense would be eventually, one would drift to Darwin and you would get far more people around Darwin than you did.

There was concern when Alice Springs went dry that everyone would go into the town camps and drink, and measures were put in place to make sure that was minimised. But in regards to the town camps, people would go elsewhere to drink. There is a risk of people going to places where they will be at greater harm, and you will have more deaths out in the hills around Alice Springs and stuff. I would like to see that looked after, but you cannot force people to go into treatment, and treatment has shown to be; it is not going to change them forever. I am not sure what it is going to do in the immediate term, but I think we should be thinking about what is going to happen after, or taking advantage of the situation being created. If there are all these people and they are congregating around and you can hold of them, what is it that we can do to start interacting and engaging with them. What new facilities can we put in place? It just needs a bit of thought. I do not think it is going to change the landscape terribly, except for, I think, there will be a drift firstly in the smaller towns and then eventually if it keeps going, it will come down the track.

**Mr KNIGHT:** One problem, I do not think it is going to change the landscape initially. We touched on the culture; you gave a bit of response around the education, and the change in the culture. The Territory obviously pops up quite high for consumption. In other areas such as North Queensland and North Western Australia, is it typical for that younger part of Australia, as far as the maturity of those areas and the climate; do they have higher rates as well?

**Dr Crundall:** They have higher rates than the rest of the country, but the unfortunate thing is they do not have a lot of reliable figures. As a jurisdiction, if you look at it jurisdiction by jurisdiction, they always come out lower because of the other parts of Queensland, whereas the Territory, from the middle of the country up, it is all the same and there is higher drinking. Those other areas do have very similar problems, and it is to do with the sort of industries that are there and who is attracted, Aboriginal people, the history of the place, and why they have come to exist etcetera. We can learn a lot of things, and if you did that North Australia plus Central Australia thing, a lot that works in one place, will work in the other..

**Mr KNIGHT:** One last question. With any kind of blanket initiative, whether it on a regional or Territory wide basis, would it be useful, per department, to do an opportunity cost study? Specific things such as Police and Health, and areas like that. If you had less amount of alcohol consumption, does that mean less amount of people going through the emergency services?

**Dr Crundall:** A couple of things about that. There was a study in the 90's which actually quantified the amount of savings, in terms of dollars, achieved from the *Living With Alcohol* program which was in place at the time. They demonstrated a saving of \$25m, something like that.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** It was that \$42m?

**Dr Crundall:** \$42m was it?

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** Yes.

**Dr Crundall:** Right. Through less numbers going into hospital and less numbers going in gaol. You can hypothesise all you want. You have saved this money, but they are not convinced, and it is just a modelling exercise really. I do not think you can approach each department and ask; tell us what you think you can save on this. You have to put forward the proof of the pudding. That is a great document because it is one of the few times something like that has been done.

I think this philosophy behind looking at alcohol as a means of reducing the crime rate and focusing on alcohol rather than all other aspects of crime, you can get a big impact there and it would be good if all the strategies were implemented and targeted properly. I am sure you would get a change and that would demonstrate to the people that if you deal with this one social issue, you will impact on all these other things. All the alcohol management plans; they are measured by changes in people going into emergency services, doctors surgeries, whatever. There is information that says if you deal with this you will get some changes, but no one seems to take that step higher up the bureaucracy and say, that is pretty clear so we should do more of this. I do not know what the changes are ...

**Mr KNIGHT:** I was just thinking of when budget time comes up and those agencies are applying for more dollars because of 'dah de dah', but it does not go back the other way. Like, if we fix this you will reduce your budget. Specifically, if you have initiatives, why shouldn't the Health Department contribute to it, and why shouldn't the Police contribute to it to make it work?

**Dr Crundall:** Because they would say they have other priorities they can contribute to as well, so it is making those choices. Groote Eylandt; with a very successful community driven permit system they introduced, and what they found was less time the police were spending on alcohol related issues, so they were able to do more proactive policing. If you talk to the local police there, they say dealing with alcohol allowed us to change their how and why of policing, and we do these things now. The experience is there, but it does not seem to filter into any systemic sort of view of the world.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Any other questions?

**Mr MILLS:** Food for thought.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** On behalf of the committee I want to thank you for your time in presenting to us today I am sure your comments will help us form our recommendations. Thank you.

The witness withdrew at 10:45am.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Drug and Alcohol Policy Division, Northern Territory Police**

*Thursday 26 July 2007*

**Present:** Ms Kerry Sacilotto, MLA, Member for Port Darwin (Dep. Chair)  
Mr Rob Knight, MLA, Member for Daly  
Mr Terry Mills, MLA, Member for Blain

**Also present:** Ms Pat Hancock, Secretary to the Committee  
Dr Brian Lloyd, Research Officer  
Ms Kellie Trout, Admin/Research Assistant

**Witnesses:** Scott Mitchell, Officer-in-Charge, Drug and Alcohol Policy,  
Northern Territory Police  
Jeanette Kerr, Commander, Strategic Planning Command,  
Northern Territory Police

*This document is a verbatim, edited proof of the proceedings*

Meeting resumed 10:55am.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** I declare this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community open, and welcome Sergeant Scott Mitchell and Commander Jeanette Kerr from the Northern Territory police.

This meeting is not open to the public, however it is being recorded and a transcript will be produced which may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise me if you wish any part of your evidence to be in camera. A decision regarding this is at the discretion of the committee. You are reminded that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary Privilege. For the purposes of *Hansard*, I ask that you both state your full names, and the capacity in which you appear today.

Sergeant Mitchell and Commander Kerr, thank you for your time and coming to meet with us today.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** My name is Scott Mitchell and I am the Officer-in-Charge of the Drug and Alcohol Policy in the Northern Territory police.

**Commander Kerr:** Jeanette Kerr, Commander of the Strategic Planning Command.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Thank you. Would you like to proceed with your presentation?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** As a result of some long discussions with Dr Lloyd, he has asked me to present to you the findings of the 2006 DUMA (Drug Use Monitoring Australia) survey. The purpose of the DUMA survey is to essentially understand the supply and demand for illicit drugs amongst detainees at a local level, and it provides comparable data across the sites.

One of the problems we have with a lot of police data is that we have different capture mechanisms for data and different management systems, and quite often comparing apples with oranges, as opposed to apples with apples. One of the best aims of DUMA is that it does allow us to compare apples with apples.

More importantly, it deals specifically, for want of a better description, our client base and much of the data is not necessarily our client base. There are lots of data sets. This actually only deals with people who have been arrested and charged with an offence. So there are people in the police watch-houses, and it collects that information from detainees and it is voluntary. They are asked if they want to participate in it and it is usually done just before they are bailed from the watch-house.

In the Northern Territory we actually use both the police cells and the court cells, simply because it gives us the sufficient numbers to match the national data set. We like to do approximately 100 people from each site and the sites around Australia which are, for example, the West Perth lock-up which is a central lock-up for the local WA police in Perth, Roma Street, which is their central lock-up in Brisbane, Southport in Queensland, Bankstown, and Parramatta. A new site last year was Sunshine in Victoria, which was run for the first time.

By asking a series of questions about their behaviour and how it contributes to their offending, their drug taking behaviour and what links there are. It is a unique program funded by the federal government and conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology. It arose out of a program called IAD in the United States and is essentially the same thing.

The advantages are things such as the illicit drug reporting system and the party drugs initiative which interview, for example, 100 key injecting drug users. Key informants would talk to several officers out of the Drug Enforcement Unit. They would talk to hospital admission staff and ambulance people and look at all the seizure data that is managed by my unit, so every drug seizure is on an illicit drug seizure database. The national household survey is done every four years and takes a long time to get the data. It is usually two years before you get reasonable data out of it and it really only gives us age and sex and is not at all useful from an ethnicity point of view.

Secondary Schools data. Again, a specific small group. It is dealing with people in experimental stages where there may not be any criminal links apart from their purchasing and using of an illicit drug. There are some doubts around the accuracy of the answers which are given, and a good example is about ten years ago. One of the secondary school data surveys indicated that there was a cocaine epidemic in Darwin. In fact, we had seized less than point five of a gram in the three years leading up to that survey but for kids there was a chance to wind people up and say all kinds of stuff.

Other data sets often have a health focus which is not directed towards law enforcement specifically and they often cover drugs which are not problematic for the Territory, and a lot do not actually cover our population makeup.

From a strategic law enforcement perspective, they are not particularly useful data systems. They give us good general trends about the overall trend in Australia and they do give some trends in relation to overall use in the Northern Territory but what they often miss are some key population groups. For example, with our high population of indigenous people we often miss them. They are not generally part of these kinds of surveys. If they are not going to school, they are obviously not going to be in the secondary data set, and they do not travel outside the major urban centres.

Strategically, from a law enforcement perspective, if we are looking at changing our strategies, or what strategies we should be using, to target illicit drugs, criminal offending, and alcohol use, then they are not particularly useful apart from giving us some guide and direction and that is about as far as they go. That is the advantage of DUMA; it actually deals specifically with our people.

Here in the Northern Territory, DUMA conducted with the NT police in conjunction with the Department of Justice, a very small file in 2004 to see if it was feasible. We were able to obtain funding from the Commonwealth through the ceased forfeiture funding body, which unfortunately was only one year, to run it for a full year in 2006. It was carried out over four quarters and we did it to try and basically keep going for about three weeks at a time within the watch-house and get one hundred people plus, sometimes a little bit less, sometimes a little bit more.

The Commissioner and the executive of the Police Department were presented with the findings of this in late 2006 and the Commissioner asked to see if we could possibly source other funding. During those negotiations we were perhaps fortunate in that the Commonwealth government, as part of an overall drug package, announced that DUMA would be funded for another four years. This will be very useful as we will then have a five year data set which we can compare to all the other jurisdictions.

At the same time, the day before the Prime Minister's announcement I had been told by the Department of Health and Aging that they were prepared to fund Darwin for another year from a little bit of leftover money. The Commissioner asked that I return back to them on bended knee and ask if we could possibly shift that funding to Alice Springs. Fortunately that has now occurred. All the contracts are signed and it is finalised and the 2007/08 DUMA

data collection has already commenced in the watch-house in Darwin, and the Alice Springs site will start as soon as the contractors are finished here and they are off to Alice Springs to run the next one for Alice Springs.

Again, apart from having a national perspective and being able to compare the apples with apples, we two major centres in the Territory. That is a first, it has not happened anywhere else in Australia, so the ALC, apart from the fact they get an extra \$180 000 to do it, they are also extremely interested in looking at some regional centres as that has not been able to happen before.

The only snag to that, which is probably to our benefit, was that in giving us the money for Alice Springs, the Department of Health and Aging, and whether that was prior to the federal government's current activity, were very interested in looking at last drinks in the last drinks surveys. As part of giving us the \$180 000, they also gave us an extra \$20 000 to conduct a last drinks survey running at the same time. So while we are doing the DUMA data collection, which we have private contractors coming in to do that for the Australian Institute of Criminology, we are also conducting a last drinks survey, and that is occurring in every watch-house in the five major centres and also in the sobering-up shelters.

Whilst the DUMA data collects offending alcohol and illicit drug patterns, the last drinks survey is going to pick up on all those we missed and as you will get in to the survey, you will see that we missed a huge amount of people who do not offend, but are incarcerated or close to reoffending or in SUSs. That is occurring right now.

**Mr MILLS:** Sorry, what is SUS?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Sobering-up shelters. I work with acronyms and I sometimes forget.

It will also be useful doing it at the same time as the DUMA, because it will allow us to do comparisons with the accuracy of the data. What we are finding in the first quarter collection is that many of our clients and those in sobering-up shelters, are simply too intoxicated to remember or to give us some answers we can use.

It has started now, and we will be starting in Alice Springs in about a week and a half and then the next quarter will be in October. There will be another one done in January and another one done in April next year to give us another year. Unfortunately that will be the end of the Alice Springs one unless we can source some more funding but we know the Darwin one is going to continue.

One of the problems we have had in the years I have worked in the Drug and Alcohol Policy arena is that we do have significant differences and are all well aware of the fact we have a large area with a small population. The population is congregated predominately in our major centres. We also have a very high population of Indigenous people compared with other jurisdictions.

Over the years, the Northern Territory drug-use patterns are often very different to southern jurisdictions. To give you an example of that, our estimated number of heroin users between us and Health, which we thought was a reasonably accurate estimate was about 300 regular or basically every day or every second day use of heroin in the greater Darwin area, with about 600 recreational users. Therefore we had about 1000 people who were using heroin on a reasonably regular basis. Through some good work by the then combined Drug Enforcement Unit which worked with Customs and the AFP. We actually managed to break the three distribution networks of heroin.

As a result of that, we had 1000 heroin users who were desperate for another drug and turned to GP's and other sources and then sourced legally through our GPs, MS Contin which is a slow release morphine. The one of choice is the maximum strength which is 100mg tablets. In 1999 that peaked with the Northern Territory population of around about 200 000 issuing 9630 scripts for 100mg MS Contin tablets, and bare in mind you can get 80 or 60, down to 20. In New South Wales, a population of about 6.5 million at the time, they only issued 9300, so it gives you an idea of our drug use patterns. At the same time, we distributed about 400 000 needles through the needle syringe program; therefore we had a significant injecting drug user problem that suddenly had to find another drug.

That is unique. The only area which resembles it is Tasmania. Whether or not that is because of trafficking routes, or the smaller population base essentially, drug traffickers now operate as a business and it is all about how much money you can make. If you reduce your length of your travelling route the chances of apprehension are reduced. Things like that come into account.

It is quite clear that over the last ten years despite our problems with illicit drugs, alcohol is our single most predominately problematic drug. We used to collect some data a few years ago and I presented that evidence to the Select Committee on a previous occasion. Essentially, on average 80% of all police work in the Northern Territory is alcohol related. If you take the greater Darwin area out of it, it jumps to about 83% and in some of the other smaller geographic regions, for example Tennant Creek, it was not uncommon week after week for 95% - 99% of all police work being alcohol related, and 1% - 2% unknown. That was very common.

It is difficult in the Northern Territory with our geographic and demographic makeup to identify trafficking routes and often offenders. For example, you cannot drop an undercover operative in Maningrida; it just does not work. We all are aware of the fact that a lot of the normal practice of some of our southern districts is that they can place undercover operatives into communities to try and pick up the king pins. It just does not work here in the Northern Territory simply because of the differences.

The other thing we have up here is that some drug use is quite specific to certain groups and a classic example of that is kava. Whilst it is not classified as a drug, it is unique to a particular demographic makeup. Likewise cannabis tends to be a little bit hit and miss, the same as petrol sniffing, so our substance use patterns can be quite different.

What we did find as a result of the DUMA results coming through was that there were a high percentage of indigenous detainees. There are language issues and the lack of understanding with some of the questions and the terminology used. We were fortunate in that Dr Bridie O'Reilly, who is a private consultant now but has worked for government for a number of years with the Department of Health, was the contractor to collect this information and she is used to working with Indigenous people.

The other thing that is perhaps one of the keys to the DUMA data is the fact we can actually verify whether they are telling us the truth. The previous data sets I mentioned, such as the Illicit Drug Reporting System, or the secondary school stuff, is very much reliant upon the fact that people are self-reporting and we take it as face value. There are questions about whether the illicit drug reporting system, where you pay the people who are being interviewed \$40 for the interview. Whilst it is well recognised and it is a standard accepted research practice and ethically sound, people do sometimes query whether or not they are getting the truth if they are being paid.

The beauty of the DUMA data is that after completing a questionnaire, and I know this is going to sound really strange, but in exchange for a Mars Bar we asked them to give us a

urine sample. Nationally around the country we have an 81% compliance. They are quite happy to volunteer a urine sample to us. It drops down to 63% here, but that is still very good. What we did discover was that when we asked the indigenous males, some of the more traditional of them who were in town and in our cells, but who normally resided in some of the remote communities; they said, 'nup, it is not going to happen'. It was something that was not going to happen. I have been talking to people in the health arena and they say they had exactly the same problems when they wanted to take those samples, and they simply do not want to do it. We have to find a way around that, but at the same time the 63% compliance rate is very useful.

What that also means though is that, when they tell us they have been taking amphetamines or drinking alcohol or taking other drugs, we can verify they are telling us the truth by running a drug screen across every sample which is submitted. This is done in the same site, all the samples go to one spot in Australia and, again, it provides us with that ability to be able to prove that what they are telling us is surprisingly accurate.

My question when I first looked at it was why would some self respecting crim with a drug problem actually admit it in the first place and then give a urine sample. One suggestion from some of the junior staff, is that is pretty boring sitting in a watch-house. If someone wants to talk to you for two or three hours and then give you a Mars bar which we allow them to take back to their cells, it is probably a good deal. They know it will be de-identified. There are no names taken, so the only identification is we match the sample, obviously, with the questionnaire so we can verify it.

It gives the DUMA data set a degree of accuracy that is almost impossible to question and particularly when you compare it against all our other DUMA data sets. I apologise for not having fourth-quarter stuff in an overhead, but it is actually in a computer program which will not allow us to transfer. I was lucky enough that Dr O'Reilly managed to use another program to compile the first three. Having said that, there are no significant changes in the fourth-quarter data so it does not present the actual over-all picture.

If we look at the Darwin watchhouse, the greater Darwin area and people who have been arrested and charged with an offence, what we find is that basically 85% to 87% are male and 50% are under 30. Unfortunately 75% of them are Indigenous compared to the other jurisdictions at 14%. You can see there that the full-time job ration is less in the Northern Territory overall than in other jurisdictions with a higher ratio of government benefits but a much lower ratio in comparison in dealing drugs which is indicative of those different patterns of drug use in the Northern Territory.

We also see a much higher level of intense standard and a higher level in Year 11 or 12. We also see a very significant difference in dependence on alcohol. Interestingly enough, there is no significant difference about the age where they first tried alcohol and that does not seem to change much around the country. It generally is around 15 or 16, and it is very similar for cannabis. Amphetamines tend to go up to around age 20 or 21 and heroin goes up to around age 23 to 25.

Again, we see a significant number of higher ratios of the number of days where they have had five drinks or more, and if we remember that the standard accepted healthy consumption of alcohol is four standard drinks for males, and two for females, with two alcohol free days per week, we clearly break that wide open.

Out of the 2006 report, of which I have left a copy of with the committee, we see the ages are evenly spread across that predominately offending group of 18 to 35 year olds. There is nothing that leaps off the page for us there that is different to other jurisdictions in any meaningful sense.

If we look at our drug testing, where they have tested positive to drugs what we see - and we do not test for alcohol because it does not last long enough in the urine sample to give us a meaningful test result and obviously cannot ask them for blood samples either - however we do see for the Darwin site is high rates of any drugs. We can clearly see the next drug of choice for Northern Territory offenders is cannabis and it is not that different between male and females.

**Mr KNIGHT:** How long does it last in their system, the cannabis?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Cannabis can last any thing up to about 3½ months, but for a urine test it is pretty good up until about a week. Essentially we do not take a urine sample if they have been in the watch-house longer than 48 hrs as after the sample tends to become less reliable, therefore we are only taking people who have been in cells in the past 24 hrs and it is reasonably accurate.

Some pleasing things about that is the fact that we have not had the cocaine epidemic and despite the media hype about ice which is simply another form of methylamphetamine, it is not particularly high. You still see the remnants of the diversion of pharmaceutical drugs with bupamorphine and methadone and that also shows up in any other drug other than cannabis in the multiple drug stuff. That is still in existence, although our scripts are down around 2000 a year, as opposed to 10 000.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The second one down is benzodiazepines, what are they?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Benzodiazepines are sleeping tablets. A sedative type of drugs. Probably the largest group of benzodiazepines takers in the country are our mothers, or our grandmothers because mother's little helper with Valium in the 1960's and 70's when they went to the doctor and said I have three kids and they are driving me crazy and they were all prescribed Valium which is still one of the largest groups. There is a whole raft of those tablets of the 70's. They are easily obtained if you go to the doctor and say you are having hassles sleeping, and they will often supply a drug called Normison.

The doctor will say it is really helpful if you have a reactive mind and you go to bed and all the things are whizzing around in your head, it is a bit like a blackboard. It rubs it out and you get a blank board and you drift off to sleep. Which is very true and most of the benzodiazepines family is like that. It is a nasty drug in the sense it is probably one of the only drugs where you go through a cycle of addiction and withdrawal whilst you still take it. You can be taking sleeping tablets, which is why they are highly addictive, and you will actually go through withdrawal symptoms over about a forty to a fifty day period while you are still taking them.

They are of concern. Some of the problems which arose out of the diversion of MS Contin; the slow release morphine, is that if you see tablets that have a very shiny finish, almost invariably shiny and hard, it will be a slow release tablet. What they do is they compress the tablets so much that they also impregnate a waxy finish into the outer surface and into the initial layers of the drug and the binding agents, which are resistant to the stomach breaking it down. One of the problems with the diversion of MS Contin in the Territory is that there is actually quite a unique medical condition called *waxy vein*, because they still crush it up and mix it, and inject it and then what happens is that those little wax globules start to build up in the veins.

The benzodiazepines family has a similar problem. One of the benzodiazepines; Temazepam, is a liquid gel and users in Victoria were injecting that and it basically did not break up in the blood so they were having globules of this stuff floating around and creating

massive problems. I know, for example, health officials in Victoria have been talking to health practitioners up here asking what they have been doing about waxy vein because they have a similar problem. It also causes severe infections and loss of limbs if things do not go right. It blocks up blood vessels and is a very nasty group of drugs which is little understood by the wider community because we take them so readily. We are told by doctors they are okay, but unfortunately they are not.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It stands out that a lot of women are using it in that nine year age group.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes. If you look at the demographic makeup and think about that age group, they are probably more likely to have a couple of kids, trying to struggle with a job and so much on their plate trying to deal with, and if you delve in to some of the data and benzodiazepines, that is the sort of picture that emerges. It is actually no different to a large extent, for example, for my mother's age group went through in the late 50's and early 60's where most families had three or four kids and they were not working and were stuck home with the kids all day. I often wonder why my mother is still sane, but yes, the same patterns are emerging again, and that is some thing that is concerning.

**Mr MILLS:** There has been talk of Ritalin. Is that methylamphetamine?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Dexamphetamine.

**Mr MILLS:** It does not show up being diverted for adult use?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** There are no indications. There is some anecdotal information around the country that Ritalin is being diverted by users of Ritalin, who are wanting to flog off to friends and it tends to be in that teenage sub group. People who use Ritalin because they have been diagnosed with ADD and have to use it, and are prescribed it, actually dislike the effects. We all know that ADD kids are hyperactive and what Ritalin does is actually speed their brain activity up to try and match what else is happening and going on. If they give it to someone else who does not need it, it does tend to give a speed, or amphetamine, type reaction, but nowhere near as intense. It is a little bit difficult being a dexamphetamine, or a synthetic derivative to detect in urine samples. There is no evidence it is a major problem. It is something which is on the horizon as emerging. Whether it is going to emerge any more or not is going to depend on the way in which the amphetamine market changes around the country. I have just been at meetings in Brisbane, and Commander Kerr has as well and it was raised then. We had a brief discussion about it, but nothing that we have seen up here.

**Mr MILLS:** Thank you.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** In relation to the DUMA data setup here, each time we do a collection of the data there is an addendum. An additional set of questions and each jurisdiction is allowed to choose whatever they want to do for two of those things - two of the collections. The third quarter, or whatever quarter is chosen, is one that we all agree on. In each of the jurisdictions we might decide, for example, if we collect and thought Ritalin was a problem we might want to ask an addendum set of questions just about Ritalin, or ice or whatever the particular drug was. The fourth quarter collection, whatever one they choose, is always at the discretion of the Australian Institute of Criminology which runs a couple of these similar types of programs.

We chose alcohol as our addendum for two quarters. Normally we do one and, thankfully, Sunshine in Victoria being the first site as well, agreed that was useful for them so I designed the questions, and the ARC research experts refined them, and put forward a series of questions in relation to alcohol. Some of the things that came out of that, have

confirmed things we have known for a long time but probably for the first time we have some actual clear, hard data which for us is illuminating one of those things I will talk about shortly.

It is quite clear if you compare the Victorian site with the Darwin site, that there is a significant difference between our people who report in the past 48 hours and the past 30 days, with their levels of what they think are heavy alcohol use. If you look at our tables at 68%, 75%, 82%, and 83% over 30 days, and compare those with the Victorian site, there is a massive percentage difference which is alarming when you think about it. You have to look at this stuff and it all actually marries up and overlaps, and when you start doing overloads it gets more alarming. We know alcohol is one of the principle factors for violence related offences, and that it is a major problem with our domestic violence, for example, and breaches of domestic violence orders.

What you actually see is the same thing when you look at the most serious charge that a person is in the watch-house for and you see the patterns of alcohol starting to emerge. For example, have a look at our patterns of violence for males and females at 61% to 62%, and compare those with Victoria. There is only one answer to that, and if you go back one page and have a look at the alcohol, you see the same pattern; a huge high of 60% and 70% in the high teens, and the patterns are quite clear when you look at that. Look at your breaches; 77% and 88% in Victoria. Things you would expect to show up in relation to high levels of alcohol use in offending, reappear in your offence categories. It is when you start doing the overloads of this that you end up with things which start to really bother you.

If we look at the actual addendum itself we see, again, the Northern Territory picture is - and we did this over three quarters - so the first quarter was done in February, and the fourth quarter in late November. Unfortunately we did not think about it the first time, and it is my fault that I did not pick up on it, but it would have been useful to do a dry season and wet season one to see if there was a pattern there, however we will be able to do that in our last drinks survey and it is very similar the DUMA addendum that we did on alcohol.

What you do see is that the percentage who are drinking in the 24 hours prior to their arrest, and this is indigenous and non-indigenous, is overall 65% of offenders. You will remember I referred before to the fact that 80% of all police work is alcohol related so what we see is the same pattern reemerging again in those that drink and then offend, and you, have 60% - 68%. If you look at the average number of hours they drank in the past 24 hours, we are looking at at least six hours plus. You might think that is concerning and I would like to say it gets better.

Have a look at the number of drinks they have consumed in the last drinking session prior to their arrest. The actual statistical figures which show up there are for non-indigenous and indigenous, and overall, in the past 24 hours prior to their arrest, 4% of offenders have had between one and three drinks. That is only 4% which is averaged out across indigenous and non-indigenous, and 21% have had between four and six drinks, with 16% having had seven to 10 drinks, and 47% have had 15 or more. If we then add our seven or more drinks, approximately 72% of offenders have had seven or more drinks in the day, and what is really concerning is that 50% of offenders had have 15 or more. We do not ask after that because they just do not know.

I have brought a handout of the newsletter which has that data in there for you to read if you wish to, and that is on the third page, and there is also other information in there. The other thing which emerged out of this and is something Commander Kerr and the Commissioner have been discussing as a result of some of the data with me and some of our thinking at the moment, and that is about the fact we are probably going to have to look at paradigm in our thinking in relation to how we manage this and how do we regulate it and enforce it from a liquor licensing perspective. I think sometime in the not too distant future you will see a

significant change in the way we operate from a law enforcement perspective from the NT police, in conjunction with Racing, Gaming and Licensing and other stakeholders.

One of the things we have done, and if you will excuse me saying I am an old codger, is that 30 years ago when I joined the police force we regularly did night club patrols. If you happened to be on the city sector in those days, and Jeanette has been in 20 years – but she is not an old codger by any stretch of the imagination – even 20 years ago we were still doing it. We would stop outside licensed premises and would walk through. As workloads and patterns of crime change and people having to rush from job to job, that has still been our primary source of regulating anti-social behaviour and trying to stop some of it.

The reality is that only 9% of our offenders are drinking on licensed premises. If you have a look at the handout I just gave you, what you see is a fairly consistent picture of the drinking at home and drinking in parks and public places. It is pretty evenly divided when averaged out across the two. Obviously in Darwi, there are a number of people who come in from remote communities and are staying with friends and relatives in hostels etcetera, so they are less likely to be drinking at home and more likely to be drinking in parks and public places. Those figures reflect that.

The other thing which contributes to all of that is the fact of those who have been drinking alone and, having had a meal, felt their drinking contributed to their committing of the offence. So you have over 50% who had not had a meal on the day that they have had fifteen or more drinks... that is clearly a major problem and the acknowledgement that it contributes to their offending.

I am worried about cannabis, which is a problem in the Northern Territory. Our other drugs, I think, are in general terms below the national average, however when you look at the figures for alcohol then it is probably not as big a worry as alcohol. If we look at our violence offences, the fourth-quarter jump back up to 41%, therefore 40% of our offenders are in there for violence and we know we have that very high ratio of alcohol consumption and you see the breaches being very high. But look at them in comparison to other jurisdictions; the violence and disorder offences are higher, drink driving is higher, and we are below in our drug related offenders.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The offending behaviour. Have you been able to break it down to people who specifically drink alcohol and people who specifically just have cannabis and a combination of the both? Is the combination greater than one plus one, because one plus one equals three if you are drinking, plus taking cannabis?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** The data is not quite that clear and it is very difficult to tell what we found. One of the things about drug users is that they do not take one drug. They are high drug users and they use more than one, therefore alcohol and cannabis go hand-in-hand.

If you are an amphetamine user and you cannot get any, then you are going to smoke cannabis. Generally amphetamine users smoke cannabis as well, but they also drink so it is a combination. If you have a look at our statistics compared to everywhere else, what we see is low numbers, even by comparison when we do our tests, compared to the other jurisdictions for drugs, however alcohol is through the roof.

The suggestion is that alcohol is the principle drug. Cannabis tends to mellow people out a bit too, but if you hit it hard you can get into cannabis psychosis. We have a number of incidents of where people are medivacced out of rural remote communities because they bucket bong and smoke it in large quantities whereas as most of the European community will buy a deal bag that has to last them three or four days. They will just sit there and smoke the entire lot until it is gone so it is just the huge quantities of a 'hit' that creates the problem.

Cannabis is not nationally recognised as a drug that causes violence. Amphetamines yes, but if we look at our amphetamine statistics compared to the country, we are down here and they are up. So the only drug that is creating all these problems for us is alcohol, or predominately alcohol.

If we look at our arrests, we have a lot of repeat offenders. A lot have been in prison before and a significant number have had treatment for a psychiatric disorder, which complicates it because one of the things is that if you go to the health profession and say I think I am nuts, they will say, 'What are you taking? You need to get your drug problem fixed first before we treat the psychiatric stuff'. Then they go to have their drug problem treated and the drug treatment people say 'You have got to get your mental condition under control first'. So there has been this barking together about drug problems and people with psychiatric things and the health sector does not know how to deal with it very well and that has been around for a long time. 10 years or more.

What I did after the completion of the DUMA data set, was some overlays in comparison to see what else confirms what we now know about the alcohol and violence situation in the Northern Territory. The National Homicide Monitoring Program has been running for a number of years and about four or five years ago when I was looking at it, I was particularly surprised to see 100% of our victims were intoxicated at the time of death. I have been watching it ever since and the 2005-06 National Homicide Monitoring Program report was released a couple of days ago and I grabbed this late last night. Have a look at the 'alcohol only' for the Northern Territory down the bottom. These are victims, people who have been killed, and at the time of their death, in percentage terms, 50% and 20% have been killed when they have been intoxicated. Compare that to any other jurisdiction; Queensland is high, and South Australia, however we are above every other jurisdiction in both male and female, with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory.

**Mr KNIGHT:** They are actual figures, not a percentage?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** No, that is a percentage. We did not have 70 people murdered last year in the Northern Territory, thank Goodness!

Now look at illicit drug use and compare us to other jurisdictions. The 40% is the benzodiazepines that are coming out. People who are stressed with mental disorder and worried about a whole heap of things, this is the prescription drug coming out. Alcohol and illicit drugs - we are well up there with every other jurisdiction, higher than most with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory, and have a look at our 'no alcohol use and drug use' we are below everybody else and that is victims.

If we move on to offenders, we see the same pattern emerge again; 100% of our female offenders had alcohol on board when they committed the offences, and 45% of males. Our drug use is zero for females, and not too bad for males.

There has been a bit of a shift but, it is the victim stuff I find particularly interesting, not that murder is an interesting subject, but just the fact the victims are intoxicated at the time of death – what does that mean? Does it mean they are unable to defend themselves, or they put themselves in situations that they would not normally be in, or did they start a domestic violence incident with another intoxicated person? It is that sort of stuff which would cause a lot more research and probably be on my ...

**Mr KNIGHT:** That correlation between the offender and the victim; is it that they are both charged up?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes, that is exactly right. When you look at these figures for your victim, and then those for your offenders.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Have you figures on offender/victim based on gender? That is how many men kill women and how many women killed men?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** They are in there but I did not take it out. It arrived two days ago and I was frantically struggling to find a bit more of this stuff.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What are your thoughts on that? What would it be from your own personal image?

**Commander Kerr:** 80% - 90% of offenders are men.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** It is quite alarming. A couple of years ago you will see the number of our victims and there has been a decrease in that. A decrease in the actual number of females as victims from 100% down to 20%. When I get a bit more time, I will go back over the last four or five years and see if there is a trend there or is this an aberration for this year. Obviously there is a high degree of vulnerability if 100% of your murder victims are intoxicated at the time of their death.

**Commander Kerr:** What we are seeing here is there are no women who are not intoxicated with alcohol and drugs, and the others are alcohol and cannabis; cannabis, and then alcohol, alone across the board for the women. It is either one or the other or a combination of those drugs. In terms of victimology, young men are also at high risk of being victims.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** I did only pluck the alcohol information out of a quite comprehensive report. If we look at our figures for protective custodies of people who have been arrested under the *Police Administration Act* and placed in protective custody, there is a quite a steep curve over the last five years from 15 500 to 25 000. Again, what we see are the same patterns emerging of high levels of alcohol use, high police activity as a result of it and us having to look after an extra 10 000 people a year.

We had a look at sobering-up shelters, and we have a flat average of about 20 000 a year. Health and Community Services are doing a review of sobering-up shelters at the moment and at first glance our belief is that properly managed, our sobering-up shelters are running at capacity. They have increased in number as a result of the more intoxicated people we have had to take into protective custody. That is fairly constant, and if we look at other jurisdictions, the Northern Territory has the gold medal standard of proportion of incidents. Again we see, when it is looked at externally by researchers, and I talk about that odd 80%, we are talking about 70% of incidents. That is not necessarily offending, but incidents which require police attention. That is 70%, compared to the next highest state of Victoria who has about 30%.

I plucked this quite deliberately out of a listing of call-outs from an officer based at a rural remote community where there is a licensed premise. Now this is only call-outs where they have been called out after their normal rostered hours of duty and there is a very clear message.

One officer based over on the Tiwi Island at Nguuu. This goes from 1 September 2005 for the month of September 2005. It was an old file and I thought there was a pattern. It does not matter what you look at, you see the same pattern.

**Mr KNIGHT:** So this is pulled out of the PROMIS system?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** No, this is pulled out of the office. It was recorded for his own information to discuss. At the time we were looking at Racing, Gaming and Licensing, the Liquor Commission changes to liquor licensing laws and liquor licensing hours for the Nguui club and he just kept this ongoing record.

**Mr KNIGHT:** As I understand, with the PROMIS system you have a number of mandatory fields which you cannot complete unless do this. The selection of alcohol related, is it mandatory?

**Commander Kerr:** Yes it is. There has been an upgrade, but I can check on that.

**Mr KNIGHT:** About six months ago when I had a look at it, it was not mandatory. If you skipped through, it just said you had to go back in and actually select 'alcohol'.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Just as a word of caution, the IGIS system was the same thing where you had to choose either drug, alcohol, other, or not. One of the things, for want of a better description, for statistical gathering sometimes you end up with quite distorted pictures. For example, in the IGIS system, unless you click off one of those categories, it would not allow you to go any further.

To get past that field officers, from a law enforcement perspective, are more worried about putting in the actual required data; name, age, date of birth, offence, and all that information. They get to a point where the person either does not know or, how accurate is it? I have always questioned data from those sources where you have that forced kind of category, and it does not allow you to put in 'Don't Know' or 'Not Available', or whatever. What if we have is an offender who we have been chasing for three days? We have now arrested him and we enter him in, and 'excuse me were you pissed at the time'? Yes I was, or no I wasn't. How accurate is that? There are those kinds of issues, and certainly from a pure research perspective, some of that data is very good trend wise information but it needs to be treated with a bit of caution.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** It might be obvious, but that data when you put it into the PROMIS system, is that at the time of the call? Is that by the call people, or is that after someone is apprehended or whatever?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Before, during, and after.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** I was going to say, if it was people recording it in I could say my neighbour has jumped off the balcony because he is pissed out of his brain, but I don't really know that. I am just assuming. He might actually have a mental illness or something else.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Exactly. That is one of the problems with some of those forced data entry points, and it is not unique to police. If you have a look at some of the data, for example hospital admissions and the causes of death. We took a couple of major research bodies to task and they reported our rates of drug overdose were much higher than the rest of the country, yet we knew for a fact that we had an average of one a year.

What happens with the hospital admission data is that they are admitted and someone says you took this and this. He may later have died as a result of someone stabbing him in the back, or liver failure as a result of heavy drinking, but the actually hospital admission says that he took an overdose of heroin.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** That is the danger of statistics sometimes isn't it?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes, you do need to be clear.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Sorry, there is data on whether alcohol was involved or was not and was it the number of people?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Not alcohol?

**Mr KNIGHT:** No, the 2, 1, 2?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes, the number of people. The next is the number of call-outs, and the other one was the number of people.

**Mr KNIGHT:** And whether the club was opened or closed?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes. I think it is a pretty clear pattern. I didn't pluck September out for any particular reason. I opened up the excel sheet and highlighted a month. I double checked it all. The other months were pretty similar.

One of the concerning things is self-harm. People not making sensible decisions when they are highly intoxicated. That is a worry for all of us in a lot of ways. Talking with RGL and looking at what it means to them and what it means to us, we started to do some overlays. If we look at it in terms of pure alcohol, we see again something that starts to match some of our data. If you look at our upward increase over the past five years in relation to intoxicated people who have not committed an offence, you will see this nice curve upwards, and if you look at the number of pure litres of alcohol which have been sold, you see exactly the same thing.

What we also see more importantly than anything else, is our problematic licenses. With only 9% drinking in clubs and pubs, they are drive-through bottle shops and supermarkets. It is on that sheet I have handed out to you. You see nice and clearly the rise in our stores. Again, it starts to match offending, people who are taken into custody, injury, and death. There is a very clear correlation between alcohol.

It is interesting when you see that we have established alcohol is a problematic drug for us, so which category is it problematic? What we see is full strength beer coming down; however we do see big increases in bulk wine, fortified wine, and increases in mixed spirits. Green is mid strength, and I find it particularly interesting that low strength beer is going down.

**Mr MILLS:** Beer is going down, full strength and low?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes, but look at the increases here. It is dangerous to look at one and think that is terrible. You have to start doing overlays. Every statistic I look at says that Northern Territorians are drinking at really high levels, and we are not talking about harmful levels, we are talking about hazardous levels of drinking patterns. If we look at our annual returns, what we see is this upward trend. Overall we have an upward trend and there is a million litres.

**Mr MILLS:** That is pure alcohol?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Pure alcohol. If you are drinking 5%, it is only 5%. No wonder we can build beer can boats; we could probably build a navy out of it. It is that which is worrying. Again, we are looking at this five year snapshot. It does not matter how I overlay the data, we get the same upward trend. Look at Tennant Creek from September 2004 to March 2007 for cask wine.

**Mr MILLS:** My Goodness! 2004 to 2007?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes, 5500. Every other category has come down. That is why I say that if you look at this kind of data, and you have to look at more than one data set and at injury, criminal offending, etcetera, and you have got to look at why was there was a significant change.

**Commander Kerr:** If you have a look at fortified wine in Tennant Creek, you start off in September 2004 with 15 000 litres of Port which we took away, and that is where you get the increase in wine casks. I know there is far more grog being drunk, but we do not have a problem with the glass bottles, however you cannot put in one strategy without having a serious impact.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes sure. So the quantity of pure alcohol consumed in that area has gone up, irrespective of the shift?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Actually I did not add that up. I was more looking for patterns of changes and stuff. If you actually have a look at it, every other one, bottled wine, fortified wine, and cider, however few indigenous people drink cider as it is not their choice. Standard spirits from 13 to three, mixed spirits 19 to 17, a bit of up and down in the middle. I need to go back [and find out], what was happening here. Why was there a jump in June to December 2005 and what was going on?

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Are they leaders of pure alcohol, they are not just leaders of product?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** No it is pure alcohol.

**Commander Kerr:** UDL, bourbon cans, mixed drinks. There was a period when they were a problem in Tennant Creek and they were discounted. The police spoke to the licensees and the prices were put up, but then it transferred to somewhere else.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** In relation to strategically thinking about targeting particular kinds of drugs, if we were for example to deal with heroin, something else would pop up, and it is replicated across alcohol as well. You push down on one area and the next one will pop up.

**Mr MILLS:** I want to go back to that last one. You would say the consumption of pure alcohol has increased or decreased in that period?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** I would have to do the maths. I would actually say it probably has not changed significantly, but has probably increased slightly. If you have a look at your full-strength beer the increases are not significant, but it is this massive change here.

**Mr MILLS:** It would be difficult wouldn't it? There would be a population change in that as well.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes. I did not throw that in to highlight Tennant Creek. What I was doing was showing you all the information there. It is dangerous to look at one [set] and say what does all this mean. In Tennant Creek, the current officer-in-charge and myself have been doing a lot of work around liquor licensing and I pulled out these figurers for her and we were looking at why.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Obviously you have to build a pattern of data, but what are you actually doing with the data, and how is it being fed back into policy?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** One of the reasons the Commissioner was very keen to get DUMA in the first place was that, from his time as Assistant Commissioner of Crime in South Australia, he was very keen on collecting good data sets and was well aware of the DUMA information. This is why we went out to see if we could get it.

It is an expensive way to get data, but it is a very pure data set for law enforcement and thinking strategically about where to from here. One of the things which is very evident as a result of the 2006 findings – and we have only just got them as the report was only released three weeks ago - is that we are starting to think already and the Commissioner has had discussions with Commander Kerr, and I have begun discussions with Racing, Gaming and Licensing about what is the paradigm shift we need to make in our strategic thinking about law enforcement activity and targeting alcohol. For example, how do we address the situation when it is basically pretty evenly spread where people are drinking?

I expect to see some significant changes over the next 12 to 18 months with the introduction of our restricted premises (private premises) legislation. There is a whole raft of those and my office deals with them coming through, and our restricted areas. So, is there going to be a change where they are drinking? If they cannot go home, and most of them, without exception, is a Housing Commission premise.

A lot of them live in town, for health reasons or whatever, and what we see is a pattern of reduction in alcohol at that premise. I initially thought we were going to see was quite a large jump in public place, or park drinking, but with restricted public space, where do we go to now. If it is not occurring there, where is it going to go to next? If you keep pushing and pushing, you end up with people drinking in really unsafe environments where if there is an injury, or anything like that occurring, how are they going to call for help. There are all those sorts of additional health factors that can then come on board.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** You are saying that all of the restricted premises are Housing Commission places. What about in a complex where individual residences are one thing, and you might have one there out of a block of 20, and then another one in another block or whatever. How is the common area treated?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** We are getting a legal opinion on that now. It is a little bit tricky. Where everybody is happy in a complex it is not a problem, however there are some complexes in our areas where there are four or five problematic flats or units, but the others are not problematic. We are looking at whether or not, collectively, we can declare those areas restricted or not?

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Are they the common areas?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes. We can declare a single unit in a complex; we don't declare it but it can be declared after application, however whether the common areas are something we are still having a legal opinion of it, it is not quite as clear as ...

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** So that is an issue, even though the common area is owned by the people who make up the ownership of the units, which is in effect the Housing Commission, unless they have sold off one out of the complex. I mean some of them have sold off one, and then formed a Body Corporate which then brings everyone into ownership, but if the Housing Commission are total owners ...

**Sergeant Mitchell:** The thing about this is that the Act requires consultation and the Commission is making decisions. It is something we are having clarified between us and

RGL. We are having a legal opinion done, and there are a couple of places now that we are looking at.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** One of them is in my electorate!

**Commander Kerr:** In regards to your last question in terms of what are we actually do with all the information. We are getting the DUMA data, the last drinks survey, information from RGL, and using the national monitoring statistics, and getting a complete data from our PROMIS system in a range of categories in relation to alcohol use and disturbances, violent crimes, etcetera. Then we are having someone do a complete analysis of it, similar to what we did with the Violent Crime Reduction strategy. Violent crimes related to alcohol in Darwin is pretty much, a Mitchell Street type scenario, as opposed in the other communities where it is not related to night clubs, pubs, etcetera

With a glance at the data we are looking at high rates of violent crime in public areas of houses and increasing takeaway sales, and you would suspect there is probably a link there as people drinking in public places and residences are drinking takeaway alcohol. Whereas if people are drinking in clubs and pubs there is a lot more security around and other measures, and the ability for us to be called by outsiders who can see it happening. We are going to have a look at and try to forecast some of the impacts we will see from trying to reduce public drinking and takeaways.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** What you are saying is that when you put your foot on one, and it pops up somewhere else. I guess the drink driving stuff has put the foot on people going and drinking a lot to those pubs and clubs. Then you have them at home, not drinking and driving, but drinking in uncontrolled circumstances and amounts and enforcement is a lot less.

**Commander Kerr:** Indigenous women in particular, are at greater risk.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** That's right, out of sight.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Some of the raw data is that the number of people who have taken a drug in the past twelve months before committing and offending was low, and now we have a look at their first, second, and third offence, with alcohol. This is the raw data; the current charges for which they are in custody on. You see the violent stuff coming through again; aggravated assaults, non-aggravated assaults.

**Mr KNIGHT:** What is the recidivism of that group?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** That was in the slides where I had recidivism rate and that was where I brought through in the presentation itself, that we had a whole heap who had been arrested and in prison before.

No matter in what way you look at the data there is this picture of breaches of restraining orders, and women being, potentially, victims. One thing I thought interesting from a pure alcohol addendum, was a series of questionnaires which matches the other data from the RGL with beer and wine being the popular drinks, followed by RTD's. Where they were drinking; parks or public spaces. It is an even split and averaged out about 50% of where they were drinking, the location of the last drink, and where they are buying it.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Does DUMA actually ask people why they are drinking?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** This is the one that I like.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I guess it is patently obvious that if people drink too much, black or white it does not matter, they are going to do these things because they are out of control.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** DUMA does not ask that question. We are currently asking it in our last drinks survey, but it is a problematic. When you are trying to get something from an intoxicated person about why they are drinking when we have to release them, they do not want to sit there. Even though the last drinks survey was 15 or 16 questions, they do not want to stay. They are entitled to go, so there is no way we can hold them, however most of the ones coming through indicate they are drinking with family and friends, and there is no suggestion they are drinking because they are stressed, or under work pressure and all that stuff.

My closing point is that we all have dramas. Not one person in the whole year, and it was the same for the fourth quarter, was denied service or asked to leave because they were intoxicated. I should not have put that in green; I should probably have put it in red.

The other significant point is, to some extent, we look at different areas or different groups of people demographically, as to being problems or whatever. One of the things this shows in the demographics is that there is a public perception sometimes about our indigenous itinerants creating our biggest area of problem, however if you look at the middle section of where they are living, it is less than 10%.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** They are just more visual, aren't they? They are out there.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** If you would ask the public, they would say it is all the itinerants, but it actually is not.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** That is what they see. As I was saying before, there is a lot of in-feeling, particularly in my electorate now. There are a lot of nice little nooks and crannies that people used to go and have there drink and whatever. They are not there any more, and a lot of people concerned.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** This is the sort of question we were asking in the last drinks survey. We were looking at the agenda to see whether they are an offender or not. If there are offenders who are just bluffing, and the same with protective custody, where they obtained it from. Staring in Alice Springs where I was working for a week setting the DUMA up, and I can almost guarantee Alice Springs has about *[inaudible]* licensed premises. So again, it allows the sort of work the Commission has in mind with Commander Kerr where we are working towards what is going to allow us to specifically hone in, and target, those.

The reality is most licensed premises are not problematic. We all have our favourite restaurants and it is very difficult to find a restaurant which has a problematic licence. Those that are, are the ones who move from licence from restaurant to a half way between café and not being able to sell alcohol without a meal. This will help us, and I note the time and Brian will no doubt ask me what we were dealing with.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** Any other questions?

**Mr MILLS:** You made reference to a report which has been released just recently. Is that available for the committee?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** The DUMA report?

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** Scott said he would send it through so I will get it to you.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Is this contained in there or not, in your powerpoint presentation?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** I will give it all in the powerpoint presentation, and electronic copies of the full report. Everything I have done today I have electronic copies of.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You can give a full page hard copy?

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Yes. I will print it off.

**Ms Hancock (Secretary):** I can send it to you.

**Mr MILLS:** I am interested in combining all of those strings of data and doing a deeper analysis. Can you tell us the timeframe on that, and would it be available once completed?

**Commander Kerr:** It is a new project which is starting. I am expecting probably six months or something. In addition to that, we are kicking back on some of the other work we are doing around the jurisdictions, and we are going to have focus groups and workshops with their staff, and diversion officers, to try to work out some strategies we can command as a result of the data. I am thinking we will probably have a strategy background paper finalised within six months.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** Given that, the last drinks survey, the very first collection is still continuing to show up through her research.

**Mr MILLS:** I just reflect on, and I have not been in this position, but when there are national forums and all the different jurisdictions are presenting, the Territory just stands out so distinctly.

**Commander Kerr:** That is not just in relation to alcohol and drugs. It is crime, drugs, violence, traffic, and road safety laws.

**Sergeant Mitchell:** But it comes back to the alcohol. All those things happen because of alcohol.

**Commander Kerr:** Absolutely.

**Mr KNIGHT:** With 50 years experience in the NT police Force between you, what would you do? In turn, you could ask for it to be turned off.

**Ms SACILOTTO (Deputy Chair):** On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you both for your time and information and insight in to the data that has been collected and look forward to hearing the results.

Witnesses withdrew.

Meeting concluded 12:34pm.