



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

**Public Hearing Transcript**  
1.00 pm, Thursday, 17 November 2011  
Yirrkala Community Hall

**Members:** Ms Lynne Walker, MLA, Deputy Chair, Member for Nhulunbuy  
Mr Michael Gunner, MLA, Member for Fannie Bay  
Ms Kezia Purick, MLA, Member for Goyder  
Mr Peter Styles, MLA, Member for Sanderson

**Witnesses:** Scott Beverstock, Miwatj Health  
Elenie Bromot, Youth Services, Anglicare NT  
Janine Bevis, Tope End Coordination, Department of Health  
Sandy Graham, Operations Manager, Anglicare NT  
Brendan Muldoon, OIC, Nhulunbuy Police  
Graham Campbell  
Emily Osbourne  
Fabian Gurruwiwi  
Banduk Marika  
Lynley Maymara  
Emily Perry  
Lena Gurruwiwi  
Shirly Finn, East Arnhem Shire Council  
Lin Liddle, Youth Worker, East Arnhem Shire Council  
Alan Finn, Resident Yirrkala  
Luke Kusha, Youth Worker Yirrkala, East Arnhem Shire Council  
Russell Burns, Yirrkala A/ Shire Service Manager, East Arnhem Shire Council  
Cherie Forbes, Regional Manager, East Arnhem Shire Council  
John Maher, Miwatj  
Michelle Tillman, Community Services Consultant and Trainer  
Joselyn Cairns, East Arnhem Shire Council  
Shane Flanigan, NTG ADDP  
Irena Zieminski, Youth Worx  
Danny Fromenzi, East Arnhem Mental Health Service  
Marrpalawuy Marika, Aboriginal Mental Health Worker  
Philippa Thomas, East Arnhem Mental Health  
Fiona Djerrkura, SEWB Miwatj Health  
Rosalie Howard  
Gareth Wise  
Abi White, NT Schools  
Lyn Whitford, NT Government  
Howard R, Miwatj  
Djerrkura F, Mitwatj

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Okay, we might get under way. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Lynne Walker. I am the member for Nhulunbuy and I am the Deputy Chair of this parliamentary committee investigating suicide in the Northern Territory. Our chairperson, Marion, as you have worked out, is on the end of the phone there. She is unable to join us today. This is the third meeting we have held today, so Marion has been able to phone in to each so we have been very happy about that.

We met with East Arnhem Shire Councillors this morning, and we had a good cross-section of community representation across northeast Arnhem Land from the councillors there. We only had an hour. I am sure we could have talked for much longer. Following on from there, we went to Causeway out near Munwe. We actually spoke with the Galupa Marn Garr Suicide Prevention Group again and had an hour with the. We could have talked longer but we, obviously, needed to get out here.

This is a public hearing. Anyone is welcome to attend this meeting today and we appreciate you taking your time to be here. My colleague alongside has suggested when we do the introductions, members of the committee will go around the room and ask people to introduce themselves and the organisation they are from or whether they are here as an interested member of the public.

In a formal sense, I need to advise you we are a parliamentary committee and, as such, operate under the same proceedings our parliament does and therefore protection of parliamentary privilege and the obligation not to mislead the committee applies. I do not for a moment think anyone in this room would want to do that.

We are trying to make it as informal as we possibly can by having a forum discussion. The equipment you see is recording equipment. Members of our secretariat, Julia and Lauren, are recording for transcription purposes our discussion today, as we have at our previous two meetings. What happens is a transcript is produced at the end of this hearing which we may or may not put onto our website. A copy of the transcript will be made available to people. We probably need to get everybody's contact details so we can send it to people.

I need to let you know this is a very sensitive and very raw subject for some people to discuss. If there is something you would like to talk about today within this committee but do not wish it to be made public, you need to say: 'I wish this to remain confidential' or 'I wish this to remain private' then that part of the transcript will not appear publicly.

Again, one of the purposes of putting the transcript out allows people who attend to have an opportunity to read it and then say they would like the comment made about a family member to be removed. Are people clear on how that process works because it will save many problems?

That is all I need to relay to you. I will now ask my colleagues to introduce themselves.

**Mr STYLES:** My name is Peter Styles, I am the member for Sanderson. My electorate is in the northern suburbs of Darwin just near the airport.

**Ms PURICK:** Hello, my name is Kezia Purick, I am the member for Goyder, which is the area that covers Humpty Doo and Noonamah and (inaudible) the rural area. I grew up out there in the bush and still live on the family property with my mother and my sisters live nearby too.

**Mr GUNNER:** My name is Michael Gunner, I am the member for Fannie Bay. It is great to see so many people here.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Marion, do you want to introduce yourself?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Marion Scrymgour, member for Arafura. I am sorry I could not make here today.

Russell, Lynne, this phone is echoing badly. I (inaudible) go back to that (inaudible).

**Mr KEITH:** Okay.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** We will try the other one, Marion, and we will keep going, if that is all right with you. It is Heather's mobile telephone that is causing the interference. We will get you back on soon, Marion.

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Because you are going to miss the introductions, we have a real cross-section of people here today. We have Night Patrol people from the East Arnhem Shire; Alcohol and Other Drugs; representatives from Police; Anglicare; Children and Families, Miwatj Health; shire youth services workers and some other people have not identified, but a real cross-section of representatives.

I might start by going from my left. You do not have to, but it is helpful if you state your name and the organisation ...

**IRENE:** (Inaudible).

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** We will come back to you ...

**A person unknown:** (Inaudible)

**A person unknown:** Brett (inaudible), NTG Alcohol and Other Drugs (inaudible).

**Ms CAIRNS:** Josclyn Cairns, shire night patrol and sobering up shelter. .

**Ms TILLMAN:** Michelle Tillman, (inaudible) community services (inaudible) and workplace training (inaudible) CDU.

**Mr McNAMARA:** John McNamara, Miwatj mental health program.

**A person unknown:** (Inaudible), East Arm Shire Night Patrol.

**A person unknown:** (Inaudible).

**A person unknown:** (Inaudible).

**A person unknown:** (Inaudible).

**A person unknown:** Russell (inaudible), East Arm Shire Council.

**Ms ?:** Youth Worker in Yirrkala.

(inaudible) (inaudible)

**Ms OSBOURNE:** Emily Osbourne, youth nurse of the Round Table for Young Territorians.

**Mr CAMPBELL:** Graham Campbell (inaudible) - I am here to get a few ideas because I got a family member (inaudible)

**Mr MULDOON:** Brendon Muldoon - I am Officer-in-Charge of the Nhulunbuy Police Station.

**Ms GRAHAM:** Sandy Graham - Operations Manager at Anglicare.

**Ms?:** Community Liaison Officer, Department of Health

**Ms ?:** (inaudible) Anglicare NT (inaudible) I am a senior youth worker.

**Mr ?:** (inaudible) *Strong Father, Strong Family Program* and (inaudible) program.

**Mr WISE:** Gareth Wise, community member in Yirrkala.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I told you we had two meetings this morning. This committee was formed a couple of months ago. We invited written or oral submissions and we have received more than 30 submissions to date. None from the East Arnhem region I understand, but I spoken to someone today who wanted to do one and we would still, I believe, accept that submission.

We held public hearings over two days in Darwin, and last week we were in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek and out here today in Nhulunbuy. We plan to go to the Tiwi Islands, the rural area outside of Darwin and, potentially, Elcho Island which we had hoped to tee-up on this particular trip, but the timing was not right for the community.

So we are basically throwing this open to discussion about anything people would like to share with us, your experiences about the impact of youth suicide on communities out this way.

**Mr MAHER:** So, what is the close off date for submissions?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Weeks ago.

**Mr MAHER:** Yes, I have told them that.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** It would have to be as soon as possible.

**Mr MAHER:** Okay.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** You can do that.

I can start to have discussions in this area which will be broad ranging from community to community in Darwin, in that there are many service providers; about, in general terms, recognising that resources are scarce when it comes to support services, and how affective are those support services. I know that out here there are strong networks within inter-agency networks and family inter-agency networks, and we have representative from those organisations today from people who are supporting that. We know in this community that we have seen a number of suicides in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities; if anyone wants to talk about the provision of services for the youth in either prevention or postvention in relation to suicide.

**Ms GRAHAM:** I have started with something I see as an issue out here; there are a number of issues, but I know there is a coordinating committee or team of government representatives that form and set the plan for suicide, and there was an example out here, it was awhile ago, maybe a year, where two young lads within a very short period of time t committed suicide, and I just do not think the plan worked. So the plan was that mental health was then supposed to come in, they were being swamped, we were swamped, Miwatj was swamped, and there were a number of young people who needed to be seen. At that point Anglicare had to actually make a complaint to get things moving, and then the next week or something mental health flew some other members out to try and help.

But, we should not have to make a complaint to get a process that is supposed to kick in happening.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** A complaint to whom, Sandy?

**Ms GRAHAM:** The woman, I cannot remember, who use to Chair that, from Suicide Prevention ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** You do not know her name?

**Ms GRAHAM:** I cannot remember what her name was.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** I have just had a reminder that it would be helpful for our record if, when you are about to speak, you could just say your name.

**Ms PURICK:** I want to ask you a question, because it has been an issue everywhere. In Central Australia, they have worked out that there are 35 agencies that provide some kind of youth service. In Tennant Creek, one of the -----1:20:33 we spoke to -----1:20:35 but in Tennant Creek some of them did not even know that this group did this and this group did that, so Alice Springs has got, I don't know hundreds of youth services that deal with issues, Tennant Creek is similar.

Are there enough youth-type services here or is there things you do not know about or there should be more agencies – this is across the board kind of agencies - some are government, some are like headspace, some are church group type of things that you can link, so is there sort of a bit of a feel like that, with them too?

**Ms BROMOT:** As far as the amount of young people in our community to the amount of workers and programs that are out there, we are really well-resourced in that way but getting young people to engage with those resources is really hard; that has been the barrier in service delivery for this area.

**Ms PURICK:** Do you have a feel for why it is so hard to engage them or why there is reluctance on their behalf?

**Ms BROMOT:** I do not know; for me, I would say it is a cultural issue. But it is really hard to get to town kids to interact with their kids and especially when your service is not about, it is not Indigenous-specific, it is targeting everyone, and it is really hard. We have seen a massive decrease in the numbers of town kids accessing our service but I think that is just them misunderstanding what our service is about.

**Ms GRAHAM:** I also think there are a number of gaps in what is available for young people. In most cases where young people completed suicide, there is sometimes substance or a mental illness and there are none of those services out here that are specifically for young people. There is nowhere to feed young people into, if they come to us about issues. There is no specialist.

**Ms PURICK:** Social wellbeing issues.

**Ms GRAHAM:** Yeah. There are broader programs but there are not any specific programs that are around mental health for young people or substance abuse issues.

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** I agree with Elenie that it is not so much the availability of programs, it is sometimes the model, the engagement tool, that has been put forward to use for Indigenous kids in the community because there are a few family members here who were around in the day when we ran our [inaudible] program because around 2004-05 the suicide rates were quite high at Ski Beach and, as a result of that, myself and a fellow that has passed away, Mr Dhurrkay, put together a diversionary program specifically aimed at young men and men in general to address those sort of issues and educate boys around substances use and a whole range of things.

It was a vehicle used for other agencies to be able to jump on board to get access to young men we were targeting at that stage. There have been effective models done in the past because we had very high engagement and retention rate of those -----that we worked with and we saw a dramatic decline in any, even attempts, of suicide at Ski Beach. As many people have problems with here, it is the funding cycles of program delivery, so we had a few years up our sleeves, but it was not forever programs. Inevitably, it was taken over by another organisation, the model changed, and engagement dropped from the model change.

That was an engagement tool that Yolgnu developed in the community; it was not an outsiders perceptive on things and how to engage people in the community. It was developed over a three-year period with people in the community. I agree with you; it is not so much that we do not have the resources. Sometimes there are, but government tend to fund positions, and not necessarily the tools to do the job.

We are currently working on a couple of programs. What I am working on with Healthy Lifestyles and the Strong Fathers program is looking at that model again, because it has been a popular model the men in communities have engaged in before. They have asked for that program to come back. So, we are going to look at maybe adopting that philosophy or that program, and using it in conjunction with a few of the areas we have to cover under funding arrangements with the Strong Fathers, Strong Family program. But, the organisation has struggled with the model of engagement, so we are looking at using that model again.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Gareth.

**Mr WISE:** Based on my experience up here working with Banduk Marika. Banduk's 18 years with Landcare here - which was probably about the biggest employer of Yolgnu in the community which wound up during the period of becoming a shire, the intervention, and various things. We managed to re-establish it and have something like 26 young Yolgnu working, turning up not just every day, but early every day. They start at 7.30 and they started to turn up at 6 am - really highly motivated, doing community activities and commercial activities and things. But, we had a big problem with, again, continuity with funding. For a small business to re-establish itself, it takes start-up capital and something to sustain it for a period of time before it can keep itself going. It is an amazing business that can be self-sustaining within a three-year period in any society.

We have had periods where it has just come to a close and, suddenly, all of these people were back on Centrelink and their motivation dropped, they started getting back into poor habits. Yes, we have had some suicides amongst those people as well, which is quite heartbreaking knowing that if we had the continuity, the situation would have been avoided.

Now, we are in the process of putting it together with one of the community's other ambitions, which is a self-owned healing centre. It will be environmental and cultural services. We are bringing the proven Landcare model together with what the community perceives it needs for dealing with youth, and we are just finalising the arrangements with our lawyers in Sydney. I still have the concern that, in that initial period, it can be very easily to start, stop, start, stop. The community loses confidence in programs when that happens, as well as the youth themselves really suffer.

**Ms MARIKA:** Gareth, he decided to get this with us ...

**Mr WISE:** Yes, two-and-half years.

**Ms MARIKA:** Sometimes it is through -----1:28:23 ACB in the -----1:28:26 community projects. One of the things that we, at home, experience with family members that have a willingness for the young people but, at the same time, they struggle to attend something if their stomach is not good. That is one thing that we found; that -----1:28:54 after hours, next morning, they might be hung over or something. I guess what I am saying is difficulties in attending workplace or even school. It should not be a hard concept to accept by young people because you're in very contemporary living -----1:29:39 to where we could accept that kind of inability to accept living styles that kids are more their culturally ways when there flexibilities are very much driven by one side, and accept society - Yolngu people especially where you have got them coming from the old -----1:30:04, to not accept new things. But, with young people today, it is a battle to even try to understand why they do not accept what is happening today. So, a variety of ideas to bring into a program where flexibility is very much a centre of the talking point for people to get through what they have to get through.

**Mr WISE:** On that point, I think we have been doing a lot ...

**Ms Marika:** -----1:30:53

**Mr WISE:** We have been working with Curtin University where they have done a study on a program we put together just recently - at a conference in Singapore - and one of the things about the model that got their interest and which comes from the older land care model was when we are talking about two different cultures and the young people are becoming disenfranchised from their own and yet not really knowing how to participate in another society and whether those two can totally co-mingle or whether you need to create an -----1:31:38 that some academics have called it a third space where the two can come together and co-exist where you can have cultural flexibility and, rather than being lost between two worlds, create a value in having a hand in both. It is a really important thing so people can find their place because that is something young people are really struggling with.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Certainly that type of concept has come up at each of the public hearings about the complexity of the social issues that are impacting upon young people's lives such that they reach this point of despair and absolute hopelessness and the end result is suicide and .

**Mr MULDOON:** Brendon Muldoon, Northern Territory Police. We have a permit system in Nhulunbuy, a liquor permit system, and I suggest a large percentage of suicides or attempted suicides have something to do with alcohol or some other drugs.

The system is good to an extent, but quite flawed in that there is an allocation to a person of alcohol, but there is no time frame on that allocation. If you allocate a person 12 heavy cans, they can go in every day - multiple times during the day - to purchase 12 heavy cans each purchase.

**Ms PURICK:** The permit system is for one purchase per adult?

**Mr MULDOON:** Yes.

**Ms PURICK:** Is it how much you can buy?

**Mr MULDOON:** Yes, per purchase.

**Ms PURICK:** Per purchase.

**Mr STYLES:** Not in a 24 hour period?

**Mr MULDOON:** No.

**Ms PURICK:** So you have the same ...

**Mr MULDOON:** (Inaudible), so if it is per day still – well, I do not believe it is. I do not ...

**Mr FLANAGAN:** We have multiple purchases up to the limit, but there is no way of telling how much people buy.

**Mr MULDOON:** That's right.

**Mr FLANAGAN:** (Inaudible).

**Mr MULDOON:** There are five different takeaway outlets and to say that someone can drink 12 cans of beer per day is - there are no health standards anywhere that would suggest that is a healthy lifestyle. We are allowing this to occur through the system and this has been identified for a long period of time. I understand it is a computer processing – something that needs to be fixed in that way. That is something the Northern Territory government can assist with because it costs money to build that into the system.

**Mr STYLES:** I can buy one can 12 times a day? If I say to the next person: 'I only bought one can before' there is no number of how many cans you have bought at each time?

**Mr FLANAGAN:** No, there is no ability to check on what you have purchased.

**Mr STYLES:** Yes.

**Mr FLANAGAN:** (Inaudible) to try and go back and get a receipt from the till. All it shows is that you can purchase up to that amount, and if it takes you four purchases a day to get to it ...

**Mr STYLES:** Can I buy 12 bottles of Jack Daniels?

**Mr MULDOON:** No, not necessarily. You have to have the ability to do that.

**Mr FLANAGAN:** Where it falls apart is if you have an open permit which means you can buy anything, people can go in four, five, six, seven times a day and there is no ability to say what they have purchased, but if they come in once or twice (inaudible) is difficult (inaudible) the terms of reference, you know we have picked changes in that which we were looking at can be very difficult to get through. We have been sitting on changes in the terms of reference now for over 18 months, and part of that have been specific youth programs and looking at (inaudible) where youth to (inaudible) session on alcohol prior to getting a permit at the age of 17, so they come with a base set of knowledge. Now we have community consultations on that and parents are very happy with that and we are getting through that process (inaudible)

**Mr MULDOON:** I just wanted to bring up that that has been identified for a long period of time, but it is purely a funding issue and, whether anyone is driving it from the Department of Justice side of things, I am not sure, but I believe it is something that needs to be addressed and I hope the Northern Territory government will be able to assist the Department of Justice in rectifying that problem.

**Ms PURICK:** So, is there secondary selling? Like I go and buy two cartons of beer and sell it to someone else.

**Mr MULDOON:** Yes, and some Yolngu people we have caught doing that. One lady comes to mind who she said: 'Thank you very much for catching them' because of the pressure she has been getting from family to on-sell. So, many times they will get a family member who has not got any history to go and get a permit and pressure from family to on-sell it.

I believe many suicides are impromptu. We have all these services and all this money is spent trying to find triggers and identify people at risk, but a high percentage of those suicides are people who have done it on the spur of the moment through Dutch courage with some alcohol or ganja, or something like that. I know I get pressure when there is a suicide, or one or two in a short space of time, and I get - what are you doing about it? – and, again, it is very hard to stop these types of things unless we are stopping the supply of alcohol and keeping people safe around (inaudible).

**Mr STYLES:** Brendon, we have heard evidence in Darwin that in excess of 60% of people who complete suicide had no contact within the agencies or mental health agencies prior to doing so. Is that

(inaudible) those figures that are here with your experiences probably means that those people have never come into contact with the mental health service?

**Mr MULDOON:** Yes, I believe that would be fairly accurate because many of the things that start off these suicide attempts, or threats, when there are domestic arguments and we might get involved in them and initiate a domestic violence order, and then there is shame involved with that with one side, or both sides, and someone will have a few drinks too many and end up in either an attempt or successful suicide.

**Mr STYLES:** So what advice would you be able to give us. We have to make some recommendations to the parliament, and I would just ask everyone: if you were in charge what can you say, or what do you believe or feel are the solutions to, obviously, a range of problems, but that is the sort of thing we need. How do you see, or what advice would you give to me to say, I think you should say that?

**Mr MULDOON:** I have seen only one model that I know works, that I have seen work, and that is the Ski Beach group. They are on the ground, they are there 24/7; they know everyone intimately in that community group, and they are dedicated to keeping their own community safe. It is driven by the community, they have interests in keeping it running; I do not believe they have any funding, and they have been going for three years now without any funding, and they have managed to maintain it and they have done a sensational job.

**Ms TILLMAN:** For the last three-and-a-half years, I have been conducting training throughout East Arnhem Shire with community workers, youth workers, and Night Patrol officers. In all my discussions through training with the workers, they are telling me there is a high proportion of the suicides happening under the influence of alcohol and ganja etcetera.

Over here, out on the peninsula, very much impromptu and I believe accidental - humbugging someone, looking for smokes, that sort of thing, they are not given them and then: 'Well, (inaudible), well, I will go and suicide'. Then getting the rope and succeeding without any real intention of doing that.

The other thing that I have been noticing and finding, too, for example, talking to workers over at Angurugu, and the trend seems to have changed from the majority being young men to now being young women. Whereas suicides for females are generally overdoses and self-harm and those sorts of things, and with males it is generally either guns or hanging. The females are now doing the hanging as well, which is a real concern.

I think what we have to do and look here and I think – sorry, I forget your name.

**Mr WISE:** Gareth.

**Ms TILLMAN:** Gareth was saying how the model that was utilised previously in 2004 and 2005, we have to think and we have to be honest here. This is pre-intervention, and since the intervention has come, the divide between the two cultures is broader than it ever was. I do not know how we are going to get any closer while ever we are continually ramming down people's throats the mainstream solutions and everything; things that work down south. It needs to come from the ground. What I am training with workers. They train me in the Yolngu way, even though I have family etcetera, but we also look at what mainstream requirements are and including legislated statutory requirements as well.

The problem there is there is not a trust factor and I can even see the people that are here today; we do not have that many country people on the ground here, and we really need to start looking at those things.

As far as running programs, etcetera is concerned. Again, it is finding that midway point between the two cultures, but having it driven from the ground. It is not just about training workers because kids are not attending the mainstream services. It is about having every single person in a community trained on the awareness so they can keep watch in their own families and recognise indicators that are there. We do need to have like a halfway thing where people can get help for that stage, and when people start noticing the behaviours and the indicator systems, and before it gets too late.

It really needs to be collective thing and we need to be facing some hard, cold realities about the divide that is there.

**Mr STYLES:** My favourite topic, the ASIST program, or similar programs; it is becoming apparent that people are struggling to identify some of the precursors to people attempting to take their life or completing it. They just do not understand that in non-Aboriginal communities, we have had to deal with suicide for many years. It would appear from the evidence we are getting that in Aboriginal communities this is not an



old time thing; it has just never been around, it is more recent, and the older people and those who are charged with being responsible for the health of the community are struggling.

People do not seem to be able to identify the little giveaways that people are heading down that track. If 10 people see 10 different things and you put it together, then alarm bells are ringing. What I have been asking people; would you see running the ASIST program of training people to identify those little things so they can actually get someone some professional help.

**Ms TILLMAN:** Yes, definitely.

**Mr STYLES:** Do you see that as an advantage if we can run that across communities, obviously in language and in culturally appropriate ways?

**Ms TILLMAN:** It has to be everyone.

**Mr STYLES:** Yes.

**Ms TILLMAN:** It really does, because service providers cannot be everywhere and one family member cannot follow another family member 24/7. Until we start looking at that, if it is also, to me, one of the problems with the youth services etcetera, is generally youth age categories are 12 to 25. What I am finding is at the youth centres are catering or funded for youth 10 to 20.

It is like going down into that children's services and, then, even getting kids younger than that. If you think, if you are an older brother or sister when you were growing up and you had to look after – 'Oh no, you take Johnny with you'. Once they get into their teenage years, they do not want their younger ones hanging around. So, they will not attend youth centres if the majority of the attendees are actually small young kids, because it is not the youth's space; it is not their space alone. So, that is a real issue as well as the funding. As far as the criteria as to what is youth; that really does need to be looked at. Maybe it is like: 'Hey, we do have so many of these younger kids turning up, then we need to look at children's services funding as well because there is, obviously, a need if they are actually attending the youth services.

**Mr STYLES:** Just on that issue about training people to identify precursors. Can we get an indication of the people in this room who actually support that or believe that would be very useful? Is that just about everyone?

**Witnesses:** Yes.

**Mr STYLES:** Thank you.

**Mr FRUMENZI:** I am Danny Frumenzi from the Top End Mental Health Services. Yes, the other program they have in place is safeTALK as well. safeTALK is a precursor to the (inaudible). Certainly [inaudible] they talked about Ski Beach [inaudible].

**Mr STYLES:** What about MindMatters, and KidsMatter? Of those kids who are at school; getting that message across to kids. Has anyone here worked with MindMatters before?

**Ms PURICK:** It is in high schools.

**Mr STYLES:** In high school on the KidsMatter, the mental health and wellbeing program? They are the type of things that people have been talking about as being useful to train young people to help one another. It is about peer support.

**Mr MULDOON:** Brendon Muldoon, NT Police. When you are involved in a community like Ski Beach Suicide Prevention Group, if you have something like that starting in every community, the funding for that would be minimal. If you have all these other agencies and you are paying hundreds of thousands of dollars every year and achieving very little - not because they do not know what they are doing but because they are not engaging in the right ways - if you have the community on the ground in charge of it, funding is next to nothing.

**Ms GRAHAM:** Sandy from Anglicare. If you look at school attendance, and if you are going to put those things in school, you have to work out why the young people are not going to school - why kids and young people are not going to school. The attendance is just appalling. So, there is something clearly very wrong.

**Mr FLANAGAN:** [inaudible] when we were talking. The previous two OICs out here have done studies on suicide. Now 100% of all successful suicides here had something to do with alcohol and other drugs. Youth issues out here with substances are huge, and that is regional. Between volatile substance abuse in communities, cannabis and petrol sniffing are huge, and these sorts of things. You really need that five-year planning. You look at, say, the tribunal coming out in the next few months. We have no youth treatment of drug and alcohol services really. We [inaudible] we are having to send people to Alice Springs is impossible. They are trying to get that almost mandatory having to send people well away from things and nothing is changing in the community is huge.

What we need is some sort of ongoing future plan with what is going to happen in five years, because these kids, if they survive to adults they are probably going to have problems in adulthood as well. You are just going to shift the age group further along.

That holistic [inaudible] that harm minimisation stuff, it really needs to start at the age of eight, nine years old. These kids at that age are picking up the habits already. So, education is huge. The issue around non-attendance at school - they are not getting into school and that is massive. [inaudible] they are not turning up.

That is [inaudible] around here [inaudible] would be absolutely fantastic. Unfortunately, to be honest, some of those parents who should be looking after those kids are in the pubs. And this is not just community; this is what is happening in Gove as well. In Nhulunbuy, we have a huge population of youth running around, running amuck, sniffing, drinking, and drugging, and all that sort of stuff. That really needs the community to come together [inaudible].

**Ms BROMOT:** Kids are bullied. The kids are really bullied. Sure, we have a large number of kids who love their sport, but we also have a large number of kids who do not want to play sport. What do we do with those kids?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Lynne?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes, Marion?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What was the name of that last gentleman? Sorry, I am just trying to keep track of names whilst I am on the phone.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** That was Shane Flanagan, from Alcohol and Other Drugs.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Okay.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Elenie, have you finished?

**Ms BROMOT:** Yes.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Sorry, your name?

**Ms TILLMAN:** The only other thing I wanted to go over again is because of the divide. I am convinced it is getting even broader and until we start dealing culturally and appropriately - there is a sense of hopeless because of the current political climate for Yolngu people in the Northern Territory. I do not believe anyone can really see the light at the end of the tunnel, or even if there is one. We need to get real and start thinking about that.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Banduk.

**Ms MARIKA:** Hi, Marion, it is Banduk here.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** How are you?

**Ms MARIKA:** Good thanks. Two things that are related to mindset - there is social, there is family and then, of course, there is society. Many things that happen as far as alcohol - directly related to deaths in the community, some say suicide, some we have never heard any story of that, okay. So cooperation from police, coroners, doctors, all these things are very important to family when something happens in the community.

My second question was is this debate only about Aboriginal or is it mainstream?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** It will ...

**Ms MARIKA:** This debate ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** It is mainstream.

**Ms MARIKA:** Okay. When you have a crowded family space you do not have your own space. Bullying exists in the school and I know bullying exists at home as well. If the Northern Territory government was willing to do anything as far as helping families the one thing is talk about space – families and more houses, more things. Facilities in the communities are very important. This community centre here is in the heart of the community but most of the action happens down there, okay. So, more community space down there – what is happening around the oval and the basketball and – that is the central place, not here.

There is a group of kids who have gone out of the way - their own initiative, play basketball every evening. They put themselves together and they are doing it. Those kids were also kids who were having quite physical play. What's a better word? two -----1:53:58 and -----1:53:59, they have come together complaining about the courts down there and no funding and no – those initiatives are very important to be supported and that is from the children themselves.

**Ms WHITE:** Abigail White, Families as First Teachers program. Picking up on a couple of points, first, thank you for bringing up housing. I feel like it is brought up and it is almost rolling of the eyes, because it is get brought up, but it is a critical issue in communities. Also, there is much talk about youth, and I would like to say from the FaFT perspective, that many of these youth now are also parents, so you are looking at a generation of very young parents and the support services needed for them. They are statistically high risk. In some cases there are issues of domestic violence. Sometimes their relationships are not sanctioned by families so there is much pressure on those young couples.

There are many issues for young parents out there and FaFT is one support network for them; however, there is a need to acknowledge that youth today in some of these communities are wearing a lot of caps and there needs to be a mother and father and how do we support that and support their children and acknowledge the pressures that brings on a lot of teenagers . I think that comes back to, the people would have set the model of engagement and having a service there that is a centre point for families, which is what we are trying to do, and then using that as an access point for other services to come in and support, and listening to voices on the ground so if we say to our mums: 'Do you know do you want someone from Mental Health to come in and talk to you about post-natal depression?' you probably will not get a very enthusiastic response even though it might be an area where you can see there is a need.

But if you say: 'Do you want to go out bush for two days and do a camp and we will do some basket weaving, do some play groups with kids?' and then build into that some discussion about mental health and wellbeing and have some professional people at those sessions, you will get overwhelming results.

So, I believe it is the model of engagement and also acknowledging that some of these young people are parents and that puts a tremendous amount of pressure, and I believe some of those young people are at risk.

**Ms MARIKA:** Just to finish up on what Vanessa was just saying; hypothetically, in theory in sterile classrooms do not work in our community, reality at home, bring it home to people, it works.

**Mr GUNNER:** Yes, we have had a similar story out here, a bit like Ski Beach it is a community driven program that has seen suicide attempts and completed suicides drop significantly, and they become (inaudible) a bit like the Ski Beach, a young (inaudible) told us how you take some kids out and have a fire maybe one night, two nights, three nights and maybe on the fourth night they start talking about the problems, but they were doing it in a way where they felt comfortable discussing it, (inaudible) and they gave power, a bit like Ski Beach, by being there on the ground, identifying the early problem and having a conversation in a way that meant something to the people in danger, and they actually saw a really good result.

But, again, getting back to it being community driven, there were just people who care and who knew what to look for and also knew, within the culture, the appropriate action to take to find a solution.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** And that also highlighted the fact that self-reliance at community level is so critically important because service providers work 8.00am to 4.21pm and suicides happen during the night, the vast majority of the time, and I know the police have been (inaudible) a 24 hour service is available, and I know people are grateful for that and (inaudible) highlight that point about how communities need to be self reliant and to build those skills as they happen (inaudible) deal with the issue (inaudible)

**Mr FRUMENZI:** I just want to concur with what people have said, and I think what is happening at Ski Beach is ownership. Ownership is the problem and there has always been a willingness to own the problem and say this is our problem and we need to address it, and so the ladies and the people in that community now have the skills and confidence to deal with that, and that has grown and they also realise that (inaudible) community standard that often the problems driving the suicidal behaviours, there are community solutions to those problems. They are often issues around jealousy, family arguments, (inaudible) those sorts of issues and, unfortunately, there is an awful lot of (inaudible) happen, which is unfortunate. But fortunately a lot of this it is not about mental illness and with the ladies in the community there is a whole lot of good grassroots (inaudible) in that. If these sorts of things (inaudible) working out, so, yes ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Is that John Maher talking?

**Mr MAHER:** No, I am here, Marion.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Okay.

**Mr MAHER:** (Inaudible). How are you?

**Ms B MARIKA:** Lynne, can I highlight one 24-hour service is the police. What about the local clinic because that is shut after-hours. When something happens ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** It is the reality of service provision that the clinic stays open from 8 am to 4.21 pm.

**Ms B MARIKA:** There should a nurse on call all the time, but a few years ago it closed; just stopped.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms B MARIKA:** I think government agreed to reassess that and ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Certainly, on some of the communities - Bunduk, the health clinic is on call (inaudible) and I guess apart from police, the other, of course, is ambulance ...

**Ms B MARIKA:** Yes.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** ... (inaudible) 24-hour service (inaudible)

**Ms B MARIKA:** For a pensioner, so they do not (inaudible) (inaudible) they go to hospital quite a lot.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What are the hours of the clinic in Yirrkala?

**Ms B MARIKA:** After hours, none.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** 8 am till 4.30 pm, Marion.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Okay, and so after-hours, Banduk, what happens if something happens after-hours?

**Ms B MARIKA:** Everybody has to get driven or ambulance gets called out to the community or get driven to Gove Hospital.

**Ms WHITE:** Can I also add to that, because of Yirrkala's proximity to Nhulunbuy ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes.

**Ms WHITE:** ... what happened with the intervention and the shire and all of that era, was that some services were just deemed to be located in Nhulunbuy, so we actually lost a safe house and we did not get community-based police service because Nhulunbuy is so close. It is still a 20-minute drive away, so ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Sorry, who is that?

**Ms WHITE:** That is Abby White from Families as First Teachers.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Abby, so all of the – prior to the intervention ...

**Ms WHITE:** There was a safe house here. We never had a community police station here, but that was one of the recommendations of the intervention ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes.

**Ms WHITE:** ... but because of our proximity to Nhulunbuy, we did not get one.

**Ms B MARIKA:** Proximity to Nhulunbuy for those who have vehicles.

**Ms WHITE:** Yes.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Gareth?

**Mr WISE:** Just on that point, it is very true, living at Beach Camp where we have a lot of problems because of that distance and many times the police are coming from Ski Beach, not from Nhulunbuy, things have already happened before anyone actually arrives. The harsh reality is that amongst young people there is a real tantrum mentality, if they do not get what they want. Quite often the women of the community having to deal with that; it is very intimidating and you will often see that just for self-preservation really, they will give the kids money to go and buy ganja or whatever else, rather than face threats.

In the two-and-a-half years I have been here, I have had a cracked jaw and fractured ribs and things like that from having to deal with the same people and protecting my (inaudible) or something like that. The young people will quite easily threaten suicide if they do not get what they want: 'You give that to me or I am going to hang myself'. It makes it really hard to pick as well, because it becomes such a loose threat that it is very hard to know when it is a loose threat and when they are actually going to go through and do it.

I think what we are talking about happening in Ski Beach where the women are being trained to manage that, by conflict resolution and things, is really important. For the few people that actually have jobs here, it is an enormous stress, because everyone is chasing their money. In life skills, where it is not about just teaching money management, but conflict resolution. Having a permit is the same situation; the stress that is put on you and the support that is available to the women in the community who know how to manage things and not to be isolated in having to manage those sorts of things is not there.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Danny.

**Mr FRUMENZI:** Danny Frumenzi here from East Arnhem Mental Health Service. Just a point that Gareth, yes ...

**Mr WISE:** Yes.

**Mr FRUMENZI:** ... just picking up on a point. Again, at Ski Beach, what they are doing, they will identify young people at risk and quickly (inaudible) with existing programs. It might be (inaudible) within the community, so it might be sport and rec, it might be works programs that are going on, so as well as doing the intervention stuff, as well as keeping the kids safe, as well as addressing any issues that might be going on the background, as well as looking at their substance [inaudible] they also then making it [inaudible] established. Again, that system that helped them to be meaningful community when times [inaudible]. So, the issues is more [inaudible]; it is not the business of one agency or one person, or one family, to address it [inaudible]

**Mr MAHER:** Just with the Koongarra project and what you were talking about. There are a few community-based things who intervene early in suicide, and also run prevention and education programs within a community within the families. But, they are doing themselves out of a lot of funding applications,

because with your question this morning about Koongarra and the model that both Sharon and Murphy were talking about the idea if [inaudible] were step down model.

Without the two groups that function in Gove Peninsula, doing that early intervention, you would have an awful lot more evacuations. The cost of an evacuation is phenomenal compared to [inaudible] or culturally appropriate step down unit, either run by Koongarra group with the idea that - but they are going to do themselves out of that funding application, because you are not going to see the stats that have been saved because you will not see them. You do not have the data from Koongarra. As you said, it is in the [inaudible]. You do not have all the real data within this community they intervene early to be able to say well: 'Well, this is how much money we are saving with evacuations due to suicide behaviour that cannot be contained in the community'.

Therefore, they are the applications for a step down unit cannot be justified and the reality is - I [inaudible] a number of times to Marion 15 years ago on the Tiwi Islands where suicide is growing there. Again, it was that idea and culture of the step down where people can go to safe space, where the families could then be worked with while whoever was at risk was in a safe space - put in a culturally appropriate safe space. We do not have any step down unit and it is scientifically proven that in regional areas they have a very real place in this whole system.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Was that John Maher, was it?

**Mr MAHER:** Yes, that is me.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes. It is like going back in time, isn't it?

**Mr MAHER:** Yes, I know.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** You get a touch of déjà vu. I was listening to Banduk and others. Lynne, am I okay to say something?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes, go for it.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** You think we are still saying the same things that was said 15, 20 years ago. There are solutions. It is not a new phenomenon 'If you do not give me money for ganja I am going to go and kill myself', or the threats the young people make to their countrymen. I have seen it with my countrymen on the Tiwi Islands where, 15 years ago, this was a major issue. We can move forward. I was heartened by the group this morning, that wellbeing group, Lynne, at the ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** The Causeway.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes. How often we hear that housing is such a major issue - and it is an issue. I find it really disappointing. I heard Abby saying that people often roll their eyes to the heavens. I do not think that people should roll their eyes up to the heavens because we all know that housing and reducing overcrowding in many of our communities is the No 1 key to dealing with some of these issues, particularly child protection.

Is there anything in Yirrkala that is working, or is it still – I got a sense that people were saying that since the intervention a number of things were removed and, therefore, there is the control. I know when there was that spike in petrol sniffing and other things a number of years ago, the community dealt with it quite appropriately with the police. Is it because many of those things were relocated from Yirrkala? Is that making issues worse on the ground?

**Ms MARIKA:** Relocations from where?

**Ms PURICK:** To Gove.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** So, with the on-call service from Yirrkala Health Clinic gone, Marion is asking what other services are gone? Is that what you are asking Marion?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes, has it made it worse by taking it away from Yirrkala and putting it in Nhulunbuy? Are there youth programs? Is anything happening after 4.30 pm or is everything shut down from 4.30 pm and nothing happens.

**Ms FINN:** No, we play basketball and sometimes we are there on the basketball courts until 10 pm with all the kids. And after school care - they are always down here at the multi-purpose hall with movies and games; however, there is still much paint sniffing, petrol sniffing.

**Ms FORBES:** With the funding we receive for youth and community programs there is quite a large expectation of what is to be delivered. One is the diversionary activities, also case management and ensuring that the -----2:11:32 are local Indigenous staff. It has been really challenging to get any local people into the positions so we have really focused on that recently.

However, realistically what we can deliver on is really building our teams, educating our staff, supporting them, using a field space approach and ensuring diversionary activities are happening.

Yirrkala has been pretty challenging. There is definitely a link and Shirley is here, but Shirley has been trying recruit staff in this area for quite some time and only just recently been able to get youth on board. So, really we are building a rapport with the young ones. Shirley has been working quite a bit with the leaders and the -----2:12:21 community but we definitely have a long way to come as well. If we have greater support from the community being involved, assisting in delivering some of these activities, we can have a far greater success.

However, until the youth and communities funding agreement, case management really is not something we can manage at the moment. We need to get practical programs happening for this to be successful.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Cherie, is has been raised at every hearing we have held about the difficulties in remote regional areas to recruit and retain staff. If you have that opportunity to build trust and relationships and sustain them over a period of time - the East Arnhem Shire, and I presume it is probably the same in other shires, those working in the youth area of sport and recreation and youth diversion programs are the hardest positions to fill.

**Ms FORBES:** They have increased significantly, and we have also not only focused on the recruiting of teams, we really are pushing to get local Indigenous staff on board. We are developing a model that gives us a succession plan, but it has been difficult promoting it within the community. The other thing is the training has been another part. We have engaged Michelle, through CDU, to deliver community services training for youth, but certainly the ASIST and other types of training we do not get funding for, we are seeking and we do not really get a budget - so if we can get that type of training. Our staff alone need all the support they can get and that is what our mentors are doing with them ...

**Ms BROMOT:** Can I just say something. I guess I have been a youth worker for quite a while and I have been there before it was before East Arnhem Shire and I have been around while you guys have been here. When -----2:14:30 had the sport and rec program they ran such a good program in this community because it was driven by local people and it was owned by the Yolngu here and then it was taken away. That worked, it really worked, all the kids were engaged.

**A person unknown:** It seems to be a common thing.

**Ms WHITE:** We have lived here for nine years now, which is a relatively small amount of time compared to people who have lived here their whole life. In that nine years I would say this community is at the lowest we have seen it. School attendance at the end of last year was at 16%, the lowest in the Northern Territory; with substance misuse and other issues, and we could sit here and discuss the reasons for that but, ultimately, I prefer to stress the need for employment for people.

So, if you take for example the pre-shire rubbish collection, there used to be 10 guys who went on the rubbish truck every week, now there is one white fellow driving an automated rubbish truck. I appreciate that is more cost effective, but that is 10 jobs gone, and that happened...

**Ms MARIKA:** Took pride away from people.

**Ms WHITE:** That happened almost overnight ...

**Mr ??:** It did happen overnight.

**Ms WHITE:** ... with the intervention, and so I believe what we are seeing now is the slow decline of a series of government policies that have been implemented without community support and we are seeing the bottom edge ...

**Ms CAIRNS:** Now, you have a group of five night patrol officers sitting there. Ruby, is the town patrol officer, so the only interaction she would have here is that we need to have community vehicles, and she will come out and help assist, and she will bring people back with her. That is the town patrol.

But I have got four patrol officers sitting there, all from Gunyangara, and three of these officers patrol Yirrkala. Now, to me it all has to happen from here; it did once.

**Ms MARIKA:** It did.

**Mr ??:** It did once, yes.

**Ms CAIRNS:** Once. What is happening now? What is happening now, Banduk? We have got no one in this community putting their hand up to drive around at night to watch out over their own children.

**Ms WHITE:** People put their hand up to do that for no wage five years ago. People talk about the community initiative ...

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** I think we have brought it up on several occasions. It is the model and it is the tool of engagement that has drastically changed over the years since we have been here, and I believe the model has had very little, next to no input on governments in most recent years and the delivery of those, because we are seen, as I said before and Gareth has reiterated, and the police person over here said the same thing, when it's community driving it, you have to go out and gather up numbers. You have to round people up.

The Surf Club model works quite well. We do not gather and round up kids; the kids all walk down here in the stinking heat every Sunday because they believe in the model - it is theirs ...

**Ms CAIRNS:** The Night Patrol Service is the best provider in -----2:17:48 shire. That is fine, but the actual on the ground job here in Yirrkala, it is actually what the people in the community requested. If it does not work, fine, take it. The only difference is they will be still getting paid and watched by me and the East Arnhem Shire Council; that is the only difference between now and five years ago. Five years ago I watched Night Patrol through Mission Australia. Five years ago I watched a lot of people being ferried home from town to community drunk, violent, abusive, under the influence of both alcohol and other drugs; and, also in those days, the community people felt it was better to bring their people home and not take them to other places like the sobering up shelter.

That has changed today. What we do is have two cars, community cars from a community base. My cars deal a lot with attempted suicides; they have been on hand when they have not been able to stop it. We have been – these ladies have been the ones running, climbing up trees to chop down the young people, and all the time the parents are in pubs, clubs, not at home, playing the pokies, sitting around trees playing cards. Now, what I am trying to say is this. We need to know that my three little ladies there have the backing of a community of 700 to 800 people, here in this community. They cannot do it alone.

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** I think that is a worthwhile thing bringing up, I believe a lot of departments are struggling with the same issues -----2:19:48, it is not just you guys - it is an everyone thing - but what I believe has been brought up before, it is reflective of the change of politics and the nature of that and its effect on community, because the decision-making power from when it was a government council, and I am sure it had its flaws, there were flaws back then too, but the decision making powers went back to the Community Council who were representatives of this one little place here. Very different.

**Mr CAIRNS:** Scott, my job was in five years to find an Indigenous person to step in to my position to run night patrol as per the requirements culturally and as to what the wider community wanted. That has not happened. That still has not happened. It is not through want of not looking for anybody; that just has not happened because a lot of people are saying this: 'Where is night patrol? Why aren't they watching my people?' I am afraid night patrol has only got, in this case, six eyes.

**Mr GUNNER:** So why do you think you have not been able to fill your position in five years?

**Mr CAIRNS:** What I have not been able to do?

**Mr GUNNER:** Why do you think you have not been able to train up some Indigenous person in your role?



**Mr CAIRNS:** Because what they want is they want to run the patrol themselves, culturally, people doing it. That is good and well, but none of them are stepping up and saying: 'Jos, I will do it, I will take on your job. I will learn how to do this and I would like to do it for my people, okay'.

**Ms TILLMAN:** Night patrol was originally a Yolgnu service; something that has grown from Yolgnu people. It was their service, and no pay or anything, and everybody did it for donation. As soon as night patrol went into the system; again, with the authorities, the government has started to come down which meant -----2:21:36 when youth services have been hijacked and, again, this is where it comes in.

If the night patrol was retained for the people, so it was truly community-based here and responsive and run by the community, yes, I believe you will have the -----2:21:51 come back here.

While we are directing all the services to come under the local government banner, that mis-trust will always be there and that divide is not coming any closer, and this is what we really have to do. We have to look at the good of the people; they know the things and the ways to heal the people and to keep them happy and, to me, it is that in a nutshell. It really is; it is that easy to take things back to the people here from that self-determination, those words that we have been using for so many years but not actually applying because this, again I say, hopelessness.

**Ms WHITE:** Here we are 220 years on and are we any closer? With that and perceived intent of government and so on, if you talk about school attendance - like I say, at the end of last term Yirrkala had the worst attendance in the Territory.

...

I am not saying they are directly linked, but as many people have said, if that top-down approach and how people perceive government agencies, and the messages that are being sent to community on the ground about their values, and how their values are placed in those organisations.

**Mr WISE:** I totally agree with that. I think it is really significant with all of this happening with the closure of Landcare. You had 32 Yolngu staff who were taking enormous pride in their community work, some 18 years of experience there; where would I find these people now – in the pub, most of them. Their lives have gone downhill. Taking away the rubbish run; there was six to 10 people, exactly the same story.

**Ms PURICK:** But didn't those people hang on to the jobs when the shire -----2:24:20 people ...

**Mr WISE:** No, it was seen as not one of the shire's core concerns and so their jobs were not retained.

**Ms PURICK:** Who collects the rubbish?

**Ms WHITE:** One white fella in a truck.

**Me WISE:** Yeah, I was actually standing with the workers the day the shire boss came down and said: 'You are not collecting the rubbish today, someone else is doing it for you'. It was put in those exact words and, with that, they lost their jobs.

A single contractor now does it; they had no warning and there was no tender they could actually ...

**Ms PURICK:** As a group, put a tender forward?

**Mr WISE:** Yes, their rubbish truck was sent to the tip. That is how it was managed. That is really disheartening. We can say all of the men are just going to the pub all the time. Well, there is a whole string of men and women who worked day in and day out for up to 18 years who just had it ripped out from under them. If that happened to me, perhaps I would end up at the pub, too, through depression and things like that. So, we cannot just point the finger at these people saying: 'Well, they are abandoning their kids'. They have had their own worlds torn apart; something they have held on to. Everyone knows that since all of this has happened, the rubbish levels here have gone down. We do not have these people who, if the dogs knock the bins over, they will pick everything up, and they will pick up the rubbish on the beach. If it is not in a bin for this truck to pick up with its automatic arms, it is left to lie everywhere. The community has really deteriorated with this change over the last few years.

**Ms CAIRNS:** Gareth, is it?

**Mr WISE:** Yes.

**Ms CAIRNS:** In saying that these people have lost their jobs, then why did these people not put up their hand to say: 'Please, I would like to give it a go on Night Patrol?' Those jobs were there; they still are there today. No one is doing it.

**Ms BROMOT:** Yes, but maybe they wanted to do the rubbish run. That is wanted to do.

**Mr WISE:** They took enormous pride that it was their thing.

**Ms CAIRNS:** Yes, I know I had ...

**Ms MARIKA:** Can I answer you a question first, please? And you have read the figures from New Zealand?

**Ms CAIRNS:** Yes, I have.

**Ms MARIKA:** Like the Night Patrol, -----2:26:48, They actually did a lot of things -----2:26:55 I was not part of the team, but I saw what was happening. The works they carried out. They actually disciplined a lot of people coming back from town. If there was -----2:27:11 they actually got involved in the domestic violence dispute, and disciplined those people who initiated the violence.

Flexibility in value, awareness, troubles - they knew about it. Okay? They knew who was doing what to whom, what family was affected, all of those things which, no doubt, you know too today. Okay? But, you and any Indigenous people in the room knows about oppressive system. The system always leads to they know better for Aboriginal people or to Indigenous people, no matter where you come from, and they judge it.

When you initiate a program and you have driven it, and you have been at the other end, with big pride along with your staff of people - you take that away, pull it out from the core of your heart, why would you want to put your hands up again and assist the government to do what they want to do is more oppressive?

**Ms CAIRNS:** We have - I do not know who was - I think she might have been one of the first, along with you, Banduk, to start patrols out here in both communities. That lady is still on patrol today, after all her ailments, her not being well. I have said to her several times: 'Aunty Margie, why are you here?' She said: 'I made a promise to myself and my people that I would take care of my people until the day I leave this earth'.

These patrol officers, they are all Indigenous in both communities. They have Indigenous supervisors in both cars. Those ladies told to me they do what they have to do. They do what is right and the only time they will come away from their culture and ask for any kind of assistance is if it infringes on the person's rights. Now, we have Emily sitting here as a team leader for the Yirrkala car. Aunty Margie, I say, would have had a big day out at Gunyangara this morning, so she is not here. That has not been taken away; the right for them to run their patrol in the best interests for their people is still there.

Every now and then they will come over the radio and say: 'Jos, we have something that is happening, what do we do?' I will often go back and say: 'You are the team leader, make the decision. Culturally, you do what has to be done'. That still happens today with the two teams. I want to know why is it, especially in this community, I do not have - you both said over there, and you, Gareth, they took pride in doing their job and it was Land Care. Well, how about pride in putting your hand up for the child and saying: 'I'll take care of my kiddies and everybody else's kiddies in the community.' This is all I am trying to say; to me it has to start here.

**Mr WISE:** Josclyn, the point is not everyone is an Aunty Margie or a Mr Maimaru or we would not be sitting here talking about youth suicide and youth suicide prevention.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Can I ask who the last speaker was? I am trying to keep a sense of who is saying what.

**Ms CAIRNS:** Josclyn Cairns

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Thank you, Josclyn.

**Mr WISE:** We are here because there is a general issue. We have some amazing community members who stand up but, for whatever reason, people are not or when they do they are downtrodden and do not pick themselves up. That is something we will have to look at. We have had some functional systems that did work in the community that, if they could be sustained or re-started, we know it would work. The problem is with the elder people as well, once they are disenfranchised from ownership many of them struggle to pick themselves back up.

**Ms CAIRNS:** Gareth, I have lived here for 33 years in this – Yirrkala, Nhulunbuy and Ski Beach. I have lived amongst the Yolgnu people, I have worked with them, I have had arguments with them, I have had cuddles with them, I have watched many of their children grow. I have watched people like aunty Margie do what they do and ask for nothing in return, okay. To me, we have a big problem with our youth self harming. Sometimes we are lucky and sometimes we are not. To me, as Michelle said in her earlier conversation, you have a man sitting across from me who is here, he has a house full of young people and he is concerned. ASIST programs, anything that will help us keep our children safe needs to be initiated but not only with the youth. How about two classes for adults - not just the youth – adults? I have been through it, I have a couple of teams - guys here - who are about to go through it. We all need to be in the same boat here, everyone of us; mums, dads, aunty Margie, Banduck, myself and everybody else in this room needs to be in the same boat. We cannot be if the parents are not being taught what we are here saying we should be giving to our kiddies because nine times out of 10, our kiddies will not turn up but there are parents who will, there are parents who care and it starts at home, here.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Scott has a question, then the lady up here, and then Peter has a question.

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** To add to that, we are here for the same reason or we would not be here. What we are trying to nut out – my understanding of it is an appropriate way, an engagement tool, because we know those are the issues, that is a given - that is why we are here. However, to get the adults to be engaged with those issues, to understand those issues and learn about the issues of the kids has not happened. There is nothing on the ground that is practically dealing with the issue right here and now or there would not be these forums. What we were talking about earlier was not necessarily having to reinvent the wheel in the forms of engagement - with young men and other groups that have been formed in the past and have had very successful engagement opportunities with young fellows and their fathers in cultural environmental theme, great. That worked very well for both elders and the kids. Collectively, everyone has to be on the same page if it is going to be that type of effort. But what people have been bringing up repeatedly is the engagement process is crucial, and having Yolngu govern that engagement process and tell us how it is suppose to happen is number one, because all the theory in the world has not resolved any issues so far.

But I think it is also worthwhile to acknowledge too, because people were talking earlier on about the petrol sniffing problem we had a year or two ago. I think they were saying they do not think the community was really consulted very well on that, because I was involved in that going through the schools at that point in time, with the Youth Development Unit.

What actually happened was the communities, the homeland communities more so, that had access to next to none, or very few resources were dumped on, with these kids who had sniffing problems, and what happened at one of the communities out at Gapuwiyak, and a few others where there, they put their hand up to help one child who was a family member, and the next minute they had a whole cohort of sniffers on their doorstep with no resources, no extra food, no accommodation, in an already overcrowded situation. So, I do not think it is right to say that was dealt with properly, because it was not, and it was through sheer persistence...old ladies over on an island dealing with teenage boys under volatile substances ...

**Ms ?:** Most of the time using my own sister's money to feed them, and they come back and -----  
2:36:43 support.

**Ms WHITE:** And it is a funny position because at the same time in the Court system and other systems work using homeland as a resource for petrol sniffers without resourcing them, but at the same time governments are saying we are going to put all our money into 20 growth towns which effectively withdraws the funding from homelands, and if you want to talk about mental health and social and emotional health it is well documented that homelands -----2:37:12. so I just throw that in as well.

**Ms MARIKA:** And families were not made to be responsible for their children who were breaking the laws here, with the exception of grandma - an old lady looking after them with her own pension - no families were made responsible to go out and look after them.

**Ms LIDDLE:** Lin Liddle. It is the same reflection and indictment listening to what has gone on before and why is it not as good as it should be now. Just listening to a lot of the speakers, we are hearing about what is not happening from service providers now, but we are doing the very best we can with very limited resources. What I would like to see out of this is that everyone bands together - the service providers that live and work within the communities, within the homelands, within the supposed growth towns - we need the support from the service providers that fly in/fly out, but we also need better resources. We need resources for our kids on the ground.

I guess people that are working within communities do not finish at 4 o'clock in the afternoon; their hours go until 9 – 10 o'clock at night, and sometimes start as early as 8am and 7am in the morning, and most of them have very inadequate breaks because they are trying to deal with kids as young as three and up to 25, and the rest of the community, to try to get and provide programs that suit everyone; and funding is only available, supposedly, if they are doing an after-school program from five to 12. Youth is classified as 12 to 20, but to get the balance it is very hard to provide programs that will suit - like an after school program from five to 12 and the little ones are coming in too, so you are providing care for the little ones, you are providing care for the ones that are older; the ratios are not correct, you might have one or two workers and 100 kids; and then when we can get community support, which is getting better because they can see that what we are doing is very positive.

So, it is not all negative, and there has been some real moves forward with the training of Indigenous workers and to see the pride in their achievement is very gratifying. There are some fantastic things being done and what I am hearing is since East Arnhem Shire we are so much better, but there are many positives that have come out of East Arnhem Shire, being year two, and it is kind of denigrating what their workers are trying to do.

There is a long way to go, but we all need to work together. The service providers all need to work together.

**Ms MARIKA:** There was nothing better prior to the shire at all. There are still problems in the communities, but back to you – I've forgotten your name.

**Ms CAIRNS:** Joselyn.

**Ms MARIKA:** I see red because as one of the landowners here in this community, we have never ever thought of growth in the community would be apparent. That growth is only here and getting bigger because of the intervention and the shire. We never expected it to be, it just came over, just like that, no warning. One of the things that we are feeling and the angst that we are feeling is because we were not consulted, we were not warned, and that is it. When things were in place and they were working for Indigenous people, community and the likes; none of those were assessed and said: 'Yes, what's working and what's not working and how can we work together and make it work?' That is where we get very angry and frustrated about.

**Ms WHITE:** Can I just say, I do not think anyone is making any personal attacks here. I work for the Department of Education and I am acknowledging this school currently has the worst attendance in the Territory. I think if we remove ourselves from assuming people might be making personal attacks when we are just talking about the big picture, then we can all keep the conversation at a more communicable level and certainly in all organisations, everyone in this room is well-intentioned and well-qualified to be doing the job they are doing. That is why we are all here.

It is about acknowledging that government practices do have an impact and the intervention, while we were all thinking that troops were going to come rumbling through and there was going to be this immediate result, that there wasn't. What we are seeing now with a whole lot of things slipping away, is the knock-on effect from a series of government policies that have disenfranchised communities from ownership over programs. That is not an attack on any individual working for any organisation. We all take on jobs to do the best we can, but we have to acknowledge that community perceptions of structures and organisations will be there and do impact people's emotional wellbeing, their sense of identity, the way they view their cultural values and so on as being valued by government and other organisations, and their self-esteem. If you are talking about suicide, self-esteem is one of the biggest preventers of suicide.

**Ms TILLMAN:** And it impacts participation in society overall. That determines the level of participation, they either do or do not have.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Okay, so Peter has a question.

**Mr STYLES:** Madam Deputy Chair, I just want to go back over to this side of the room, to Elenie, and also acknowledging Gareth and this gentleman there ...

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** Scott.

**Mr STYLES:** ... in relation to things that were working. I was very interested in what you were saying, but I did not quite understand. Can you just go back to that, to look at some of the things that have worked that slipped off, because I think it was Gareth said: 'We do not need to reinvent the wheel'. Obviously, there are good things we can do and respond – was it you?

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** Yes.

**Mr STYLES:** It was Scott that said that. (Inaudible) is (inaudible) Scott. Can you just go back to the sort of stuff you were talking about, because I just need to get some names, because we have to make some recommendations to parliament as to how we move forward with this and things that were working that seem to have dropped off, simply because of funding or some commitment by government, we need to go back and say to government: 'Can we reintroduce these things because it would appear the community loved it, they owned it, and that it working. So can you just ...

**Ms BROMOT:** Before [inaudible] it was the Dhanbul Council and they would governed Yirrkala, and they looked after Yirrkala and done all the maintenance and organised sport and rec. The Dhanbul Council - this committee that actually steered the council were all Yolngu. What I was trying to say is there is sport and rec, even though the lady who was running it was a white lady. The community had a sense of ownership, that was their sport and rec program. They encouraged their kids to go. Then, it got to the point where you would have 50 kids coming to anything but there was one worker. He's got two cars - you would have to send kids away. I was just trying to say that because the community had a sense of ownership over that program, it was well supported and the parents were encouraging their kids to attend.

**Mr STYLES:** That is a good problem to have; you have too many kids turning up. They were there to find a solution to it.

**Ms BROMOT:** Yes, and they would. Now, we struggle to have kids come to our activities.

**Mr STYLES:** That is something then. Scott, you were mentioning you guys were talking about some other programs that were in existence also ...

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** One in particular at Ski Beach - and there is documentation and videos for it – is the young men's group program that.

**Mr STYLES:** Can you just repeat that?

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** Gunyangarra, which is Ski Beach men's group program. It dealt with a range of these issues.

**Mr STYLES:** So, that is [Inaudible]

**Mr BEVERSTOCK:** Yes. It was used a vehicle from community because they, basically, created the program to engage men, young men, and boys in education and -----2:47:23 activities around suicide education, and employment. It was used as a vehicle to invite other agencies to come in, in a culturally appropriate context, which normally took place at homeland communities. So, they ran the camps out there every fortnight and, in between the camps, we used to have men's group meetings in the Ski Beach community every alternate week when there was not a camp on.

Given its success, I think ...

**[Editor's note: Break in sound from 14.47.49 to 14.47.55].**

... which is hard to come because we had a champion on that program which was Mr Djerrka, the AFL player who had a passion for his people and his community. We did receive the current funding for three years but, tragically, when we first received the funds - we ran the program for three years with no funding; with just a lot of -----2:48:18 tents and swags from departments and agencies to prove the program worked. Then, we received the funding and Gary died, tragically, in a car accident. Once that happened,

we tried to run the program for about a year or so into that. The community was going through a whole grieving process because he was such a well-known and loved person.

I left the position for personal reasons and the program then was handed over to the Yakidi Foundation which was not really specialised, I guess, in running that diversionary program. They, in turn, changed the program's structure, which did not involve the camps and the weekly meetings with the community members. So, again, they lost that governance structure stuff. But, currently, we do have a win with the Yirrkala community. It is the surf club, with -----2:49:11 the surf club with the community members and the kids. I invite anyone to come down on a Sunday, and you can see the number of community members and kids we get every Sunday. I get between at least 50 to 60 kids every weekend at that beach, and their family members. The parents have been coming more often than not, now they know with continuity that program is there and is being delivered. It is flags up season this time of year because of the stingers, so what we are doing now is running just a variety of sports that kids want to play on the beach. It is beach soccer or volleyball, or some of the kids are taking the canoes out still, because they are not in the water. That is also in that training too which is being developed with the Education Department, with the delivery of the bronze medallion certificate and the surf lifesaving certificate. So, that is actually still running now, and is quite successful. We just cannot run it every day of the week, unfortunately, because it is a voluntary organisation.

**Mr STYLES:** No doubt through the -----2:50:05 with a really nice top on.

**Ms FINN:** In the last two to three weeks we have had over 50 kids every night from 5 pm until 10.10 pm playing basketball. Friday nights we have over 60 watching movie marathons in the school, and when you run discos on alternative Friday's down at the old wreck shed we get over 300. Things are happening slowly.

**Ms FORBES:** That is all through our youth programs throughout the East Arnhem Shire. Definitely there are complications where you do not get enough funding with some positions coming on but we get the numbers.

**Ms BROMOT:** I was not bagging the program, you guys work really hard. I work with Shirley quite a bit and we have done many holiday programs. All I was saying is that model really worked because it was owned by the community.

**Ms FINN:** Once again, there are only two of us that -----2:51:09 and myself.

**Mr WISE:** This is not an indictment of the shire when I say this, when Landcare was caring for their country and had 30-odd Yolngu, the shire has managed to maintain one or two Yolngu doing the same civil works and things like that still using the CDEP programs. Hang on, the programs are the same but again it is that ownership. It is a really culturally appropriate thing for all Yolngu to take care of their country because they are one and the same. No matter how good a job or a program you put forward, if they do not own that it does not necessarily work for the people; they cannot attach to it because it is not theirs. It is a cultural thing.

You could probably come up with a better system than Landcare was utilising but they would not be able to attach themselves to it and, unfortunately, that is the reality.

**Mr FLANAGAN:** Yes, I have been here a few years and a couple of things I have seen which really did work and much stuff was done, which did happen - when you talk about that engagement and you get that community engagement as a harmony group. Now, that was run by those senior members of the community. That has fallen apart and if you look at the achievements they made over the years that was running and that voice to government, it was huge.

The other one I see which potentially – I mean that says; taken over that role but the role could be rolled out in the community is similar to the ITCG -----2:52:59 where we are - like everywhere, you go to meetings nearly every second day of the week with not much outcome. Those regular tasking meetings held in a community where senior community members come - and we have this issue - where you have senior members from agencies saying: 'We can do this, we can do that. We will do it by three or four weeks or whatever'. You see outcomes and you get more of that impact getting into it from the communities themselves.

We have one in Gove and Nhulunbuy which is the one -----2:53:33. You see outcomes and reasonably quicker you get people -----2:53:38 and maybe something like - I am not saying that model, but something like that in communities where they can have - the Shire can be there with police or other

agencies and say: 'These are our issues this week or this fortnight. Who can do what? What do we want done? What has worked in the past? Let us look at doing this again? How can we -----2:53:59 that?' Maybe something like that -----2:54:01. It is important to see what is working, what has worked in the past -----2:54:09.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** -----2:54:12 thanks

**Mr FRUMENZI:** On the point Banduk made about discipline. I have been invited to a lot of the causeway meetings at Ski Beach and, as well as education, as well as talking about what kind of supports are on offer etcetera and looking out for people, I notice women are doing much of the disciplining as well because they are -----2:54:39 this is not acceptable, particularly the Top End threats of self harm and suicide to manipulate or to put people out there -----2:54:51 they need to -----2:54:53 holding people to ransom that kind of behaviour. While they support people while they are learning, there is also disciplining happening. Those ladies go there and tell them and say: 'Look, hey'...because I think that's what -----2:55:09.

**Ms MARIKA:** Sorry, Madam Deputy Chair. May I answer that, please?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms MARIKA:** It all very well to be talking about discipline elsewhere - Ski Beach. A lot of people here are talking about Ski Beach, but the court system, the correctional services system and all the Justice agency people, when you have got lawbreakers, sniffers, someone who should have been brought to Darwin but has gotten off lightly and needs to go to -----2:55:45 somewhere. That is what I am talking about. The system is -----2:55:52, a failure to receive a sniffer, whatever. That person comes sits at Croker Island or elsewhere, another outstation, and that particular person's family is not disciplined to contribute responsibility, food, travel costs, and all of those things when you expect those people out in the outstation, quite remote, expected to spend every cent of their income, lousy money. That is what the system needs to think about.

**Mr FRUMENZI:** -----2:56:34 Let us be fair – too much expectations put on the public, I think.

**Ms MARIKA:** You can talk about discipline that is working in a community in that sense, but discipline within a family who -----2:56:48 you need to be able say: 'This is your child or your uncle, brother, whatever, you are responsible. Go out with that person and spend your money on making sure they get fed.'

**Mr FRUMENZI:** I think it is what the ladies do, in the background; they go and talk to the right people. They identify the people and they say: 'Look, hang on a minute, this needs to be happening with this particular person or ...

**Ms MARIKA:** You are missing the point. I am not attacking what is happening at Ski Beach. I am attacking a system that does not support what happens outside of Ski Beach or Yirrkala.

**Ms TILLMAN:** Can I just make a comment in relation to discipline and -----2:57:29 support of that, too? A lot of this is the white coming and because, yes, we are in a Yolngu community it seems like a lot of people think that discipline is a problem here, but this is a problem that we have right across the country at the moment, as far as young people are concerned, as far as parents not taking responsibility and that sort of thing. So, I think we need to really put that into context here and just...

**Ms PURICK:** It is across the Territory.

**Ms TILLMAN:** Yes, it is, it is across the entire country, whether you are black, white, pink or yellow. It is an issue with society and we have young people being a lot more violent a lot more disrespectful and everything, so I think we need to just keep that in mind as well too.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Sorry, another point...

**Mr GURRUWIWI:** Actually, I know you get a bit twisted, boys, because I am not a good speaker, but I have been here quite a few years; I actually spent 10 years in Yirrkala. I see all the girls have grown up here, and I have been watching all these years, I been sitting back watching. I worked -----2:58:28. And all the boys -----2:58:30 and I just tell them they should not be working there. Where are the rest of

the boys?. You should be here. -----2:58:41, but I try to let them see the opportunity too. They have got heaps of opportunities here, and these are my men friends. But, of course, when I first here in the late 1970s there was an old man, I will not mention his name, but this old man had everyone on their toes, the whole community.

Now, I have not seen another person like that here. You may not even need the government. Like everyone says, leave it to the people. Well, I have not seen a leader here since, and that is what is missing here. But a lot of the leaders -----2:59:19, that is good, at least they are speaking up, because your future is at risk here, and there are so many opportunities out there it is not funny, and I tell all the guys here: 'You are sitting on a goldmine.' Because -----2:59:32 I have come from nothing. I am not very well educated; I just use my head and I know what is out there.

You come to this country, you don't come here for nothing. You are here for a reason and my reason here boys, my young bloke was thinking of committing suicide and I thought it was myself, but it -----2:59:54 lucky it wasn't drug or alcohol related, but I see some of the talk that goes on here, -----3:00:00 you may not need any government here. You may take the pressure off until you get yourself right here and then you can ask for things. You get the groundwork done first. It doesn't matter who runs the outfit, no one -----3:00:15 : 'Oh, he should not be there, no one bitching about each other, just get in there and all make it work, and when that works, then the government can help. The government cannot really help because they do not know what everyone really wants; unless you get your shit together. I am sorry for talking like that but that is how I talk. Thank you very much.

### Applause

**Ms M MARIKA:** I am Marrpalawuy Marika and I am a mental health worker and alcohol and other drugs. We are talking here about suicide and that is the thing that suicide in both cultures and how we can deal with it? Suicide is the thing that goes into the mind of all of us not only in the youth but it can go into our minds as well. Working with mental health, with East Arnhem mental health, the work there is more for Aboriginal mental health workers and alcohol and other drug workers, as well as making Yolngu programs. It needs the self-esteem that skill that we Yolgnu have. We can do it, if only whatever issues that we are dealing with alcohol and suicide, the community can only come together as one. Right now, it is fragmented, it is all broken up because what our -----3:02:04, how our youth are doing is fighting each other, which should not be happening, and where is the leadership? The leadership that is here working with the true society, you know the true mala, like any town we should be working together, working together to solve the ways the problem here.

But, in many cases, there are many sides and the folk that work here, like Bob and Essie, we take sides, we want to take sides with his family. I do not want to take your side, I would rather work with my side because my child is over here, and that thing -----3:02:47 system -----3:02:49 is fragmented; it is broken. If we only have that together, work in with our family, work in with our relationships, things could get better. But, with suicide, as the mental health worker and also alcohol and other drugs worker; the funding is very poor and again we need workers. It is all good to try to say that there is nothing can do about mental health and suicide, but we need workers, and these workers need to come on board to make it happen, to make this suicide and whatever issues that are around our Yolngu society and Balanda society, we can work in. I do not know much about Balanda society; I know where I come from. There are things that I need to go back to my community and talk on issues and there are things which we Yolgnu sometimes behave like we are in a bottle, but we just turn the bottle over, all the pressures that come in like anxiety and depression, I want to put in a cork in this bottle. I do not want to talk about it, it can happen in our world, I do not know much about Balanda world.

That has happened to one of my -----3:04:13, he got suicide, I do not know whether alcohol or drugs was involved, and here I am trying to figure out what is that that was in that child; we are talking about youth suicide -----3:04:29 and he was only 19 when he took his life. And to me, the day to day that I need to come out of that and there are people that I can talk to. -----3:04:50 Yolngu problem that we normally have we do not pretend to speak, I would rather keep it to myself otherwise -----3:04:59 otherwise that great relationship is not there. And -----3:05:04 problems now I am working with my family now to try to get hold of the -----3:05:10 try and get that what is hurting. I need to let that boy talk instead of me telling him what to do. I need to listen to him. There are things that as a worker, as a Yolngu worker, work in the -----3:05:32 sometimes they just cannot with that sort of relationship and other boys. But if I have my own grandchild I can talk to him, get to ask him. And sometimes it takes that time to actually have the boy talking and that girl talking about it. But living in this Yirrkala community, as Banduk was saying, we need all the help that we can.



We have children there. I have to go at 5 o'clock in the morning just to pick up my son who is stuck in town. When I come I could hear all this noise on the oval - shouting and carrying on. Sniffing of petrol -----3:06:20 is real here in Yirrkala. We need the help that we can from each other, we need to involve whatever services that are already here.

We need not only Ngapaki working, our brothers doing normal working. The Night Patrol, the services that are here, we need to see Yolngu there, because our Yolngu can only see a familiar face and, then, oh, I can speak to him because they know that person. If we have Ngapaki working there, even in mental health - but I have known Danny, I have worked with him. But, if we have more health workers and more funding for our people on the ground, as well as in the new -----3:07:13 funding for our services with them.

You know what I am trying to say here, but I am trying to find ways that be able to help that services here, people that are already here on the ground - to be able to work in, you know. To that problems here, just will not go away - it is not a miracle that will happen one night, just can't. If we can work slowly and make it happen, and then we can see that it can be a peaceful community as well for our children.

Last thing about the schools. I know we have the schools -----3:08:00 in the school council, and the attendance is poor. But if only the community, the Yolngu community, can come in and work, we can work together to make the attendance go up. But, right now, as I was saying before, it is fragmented or broken. If only we come together, our leadership come together, and then everything will work. But, right now as I see it, it is fragmented. If only things will work out, but it will slowly if we, as a community, will work together. That is what I want to say.

**Ms WHITE:** Just one other thing. We mentioned housing as a critical issue for community. Another critical issue for Indigenous communities is grief. The cycle of premature death through ill health and suicide and other things means there is a lot of pressure on families. You go to any house in this community, and most other communities, and there will be stories - multiple stories - of tragedy. In suicide prevention, we need to be realistic about - and I do not know the model that works with it - acknowledging the load of that grief on families and, then, looking at a model to counsel families effectively through grief. Because what also happens when there is a cycle of grief is there is anger, blame, and a lot of other negative things that ...

**Ms B MARIKA:** What ifs.

**Ms WHITE:** Yes. ... creates that effect. Yes. Then you get more negativity triggered and more risk of suicide. So, it becomes difficult and we need to acknowledge that people live on a daily basis with a high level of grief, and how we can look at a model to - a culturally appropriate model for grief counselling, an understanding of the phases of grief, and that anger and things are part of that and how you manage that in a culturally appropriate way. I do not know if there are models out there that do that, but you cannot underestimate - if you went around every house here you would hear stories and the day to day pressures that puts on people.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** That cumulative grief story has come out at every hearing we have been to.

**Ms B MARIKA:** Yes, thank you guys, that was very moving. But there is another type of sickness that is trying to emerge, especially amongst young girls – not eating. A couple of them are eating but they are straight way vomiting. The petrol is back in a big way. I think that is -----3:11:23; the eating business is pretty bad.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Bulimia.

**Ms B MARIKA:** Bulimia.

**Ms TILLMAN:** In relation to the training you are saying and Yolngu people in positions etcetera, as a trainer I am trying to assess funding and everything on a continual basis. That is one of the highest need areas and is the same in relation to grief. The government needs to have a commitment to the training of Indigenous people for these roles. In saying that, the need is at a higher level than what it is for mainstream. Yolngu people dealing with the issues we are talking about in relation to suicide and also the daily pressures. As far as within a working environment, many Yolngu people have not worked in the environment before so the training needed is, at a minimum, double what you would be looking at for a mainstream person in order to be effective and in order to feel confident in the role they are playing.

There is such a high turnover of Yolngu staff, whether it be Night Patrol, whether it be in youth work, etcetera. If you can imagine, these people are in unique situations. None of us have to work with our own family. None of us have to deal with reporting child abuse or dealing with suicides and everything.

**Ms WHITE:** And some agencies are doing it unprofessionally.

**Ms TILLMAN:** Exactly.

**Ms WHITE:** You should not have to counsel your immediate family ...

**Ms TILLMAN:** Exactly.

**Ms WHITE:** ... yet Yolngu qualified staff are expected to do that all the time as if it is OK.

**Ms TILLMAN:** ... police, lawyers, doctors. We are placing these people in this unique situation and the pressures that come from that, especially with the intervention over the top. Even things like filling out numbers for statistical sheets to let government know in relation to funding - just putting the numbers: 'No, I can't do that because that is identifying my community as one that is in trouble.' So you do not get notifications or anything. You do not get effective services and that, again, causes much tie-over for the next situation we put people in and with the pressures and trying to deal with the issues they have, which are far more than what we are dealing with in mainstream society or mainstream families. We need to recognise that too.

**Ms BROMOT:** Lynne, Marion is trying to say something, but it is really low.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Hello, Marion.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes, Lynne, sorry. I was just trying to ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** You were turned down.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** It might have been Abby or one of those. I am not sure who the Yolngu speaker was - the mental health worker?

**A person unknown:** (Inaudible).

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I wanted to acknowledge her, she spoke very well. Abby spoke about grief upon grief upon grief with a number of the families and one of the things I am interested in is post-traumatic stress disorder and depression in communities. That is a reality we are seeing emerging out of many of our communities. Probably Yirrkala, like many of the other communities, would be on par. I am not sure if any of the mental health people are there to say whether ...

**Mr MAHER:** Yes, I think, Marion, Yirrkala has gone back again to what you have just said a moment ago. Part of what I said - I remember Yirrkala what must be 15 years that I was here, but the time when [inaudible] supporting Commonwealth government - very seriously supporting - Indigenous people from communities to be employed in mental health, social and emotional wellbeing. It was at that time that we make great differences in sitting in that area in the suicide prevention, early intervention, and intervention. That was captured in that suicide prevention team. There was a team out here, there was a team in the Tiwi Islands, there was one in the desert, and it was very proven that they made a great difference in that area. I accept all the community-based programs work in a family support, family [inaudible] on suicide prevention at that point - suicide intervention at that point - community-based Indigenous things - that control for the community - had a proven track record. You do not have to investigate; they had a proven track record in youth suicide. That is what Mapaluway just said.

The idea of post-traumatic stress was an issue that was brought up from Katherine, from Alice Springs, from the [inaudible] community about the trauma and stuff within community. But, that came from those community-based people who are paid to conceptualise that, who are paid to work in that area and, therefore, any intervention on that came from within that field. That was the benefit of having Indigenous people employed in those fields for specifically that area. You could get development from within that team. But, unless the post syndrome [inaudible]. They were all Commonwealth funded, short-term funded, and most of them are [inaudible].

**Mr FRUMENZI:** John, I do not think there is - I am more with mental illness; western models used to assess people. I do not think [inaudible] to the depression in Aboriginal people. Without the help of Aboriginal mental health workers most people have greater difficulties of trying to discern what is going on. Certainly, a lot of people I have seen post-stress to suicide do not appear to have a treatable mental illness. But, like I said, I do not know whether that is because they do not have the mental illness or because the models that are used to assess people, or the context in which we assess people, etcetera, is not that good. I do not know the reason, to be honest.

**Mr MAHER:** But that is what I am saying. Those things were able to be given space, and was enough of those things to be given space, support, and lots of development within the field to be able to conceptualising ideas like post-traumatic stress in communities, anxiety disorders in the community, depression in communities, that you cannot see from a model and, therefore, being able to intervene - intervening in an appropriate manner. It may not be what we do. Fiona is probably a lot more expert at that type of thing. But, the idea being that you have to put money into Indigenous teams within the communities, and there has to be a lot of them.

When I starting work in Darwin remote areas in 1989, there was 10 community workers on the Tiwi Islands in Nguiu alone, there were eight at Port Keats. That is the level that you have people working at the regional jobs. Then, you can develop the ideas around how we would appropriately intervene in the suicide, or how we would probably intervene. Then, you would have their most -----3:19:24 programs. Those are the family development programs, stress management development programs, family support programs. Unless you have it – without all that - and it does seem to have been proven to have a good effect.

**Ms FORBES:** So, John, what happened when the funding dried up?

**Mr MAHER:** Funding dries up. Always the funding dries up - always. There are two positions in Gove -two Indigenous positions in mental health in Gove - that are not being filled because the government is using that money for something else. There are two positions here that we cannot use. So you talk about funding, yes, you are right. Two government positions that are being used to pay for fares - and they are designated Indigenous positions that are not being filled because the money is being used for something else. They are two mental health positions. That could be a start.

**Mr FRUMENZI:** \*\*\*3:20:22Well, I have had experience working on my own without -----3:20:26 and with -----3:20:28 coverage -----3:20:30 Aboriginal mental health workers and their experiences working with them and I cannot do my job without that knowledge and without that support; it is impossible. You know, without cultural knowledge, without out the ability to connect with people, and to talk to the correct people. It is just, you know, you can't – we need workers, more workers on -----3:20:51.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** -----3:20:54

**Ms B MARIKA:** Can I ask people, yourself in the mental health -----3:21:10, people who are actually one-on-one working with Yolngu people. You have come across sexism, correct? Equal rights against woman and man or otherwise? Because sometimes an Indigenous person knowing the equal rights existing nationally or internationally, inside in an Indigenous community, actually do not exist. How do deal with that, Marion?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What was that Banduk, can you just say that again?

**Mr GUNNER:** Can you repeat that.

**Ms B MARIKA:** Marion?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes, I do not know if you can hear me. Can you hear me, Banduk?

**Ms B MARIKA:** Yes. The question I was asking to people who actually work with Yolngu people on the ground is the sexist issue amongst ourselves in being Indigenous people, but likewise, but inside an Aboriginal community, the equal rights, all the sexist one-sided issues as far as being females are concerned do not exist. What do you do about that?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What, in terms of Yolngu people's rights?

**Ms B MARIKA:** Being a woman and a Yolngu person? Most of the time, Yolngu women will not get acknowledged.

**Ms BROMOT:** But we are doing all the hard work. Look, you are here, you are here, I am here.

**Ms B MARIKA:** But at home, I have great difficulties with my brothers.

**Ms ??:** Yes, I agree with you.

**Ms WHITE:** Just one suggestion ...

**Ms B MARIKA:** I think that is another of, you know, despair and, you know, this ...

**Ms WHITE:** I think that is why men's programs are so important because often times men are the perpetrators, so we need to support women, and that is a large part of the job I am currently doing. If we can be supporting mothers, for example, in my job, someone needs to be working with the fathers about positive relationships and self-esteem and all of those things, otherwise I am just wasting my time, only talking to one half of the relationship. So, you know ...

**Ms B MARIKA:** I found it very difficult when my son – and I will not mention his name – was in trouble with the courts and the police or the – when you get – what is it, child services people, come ...

**Ms WHITE:** It is Department of Families.

**Ms B MARIKA:** ... but they are only talking to his wife, they are not talking to him. That is not helping.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do we have any further contributions? We had scheduled till 4 pm, so we have been going two-and-a-half hours.

**Mr FINN:** I would like to make a comment. I am a short-term resident here, so I do not know what things were like in the good old days, or whenever it was. At the moment, I have been listening to the ladies here and I think family – everything seems to come from the family. Problems are coming from the family, whether it is the attendance at school, or where the kids are staying overnight drinking or whatever. If you cannot get the support of the family in the local community, it does not matter how many organisations you have, because they are not going to come knocking at the door. You have to get them to want to go out and seek help. And at the end of the day, the help is there. As I said, every morning when I go for a walk at 6 o'clock in the morning there is groups of kids down there that have been sniffing and using substances all night, and some of them as young as eight, some of them in their early teens.

Who is there for them? Who is there at 6 o'clock in the morning to get them and say: 'Come with me, I will give you a feed, and find out what is the problem'. Is it a home problem? Is there something? It really upsets me to see it. It is a wonderful community, it has great potential. We just have to get something going.

**Ms BROMOT:** I guess young people who are doing sniffing and stuff, they are having to deal with an addiction. It is hard enough being an adult having to deal with addiction. It is really disheartening when young people are ordered through courts to attend rehabilitation sentences, when the courts know we do not have any here. Families cannot afford to send their young people to Alice Springs - really good working programs there are great. I guess because volatile substances are a contributing factor to youth suicide for this region and we all know that, we need to maybe look at resourcing those sorts of things if we are going to tackle that issue.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** That was raised at the Causeway meeting this morning too.

**A witness (GBM):** I just have a comment to make. Listening to everybody, often these problems you get -----3:27:45 around service providers are working really with good intentions, of course, to try to deal with the problems. I would really like to hear a lot too on the treatment of youth; the subjects we are talking about, and being engaged in little groups, clusters, and forums to find out how they feel as individuals. We always talk about youth group solutions, but people who end up suiciding are individuals with individual situations and circumstances. I would really like to see more engagement by the people who we are trying to find solutions for, and to get them involved in finding those solutions. They are the best place to start finding out why people behave and feel the way they do, because we are doing it from positions of empowerment, and children are disempowered and because of their age they cannot generate any funding.

So, their paradigm -----3:28:38 for solutions is coming from a different level that we are seeing it from. That is where I come from. Information could be helpful as well for the kids we are talking about.

**Ms GRAHAM:** I am Sandy Graham. I guess that, through the year one of the things we will be looking at is a Youth Action Plan for the Gove Peninsula. Amongst that will be lots of, I hope, interviews ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Please say where you are from.

**Ms GRAHAM:** It is the Youth Interagency Network. We will be looking at interviewing, with the help of all the agencies, talking to lots of people, lots of stakeholders across the Gove Peninsula.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Is that part of the shire, is it?

**Ms GRAHAM:** No, no. That is YIN; that is collective youth and other relevant agencies.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Oh, okay.

**Ms GRAHAM:** And the shire will be part of that.

**Ms WHITFORD:** I think we are looking ...

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Could you just mention your name and your role.

**Ms WHITFORD:** My name is Lyn Whitford, and I am an advanced practitioner at Gove District Hospital. I apologise for being as late as I am, but probably the one thing I think is really fundamental is looking at the systemic issues. To me, it is a reflection of the fact that Indigenous people are not respected, they are not valued. They do not feel good about who they are. I speak as an Aboriginal person from Canada and one of the issues is if you want to move forward and feel good about your life you have to feel like there are steps that you can take that are going to take you to a genuine place where you can support yourself and support other people.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What is happening?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Thanks for that, Lyn. Do we have any other comments, any closing comments?

**Mr KUSHA:** I have a comment.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr KUSHA:** I moved from here to Yirrkala. When I first started I working we used to run like -----3:31:11 one at the clinic and one at the -----3:31:19. Now, what I have discovered, when we started the program – when we ran the program there was no one - like all the kids coming to the program because they do not want to come or they are like “ -----3:31:43”. So what we did was we had to go around ----3:31:51. So myself, I talked with the young boys about what they really want to do and they said they wanted to play sport.

So, in the last two months up to now they started playing basketball every night from 6 to 9, but it is a bit hard because there is only two of us, but we -----3:32:19 seven hours. We start at 9 am so it is pretty hard for us to go through to 9 pm. So perhaps we need some help from the community, like giving some time for volunteer job.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** Josclyn.

**Ms CAIRNS:** What I would like to see is - well, here we are, we are all service providers from different services. We can talk and talk and talk until we are blue in the face and nothing is going to happen. We need the local people with us when we do these types of things. We need the local people to say they will take charge of that for them. What we need to be able to say back to them is: 'We will try our very best to help you do that', or, 'That is what I would like to have for my kids'. I would like to have community backing my team, not only to see them out there trying to keep this community safe and the people living in every other community we have in the East Arnhem shire, but we also need black people in the communities to give us a hand.

Fine. I was listening to Banduk. Give it back to the people - Elenie, Scott. Sorry, Gareth. Give it back to the people and we should be there just to say: 'Okay, I've got \$20 in my pocket. I can help you with this, I can help you with that'. We need to give it back and make them responsible for their own. That is all. What I would like to see out of this is we have many young people taking their own lives -----3:34:20. I would dearly love to see classes out there for adults as well as children.

I am unsure who said we need to sit with the children and have them tell us what is what. Well, many of our Indigenous children will not talk to non-Indigenous people. They will just sit there quietly, put their heads down, look around at their mates and -----3:34:49. We need the parents, people in communities, to come on board with our help and our help, as always, is financial help. I cannot walk into -----3:35:04 house and say: 'Well, we have just dropped your boy off here. We think he's been sniffing down the road and you should do something about it'. I need my co-worker to say to me: 'Thank you, Josc, for bringing my son home. I was not able to find him this afternoon. Now I am going to help him. Thank you'. This is what the patrol is all about. The patrol is all about keeping people safe in their communities, but they need the help of the people here.

So, by all means, empower the people, give it back to them, and just step back and say: 'Well, here you are, we will help you'. We know we have to tick the boxes - everyone has to tick the boxes. My job is ticking boxes. As I say to my ladies: 'I will help you to do what you have to do in your community'. You go out and do it and I will see if I can keep the money coming in'. And that is it. They are out there, they are doing the hard work and I am just sitting there hoping, 'Oh, next week I hope the AGs gives me some more money'. That is what I am all about, and that is what my job with the shire is all about. That is what it has been all about for the last four-and-a-half years.

What I would like to see is you guys helping us to put out there classes teaching people, showing people, helping them to recognise our children are in trouble here; this is what they may do. A lot of the children say: 'I am going to go and hurt myself' – and they usually do. But, if we are there to say: 'Come on. Come on, son. Come on, girl. Sit down with me and let us have a chat, or we will take you to grandma and grandpa and let them have a chat'. But, to have us as service providers sitting at the other end of the table telling these children - and right now we are here talking about a lot of the Indigenous children - what they should and should not do, it is not going to work. They need to be talking to their own, and we need to help their own to bring themselves up to the point where they can talk, and they can reach their own. I would dearly love to see that happen for my Night Patrol team. I can only give them what is available out there, and they take it from there.

**Mr MAHER:** I know it is a very specific issue. For the last 20 years, you get to a stage in suicide prevention where either the police, a community team, or a clinic team have to decide to make somebody safe. Because many times they can make them safe working with families, or working with the clinic, or walking with the strong groups that have been set up across the communities - I have seen different mob. But, sometimes there comes a time that somebody has to be evacuated out of the community into mental health services because there is no other answers.

In my recent experience of it, that happens on average in the community, probably three to four times a year. Those decisions are never made lightly. I have been at two o'clock, three o'clock in the morning and I have seen a lot of things. At two or three o'clock, you make the decision on whether you let that person go home and hope they do not kill themselves, or you make the decision to evacuate. I would like a discussion with mental health services around - and those decisions are hard to make because they are not mentally ill; most likely it is a mental disorders and the system does not take those referrals as easily as it should. I am getting them back in communities, and there is a nurse, there is a health worker, there is a mental health worker who has made a decision to send somebody in, and the feedback they get after sending somebody in, is we are sending this person back home again because there is nothing wrong with them.

It would be good to have a discussion to be able to treat that issue, and develop a policy so it is lot more user friendly. I have come, I suppose, lecturing to supported accommodation workers, women's shelters, mental health workers, and the people because we all come up against the same issue. I have had somebody who I think they is going to kill themselves, and I am scared to refer them on to the next level because I would be judged as being not able to cope. That is a serious issue. It is a hugely serious issue -- -----3:39:59 and it happens with so much frequency. I suppose if it is that you cannot do anything about that - I know it is a very specific issue - who would be prepared to do something about it?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** That is a very tangible type of recommendation; it is probably easier to do than some of the other broader arrangements that is around this subject.

Can I wind up now. On behalf of the committee, I do want to thank you for coming today. I did a count around the room and we must have had close on 40 people here. The discussion has certainly been wide-ranging and has reflected some things we have heard in other parts of the Northern Territory, so thank you so much to all of you for your contributions.

If we did not capture your email addresses, especially if you were someone who contributed to discussion, can you just make sure that we do capture your email address the process will be then that a transcript will be made available to you to have a look at. Certainly during discussion, no one preferenced any comment by saying: 'I do not want this on the record', so I am taking it that you are all comfortable with what has been said here today, but you can make that decision when you have seen the transcript as to whether there is anything you would like to remain in confidence.

Thank you very much.

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