

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE COMMITTEE

Membership:

Ms M Scrymgour MLA (Chairperson)
Dr C Burns MLA
Ms S J Carter MLA
Dr R S H Lim MLA
Mr E McAdam MLA
Mr G Wood MLA

PUBLIC HEARING

Tape-Checked Verbatim
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Jabiru

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Madam CHAIR: I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the community and welcome Mr Dave Lindner who is appearing before the committee today to brief it in relation to its terms of reference. If required copies of the terms of reference can be obtained from the committee secretary. This meeting is open to the public and is being recorded. A transcript will be produced and will eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise if you want any part of your evidence to be in-camera. The decision regarding this will be at the discretion of the committee. You are reminded that evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege and for the purposes of the Hansard record I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Mr LINDNER: David Arthur Lindner and I work in Kakadu, essentially as a volunteer worker, paid by CDEP supplying meat to Aboriginal communities. I was fully employed in that since 1981 but funding ceased about four years ago. My wife and my late wife were both people of full Aboriginal descent whom I met through working in the Alligator Rivers area both on the meat supply work and the previous employment I had working for the Conservation Commission.

I was asked by Dean Whittaker if I was interested in giving evidence.. I feel a sense of futility in some issues but are deemed very important to my wife. She is a very strong Christian, I am an absolute anti Christ, but she is a very good person, and christianity is a large part of it. Dean is a large part of our lives. So it is basically a concern for alcohol abuse in the community that I live in and work in for which I appear here today. It is purely a personal decision to give evidence at the suggestion of Dean Whittaker.

Madam CHAIR: Before you go further, if I can introduce the other members of the committee. Mr Elliot McAdam, MLA. Elliot is the member for Barkly and Ms Sue Carter. Sue is the member for Port Darwin, which is one of the inner city seats in Darwin.

This is not the full committee, there are three other members and unfortunately they are unable to participate this week as we are going around, but we do have a committee of six. The committee was established by motion in the Legislative Assembly last year after the – I think it was in August or September last year this committee was established. We have now been on the road and going around to most of the communities for about six months gathering evidence and talking to different communities.

The terms of reference is quite broad. Our terms of reference is all illicit and licit drugs, although there are three main areas that we have decided to target first in the first 12 months and that is the issues in relation to alcohol – which is still the biggest menace in terms of our society; petrol sniffing; and cannabis. So they are the three areas that we are targeting at the moment for the first 12 months. Not saying that we will not go onto tobacco and other areas later on, but for the first 12 months it will be just touching on those three areas.

Mr LINDNER: So you have got six months to go in getting evidence.

Madam CHAIR: No, we have started gathering over the last six months and we will continue travelling most of next year as well and for the rest of this year. The committee is for the full term of government, so for the four years this committee will sit the whole time unless otherwise deemed by government that we have served our purpose. So if you want to give us your view.

Mr LINDNER: So, Elliot you are CLP are you?

Mr McADAM: No, ALP.

Mr LINDNER: ALP. So I can speak freer then. No, I saw it, apart from the Chair, that it was a joint committee.

Mr McADAM: Yes it is.

Madam CHAIR: It is. There is another member, Dr Richard Lim so is also with the CLP.

Mr LINDNER: You are...

Ms CARTER: CLP.

Mr LINDNER: CLP. I saw a beautiful photo of you on the NT News with two ALP ladies the other day. I am going to get a copy of it.

Ms CARTER: You would be surprised what we get up to.

Mr LINDNER: So we have got a CLP here.

Madam CHAIR: We have two CLP members, there are three ALP members and we have the independent member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, who is also a member of this committee.

Mr LINDNER: Okay, I am not worried about who is here or what, as I have said, am I right to go now?

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LINDNER: I guess before getting down to some detail, I have got a very strong feeling arising from 1962 I think, I was working in the centre on cattle stations. I have a very cattle station based view of which – It originally started in Willkannia, New South Wales, it was illegal to cohabit – people were still going to jail for cohabitation, for supplying alcohol and that sort of thing and of course I suppose most of the people in the community across the bridge at Willkannia were of mixed descent and there was a terrific alcohol problem then.

It was almost as though abuse of the laws regarding the supply of alcohol and cohabitation was an excuse for the police to take action against someone who was regarded as a person of white decent. It was regarded as socially unacceptable. The Territory is very different. I got away Willkannia to get away from sheep and get into cattle work but Alice Springs is a very racist town. I lived in Alice when the law came through allowing people to drink. So while I was there people were still being locked up for supplying and then it became open. I left Alice and joined the Conservation Commission for a year in Alice. I married an Alice Springs' girl from the Smith family. Her mother was of full Aboriginal descent, a local lady, her father was of part Aboriginal descent, a very well known family in Alice Springs and we had a family. She came up to Coburg with me and I had a more open exposure and contact not on prescription of cattle station management where you had the camp and where you had the whites and that sort of thing. With Coburg people – and I was there for five years – I then had five years from 1972 to 1979 in Darwin and working out in this area, then came in this area and my marriage broke up. I came back to this area full-time in 1979.

Some people I have observed being here since the past essentially picked up culture of full Aboriginal descent language speaking people within weeks. They knew more about culture, they felt more – they obviously demonstrated more comfort with the culture – I just lost the word there – they are at home with the culture and could accept it in a matter of weeks. It took me about 20 years, but you have to remember I had a station background and I came from an earlier era.

Ms CARTER: When you say some people, do you mean white people? Some white people?

Mr LINDNER: Yes, white people. I will give you an example. Peter Wellings, for example who is now in charge of Parks North. I have not got much of an opinion of him as a park manager but I have a very high opinion of his rapport and affinity with Aboriginal people in this area. He went into the old camp at Mudginberri a legacy from the buffalo station, cattle station at Mudginberri. One of the best examples of surviving in the seventies and eighties of the buffalo area which was a rebel Aboriginal area against Oenpelli Mission, against communities. A lot of the people here were of Maningrida and Arnhem Land origin and alcohol, women, things like that, were often the currency of the relationship between people on the stations. The station was functioning essentially on Aboriginal labour and that diminished progressively until the time the station closed, with very little or no Aboriginal labour.

Peter Wellings went into that camp with an interest in people, he developed relationships with people. He quickly just went in and identified with the people on their terms. He didn't try and change people, you are going to do this and that, you are going to make them work and make them eat lamb and peas on Sunday and this sort of thing. He just went in on an exploratory basis. But also on a social affinity sort of basis. So over that time that time, the one thing I wasn't impeded in was making observations and observing people. I can now look back on observations I made on day one and put a totally different assessment on them that I did at the time. And a critical assessment, look at the problems. I might be wrong now but I feel fairly confident that I recognised the bigotry and bias I had at the time, but I have still got accurate memories of what I saw and what it meant and I can reinterpret that now.

Alcohol is a big factor. There was a joke in Willkannia that people were widely out of employment there because equal wages already applied in New South Wales in the pastoral industry. People were virtually unemployed except very occasionally if a very good stockman would get short term employment until he went off and got on the grog and things like that. The police used to lock up good rugby players from the community the night before they had a rugby match against another town and that sort of thing and the people did not resent this, this was their way of life. They had known nothing else and that was accepted. There was very little violence to do with Aboriginal people but there was absolute compliance of the people except when they got drunk and they got locked up.

That sort of observation was repeated continuously on people in communities, the language speaking people or people of full Aboriginal descent and you have got to remember I married one who was of $\frac{3}{4}$ Aboriginal descent whose other sisters and brothers had varying degrees of alcohol problems. Most of the Smith family have died of alcohol, the older members. Her father did not drink, he was totally anti-drink, Willy Smith, but we had a family so I have got four children, one daughter, three sons, who are slightly less than half Aboriginal descent – I will keep emphasising this because it is a fundamental issue of concern to me out here that it does not matter what I see the United Nations charter our own laws, I deplore the use of "right". We have got the right to die, we have even got the right to – in a framework of time, to die within 100 years, everything else is being born. Everything else is a chance in my view. When they are put into law they have fat chance it's the law of change.

There is a lot of tendency to look for causes – I am talking about alcohol now, alcohol problems – I am just giving an overview at the start and it is my view, looking back on observations from relationships, my friendships, losing a wife with a bad alcohol history, irretrievable through diabetes – even though she gave up alcohol – I am a drinker by the way. I think I am overriding the fact that I would like to put it as an overview and clearly state that nothing else will change if you right all the wrongs, if you remove all the social problems that language speaking people feel, if you give them control of their own affairs, if money, vehicles and alcohol are available, you are still going to have a disastrous alcohol problem amongst those people. I am quite sure of it.

Why I am stating this is because I think that it is not a soft option problem you have got with alcohol. There are cultural reasons that make it hard to get the non-drinking people – a lot of people do not drink – to impose over the drinking people. Here it is illegal, as we saw with the Tommy Pascoe farce which has gone in. It is

illegal and the wider community will take to a transgressor at gun point to really be an Aboriginal man in the community in relation to other people.

I have got clear indications from my late wife, particularly, that women were the chattel of their husband, that they could be killed and so on. I remember during committal hearings for a very bad murder – a grog related murder in Pine Creek. People going backwards and forwards to Darwin. A woman ran around with her throat cut in a Housing Commission home in Pine Creek. The house was covered in blood and she died. The committal hearing – people from here went in and out of Darwin and one old chap, a very compliant person, he did not buck the system, he was not a Tommy Pascoe, he was a survivor of accepting the system and sticking with it from the days when the buffalo industry, the police, the pastoral industry ruled the roost totally. And he said it was a lot of trouble, his term was “for one gin” but what he meant of course was that it was a lot of trouble for one woman and that he is not regarded –he is dead now – he is not regarded by women or anybody else as a monster or anything like that, he was a very nice old man, but that was what he was brought up with.

So that in spite of all those things, change in those areas, it seems to me that the soft options will always predominate in our society. We do not like to have incarceration regardless of whether it is good for non drinking people and so on. We are prepared to enforce United Nation’s view point on those relationships by armed police intervention, yet very reluctant now because so many got chances given for controlling alcohol abuse by force. I do not think it has been discredited, it was handled properly, but I do not see it is going to happen.

I still say that if you do everything right socially, if people are brought up somehow so they have no memories of – or preferred memories of dominance and wrong things – I mean I have got to remember a lot of old people were descendants of people who had survived by compliance, they grew up in the cattle and buffalo industry, that was their culture – and I saw a lot of people and worked with a lot of people in the buffalo industry and in the government that really seemed to have no resentment against white people, that was all they knew. But if you change all that, I firmly believe that people of full Aboriginal descent – and many of them will be speaking languages learned in the communities for a long time if not forever, you are going to have people using every trick in the book to convert their vehicle access, their money access, their so called rights into procuring of alcohol. That alcohol will be consumed in a totally out of context to what people prefer to believe the alcohol beverage is all about, they will go right off their head, and they will be a terrible imposition on their children and in many cases, for many, on their wives who try not to drink. In many cases they do succeed but they have broken homes, broken communities, because of what starts out as a minority alcohol factor.

This was very evident at Oenpelli when the Border Store started. A strongly church controlled community, some had free access to alcohol at the Border Store. I went into Oenpelli with some people. In those days, Kormilda College was the only venue for Aboriginal education, specifically for Aboriginal education, so Alice Springs girls coming from -relatives came up here – they came to Kormilda. They formed relationships with Arnhem Land people, one married a bloke from Goulburn Island. We took our kids up there – my kids – we took them to Oenpelli enroute to Goulburn Island, Barbara came down from Goulburn for the school holidays, we went into a house where an old lady and several other people there. It was a clean house, it was a big house, it was a modern house at Oenpelli. This was going back in the 1970s – and everything was okay, we were talking and laughing and carrying on – I think I was the only male there – and then a group of people came in with a carton of beer from the Border Store and they demolished that house. The woman said she didn’t want them there, she held the door shut, they pushed the door open, they went over the top and we moved out

I gave evidence against the Border Store. There was opposition to the renewal of its license when the Hills were running it. It was a very brutal. Terry Robinson when he started it, was an absolute rogue in selling grog. He had a very strong affinity with the Aboriginal people, he spent a lot of time with them, they still had good memories of them. For example, when my wife’s father murdered someone she reckons Terry Robinson got him off. I don’t think he did, but she believes it.

The Hill family in the end were of total contrast. It was strictly money. When people questioned what they did, they would say we cut the cartons in half, we only sell half a carton at a time. Alf Wilson. Superintendent said we have a payroll of \$25 000 we have got a supermarket which takes \$1000.00 out of that payroll, the rest went to the Border Store.

I gave evidence against renewal of the license. The Liquor Commission hearing, Michael Maurice, I think was the Liquor Commissioner or appearing against the license – it might have been the Liquor Commissioner – and someone said I have very strong views on it, I was working here for the Conservation Commission at the time I was placed in Darwin and my colleague in Darwin said we should be able to buy grog from the Border Store. If the people at Oenpelli want to get drunk, that is their business, why should we not be able to buy beer at the Border Store. I said, people at Oenpelli, that is less than 40%, are drinkers. The impact of those 40% is horrific and from that point on I have had a sort of a very strong concern that really people are not prepared to look at the point of any sort of real concessions on their part and that the problem is still there.

Mr McADAM: Can you just elaborate a little bit you saw on people are not prepared to allow concessions. Who are you actually referring to?

Mr LINDNER: The wider community that controls law.

Mr McADAM: Government agencies?

Mr LINDNER: Whether it is Marion, whether it is Sue Carter, whoever it is, the government agencies and the people who vote them in now – at that stage we were under a assistant administrators, I could shoot half the buffalo in the Northern Territory and get away with it, it was a very different place in those days.

Mr McADAM: But you are also referring to local government councils, you are referring to Aboriginal organisations.

Mr LINDNER: No, not in those days. When I say people I am talking about my work colleagues, but the rank and file of the people who were in control of the Territory at the time. People could make representations on behalf of – this is well before land rights – on behalf of Aboriginal people, but I do not think things have changed now. This is in a town where they have gone to the enth degree – Jabiru today, and we will get back to today now – where they have gone to the enth degree to comply with Aboriginal concerns over alcohol. Now one thing that is forgotten about Kakadu Park and forgotten about Jabiru and that, it was set up by the Fox Inquiry, by the government adopting the recommendations of the Fox Inquiry. I recommend that your committee examine the Second Report of the Fox Inquiry very closely. It is a very important document to me because I am very strongly (inaudible). I am totally involved with Aboriginal people but I see a good (inaudible) being good for Aboriginal people locally. I see the mine as the vehicle for financing that. In my a bag I have got a quote from Toby Gangali saying that Jabiluka should follow on from Ranger and that was when Jabiluka was an horrific proposition, not going through the local processing but separate, under Pancontinental a huge thing. And politics in this area changed it. If you go to Fox you will find a large part of his concerns about development of this area, and he was under a bit of a misconception there – it was a contact area. It was a contact area by Aboriginal choice, in fact a lot of people of descent from this country had left here and were living in the fringe camps of Pine Creek and Katherine and Darwin and Oenpelli and through the efforts of Parks particularly, a lot of them are now back in the park. In those days there were a lot of Arnhem Land people who did not have the options of alcohol and tobacco dispensed through whatever processes they could raise money by working the buffalo – a lot of those people were working here.

It was a contact area and I said in evidence to the Fox Inquiry that people at rock bottom, they knew what was happening at Mudginberri. Mudginberri was in full swing at the time. But this town, Ranger have come in here as the government sort of setting up a park – Fox set up the concept of the park and it has been complied with. I did not think it ever would be. In my view the mining company is the only person that has delivered the

goods around here. The government agencies have let the area down, that is my point of view, a very strong feeling.

I do not know whether Yvonne Margarula is going to give evidence. I am very close to Yvonne a lot of the time, we brawl a bit, but she is my late wife's daughter and – whenever Yvonne, as successor to her late father, Toby Gangali, has requested anything of the mining company in relation to alcohol, they tend to instantly adopt it. For example no take-aways in the Club was Yvonne's initiative, it had nothing to do with the Gunbang Action Group. A lot of people do not realise that. Her and someone else got in contact with Ranger and said it. Her family is a disaster. She has got one sister who does not drink and she is dominated, to some extent, by her husband who is a very heavy drinker and exploiter of all avenues for getting alcohol. But I deliver meat to the communities and in the Jabiru community there was an instant change in what we call a drunks camp.

Ms CARTER: When you say that the mine is the only agency which can deliver the goods around here, what sort of goods are they delivering?

Mr LINDNER: The mine in compliance with the mining lease and they are running a town in compliance with the requirement of them setting up a town and running it and they pay money. Now there is only so much money that Aboriginal people and even less goes to the local people, but there is a very clear equation in my mind – and the only way we will ever find out whether I am right or wrong is if the mine closes. There is a very clear equation that the Commonwealth administration of the Alligator River area identified as Kakadu Park has been sustained by both Labor and the Liberal governments in view of the fact that the book balance on the financial value of the mine to Australia. I have got no problem with uranium if the human race wipes itself out with uranium, it will only be a few years before it wipes itself out with something else. But it would take 360 buffalo farms similar to the one I run for local meat delivery, to have the Toyota buying power of Ranger's production. Ranger is a whole in the ground, the water that runs past Ranger, in spite of all the allegations made over the last couple of years is clean. If that water was put into Sydney's drinking water it would be cleaner than the drinking water they use now. It is clear – if you go to Adelaide River which has a very small land use, percentage wise of its catchment, Adelaide River through Adelaide River town, runs thick mud. Here the river has run clean since we got rid of buffalo.

Getting back to the alcohol problem. The mine has tried to beat the system time and time again. There has been no christian ethic based high mindedness in telling the mine they are not allowed to do it. I have been in the coordinating committee meeting and it has just been a straight slug fest. The Commonwealth have not backed off on control of the mine. There was a series of spills through poor pipelines through deliberate or accidental turning on the wrong valve and things like.. They were slugged out of the committee and they were stopped and the mine were told they have got a contract to deliver the mine goods. That does not give them any dispensation to breach their contract with the environmental side of their contract.

Ms CARTER: Do you see the mine as a positive then for Aboriginal people?

Mr LINDNER: Total. I mean the social impact study done recently of Kakadu was one of the greatest frauds I have ever seen. It released a lot of money for housing and that. Some of it was well spent and some has been bad news. But if you look at – there was no model set up for the social impact. The model would have been well there is no uranium here ever. There was uranium here, but it was unsellable. There was uranium here but the government decided not to mine it even though it was sellable; and the one that happened. The one that happened resulted in the acquisition of racist land destroying pastoral leases which allowed the control of mimosa and feral animals. It resulted in land rights to people, which I think to some extent has been mishandled, but I would not change it. Particularly the original stage 1 land rights where people really fought their cases out with Justice Fox the first Land Commissioner for the Northern Territory. Their case was not opposed but in those days there was a lot of full descent senior people, particularly Toby Gangali and the whole people, are all dead now, and there was no trouble for Justice Fox to deliver the land to Aboriginal title.

Ms CARTER: What do you think will happen when the mine closes?

Mr LINDNER: It depends of course on global economics at the time. If the present economics prevail where Australia is a fairly rich country, people are still having holidays. Kakadu will deteriorate, and Aboriginal security in Kakadu will deteriorate and that means elsewhere too. A lot of the Northern Territory government's – Coburg is a classic example because I knew Coburg and I was here close to Coburg and a lot of the Northern Territory government in dealing with Aboriginal people, say 10 years ago in the Everingham, Shane Stone day was motivated by proving to the Commonwealth that they could run Kakadu by doing it elsewhere. They have not got Kakadu so things – and the cost of it is very hollow, other costs keep coming up competing with budgeting, so your environment budgets in the last days of the CLP government and the present government and the whisk of percentage of what they were maybe 10 years ago.

Kakadu has been very important in setting the pace in land management in Aboriginal land rights and that stuff but within Kakadu they had all the time lines which it clearly delivered in the Fox recommendations in the second report of Fox. In the first report deals mainly with economic, and he concluded that uranium mining was economic here. The second report there were all other issues, the conservation. Everything is going backwards now as far as I can see it, which fits in with my big picture that degeneration of the human in the civilisation, I think Aboriginal people are the ultimate people, they live with the land, they are a fellow animal of other animals, they have communication skills, they have art skills, they are hunter-gatherers, they did not fight the land.

So you have got to read that into everything I say here. Kakadu has been a revelation as far as it got. Now I think it is on the slide because people are being unrealistic on the social reform, being nice, being seen to do the right thing, consultation. I am a dictator, I believe in being a dictator and right. You have got to be right to be a dictator. But committees are the bane of getting things done and things I would choose in life are through using the finance of the Gagadju Association like controlling mimosa and a few things like that – pretty much and then getting people to agree with them after, not putting it up to a committee first. Even goose seasons can work that way. Yes, I am losing track of things here. I will try and get back on again.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, I just want to ask you a couple of questions in terms of ERA and the mining. I mean we get to a point and we look at the substance abuse and the problems with a lot of the bininj in this region. Do you think that the mine – and you say that it has been a good thing – has the mine left it too late in terms – and I know about the Fox report, I have also seen the Chris report where you had a number of studies put in and there was – and one of them, the social impact, the study that was done in terms of Kakadu. Do you think those governments, both federally and Northern Territory governments, have failed the community – the bininj people around Kakadu and that the mines have left it too late – and I know you say that it was only on Yvonne's say that in terms of the take-away, it was not the mine or the Gunbang Association, she said no take-away – that the mine has left it too late in terms of – that they should have had some process happening with the traditional owners?

Mr LINDNER: No, they were not allowed to. The mine had been defined as the bad guys and since Yvonne took an anti-Jabiluka stance, which brought a lot of people out of the woodwork to oppose a mine and her father died in about 1991. I remember speaking to Steve (Roger) at Mudginberri. I said I know the family pretty well. There is only one person, I have had fights with Toby, some almost physical. He was blind, he was old, but he was a man. I might be a thug, I might be a man, I do not know, it depends on which culture you belong to. But Yvonne always approved of constraint on drunken people. We had situations where cars were going like that and then run into the road – it could have been an iron wood tree around the edge and people fell out before they had gone from here to that wall they had fallen over drunk and that sort of thing. That is the thing Yvonne grew up with. The misconception is that it has just happened from the mine – this is where I lost of track of a little while ago – you are talking about – I do not think the mining company has any responsibility whatever, it has to be imposed by the government. It has been contracted to produce uranium, it has got conditions under which it can produce it. Now the mining company has tried to be the system, it has to an

extent had a big achievement with the complicity of the government and that is the removal of ERISS from here. That was a big win for the mining company.

I do not hold them responsible for that, it happened by government decree. ERISS has largely gone to Darwin. A big social group of public service brats who were not overawed like a visiting mining inspector from your government's Department of Mines would be going out there and he gets taken around by the mining company people. ERISS were a law unto themselves. Too much so. But the charter and their presence. They did not deliver the goods, the mine was kept in shape – I was there when arguments between the senior supervising scientist and so on.

So what happened with the mining company was they inherited, as Fox realised, they inherited a disastrous alcohol position. In appearing to be doing the right thing, when things were put to the mining company what should be done, they complied with it. For example, you may be interested to know that Aboriginal women were not allowed to drink at the Jabiru Sports and Social Club for years. Now this was an agreement between people like Allan MacIntosh, his boss and people like Toby. When I say Aboriginal people I am not talking about you, I am not talking about my first wife, I am talking about, I am talking about the language speaking people from Mudginberri camp who were involved in prostitution and everything else in Mudginberri often at the direction of their fathers or their husbands, within the Mudginberri meat workers to get alcohol. It has just been the way things have happened up here. Being a chattel, there was no moral problem with doing it. It has been one of the biggest hurdles to disassociate Aboriginal people with. But Toby was not part of it. Yorkie (?) Bill was not part of it. They were the only people living in Kakadu independently of Mudginberri, mining exploration camps and other fixed settlements. They were the only people living independently of Kakadu when I came here. Two families in the whole of Kakadu living in the bush. And it is significant that they were not engaged in procuring grog with women. Very, very eminent, really strong senior people – I might mention Big Bill Neidje did not live here, he was on the north coast and he came in later and he was in that category himself. But they were not typical of – strong people who gave good evidence were culturally strong people, it was just part of the way of life.

This was inherited by the mine era which comes up to the present, this problem here, People preoccupied with alcohol. For example, my late wife, Ruby, told me a lot about working for Jack Hugo at Munmilari and growing up at times in Darwin where the father, Harry, who was a buffalo shooter – assistant to a white buffalo shooters, that the currency - Jack Hugo, I do not know whether he had any relationships whatever, he had a bloke, Mack who had a permanent relationship with an Aboriginal woman managing Munmalari for him and on special days metho was put in the tea, methylated spirits.

The currency in Darwin for a woman was a bottle of port and a bottle of metho. Now this is how people grew up here. It is fundamental to recognising the situation that was in place totally by a contact community when the mine started here.

Ms CARTER: When did the mine start?

Mr LINDNER: About 1980 or something. I was here when they built the town. I came out here in 1979 and the Fox Inquiry was in the mid-seventies and I gave evidence to it at the request of the Commissioner – there was three commissioners with Justice Fox presiding, we drove him around, Frank Well and myself, being the rangers in charge of the area for the Northern Territory government.

Ms CARTER: What do you think can be done around here to help the problem?

Mr LINDNER: First you have got to understand the problem. Not so much look at the social issues but I think – years ago I learnt about a Japanese study – Japanese people have not got any problems, there racial background, they are their own people in their own country. They have got an observable lower level of ability to handle alcohol than caucasian people. Now the study found that 50% of Japanese have – this was years ago I

read it - alcohol hydrogenies 1 and 2 factors, 50% are missing. Obviously quite a number of caucasians, probably less than 5% probably lack these factors. We are all aware of people who have a few drinks and go off their trees. I have seen eminent people, I have seen an MLA's family. His wife has a few drinks and start talking to much and the MLA says "that will do." It is an agreed signal she does not drink anymore. She is a cheap drunk. 50% of Japanese are cheap drunks. My observation is people of full aboriginal descent are almost all cheap drunks. So that people like Yvonne totally accept that their family's drinking has no real relationship to drinking by the non-Aboriginal community.

With people of mixed descent and I do not mean to offend anyone here with this. It is just what I have observed and I am telling this Commission because I do not see any point in not telling what I know, or what I think I know, seeing a cross section of my family, I have four children and they have varying degrees of alcohol tolerance. They are all above what I would call a person of full aboriginal descent alcohol tolerance and some of them are cheap drunks and some of them seem to be able to drink quite freely. They do not drink much, when they do drink they seem to be able to mix socially. I think once you have people of mixed descent, for various reasons there is no prescribed level of alcohol tolerance. Some people can drink, some can not.

I have found a problem that I was a very good friend of Clive Holding because he helped us stop the Koongara mine, which we absolutely opposed years ago. When I say we I am talking about myself and the Alderson family. I was married to Jessie Alderson at the time. Mick and I had a very strong campaign to stop the Koongara mine in compliance with the Fox Report and for our own reasons. Mine being an advocate of Kakadu not any loyalty to Aboriginal people. It was my own feeling, private feeling. And we dealt with Clive Holding when he was in Opposition before Hawke got in, and Clive Holding, Susan Ryan I think was the designated top Shadow spokesman for Aboriginal Affairs before Bob Hawke got in. Clive Holding proudly told us he had a secretary with Aboriginal heritage. We went down there to take legal action and get legal advice and the woman, you would have to be told that she was Aboriginal to know she was Aboriginal. My mentioning this is because Clive Holding came into the portfolio of Aboriginal Affairs as you probably recall. He came to Oenpelli to talk to people, and the meeting went on in the morning and he spoke to them and in the afternoon he came back to the meeting and everyone was totally off their whack because the Club had been opened. Now he was absolutely disgusted with these people. He said, "I have a secretary who can turn up for work, she does not have any problem. These people have to learn to do this". I do not think that people will learn to do this, it is a genetic problem, it is not a moral problem. It is not a problem of ignorance. And until people can address the problem on that basis you are - Clive Holding walked away from those people, and I reckon that was terrible. I think that was a terrible problem. Oenpelli was one of the places that brought home to me just how devastating you know, 20, 40 percent alcohol abuse component in your community can be for everyone in the community. And yet Clive just said to the Oenpelli people, "waste of time giving them anything, waste of doing anything for them because they are a mob of drunks they have got to learn to behave themselves". I have tried, nothing changes at Oenpelli. I think that is typical of who you asked me about who I was referring to, I am talking about us. People are not prepared to view this as perhaps a problem going beyond wrongs, domination, invasion, what have you. There is a deeper problem, that is, my view is if you have got money, you have got vehicles and you have got supply of alcohol there is going to be a problem out here with the people.

Ms CARTER: Do you think there is anything that, for example, governments can do?

Mr LINDNER: Yes, there is a lot of stuff that I refer to as tokenism, for example, there was questioning a few years ago about dry communities. Now again here is an example of the wider community really not prepared to address the problems for Aboriginal people from their viewpoint. The viewpoint in Darwin which was widely reported in the NT News was that these people should be able to drink on their own communities instead of coming in and being long-grass people in Darwin and all I could think of was those mothers struggling with kids, struggling to keep sober, struggling to have a house out in the communities because the availability of vehicles and money through the social security, welfare system is not really effected by the availability of mine royalties. Yvonne had put up the mine as being the monster in alcohol. Her father had an

alcohol problem before the first negotiations started on the mine. I have been here since 1972 and the mine has a very small part in worsening the alcohol problem, it has provided an option – for example this town is a closed town, there are not competing liquor outlets if it was an open Territory town. It is a much better town for a non-drinking Aboriginal to be in than say Katherine or Kununurra or Wyndham.

Repeatedly the supermarket was are trying to get a license. Repeatedly the Director of National Parks, Derek Ovington, a really obnoxious person that we only appreciated after he left how good he really was for issues here. He just knocked it back. Over a period of time the residents in Jabiru matured from thinking this is a horrible place, there is no advertising, there is no competition, the supermarket is dreadful. They suddenly realised it was a very nice place to live and it was like Adelaide in the 1950s where you could leave your bike on your front lawn, you could leave your door open. Totally different from Palmerston and other areas of Darwin which is the same in Adelaide now, break-ins are the norm everywhere in Australia.

Jabiru was different because it is a company town and what - the mining company hasn't let the town down. The government agencies and the Aboriginal people have let themselves down by not using the mining company's clout and consideration to the full. They could have done a lot more. Initially, if you had not had this mine here you would have pastoral leases, several small regional centres for alcohol distribution, unconstrained by the Director of Parks. It would be under Territory control if the mine was not here. The pastoral leases would still be going. What areas had been set aside for park use, which would be very restricted, may be about a quarter of it now would be covered in mimosa, the pastoral leases would be covered in mimosa and Aboriginal people would be fringe dwellers. As I said, I sincerely believe that the model that has been set up by Kakadu has given something for the Northern Territory government to compete against. I reckon it has had a flow-on benefit where they have tried to – where the Territory government has tried to prove that it can adopt that line of thinking towards Aboriginal people and Parks. It is pretty dead now but the thing that was put in place, I think it was a result of the insult of this park being given to the federal government.

The park was set up well, the management was set up well. It was all in compliance with Fox. He put the vision up, the government opted to go for it. He showed a lot of concern over alcohol. The mine has mined the uranium, has not polluted the park, is in place of putting up a follow-on operation which has got an indefinite future and people have lost of the fact that the problems here were not caused by the mine, they were caused in spite of the mine, because I would hate to think what this place would be like if the Commonwealth had not taken this land over under uranium mining, supervision policy and allowed it to develop as the rest as the Territory has. There is nothing wrong with the Territory people, white or black – you have got to look at reality and reality for black Aboriginal people is not good.

People that are in the state of apathy. Nothing has changed. Yvonne wrings her hands, a few other people wring their hands, a few people perhaps with the idea of getting jobs and that, say their concerns but basically nothing is changing. There are people down in the Mudginberri Camp which still exists. They have got good houses and that but they are still the same people.

One of the few things that I have got a strong view on is that it has changed a little bit is that ganja is coming totally in here. If you want ganja, you can get it. People who have left alcohol and gone to ganja are socially better off. Alcohol with ganja in black camps are better off than alcohol.

Madam CHAIR: In terms of their behaviour, when they are ganja?

Mr LINDNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Can we just explore that a little bit. I mean in most of the communities that we have travelled – and you are saying – is the ganja used quite high around here?

Mr LINDNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: In most of the communities that we have travelled and had a look and where people are dual users, so they are quite heavy drinkers and they are also smoking ganja. They are heavy drinkers and if they have started off abusing alcohol, they have already developed alcohol induced psychosis and then they take on ganja and become dual in terms of ganja, that then adds another – then they have drug induced psychosis. So you have got two – because they are multiple users.

Mr LINDNER: No, some people have given up alcohol for ganja.

Madam CHAIR: So they are just smoking here and they are not drinking.

Mr LINDNER: Yes, Dean Whittaker, if you make him, may talk about a person, she is not an isolated case, she was on borrowed time just waiting for a murder. Murders are going to happen when people drink a certain amount of alcohol. A person who gets murdered could have been the murderer just with a slight change in circumstances. She is a heavy ganja user.

She lost her family. She dropped alcohol. She was very ill on alcohol. I suspect, I am quite sure – other people have gone from one to the other, they can talk – and the other thing I am worried about is – I once told Mick Palmer when he was a Commissioner of Police, I thought ganja should be legalised. The police were ineffective against it, it is a source of corruption and distraction, it is priced too high and people steal money for it. People who cannot get ganja can be quite nasty, certainly Aboriginal people who cannot get ganja can be quite nasty. Part of this I think is because they have not got respect for women – if you are talking about men in particular – they have not got respect for women for cultural reasons, so women who have got money are going to be in trouble if they resist giving them money. But it does not compare overall with, I emphasise is that this person has given up alcohol and gone to ganja.

Madam CHAIR: So did not have a previous history of smoking marijuana while they were drinking?

Mr LINDNER: Do not know. These people were just bad self-destructive drunks, and that can often mean killing people and all sorts of things.

Madam CHAIR: I note that you say that it should be decriminalised but isn't that substituting one substance for another substance.

Mr LINDNER: Yes, there is no answer for the other one at this stage but the – the main reason I say that is because alcohol is legal for whatever reason and ganja is not and they are directly comparable. The only disturbing thing is the schizophrenia that seems to be associated with the ganja. It is pretty bad. Now I do not know whether it is because people of mixed descent use more ganja – I think they do – unless their alcohol if you look across at the board of people with substance abuse history, but there are a number of people of mixed descent here, many of them – mostly caucasian descent, who are on permanent medication for schizophrenia and still taking ganja.

You would probably know – it is only an observation. I really have not talked to doctors about it or anything because I am preoccupied with the alcohol.

Madam CHAIR: You mentioned before Dave, just briefly, about the dry areas legislation which is something – I mean there is legislation where a lot of communities can apply to have their communities deemed a dry area. Do you think that is a good thing or a bad thing?

Mr LINDNER: Very good if it is enforced. The weakness in it is not being enforced. The cops are having a holiday because of all the confusing direction they are getting on not locking people up. One thing – I have said it before, it might not have come through – is the welfare of the non-drinking kids, almost an entirety under

the age of 10 and a lot of women – maybe only one woman in some households with 10 adults, but that important woman when you go to that household regularly and you see all the kids around that woman. Yvonne is one of them, May Nango is another one. The singular sober people in a super family group of sisters and so on.

Madam CHAIR: But don't you see that as a role of government – I mean where we should be supporting the Yvonnés and the Mays who are burdened down.

Mr LINDNER: Yes, I reckon dry areas are great. Now Yvonne does not cop anything. She has got a house full of kids, she is overwhelmed with the kids but there is no drunks there. Now I have seen a bloke deliver turtle meat, drunk as a skunk, come up with the turtle meat, she thanked him for the meat and then rang up the police and got him locked up because he was drunk. That is how she grew up. She knows there is no holds barred with drunks. May does not have that attitude. May, her husband is still alive, he did not drink. He got overwhelmed by pressures from widowed sisters-in-law and so on. All drunks and he is totally paralysed from strokes. So she is on her own there. She does not have that, she cops it, gets overwhelmed by it and learned to live with it and she is a slave to it, but the police are not enforcing - exploratory enforcement of the law is what we need where people actually go out and look for people breaking the law, not wait for a phone-call from Jimmy Wok Wok who runs a dry house, or largely dry house at Jabiru or somebody else to complain.

It means there is 50 breaches for every one that is investigated. If they went out they could effectively stop alcohol being taken in. The other thing is they had a night patrol there which I reckon is a joke and they tended to take drunk people back home instead of the sobering up shelter and it ended up with a particular situation of sober people going to the sobering up shelter to get away from drunk people. That is pretty sad. It is not available to May because they have not got a car there because of the drunk people, and she has too many kids there anyway. But it has happened with blokes living in the bush. There is a chap Lucas here. He used to go to the sobering up shelter to get away from drunk people.

When you set up this high mindedness and that sort of thing, I think in these areas when you talk about – I have put so much value on dry areas that I started to say there should be zero tolerance. That is how strong I will go on it.

Mr McADAM: I think the message you are trying – the message I get is that it is of such catastrophic proportions that – I mean, something has got to – that is what you are saying isn't it?

Mr LINDNER: I mean they are totally on medical, social life support. The only reason the Mays and Yvonnés are still alive is because that if someone kills them they know they will get locked up. Normally – a few years ago alcohol was not available, the finance was not available, the people used to be killed for interfering in alcohol procurement.

These people are only isolated from retribution – well May does not interfere. She has old culture. Yvonne never married and fights over Jabiluka which I totally disagree with – but all this has made her a stronger and stronger person and the alcohol thing, she has zero tolerance. It goes back fairly well, there were two households where she lived in the bush and when drunk people came over from the drinking household to where her old grandmother, who was pretty sour on the world and transmitted it to her grand daughter as much as she could – anti-man and so on – when someone went over there drunk you would see crow-bars and spears come flying out and they got beat up pretty savagely including her father and yet they doted on the father, he had cars he took them around. The drunkenness thing was – when you really think about it, before her, her very powerful sister got married to a drunk neither that family was anti-alcohol as teenage girls they were physically protecting themselves against drunks including their own parents.

I thought it was well known the situation was a catastrophe. Perhaps it has been watered down by the fact that there are a lot of people of mixed descent who are living very productively and very energetically in Darwin

now and the whole picture, but when you get out to language speaking people in communities and where you have got – this community has always had access for alcohol free of the restrictions of Arnhem Land reserve, as it used to be. So I do not know, other communities, for example Chris Haynes has just walked in and will tell you a lot about the history of Maningrida, and how it has had alcohol, where whites and blacks alike have been obsessed with alcohol getting it in and that sort of thing, but never freely evolved in the context that it has been in this area.

Mdm CHAIR: Yes, we were at Maningrida yesterday looking at some of the issues there. Is there anything else you wanted to tell us.

Mr LINDNER: Yes, sorry I have been so long winded.

The only other thing I will tell you there should be exploratory police work aimed at getting a higher apprehension result if possible is on drunken driving. The drunken driving around Cooida is a daily event. Several cars there are daily offenders. How the hell these people have still got their licences I do not know. They are aggressive people. They have had histories, I do not know, it does not necessarily solve the problem but I just feel very strongly for the non-drinking people who are not protected by these rules.

Mr McADAM: Dave, can I just ask you one question because, and I notice there are no indigenous people in here in terms of talking about some of these sorts of issues and there may be a reason for that, but you have been around a long time, you have been in the bush you have seen things change, you have seen some communities make attempts to tackle the alcohol problem. You now refer to ganja and there are lots of other little places in the Territory that are not dissimilar to here, in the context of the social problems, the grog problems, the whole lot. Tell me this, why is it that some communities, some towns can sit down, and talk, and develop strategies?

Mr LINDNER: Do you know of any effective ones?

Mr McADAM: Well I am not suggesting they are effective, but what I am suggesting is that there have been some really - what I would consider to be some really sincere attempts to solve issues that you talk about.

Mr LINDNER: I see this experience come into here with people, particularly from the Tiwi Islands, if they come here for a job, they say 'oh we did this in the Tiwi Islands, and we are going to do it here. But you have no chance in the world, a totally different situation. A lot of people from a lot of the different clans here. The people on Tiwi Islands are either Tiwi people or they are people from the childcare home, people who have chosen that way, and here it is very different. These people had a culture, what I call 'buffalo country culture'. It was anti-missionary. Ruby was the quietest person I have known. She had deep-seated attitudes and resentments, and one of them was against Oenpelli. When various people died and we buried them at Nourlangie Camp and they had funeral service, we had someone from the Church there because it was just accepted, we buried them. And most bear no resentment against Church but when Oenpelli people came down and started singing hymns in language, several times Toby just went right off his whack and assaulted them. He said 'we are here, this man was my friend, I looked after him at the buffalo camp, and that went well. Now the Oenpelli people might have been drinking but he had a rejection. They were a rebel group, and alcohol was a part of that rebel group. There is a culture problem here. Now the other thing is there are too many damn meetings here. It just goes on and on about the most trivial rubbish that is no different between whether we have too many dogs in the camp and whether we have too many murders in the camp. There are meetings and meetings and meetings, and meetings for social events, people tend to get paid for them. Park management, mine management, just involve meeting after meeting.

Ms CARTER: Do Aboriginal people come to the meetings?

Mr LINDNER: Yeah, I am talking about Aboriginal meetings, I am talking about Aboriginal meetings. I am talking, these are specifically to engage Aboriginal people in consensus on decision making. So that alcohol is just another one, and it is something that has not changed. Which comes back to what I am saying. People will say things that they do not believe. They will say things because they want you to hear it, but every indication is that everyone agrees that grog is part of the daily scene here, and things will not change.

Mr McADAM: And that is all the more reason to be fair dinkum about it.

Mr LINDNER: Yeah, you are not going to beat it by saying the right things and being kind. Kindness, gee that is the lowest form of insult you can dish out I reckon when you are talking about dealing with a problem. I might be the extreme of the level and gone in the other direction. So you have got to look at what the history of the place is, everything has been done here. It has been looked at before, but there have been dry areas and it has not been proved wrong and I have seen the changes, I saw the changes achieved by Yvonne's decision and the ERA's willing compliance to stop take-aways. There is a lot of drunks around still but they – when you deliver meat and you are dealing with people and you tend to drive around drunk people – because I have got a very short fuse – I could be saying good day to someone one minute and then they push me over the limit and I go – so what I do is I just do not go where I think that is likely to happen. But I love the work I do, I really do.

There has been things achieved by dry camps and by restrictions on take-aways. Now the Cooina situation is people beat the system down there, start slipping stuff out the back door. If there was no restriction on Cooina there would be a 1000 Arnhem Land people permanently living around Cooina, except it would have lost its license due to murders and things like that. We went through that when Gagadju acquired Cooina in about 1981. I was actually the person who brought the first limit in there. A foster son of mine was accidentally shot, kids hunting with an unsafe fire-arm, out of my control, got shot dead and the police came down and there were a couple of stand-in managers at Cooina – if you want to refer back to it, Pina, who was George Chaloupka's, partner was one of them and another woman, Daphney, I do not know where she is – they were managing the place and I was just sticking my beak in and they were quite happy about that. The cops came down and investigated the accidental killing. Cooina was a disaster area with drunk people everywhere – it was not flash like it is now, it was an old demountable pub, a burnt-out demountable pub that Tom Opitz had set up which was past its use by date. But it was a good place to go to, but there were drunk people, dirty on the floor when the cops were not there, so I just told a complete lie, I said the cops said if they ever see this place like this again, they will close it down permanently. I said we will put it in a four can limit and anyone who disagrees with that has to go and do a breathalyser test to show they are not over the limit. Daphney and Pina, who both liked local people were quite happy to do that. I do not know who held the license at the time but it went on.

Now that was attacked incessantly as was the – what I forget to mention was the law about no women drinking at JSSC was destroyed by the Northern Land Council as was the restrictions on alcohol purchased by Gagadju people at Cooina and yet it is a place – it is a good tourist venue. A lot of the local people go there for shopping and socially and it would not have lasted five minutes if there were not several constraints there. It would not last five minutes.

I think anything restrictive that is being put in at present is not being enforced. When I say enforced, they are waiting for complaints. Basically they are discouraged from touching Aboriginal people and I am looking at the Aboriginal people who live like this, that is all I am interested in. I am not looking at rights or anything else because I do not believe they exist and the other thing is restrictions on sales in the area they are applied are a good thing. Lift them and you can see what I mean. I see it basically because I am dealing with alcohol actually going into the household wherever I deliver meat.

Madam CHAIR: Any more questions?

Mr McADAM: No.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Ms CARTER: Thank you.

Mr McADAM: Thanks David.

Witness withdrew

Session 3

Madam CHAIR: I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome the Gunbang Action Group who are appearing before the Committee today to brief it in relation to its terms of reference. If required copies of the terms of reference can be obtained from the Committee secretary. The meeting is open to the public and is being recorded. A transcript will be produced and will eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise if you want any part of your evidence to be 'in camera'. The decision regarding this will be at the discretion of the Committee. You are reminded that evidence given to a Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege and for purposes of the Hansard record I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Mr HAYNES: I am Christopher David Haynes, that is my full name and I am the Park Manager of Kakadu National Park and I am here as a member of the Gunbang Action Group.

Mr SCHOLZ: David Scholz, here as Manager of Kakadu Health Service and also a member of the Gunbang Action Group, albeit a very recent addition.

Mr RALPH: Andy Ralph, Executive Officer of Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation and Chairperson of the Gunbang Action Group.

Mr CURRY: Gavin Curry, Kakadu Health Service, alcohol and drug worker, connected to Gunbang Action Group.

Mr CHALOUPKA: Raymond Chaloupka, Community Patrol, Kakadu.

Madam CHAIR: I would like to introduce Mr Elliot McAdam. Elliot is the member for Barkly and Sue Carter who is the member for Port Darwin. We have two support staff, Pat Hancock who is the Committee Secretary and Liz McFarlane who travel with us.

Mr RALPH: Thank you Madam Chair, we will probably give a short introduction and then we can take questions from the group if you like. The Gunbang Action Group has representation from most of the Aboriginal associations in the area, most of the hotels and clubs, also the mining company ERA, the police, health and service providers, the Northern Land Council, Kakadu National Park, the Supervising Scientist and the Jabiru Town Council. We are a large community group with a wide range of conflicting views. Representing the Gunbang Action Group here today is myself, Andy Ralph, I will be giving you a brief overview of alcohol and substance abuse in the Kakadu region shortly and also the role of the Gunbang Action Group amongst the community. David Scholz is the manager of the Kakadu Health Team, will talk about health issues and service provision in the region and Gavin Curry is the newly appointed or recently appointed drug and alcohol counsellor, will talk about prevention measures, treatment and rehabilitation options. We also have Dean Whittaker here who can offer an insight into social impact and community dysfunction resulting from substance abuse, primarily alcohol.

You have probably already heard from previous evidence this morning some of the brief history especially relating to pre-Kakadu. It has been established already that the Bininj was a fairly small number, I think the 1975 Census had about 46 Bininj in the area and they were primarily at Majinbardi.

Madam CHAIR: How do you spell that word?

Mr RALPH: Bininj. There was only three major communities, Majinbardi, Tonga and Nourlangie Camp in the mid 70's, and as you have heard in previous evidence this morning the Border Store was the about the only outlet in Kakadu at that time. Pre-mining there was lots of studies and reports done. The Ranger uranium inquiry, the Fox Report in 1977 did forecast the social impact of balanda and the dysfunction caused by the availability of alcohol. Several social impact studies done in the early 80's, were done in the early 80's, and nothing really until "Gunbang or Ceremonies" study done by Dr d'Abbs and the Menzies School of Health in 1996, and then there was the Kakadu Region Social Impact Study done in 1997. Both of those reports documented serious alcohol abuse amongst Aboriginal people in West Arnhem Land and community dysfunction. As a result the mining company, ERA, banned take away alcohol from the JSSC in February 1997. While this did slow down drinking in out-stations it has resulted in an increase in grog money and alcohol being brought into Kakadu from the Bark Hut, Pine Creek and Darwin.

There has also been an increase in the use of gundalk or marijuana although it appears to be nowhere near as prevalent as in some of the totally dry communities of Arnhem Land. There have been a few incidents of petrol sniffing over the last 30 years with the occasional flare-up which is normally quickly controlled by the community. The last such incident was at Majinbardi two years ago which resulted in a community meeting to sort out the issue. It was quickly dealt with. Again like gundalk, petrol sniffing it is far more prevalent at Gunbalunya and other Arnhem Land communities.

Alcohol is an absolute way of life for a number of hard core drinkers and is the main source of social dysfunction and disharmony in the Aboriginal community. Quite often the hardest hit quite literally are women, children and also the elders. For them especially the humbug late at night is just too much. Two recent deaths of Aboriginal women from a town camp and an attempted suicide in Jabiru all appear to be alcohol related. The community has had enough. Some, including the Kakadu Board of Management, are calling for further restrictions on the availability of alcohol. Others just wish the problem would go away.

So what can we as a community do? The Gunbang Action Group is committed to reducing alcohol related problems in the region. At the moment there are ad hoc restrictions at the various liquor outlets in Kakadu. Some work, others do not. We are committed to drafting Memorandums of Understanding with all the licensees in the region, including the Bark Hut. It must have complementary restrictions that are uniform for all outlets while taking into account the individual needs of the tourists and residents. My personal view is that the clubs and pubs must remain viable and attractive places for local Bininj to consume alcohol responsibly. The alternatives is for an increase in grog running and the possible relocation of hard core drinkers to Darwin. We need the licensees to not only concern themselves with patron care issues on their premises but they also need to address the far reaching effects of social dysfunction on our communities caused by alcohol abuse. Restrictions and other band-aid solutions alone are not the answer. Band-aids tend to fall off. Addressing work calls including developments on Aboriginal land, prevention measures, education, rehabilitation and professional and family support networks are equally as important. The licensees and other stake-holders, both Bininj and balanda must play a far greater role in these areas than they do now. If not, I am concerned that the community will soon normalise these recent murders and attempted suicides in Jabiru, with the result that similar tragedies in the future will be regarded as common every day events. While the potential exists for this to occur I am fearful that the Kakadu community could soon get a state of crisis if it is not already.

Before we go any further I would like to table some documents for the Committee. One is quite old, it goes back to the mid 90's, Gunbang or Ceremonies, which was done by the Menzies School of Health in July 1996 concerning alcohol.

Madam CHAIR: So that was Peter d'Abbs?

Mr RALPH: Peter d'Abbs and Chris Jones and that looks at the history and contemporary problems with alcohol in west Arnhem, including Gunbalunya and Jabiru. Also 'Accounting the cost of Gunbang' which was done by the Gunbalunya Clinic in 1999 and a recent letter which was drafted by the Gunbang Action Group to the JCC about the introduction of keno, which was presented to the club a few days ago.

I now just ask Gavin Curry just to talk about some of the prevention measures. Gavin has only been in Kakadu for about 12 months. It has been a long time coming. I know there has been a lot of sort of, I suppose a lot of us have been, especially the Aboriginal association has been asking governments to provide money for years for a drug and alcohol counsellor and at long last we do have one.

Mr CURRY: I am Gavin Curry, Kakadu Health Services alcohol and drug worker. I have worked here for 8 months in fact. Given the Gunbang Action Group concern themselves primarily with accessibility and availability of alcohol I have worked on treatment and community education issues. So treatment has occurred in forms of referrals from clinics, work places, correctional services and case management with a DV worker, worked together on DV issues. By far and away, the greatest number of referrals I have had are from Corrections. I have also had some self referred people that have been associated with the Court, so I have convinced people to turn up, do an assessment, they take it to Court and that leads to referrals back to Corrections who then, the person is then ordered to seek treatment for their alcohol problems at the other end of the Court process.

Madam CHAIR: What percentage of your patients are actually Court referrals?

Mr CURRY: 96%

Madam CHAIR: About 96%

Mr CURRY: Yes. No-one has ever self-referred because they walked up feeling they had a problem. It is always associated with a clinical presentation that come on after that, Court, some offence, some legality, DV stuff, uptake of the service other than that.

Madam CHAIR: And what sort of support process goes in place? I mean it is alright to get this referral from the Courts, but in terms of the Northern Territory government agency, Correctional Services, that does this referral, what sort of support goes back to you as the alcohol and drug worker when they are referring these clients out of the Court system?

Mr CURRY: I meet with the worker once a month.

Madam CHAIR: The worker as in the person.

Mr CURRY: The Corrections person, Sharon Brewster. We discuss cases. I talk about where people are up to, she makes suggestions, I visit with people, so it is case management basically from the Corrections, alcohol treatment. The other thing I suppose you could mention with Corrections is that I meet with the prison-based people, Not that a lot has happened so far. We are talking about ways of supporting people who have been in jail, done prison-based drug rehab stuff and come out again. That is slow going but we do hope to have support for those people once they are back in the district. The numbers are not that big so it will take a while to build a case load. That is treatment. Referrals to Darwin based treatment services are zero. I have had one

fellow who was a work referral go have a look at a place. He may go, he may not. The coin is still in the air with that. There is not a lot of drive from local people to get into treatment in Darwin. The few that I have talked to that have been in treatment were not particularly satisfied with it either whilst they were there.

Madam CHAIR: Would it make a difference to have a treatment and rehabilitation centre located here rather than? I mean part of the, I mean a lot of our mob, I mean people do not want to go to Darwin for treatment, that it would make more sense to have a treatment centre here in Jabiru.

Mr CURRY: I have no idea.

Madam CHAIR: I am doing a leading question here.

Mr RALPH: It probably would be advantageous of course. I know a lot of people do complain too about the treatment service in Darwin are mainly allied to the Church as well, and that does turn people off as well.

Mr CURRY: The person came from America and he a theory if you build a treatment centre people would turn up, but he was found sadly wrong. Providing it does not put people in it.

Rev WHITTAKER: I think in the d'Abbs Report there was some consideration given to it and it was decided that probably in terms of expense and possible usage that it probably did not seem a viable thing. That was 1996.

Mr McADAM: I have just got one question. You said that you received referrals through the Court system. Are any of those referrals incorporate compulsory treatment, ie from the Magistrate?

Mr CURRY: Um those Orders have been made, yes, and Corrections are there to make sure it happens.

Mr McADAM: But what I am saying to you to be referred outside here for treatment?

Mr CURRY: No, have not heard that. People have not been ordered to attend Darwin based treatment but I know people have gotten from gaol six weeks earlier into CAAPS, so they did it on the way out, but not because they were ordered to.

Mr McADAM: After being placed in prison.

Mr CURRY: I also understand that Magistrates can not order people to do the prison-based program. It remains voluntary and prison-based people I have spoken say that once the person is in gaol, what are you going to do? If they do not want to do the program you can not put them in gaol, they are already there,

Mr McADAM: A pris on-based program.

Mr CURRY: Beg your pardon?

Mr McADAM: I was not referring to the prison-based program.

Mr CURRY: Perhaps you had better repeat the question I was not listening well enough.

Mr McADAM: Well the point I am trying to make is this, that you do not have any rehab or any services here, you are pretty much starting up as I understand it, this position of yours is the first one in a number of years, is that right, the first time ever, is that right?

Mr CURRY: I am, no CAAPS were based here, and tried to treat people in this community or have people go from this community to their services in Darwin, and I do not believe they were very successful in that.

Ms CARTER: When people are referred to you through Corrections as a Court Order, I take it to mean that they are not actually voluntary in seeking your assistance. Are you able to assist? I mean, how do people respond to a program like so called rehab when they are not actually motivated internally to change? Is there any point to it?

Mr CURRY: I think, it is on a continuum of 'could not care less' to quite spontaneous and enthusiastic participants, so it is the individual.

Ms CARTER: Where would the weighting be on that continuum be for most of your clients? Would the majority be in the 'I am quite happy to be here' category, or are a lot recalcitrant and sort of turning up with their bottom lip dragging?

Mr CURRY: I suspect if they were not referred by Corrections I would not have seen them at all. I also suspect that depending on the skills of the counsellor you may move people substantially towards considering changing behaviour for those that are interested regarding their drug use and legal problems as being one and the same thing.

Ms CARTER: How long is the program that they are obliged to participate in?

Mr CURRY: It is somewhat discretionary in that the person may be under supervision by Corrections for say six months. If I was to see the person a couple of times and believed that there was not much room left to move with them, as the situation is, I tell Correctional Services I am pretty much winding up that case. I do tend to visit people again towards the end of their Order, because what they are accepting as a problem with 12 months hanging over their head probably needs looking at again when there is only a week or two left.

Ms CARTER: Just one last question on that. Is there a tendency, at your program if they weren't to attend, is there a threat that they could be put in gaol?

Mr CURRY: I do not think gaol, no. I think that a person cooperates to the best of their ability or not. Corrections make decisions as to what they would do next with that person, but I have never been in a position to have to threaten someone.

Madam CHAIR: I am conscious that we have to talk to the other workers, but could I just ask you one more question, and I would be interested in the statistic of 96% of your clients

Mr CURRY: I pulled that out of the air.

Madam CHAIR: No, no. Well I mean we are talking a rough estimate of say 96% and we will not quote that this is the exact figure alright. This is just picked up out of the air, 96% of your clients are actually referred from the correctional, or from the Courts. Now you can answer this or you do not have to answer this. What percentage just say out of that 96% are actually referrals in terms of family violence incidences as a result of alcohol.

Mr CURRY: Oh. Would you mean that the primary reason for the directions is because they are charged with family violence or

Madam CHAIR: A domestic violence issue, and I mean they are coming through the Court system, part of the requirement is to go through and to have this case management and to look at rehabilitation and treatment in terms of alcohol.

Mr CURRY: A couple. I would say that for a lot of people that I am involved with, domestic violence is an issue that has not been dealt with through the Court. Their offence was not a DV offence, it was something else, but that is not to say that the issue has not existed for a lot of other people.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, go on.

Mr CURRY: And to start on community education which is trying to alter the culture on drinking, there has been some men's camps where we deal with health issues. There is some clinical in-services, there is face to face discussion with other concerned people, not necessarily clients, and in terms of cannabis and petrol, I have done nothing nothing. It is not something I have worked on yet, it is an alcohol based service only. Thank you.

Mr RALPH: Madam Chair can I introduce David Scholz the Manager of the Kakadu Health Team. David supervises the night patrol now, also Gavin's role as well, and also the aged care and the general and Aboriginal health care.

Mr SCHOLZ: Thank you. After hearing that others have been only here for 8 months, I am a very new arrival, I have only been here about a month, so most of my information is gleaned from intensive discussions within the team and being associated with the Service.

We service a population group of about 355 people, it varies from time to time, located within Jabiru Town Camp and 13 surrounding outstations. In there, there is up to 180 adults in that population group. Now talking with our primary health care team and also the team from Territory Health Services, Health and Community Services, we see a large number of clients having alcohol problems. The other predominant substance is marijuana, although that is less prevalent in the clinical setting in terms of the effects that we see. The best estimate from staff is that at least 85% of the adult population has you know, are drinking and at least 60% of those are drinking dangerously. So there exists a very substantial problem with alcohol here, but the effects we see are obviously physical. There is an impact on people's clinical health, impacting on hypertension, liver disease, brain damage associated with excessive drinking. There is also an effect on other diseases such as diabetes, very significant physical effects. Psychologically people you know have a loss of self esteem, of self worth, a loss of, a general loss of capacity. Socially people are focussed pretty much away from family and concentrating on sourcing their next drink or their next drug, whatever that may be. There is obviously an economic impact that for a significant portion of a low income anyway goes to supporting drinking that there is not enough food for the family, so you have those flow - on effects that result from, and there is a big influence on children in terms of supervision, impact on education, if the parents are up all night, the kids are often up all night too. They come to school the next day, they are very tired, often hungry. It makes learning very difficult. So there is that, a lot of social impacts, and then in the community there is obviously a lot of drunkenness, violence including family violence. We do also run a the family violence worker and there are increasing number of referrals as she is becoming better known in the community and develops rapport with people.

Certainly there are other impacts in terms of people's ability to be employed that I think there is a big link there, and there is a high impact on the health service, the cost of health care. If people continue in this trend I think the impact on individuals family means that the costs are going to be huge, and that unfortunately results in premature death. We know that the gap in life expectancy is no greater than 20 years and that seems to be worsening when we have murders and attempted suicides, that seem to be strongly influenced by substance misuse problems.

In terms of what we are doing Gavin has sort of given an overview of his role. We have a primary health care team of a doctor and two health workers and to the extent that is possible they try to do short interventions with clients where alcohol or other drugs are known to be problematical. There is a lot of links with the family violence worker and also with our community educator who is trying to help I guess bridge the communication

gap so that we can do or offer more effective services across the range of activities that we are doing. I think the really key point is yes we may have some services available but, it is really about the ability of people to utilise those services and to change. It is about the underlying capacity of people. I think with the failure of the education system with the reality that there is no meaningful prospect of employment for most of the Bininj population. The people are so perhaps so caught up in surviving rather than being able to focus on developing their life.

I think the real need to address the problem needs to go back to that fundamental capacity of people to actually take control and to change and that means we need support right across the government and community sector to actually give people a better education. To foster socio-economic development so that there is some prospect of employment and engagement in the community. The law and justice system needs to, I guess be more proactive to divert people, particularly youth, away from the prison system where they tend to acquire sort of skills that are not really in the community's best interest. So I think there is a lot of work needs to happen there before any health specific interventions become very effective. What we are doing at the moment, while we can help the odd client, I think a lot of people are just so despondent, just really do not feel that there is any option for them to change. So in order to make what a health service does more effective, we need to look at some of those real underlying issues.

The other things that are important is where possible we offer some community education through the men's camps and other things but there is a lot more work to be done there to get a meaningful message across about the risks, the harms associated with excessive use of substances and I do not think anyone relies on supply reduction alone to change the, - we have to change the demand and that means giving people alternatives and capacity to change and to seek out alternatives.

Some other things that I think would help certainly greater work from the Licensing Commission about creating safer drinking venues, better policing of the licensee, better training for licensees and a couple of Bininj last week were speaking about the appalling inter cultural skills that the current licensee, or the manager of the Jabiru Social Club has so I think there is a lot of work that can be done there too, to make those venues a better environment so people can learn responsible drinking. That they are helping people to deal with drinking in a way, and certainly a better policing. That has been an issue people have flagged but the ability of the police to respond to incidents involving alcohol are pretty limited.

Madam CHAIR: In what way?

Mr SCHOLZ: I think there is two things. One is the you know, the amount of staff that are based here. They are often called out.

Madam CHAIR: How many police do you have here? I think it is six, and they cover a region of what?

Mr RALPH: They cover Kakadu., Kakadu plus.

Rev WHITTAKER: Point Stuart back to about maybe Corroboree Park, down I think to Mary River Roadhouse, but not Pine Creek, and then back.

Mr SCHOLZ: One of the problems that exists here and in other areas in the NT is the practice of diverting local phones through to Darwin after hours, and that creates a lot of difficulty for Aboriginal people. They get rather confused when they get this operator that has no idea where they are calling from and it makes it quite difficult for them.

Madam CHAIR: Can you just, so if something happens on a weekend, right after hours, if there is an emergency.

Mr RALPH: In Berrimah.

Madam CHAIR: Someone rings here and it goes to Berrimah.

Rev WHITTAKER: One of the difficulties is, the person will say how do you spell Mudginberri, and like a lot of Bininj hang up.

Mr SCHOLZ: They are really alienated by that process.

Mr RALPH: After hours is 4.00 pm onwards.

Mr SCHOLZ: So I think they are some of the issues that help, you know, reinforce what the health service is trying to do and build it into a broader community approach.

Going back to Marion's point before about rehabilitation options, I think experience from elsewhere in the NT suggests that a locally based facility would be much more acceptable than going to Darwin. The people in Central Australia were much comfortable staying within Yuendumu or Mount Theo rather than going to Alice Springs. I think there would be a general acceptance with them. I guess the overall trend with them towards regional health services. It perhaps should be considered in the broader West Arnhem context. So in summary I guess we can offer some short term intervention, some education services, some very basic treatment services, but there is a need for a lot of other development work for us to build on that we obviously can not do by ourselves, and that sort of points to the need for a better coordination role so that this I guess ways for all the various departments and organisations to communicate and to have some sort of common vision of where we are going and how we are getting there.

Ms CARTER: Is the primary aim of this group always to concentrate on Aboriginal issues, or are non-Aboriginal issues part of your brief as well? For instance this is a mining town, which stereo-typically would have alcohol problems, and I do not know this as a fact, but is your concentration purely Aboriginal?

Mr RALPH: Yeah, pretty much, the focus is Aboriginal groups, all the Associations are represented. The group was formed in 1996 out of concerns mainly from people at Mudginberri. We do not believe there is any great problem with the Balanda community especially the mining community. They are regularly subjected to alcohol and drug tests when they get to the gate at 7.30 every morning, when they get on the bus to work, and I am sure if the police were here they would be commenting on the same but there is not a great problem with the Balanda community when it comes alcoholism.

Mr SCHOLZ: I guess on the clinical perspective obviously there are large numbers of Balanda with drinking problems but I guess their capacity to deal with it is greater, so the natural focus of the group is on the people that need the greatest assistance, but that is not to say that there is not substantial drinking problems within the Balanda community.

Mr RALPH: At this point maybe Reverend Dean can talk about some of the social impact and community dysfunction which he sees out in the outstations.

Rev WHITTAKER: Actually I will be speaking later on behalf of the Uniting Church but I was asked if I would make a contribution in terms of the Gunbang Action Group as well and I just would like to make a few points. When I look at the region there is a part where it goes it is not that huge an Aboriginal population. There are significant controls in place. Theoretically this place ought to be doing probably better than anywhere in the Territory, and I guess my concern is that when one looks at what actually happens for individuals and people on communities and families, it seems to me that that is not working. Despite the fact that the population is reasonably small, that there are significant services and controls in place, the problem continues to be there. In terms of, we tabled the d'Abbs Report, out of that report came a plan that the Gunbang Action Group has

continued to work with and work on from what time that was produced. It would need to be said that we are called the Kakadu and West Arnhem Gunbang Action Group. The Gunbalanya side has not really ...

Mr RALPH: They boycott the Group. The Gunbalyunya Sports and Social Club boycott the Gunbang Action Group.

Rev WHITTAKER: So while there is some stuff in the report and certain things that we capable to relate about Gunbalunya , basically when the group meets it tends to be Kakadu group of people that meet and I think there is a significant level of cooperation and good work goes on. Certainly in recent times the participation and involvement of licensees has been significant. The area that I guess would concern me, and would even concern me in terms of today is the actual participation of Bininj themselves and finding ways to operate in which Bininj feel comfortable and which actually works as an empowering process for them is something that continues to be a major, struggle.

Mr MCADAM: What right from the beginning in 96 or just of late?

Rev WHITTAKER: My understanding is that beginning a point where it was decided to have the d'Abbs Report that there was quite a large public meeting of Bininj who said 'hey we need to do something, the problems are great'. So my understanding is that it was an initiative that came and I think Roman probably would be, you were around at that time Roman were you? When the group began, but it was saying 'hey there is a problem here, do something about it'.

Mr CHALOUPKA: Yeah. So in the early days there was some activity and it has sort of slowed down in recent times. Like this year there has been a lot of Bininj activity and talk with the group, particularly since the explosion of bars which we experienced here in February and March.

Ms CARTER: Sorry, what was that?

Mr CHALOUPKA: The explosion of bars that we sort of had in our community in February/March which was sort of associated with royalty payment, there is a lot of money around and a lot of drinking went on and from the community patrol point of view that just about everyone in the community, the Aboriginal community got assaulted or was a victim of domestic violence. Even community patrol members, key members were assaulted, our vehicles were damaged and it was a concern for that that the team members decided to have an open meeting to bring these issues forward, to see if we could do something about it. This year we have had three community meetings. We have changed our name, we have gone from a night patrol to a community patrol because when we did a survey of Bininj in the Park, about one third thought that night patrol should just look after the drinkers only. Another third thought that we should be concerned with the women and children, and so we have changed the emphasis of our community patrol in supporting women and children, victims of domestic violence. We have the situation where the Club and the Crocodile are ringing us up and saying we have got five intoxicated people to go.

Rev WHITTAKER: But they would not say intoxicated?

Mr CHALOUPKA: Sometimes they actually did say that you know, and how come, they are supposed to be asked to leave before there are any problems. The 'duty of care' seems to be pretty poor. You would have handled up to 66 people a night, on a Friday night, and that was huge. We actually had a shelter open for quite a while so we had a place to put them but we just got overrun The shelter turned into like a hostel effect. When we first opened the shelter, that was Shannon and myself opened up our night patrol shelter the locals did not want to go anywhere near it, they were a bit suspicious of it and a bit frightened of it, but some who got banned from Oenpelli, came here drinking and they really enjoyed being there so they could do their three months in our community staying at our shelter where we would wash their clothes for them and make meals for them, make the bed for them the whole bit, and they still had money in their pocket to go out drinking the next day.

So they would do their, they get banned from Oenpelli and they would come to this community and stay here for the duration of their ban across the river. As soon as that mob went back home, the local hard core drinkers, alcohol dependent people moved in and it was the same situation. We were just looking after the same people night after night after night after night. I mean those days we did not have a domestic violence counsellor, we did not have Gavin with his alcohol and substance abuse counselling and we were kind of out on our own and we got overwhelmed by it all. We did something unusual, like we were trying to run the shelter and do the community patrol at the same time, and there was only a handful of carers in this town. In fact, most of my team members are women, the men do not seem to want to participate too much in community activities.

Madam CHAIR: Why is that Roman, why don't the men want to.

Mr CHALOUPKA: Because I think the men feel worn out and men are, there are more alcohol dependent men than there are women. Yeah, it is just difficult. Most of the community groups here are women. So it got really quite stressful for them being out there as well, and when team members started getting assaulted, I started to get really concerned. Some of them did not get assaulted once or twice, but some of them three times, and the men that were in the team particularly got picked on. So they had good reason, they really nailed the men, so the men were less prepared to participate because of the social pressure that they are under from their peers, from the hard core drinkers. It turned out that we were actually there for the pleasure of the hard core drinkers and the licensees in the town, and we would be out until 2 o'clock in the morning wrapping the town up and the drinkers thought that was really good, because they were drinking and we gave them a taxi service home, we got treated like a taxi service. And, that made us feel no good at all. So when the violence turned on us, we had these open meetings and we did our community survey and we have taken information from that survey back to the communities and the people and now we are representing ourselves as a community patrol looking after women and children mainly, but we will look after drinkers early in the evening. Before 8 o'clock we will take intoxicated people home if the family says it is okay for them to be home. The hard core drinkers that want to stop there long time, are usually the trouble makers they start presenting themselves about 8.30/9.30, and they present themselves like going from one bar to the other. They will leave from Jabiru Sports Social Club and here, so we are not taking calls from the Club and the Crocodile. We are not picking up intoxicated people on request. If we see them out there and they want help, we will help them on the evening as long as it is before 8 o'clock, because with our new look night patrol I would like to have some of my members, as my members are mainly women, I like to have them home and with their families by 8 o'clock, so their families are safe. They have done their hours. We split shifts, we do some activity in the day, follow up activity day. We do some diversionary activities during the day, and evening time Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 4 to 8 we actually go out there patrolling. They are our money nights in the community, Wednesday, Thursday Friday, child endowment, social security payments, and then CDEP pay. There is always money around on those three days. So we are out there helping women and children and shopping to go home and stuff like that, and we keep an eye on the drinkers and the flagon wagons too, because out in the communities we can see who has run to the Bark Hut and try and stop them, and we drop around and see the old people and make sure they are doing okay before we knock off, if they have any concerns they will be helped. Community patrols looks after the women you know. We have got a lot of men in Berrimah Gaol, and the women become victims and are vulnerable while the men are away, and so we try and support the family unit while the husbands are away, and stuff like that is really important because if we take February/March as an indicator of the amount of violence we can expect in this community we can say well, we can lock up half the men, but what happens then to the women and the kids, you know what I mean, it is very difficult. We spend quite a lot of time supporting the women in the community that husbands are away and stuff like that.

Ms CARTER: At the shelter, is it now being used mainly to shelter women and children?

Mr CHALOUPKA: Unofficially yes. We do not have a safe place here for women, and I think an address is being looked for, for domestic violence and a safe place for women. Our shelter can be used as an emergency in that situation, but it is not really a very nice place, it is in the industrial state at the end of town and a long way from the police station, the clinic.

Unknown person: No money to run it.

Mr CHALOUPKA: At the moment, no we have not got any funding arrangements. We have been looking around for a nice shelter. The previous CDEP coordinator was looking for a shelter attendant and the previous night patrol coordinator was looking around for a place, both unsuccessful. For our community patrol to be successful here it has to come from the community. You have to have community members working it.

Ms CARTER: Why does royalty money, which I gather from your comment about February/March essentially ends up in the pub causing violence and that, why couldn't some of royalty money go into providing a domestic violence shelter?

Mr RALPH: I can answer that. The majority of the money, the vast majority of money in recent years, over the last twenty years in fact has been used to provide essential services which government have not provided in this area. We have built many houses, provided water, sewerage, essential services. It has only been in recent times when - we have had to employ our own doctors for example. It has only been in recent times when governments have come to the party over the last couple of years when now NT Health does employ a doctor which is based with the Health Team. In the past Gagadju paid for that. For about 18 years, they paid for a doctor. So, the royalty dollar only stretches so far and we do not see it as our responsibility to be employing full time attendants for night patrol.

Ms CARTER: But it could be argued that the royalties do stretch far enough to create a major violence problem here.

Mr RALPH: We would be looking at more like the licensees paying for some of the night patrol activities.

Madam CHAIR: That has been something that has been raised in some of the communities and I agree, I mean royalties can only go so far and in Darwin and elsewhere I mean the community of Darwin would not expect taxpayers to contribute towards essential services, and that should not happen out in the communities. But, the issue of, with Gavin, where did your position, I mean what is that funded from, is that Commonwealth or is that Northern Territory?

Mr SCHOLZ: Regional Health Service from the Commonwealth. Regional Health Service under the rural health program in the Commonwealth.

Rev WHITTAKER: My understanding with night shelter is that there was some mining monies that went into it from the Working Group.

Mr CHALOUPKA: Yeah, I do not know too much about the Bininj Working Committee, but there was a Bininj Working Committee that actually lobbied for the beginning of a night patrol here. They did a workshop about four years ago and money does come from the Bininj Working Committee via the NLC to pay for a coordinator and night shelter attendant, and I am not too sure, I mean ERA I think provided the money in the first place but the Bininj Working Committee goes to the NLC.

Madam CHAIR: There are many avenues in terms of diversionary programs, I mean if you are getting referrals from Court, I mean there is diversionary funding and programs there. There is the Office of Crime Prevention, Community Safe, and these things we can chase up and have a look at.

Rev WHITTAKER: Certainly at the present time basically for the shelter to run – for the community patrol to run is people on CDEP and like particularly the shelter have to deal with the kind of behaviour that you have to deal with and talk about all night shifts and things like that for CDP workers.....

A member: It needs to be topped up.

Rev WHITTAKER: It is not a functional thing, it just can not work I don't think without some way or other significant topping up.

A member: Training and resources.

Madam CHAIR: What I did not finish and I was trying to finish, one of the things that has come out and from our tour into some of the communities where there are wet canteens. Some of the communities that I know that one of the members of this Committee who is the independent member for Nelson, Gerry Woods, and his view, and I do not know whether this could be open for discussion. His view and I also take that view, I share it in part that the industry, we have the tobacco industry that has become liable for many chronic illnesses of people with tobacco smoking. Should the liquor industry who made, for some of the chronic alcoholism.

Mr RALPH: There is no question that historically the JSSC which is a multi-million dollar organisation, the JSSC, I think the membership is about 850 people, over half of who are Aboriginal people and probably 70 or 80 percent of the patrons are Aboriginal people which means the majority of their money would come from Aboriginal people, but historically the funding from that JSSC has gone to sporting teams with have limited Aboriginal participation like netball or rugby. The Aussie Rules is well attended by Aboriginal people who are not traditional owners unfortunately, but people who come to the area. We have been arguing, I know I have myself personally as a former president of JSSC ten years ago, arguing that they do more for local community. I think they should be employing local Aboriginal people as patron care workers on the other side of the bar and I have suggested that they be part of maybe Roman's team, the community patrol, so they are all, so everyone is well versed in patron care issues and also they know the other side of the fence. At the moment JSSC and the Croc and other licensees appear not to care too much what happens when people get outside the front gate. That is when people like us and David and Roman have to deal with what is left of the communities and outstations.

Madam CHAIR: Who, what association runs the JSSC.

Mr RALPH: The JSSC, the building is owned by Ranger Mine, by ERA, and it is an association of members incorporated.

Madam CHAIR: Do you get members that are elected by the community when they have their annual general meeting?

Mr RALPH: They had their AGM last weekend. They elect the committee, so there has been a fairly stable membership of around 800 people for the last 20 years.

Rev WHITTAKER: In terms of Bininj involvement on the Committee -

Mr RALPH: A very low Bininj involvement. I do not believe there has ever been a traditional owner of Kakadu has been a committee member, that is pretty fair to say. We have been trying to get more Aboriginal people involved who are non-drinkers. We believe non-drinkers should be on the committee of some of these licensed premises to get another perspective, and not just the seasoned hard core drinkers taking over the role of management of the club.

Madam CHAIR: You did mention and I had allowed other members of the Committee to have a look at that letter you wrote to the manager of the JSSC. Would you like to just expand a bit, I mean and I know we are going off a bit about the substance abuse but in terms of the gambling and the impact of keno.

Mr RALPH: Well basically with Aboriginal people we find in this area that most of them either have a problem with alcohol or they like to gamble. What has happened in recent times, the JSSC saw fit to introduce

Keno when they were approached by MGM Grand. I believe they are doing the rounds of several communities, and it was actually knocked back at Gunbalanya. Without any consultation the JSSC introduced Keno into the community.

At that time quite a few, quite a number of reformed drinkers, Aboriginal people who had done the hard yards in the past, gone through CAAPS, gone through other drinking courses, had not had a drink for a number of years, were then lured to the club to play keno. And from then it was only a matter of time, they would stick to their diet coke for a couple of weeks, then they would have a light can and next thing it is full blown, back to where they were five years ago. So we think that has been a major detriment to themselves and also to the wider community.

There is another little added sting to that, that is that the money won and lost at the club is lost to the community, 96% goes straight to MGM Grand Casino whereby, if there are informal gambling schools at outstations, and nobody pretends that there aren't, that money is shared around for days to come. They will buy a loaf of bread or a meat tray for the people who got done the night before.

So we think it was a bad call on JSSC, and the purpose of the letter and the reason why it was copied to Syd Stirling and others who have got power in these things, was to say there is no process for any introduction of keno. There is processes through the Liquor Commission for liquor outlets, but this had severe ramifications for the Bininj community by luring people to the club to play keno and then exposing them to a heavy drinking environment and culture.

Mr SCHOLZ: I think just to build on that, there has been no talk about no, on the sort of environmental side there is environmental impact studies before certain developments go ahead, but in the licensing, whether it be gaming or the issue of alcohol licenses, there is no such thing as a social impact study to think about the detriment to the community, and I think there is increasing awareness nowadays that you can not be focussed on economic outcomes, you have to be aware of the broader social and environmental issues as well. So I think there is a lot of I guess merit in considering that the licensing process should be subject to a lot greater scrutiny and look at the impact of its decisions.

Mr MCADAM: Can I just ask one question? Police – In respect of your community patrols, have you got protocols in place?

Mr CHALOUPKA: We are developing them. This quite often here they come and go quite a lot. We seem to have a policeman here at the moment, they are going to be here for quite a while and we are liaising with them on the dry areas, the reintroduction of dry areas into the community which has been successful at a few places, and we are going to be liaising with them on an on-going basis to try and work on Mudginberri. We are working on some signage at the moment for Mudginberri because it has been a dry area before. The last time it was actually policed was about 1991, so there is a whole generation of people that are living there now that do not understand restrictions, and the hard core dependent drinkers amongst them are going to be resisting it, but we are actually talking about signage. Signage and language, and we are starting to liaise better with the police and that has also come through, action through the Gunbang Action Group to this forum as well.

Rev WHITTAKER: There has also been some discussion of the possibility of ACPO's community police.

Mr RALPH: We have had approached the police and said that we want to re-look at the proposal of having our own community police officer based here in Jabiru, as there is in, there is one in Gunbalanya, there is a local man Andy, locally born and bred at Oenpelli, and he is working for them at the moment.

Ms CARTER: I understand that in about five years time the mine might close and I do not know a great deal about it, but I understand that the town will be bulldozed into the lake. What happens to places like Jabiru.

Madam CHAIR: Who said that?

Ms CARTER: That is what I hear.

Mr RALPH: I do not think that will happen. In fact, speaking on behalf of Gunjehmi, I represent the land owners, traditional owners of Jabiru, they are going through a process now with the NT government and with Federal government and the mining company to realise native title for the traditional owners and they see a bright future for Jabiru. But I can say that if and when

Ms CARTER: What does a bright future mean?

Mr RALPH: A bright future would be a town that is not dependent on mining income, a town that will be an economy based on tourism where I think Aboriginal people will live quite happily side by side with a large tourist component. Obviously we look forward to the day when we have control, more proper controls over the licensing outlets in Kakadu. The Gagadju Association does part own this place now and also Cooina, but Aboriginal interests have no controls over the JSSC, and also the caravan park and the South Alligator holiday Village. But we would be hoping that as consultations continue next year with people at Jabiru and the other stake holders like the NLC and the NT government and the Federal government. We do see a bright future for Jabiru and look I think it is fair to say that the alcohol problems that have been here for 20 years will take a long time to cure. No-one is going to say that we will solve this generation in the blink of an eye, but something that we are looking at in our proposals as we talked about with stake holders is the problem of alcohol and the future of some of the liquor outlets. But it wont be bulldozed.

Chris Haynes is the fairly new Park Manager. Chris was the original Park Manager in the early 80's but he decided to come back earlier on this year, so it is, in actual fact I suppose Chris you could say and his boss the Director of Parks has a major role in the issuing and the maintaining of the liquor licenses in Kakadu National Park. So that is all licenses barring Cooina which is on a separate lease.

Mr HAYNES: Madam Chair I guess I would like to be a couple of points. One is that perhaps just, one is to do with structure and legislation and so on, which I could perhaps come back to, and the other one was just while we are talking about the difficulties and there is no underestimating those, they are quite substantial. Perhaps, I would also like to say that just as it has happened over the years, the Park has I think actually contributed quite strongly towards a positive social benefit if you like. In that, for example, I have just been doing some counting up, the Park employs 30, currently 30 full time Aboriginal members of staff, it is out of a staff of 70 odd at the moment, so it is getting close to the 40% mark. At one time earlier this year it was actually over 40% of the Park's staff were Aboriginal. Now I suppose the point I really wanted to make is that by and large those people live pretty active bush orientated sober lives.

There are, obviously there are problems from time to time. Essentially those people are not part of that hard core drinkers that Roman and Gavin have been talking about, and I guess it is, perhaps salutary to bring to your attention, that where employment is available I think it does at least lift low economic standards. I mean the salaries I used to make are between \$1.5m and \$2m that are go into the Aboriginal community on its own. That is a fairly important economic input into this area. As well as that, there are a lot of Aboriginal people who get part-time employment in the Park so they might work for periods of anything between several days to several weeks or even several months and then go and do something else. The reasons may be because there is not any more work for them or it might be because that is their choice. Sometimes it is their choice, sometimes it is not. But anyway I guess that I am really saying though that those people are essentially part of us, well we regard as part of the Park team. It is just simply to say that where Aboriginal people are given or are able to, or have got access to worthwhile employment that they like, and the Park is not by any means the only one, there are many others, and then it does improve their lot as a whole. But having said that, those people are, let's say 30,

probably the equivalent of about 40 people who, 40 wages out of, what is the adult population here Andy in the Park area?.

Mr RALPH: Of Aboriginal people? I think the last census was about 480 all up, Aboriginal people in the Park.

Mr SCHOLZ: Up to about 180 adults, that is our records.

Mr HAYNES: And there are others who are working in full time things too. I suppose I just wanted to mention that as a perspective thing if you like. I do not have any other conclusions to draw from that. Except I think it does - that when people are not living in hand to mouth sort of grinding poverty a lot of the time and then, or not that grinding poverty, but people who are pretty poor and then just topped up occasionally by a royalty payment or something which tends to perpetuate that kind of boom and bust, no planning for money, no real sense of future I suppose, which is part of the domain we live in. But it is actually off set by people who are working in full time jobs. And there is, the tourism industry tell me there is no shortage of other work that Aboriginal can do. That is all very well, it is not an easy job to do either. Some people are exceptionally good at it. For example, this year in the seasonal ranger program, Mandy Muir and Russell Cubillo and Johnny Reid have played a really active part in that seasonal ranger program. But they are just very extroverted kinds of people who relate really well to people and they have been getting wonderful feed-back which gives them a kind of, what is the word, positive feed back which has just been great for them. But having said that a lot of Aboriginal people are shy and reticent and they do not want to put forward their feelings and talk about things that they do not really want to talk about. So I do not under estimate the difficulties that they have. But, anyway I suppose I am just saying that there is an upside as far as tourism is concerned if the right kind of linkages and what is that famous buzz word that is going around now, capacity building can be added. I like it, I think it is a good phrase, but people tell me it is over done. Anyway, I suppose that is just a perspective Madam Chair about how there is I suppose another side to the really serious and difficult business that people like, well this Committee, that will, some members of the more particularly dealing with this on a day to day basis. I am lucky to be one of those who sees the other side of things if you like, where people are doing productive things.

The other thing that I just wanted to talk about was just a little bit of the history. I think Dave Lindner has provided a lot of that, although I did not hear some of it. The Fox Report, as others have mentioned it, and Andy introduced as saying that it paid particular attention to the control of alcohol, liquor and possibly other substances, but it was really concentrating on alcohol when it made its report in 1977, and it went to the extent of talking about how there needed to be special attention given here, and ultimately when the time came for the JSSC to be licensed we had really had quite a stoush and I do not think that should be under-estimated.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service as it was then had quite a stoush with the Northern Territory Liquor Commissioner, Ian Pittman, who is an old and good friend of mine, but nevertheless we did not see eye to eye. Because he was under a great deal of pressure from the mining community to make fairly liberal access to alcohol as a mining community could perhaps reasonably expect, and eventually in 1983 while I was doing the job that Peter Wellings is doing now in Darwin, after a stint in the Supreme Court because we actually sort an injunction against the Liquor Commissioner from doing what he wanted to do, the government wrote a Regulation, my only modest experience in writing Regulations or drafting instructions, in the Commonwealth domain and at that time that Regulation is now, well that Regulation capability, regulatory capability was put into place. So now as part of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act under which Kakadu operates, there is a regulatory regime where the Director may or does control the outlet of liquor. So that the Director does have the capacity to, if he wishes to, over-ride anything that the Northern Territory Liquor Commission might want to do.

Now the approach that Park Services have taken for years and years really, is to do it by a cooperative and negotiated way, and I think that has largely been reasonable. And, where I am leading here is that the critical issue now is enforcement, rather than the regulatory capacity, and I do not have any difficulties or bad words or

anything of that kind to say about the Liquor Commissioner. I think that the Liquor Commission is trying to attend to these issues as strongly as it possibly can. So I guess, where we are at at the moment is finding the right mechanisms to achieve the will or the wishes of the Aboriginal community, and there are those people who are just not interested in stopping drinking and will go to any lengths to get alcohol in any way they can. And then there are those who like Jimmy and others, who are just really troubled by the incessant trouble that comes from the drinking people around them, and it is because it is I suppose community opinion is divided, and I have to say I did not hear all of what Dave Lindner was saying but in the latter part I can only agree that a greater level of enforcement is the direction that I think, or the thing that is really required at the moment. So that is perhaps, that is where Parks is sitting at the present time, perhaps others may not.

Mr RALPH: I suppose you could add Chris, that some of the problem is that the regulations are not uniform. Like at the moment, you have the situation at the JSSC where following a recent death we called an emergency of the Gunbang Group and we said to the club that you have to bring in some immediate measures and they decided to go to white cans only until 3 pm, but that did not work because the Cooina Hotel not only sold heavy cans but it also did take-aways. So nobody went to the club, they would go to Cooina until 3 pm, drink their, green cans on the premises, buy some take-aways, drink them and go to JSSC at 3 pm and then be refused entry because they were beyond the realms of decency. So what we are about with this group, we will be going through a planning process fairly soon where we have MOU's between the Gunbang Group and the licensees where we try and get uniform measures and restrictions in place. Obviously we have to take into account the vagaries of why Cooina is primarily a tourist destination where JSSC is primarily members only, residents of Jabiru and Kakadu. But it is something we will be hoping to address in the fairly near future, but at the moment, the main problem is, say apart from enforcement is the measures and restrictions are not uniform.

Mr McADAM: I think Andy just answered my question, in part, because that is what I was going to ask what the plans the community had in that respect because, the enforcement one is a real issue, and by developing a plan in consultation with other key stake-holders, the issue that you raised in respect to the perhaps the protocols with the hotels or the clubs. But I am glad to hear that because I think personally that is the way to go.

Mr RALPH: The Director could come in here with a big stick and just take them out, but probably, I mean the best way is a proper consultation process. Our group as I have outlined before has all the reps on board, mining companies, governments, government departments, service providers, Aboriginal interests as well, so we have set a date for about four weeks time. We will be, hopefully we will be in the room with Liquor Commission reps, Parks, people who can advise us on human rights issues. I mean, havingapproaches may not be legal in this instance for example, especially at Cooina, if Aboriginal people from say Western Australia or interstate want to buy a beer after a Yellow Waters Cruise. So there is a whole process that we have to address in the near future so we can uniform measures in place. And then we have to address enforcement issue as well.

Rev WHITTAKER: It is probably fair to say through to about May this year we were following a plan that mainly derived out of the Gunbang or Ceremonies Report, with modifications here and there. We hit a period, and I thought I had a copy of that to give you, but I can not find that strategic plan but since May through to about now there seems to have been quite a lot of feeling that maybe we need to change some things. There was a small group working on that , and certainly it looks like in the new stuff there is a directional gain. So I guess we had a plan that was kind of more or less coherent and consistent and we now have a plan that we are trying to evaluate and perhaps reset some directions, and this Hearing probably catches us a little bit betwixt and between where we are going.

Mr RALPH: For example, I will just mention, I will just expand on the MOU process. I was elected Chairperson of the group only a few months ago. The first thing I did was go and meet with the manager, the manager/owner of the Bark Hut where the primary source of alcohol which is brought into Kakadu. And he is very appreciative of the idea of forming an MOU between the group and his organisation. He wants something

he can put on the wall and say 'the Kakadu community do not want you to bring in large amounts of alcohol into the outstations of Kakadu National Park'. At the moment he can sell 20 to 30 cartons to any vehicle. He has brought in his own rule, a couple, only recently. One must have a vehicle, to serve alcohol. People have been dropping off on the bus on the way to Darwin, getting off and drinking and then trying to hitch lifts to Kakadu, and so the only thing, I think it was funny, purely self interest. Also he has now brought it down to one carton per person. I have said to him that possibly we have the case of maybe having a dozen people on a troop carrier, he should look at capping to maybe six, six cartons. But Colin at the Bark Hut is very happy to go through an MOU process, whereby he can have instructions from the community of Kakadu. If you are driving this direction you can not have just copious, any amounts of alcohol and spirits. So we will be looking to, all the licensees to have an attitude like Colin and get on board with what we actually propose.

Madam CHAIR: And that would just be in the relation to Bininj people that is travelling.

Rev WHITTAKER: Working out conditions - it is going to take some time.

Mr RALPH: That is why we are having a major planning exercise next month which will have legal opinions.. The other, I suppose the other vagary about this is that if you make a restriction on one, where do you stop. They will just go to Corrobooree Park, and go to Humpty Doo, and then we end up in Woolies or Coles in Darwin. So I think it is just a matter of having restrictions and regulations in place which people will still find attractive and they will still use them without feeling the need to go further afield.

Mr McADAM: It is working in other parts in certain circumstances, so it is just a matter of ...

Mr RALPH: I should, I must just also mention too the Gunbang Action Group has had a problem in the past whereby we have been virtually boycotted one way or the other by the licensees. Obviously when we sit around the table there is someone else with strong views, and they have their own views where they feel they have to fulfill their licence obligations and sell alcohol, you know, between, you know, early, you know, 11 am for example at the JSSC, until whenever, like you know, if it is going to be late at night. So we have had a problem whereby the JSSC actually boycotted the Group for about three years. The Gunbalanya Sports and Social Club does not attend any meetings at the moment. I see one of my roles as coming on board as the Chairperson as sort of getting these people around a table. We now have Coinda coming to meetings, the JSSC is coming to meetings. I dare say a lot of that has got to do with also the recent tragic events with the death outside the JSSC a few months ago, and another one near the town camp not too long ago. But as I said in my introduction, I am fearful that if these tragedies are allowed to be normalised by everybody, and that includes Bininj and balanda that down the track we will be too far gone, and this place could well be beyond saving.

Madam CHAIR: Chris you wanted to say something.

Mr HAYNES: Yes, Andy did you say anything about the Board.

Mr RALPH: I did mention that the Board has made a resolution, but you may like to expand on that.

Mr HAYNES: Perhaps I could, I am not here to speak for the Board, I can not, but I could just mention that the Board did make a resolution that they would like sale of alcohol in the Park for Bininj at least to not start until five in the afternoon, and their reason for that was ...

Madam CHAIR: This is, what Board are you talking, the Kakadu Board of Management?

Mr HAYNES: Yes. The reason for that was because they do find it difficult to get a wide enough audience of people to become interested to talk about cultural things, like going back on country, helping out with rock art protection and things of that kind, and they thought it might be a useful thing to do. But within the Action Group I think we have come to a view that it is really going to be hard to actually do that because it is just going

to be too restrictive, and I suppose a matter of finding the right balance isn't it Andy because if people, if you shut down everything during the day then they will definitely go to Darwin.

Mr RALPH: It has been suggested to me that we completely ban alcohol being brought into the Park. I think as sure as eggs you will find that there will be a large group sitting at the Park consuming alcohol brought from the Bark Hut or Corroboree. I mean my personal view is that we need to find a so called 'happy balance' whereby the licensees act responsibly. There are regulations and controls in place. Where Bininj and balanda are happy with the restrictions. If they are not happy with the restrictions they will then go elsewhere. So we need to for MOU's with the licensees, clubs and pubs that sort of allow people to drink in a responsible fashion. They will not go back upsetting communities or making life hard for the night patrol and they will be happy with what they have got without resorting to 'grog running' or heading off to Darwin for drinking binges.

Madam CHAIR: Chris was saying before that there was a good percentage of Bininj here in Kakadu do not drink, or most of them.

Mr HAYNES: Or drink in a responsible way.

Madam CHAIR: They take responsibility for their drinking. With a lot of the problems is it because of coming across from the river you get a lot of people from Gunbalanya, and I noted before and I am not sure who said, but when people from Gunbalanya are banned, when they run amok at Gunbalanya and they get banned, I think Roman might have said that they come across here and they take up residence here until their ban ceases.

Mr CHALOUPKA: Particularly last year. We have not noticed so much this year, maybe because they are frightened of the level of violence we were experiencing here. But last year that was the case and there was talk of maybe they are banned at Oenpelli, the Gunbalanya Sports and Social Club, that they should be banned here at the Jabiru Sports and Social Club. And I do not think that has actually worked before.

Madam CHAIR: That will need the cooperation of the licensee and those who think that they will be able to talk to each other.

Mr RALPH: I was the president of the JSSC 10 years ago and that was the case with a good relationship with the Gunbalanya Club. If you were banned on one board, you were banned on this board as well. What needs to come back as well is, when the Gunbalanya Club is closed for funerals, you will find that quite a few people come over this way and set up camp in Mudgenberri for three or four days. So there needs to be a complementary arrangement in that regard for funerals as well.

Mr McADAM: Can I just ask, say, you are the chairperson of this committee, and you have got representatives from most of the major stakeholders, being the police, the publicans, licensees, in the main, so it is really, it has been around for a long time, but it is just a refocus over the last few months; is that what you are suggesting?

Mr RALPH: Well, I suppose it has, to a point. I have said, there have been problems in the past where the licensees have boycotted this process. They have felt that we have been out to get them. That is definitely not the case. We just want to see responsible drinking taking place in an environment which will not be harmful to those people taking part in the drinking, or after back in the communities. I think we are refocusing to become a more conciliatory group and I believe that if this MOU process gets off the ground, if there are no legal impediments, or if everyone has good will, then we can have some pretty successful outcomes. You will never ban drinking in Kakadu. That is my personal view; note that one. There are some people who want that to happen. I think it is a completely unachievable outcome. But if we can promote responsible drinking, have some regulations; Gavin is on board now, the health team are working pretty well, the night patrol; all these will combine to make hopefully, a pretty effective package. It certainly will not happen in the short term. if we

can put on bandaids to those people who are severely affected now, but my main aim is looking towards the future.

Madam CHAIR: I want to say something but I do not want any of you men to get offended. But are there any women that sit on this committee in terms of views. I mean, given that, when we look at family violence, the impact of alcohol, and other things that affect our families, I mean, it is the woman that most of this stuff impacts on.

Mr RALPH: Our group comprises about 20 members I think. We have had a group involved certainly with domestic violence counsellors, a woman comes. We have quite a few Mudginberri ladies, some of whom are here today, come to our meetings as well. There are the health workers, so women do attend. I do not know if it would be 50:50.

Madam CHAIR: Don't take that as an offence, I just wanted to ask, to ensure that women were covered.

Mr RALPH: I think Lorraine Little is the NLC representative, she is the manager, she was going to attend today but she has got another meeting so she would not be counted as a token, I can assure you of that. But she is unavailable today.

Mr McADAM: That is a good mix.

Madam CHAIR: Chris, just finally, and I know that you were here early, back in the early 80s, but something, I mean, with the alcohol, and one of the things we have not touched on either is gunja and maybe we will leave that for another time; but in terms of the problems, the social problems, a lot of people over the past have targeted the mines as being to blame for a lot of the social problems. You have, I mean, 1980, and you have gone away again, but you have come back. Have you noticed a difference?

Mr HAYNES: No, I do not think it is really very different. I guess I have not done any kind of mental counting, if you like, of incidents and so. You can be very biased from where you sit, you know; from your perspective of who you are talking to and all that kind of thing. I do not really perceive that it is all that different. It was interesting to hear Dave, the last bit of when he was talking, that it really was, around this area was a community where people were here for drinking. Probably that was one of the major reasons why people came across from Arnhem Land, there is a lot of (inaudible) people who live in Mudginberri, and they are still there. Their traditional country is well inside Arnhem Land. And they were here then, and they were here many of them because of access to alcohol being better than it was, inside Arnhem Land. So I do not suppose I can really perceive a great deal of difference. I do not think it has got better or worse. But the community is definitely more affluent and perhaps all I could say, from my perspective, is that it could be an awful lot worse. It really could be an awful lot worse, because there is so much more money around. But I think that money coming through in a regular kind of way to responsible people is one of the things that is, what is the word, a good social manifestation, if you like; because people then start to plan their money, they do not think of it as something that has just fallen off a tree this week and there will not be any more for the next two months. And it enables people to have a better sense of what you do with it. I guess that is the feeling I have. Certainly it could be an awful lot worse when you consider the amount of money that is around. But I simply could not claim it is better than, or worse now than it was.

Madam CHAIR: And you did say ERA was on this group, of this Gunbang Action Group.

Mr HAYNES: Yes.

A member: Pat Carrick is here at present.

Madam CHAIR: Are you, is he planning to?

Mr CARRICK: I am here as an observer today.

Madam CHAIR: It would be good to see if we can slot you in, Pat, just to get the ERA's point of view, if you don't mind. We might just, have you got any more questions, anything you want to ask as a committee or, no questions.

Rev WHITTAKER: So will your committee actually have the capacity to expend money, or is it basically about just making recommendations, or is it ... to securing things, or what is the ...

Madam CHAIR: The committee when it was established in September or October, I am not sure which month, but when the committee was established last year, and the terms of reference accepted by a motion in parliament... The life of a committee is four years so we will go right through to the end of, before the next election; however, the three areas that we have narrowed in on, and that is alcohol, cannabis and petrol sniffing, we are hoping that we may spend about 12 months and then put recommendations to government. There are some things that have come up which are quite crucial, that people, when they have given evidence, the committee has taken a decision to actually put those things to government immediately. We have written to ministers across government and various agencies, requesting information in terms of what funding and at what levels go into those communities; and we can access that level of information for the committee in terms of our deliberations.

There are issues that, in our trips to Alice Springs where petrol sniffing is quite rife, and I know that there are areas and communities in the Top End where it is starting to flare up again and become quite an issue. People have asked whether this committee looks at extreme or radical measures in terms of legislating and making petrol illegal, in terms of sniffing and trying to eradicate sniffing. So there are things that, rather than waiting for 12 months, or waiting for two years or until the end, or the next election, that we as a committee decide as to when; well, this is more critical than that, let us put this up to government now; and usually it is by consensus. Most of us on the committee agree that we do not leave issues until they are too late, and pick them up straight away. There are things; I mean both Elliot and I and our third member which is no longer our third member. If there are things that we as Government Members can take up, we will inform the other Committee members and take them up within our Government. I mean in terms of programs and that stuff we were talking about with Crime Safe and that.

A Report will be done. We will put the recommendations up. Government can either take those recommendations, agree to those recommendations or they can say too hard and let us forget about it. We are a pretty committed bunch. I think that the six that sit on this Committee and I know just with Sue, Elliot and myself have all worked in the health sector. We have been at the coal face with a lot of communities and both in health administration and other areas. So we are quite keen to make sure that government meets its commitment and not just constantly talk the rhetoric of economic development and other things. Has that answered your question?.

We can not give a commitment. because we can not pre-empt what government may or not want to do. Certainly, the Committee hopes to be able to convince government that this is the way that they should go.

Thank you all for attending

Witnesses withdrew.

Session 4.

Madam CHAIR: I declare open this meeting of the select committee on substance abuse in the community and welcome Dean Whittaker from the Uniting Church in Jabiru and George Djandomerr who are appearing before the committee to brief it in relation to its terms of reference. If required, copies of the terms of reference can be obtained from the committee's secretary. This meeting is open to the public and is being recorded. A transcript will be produced and may eventually be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Please advise if you want any of your evidence to be in camera. The decision regarding this will be at the

discretion of the committee. You are reminded that evidence given to a committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. For the purposes of the Hansard record, I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Rev WHITTAKER: Dean Andrew Whittaker, Minister of the Uniting Church, and Uniting Church Frontier Services.

Mr DJANDOMERR: Mr Djandomerr, community member. A community member for the Manaburduma camp, the town camp.

Rev WHITTAKER: I think if we try and get some of the others in as well, I think it would probably work better together.

(Waiting on additional participants)

Rev WHITTAKER: Vicki, can you say your name and where you are from?

Ms WOOD: Yes, my name is Vicki and I am from Mudginberri.

Rev WHITTAKER: Thank you for the opportunity for us to come, Elonda may join us in a while. As I was thinking about this committee hearing I talked to different people and tried to encourage them, amongst the Bininj communities to come along. Most of my contact on the whole is with Bininj that are involved with the church or are related to people who are involved with the church. Mostly with the town camp Manaburduma and Mudginberri. As we were thinking about what might be able to be presented here, I talked with a number of people in Mudginberri, and with George. In most cases, the Bininj seemed pretty shy, nervous, about coming and saying something here, so what I suggested was that we sit down together, they say what they want to say about gunbang and gundalk. I would write it down and type it up, and then come back to them and see if they wanted to say any more or change that, and then we would have something on paper; so that if they were too shy to say anything when that was happening, there was at least something that could be here for the committee. Now, I don not know if that meets with appropriate procedures or not, ...

Madam CHAIR: No, that is fine, Dean. One of the things I said to you this morning, if the Bininj felt, you know, that this is not the appropriate place then maybe we should have got outside and sat under a tree and talked to people. We could have arranged that to make them feel comfortable. Because sometimes sitting inside these offices are not the best thing, either. We need to hear from Bininj people.

Rev WHITTAKER: I guess my approach was, I think George, is going to say some words and answer some questions. And we have got that paper there, that we will give you as well, just in case there are some things on that that were not picked up in conversation. The same with Vicki. I think that have a couple where the people are not here, that we have written down, which, if you are happy to have them submitted as well I am happy to take them, that would be fine; if it is not appropriate, that is okay.

Madam CHAIR: No, that is fine.

Rev WHITTAKER: My feeling is that, I have got a lot of things I think I know and whatever, but I think it is most useful for the Bininj to be able to say some things themselves

about their experience and so I think if you are happy, George, if you want to just start talking a bit about gunbang, what its effects have been on you, and what you see the problems as being, and what might be good answers for that.

Mr DJANDOMERR: My name is George. I was a senior person here at Manaburduma town camp, Jabiru's town camp. Sadly, I was a really strong person in the community, and dried out more Bininj people, with Balanda, dried out together; but some things just came up, and I lost control of my position. And I was together for two years in prison and I got 13 months on parole, on my outstation. Marlkawo outstation. Because of gunbang, yes and I have seen so many things that Bininj are really hurting. I can see now what is, I learned my lesson because I have been in two years in prison. Now, I have started trying to help more Bininj people and plus Balanda, try and get together, try to put something better for Bininj in this community.

Madam CHAIR: George, when were you in prison? How long ago?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Just the last two years.

Madam CHAIR: And when you were in there, did you do the alcohol program?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, I did.

Madam CHAIR: And what was that like?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Not the alcohol.

Madam CHAIR: And did that help you at all?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, yes.

Madam CHAIR: How did it help you?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Well, I know that some are strong person. I went to the outstation, that was with the council; there is no treatment like CAAPS or just ask my parole officer to send me back to my outstation and stay there.

Madam CHAIR: Does anyone help you there, George, to keep going? Do you get any help from people?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No. I am trying so hard.

Madam CHAIR: So you just do it yourself?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, yes.

Rev WHITTAKER: So you have two years and 18 months on parole, and that has just finished in last few months or so?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, last few months.

Madam CHAIR: And you have not drunk since you have come out of gaol?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No. I have got other things in my outstation to do. I have got planning for my permit, so I make it better for my family, because they can get in more with sports and police inside that and try and bring them back to my outstation and stay there.

Madam CHAIR: Is there a lot of the young men drinking around Jabiru and the camps?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: What do you think a lot of these young men are drinking for?

Mr DJANDOMERR: I think it is their choice.

Madam CHAIR: They are not bored? Do you reckon they have got jobs?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Do you reckon they have got jobs?

Mr DJANDOMERR: I mean, you need to go to talk to elders in the community, senior people, you know, old people, to understand and making respect to that young people, through our culture and ceremonies, things like that. Maybe a change from Balanda way, can be a change.

Ms CARTER: Do the young people in your area go to school at all?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No.

Ms CARTER: And why is that?

Mr DJANDOMERR: I do not know. They just playing sport, whatever.

Ms CARTER: Sorry, George?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, boring.

Ms CARTER: If they went to school, which school should they go to? Whereabouts is the school for there?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Well, we got a bush school.

Ms CARTER: And do you live near there, yourself? Do you live in Jabiru yourself?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No, no. I am staying in the outstation.

Ms CARTER: Alright, but if you wanted to send your child to school or any of the children at your outstation to school, is the outstation so far away that you do not have a bus or anything that, is it effective that, if you live on the outstation, the kids do not go to school?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Well, I think I go to Katherine School is better because in my outstation they go Katherine School. Yes.

Ms CARTER: Right.

Rev WHITTAKER: George's outstation is a long way away. He lives in an Oenpelli outstation, a long way from anywhere.

Ms CARTER: So is the gist that if you choose to live on an outstation that we are talking about now, that they are so far away that any children on those outstations would not go to school? Would that be right?

Rev WHITTAKER: The school of the air.

Ms CARTER: You can use school of the air there?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes.

Rev WHITTAKER: And you have got computers and things, eh?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, yes.

Ms CARTER: But the school of the air is boring and they do not want to do it, is that right?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No.

Rev WHITTAKER: When George and I were talking, he was saying some things about what we see in Jabiru. The lack of culture and things like that, so you see, on the outstation, there are other things that are good things.

Mr DJANDOMERR: In my outstation, we got clan and culture, but in this community like in Jabiru or any other community in Balanda community there is no culture and no clan. I do not know why Bininj people have got to stay, you know, get up and stay, strong for balanda community, try to help them.

Rev WHITTAKER: When you talked about gunbang you also talked about your family and how it has affected you.

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes. I just lost two family; my daughter and my sister.

Ms CARTER: Why?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Because of alcohol.

Ms CARTER: Were they the people who were murdered recently?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Mmm.

Madam CHAIR: Is that from their husbands who were drinking, George, or?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes. Drinking. Smoking gunja.

Madam CHAIR: Is that a big problem amongst a lot of these young ones out here, as well as drinking, is gunja a problem?

Mr DJANDOMERR: It is a worse problem.

Madam CHAIR: Domestic violence is a big issue out here, you know, the violence against...

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes. I don't know much because I no been here.

Rev WHITTAKER: You were saying some things about how Djamun work to stop domestic violence.

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, yes. I think it is better to go and talk to the family before going to Djamun, to the police, because family is more important to bring those issues. Like balanda, have own law and we got our own law. So they try to bring it together and discuss what the problem is from the families... domestic violence or restraining order. So can they get together with their communities or to the families, to discuss? Because if police take all the law, then that is going to be still a problem with husband and wife, that is what happening in our community.

Mr McADAM: I was just going to ask you about, I know you were talking about education, and you have got school of the air?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Mmm.

Mr McADAM: So do members of your family help teach the children? Like, your daughter. Who helps teach in the homeland through school of the air? So does someone there teach?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, my daughter.

Mr McADAM: And so they are talking to people in Katherine all the time about what they are teaching?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes.

Mr McADAM: What about education from here? Do they go out and provide support, is there anything like that?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No.

Mr McADAM: Do teachers go out from here to say, how are things going, and that sort of thing?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No.

Rev WHITTAKER: It is an outstation of Oenpelli, and so kind of, it is not a Kakadu outstation.

Mr McADAM: No. Well, do teachers from Oenpelli go out?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No, just the Katherine school of the air.

Mr McADAM: Just them.

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes.

Ms CARTER: How many people live on your outstation?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Oh, not much. Ten or so. Twelve.

Ms CARTER: And would, say, six of them be children?

Mr DJANDOMERR: There is a number of children there. It is probably about ten or eleven.

Ms CARTER: Right. So most of the people would be children, at your outstation, and just a few adults?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes.

Rev WHITTAKER: You were saying some things about the club.

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes...because my daughter passed away in July and I got my few families there, I get into the licensee and talk to the licensee and get that police straight away, about what happening that night. The licensee ignore that because they don't know what's going on. And we knew that person, he was really smart because of this drinking problem and smoking gunja, and that is what happened, she got murdered my daughter got murdered because they ignore my nephews and my family. I don't know why balanda should have helped that.

Madam CHAIR: Did she die over here, George, or at Oenpelli?

Mr DJANDOMERR: The club.

Madam CHAIR: Here at the sports and social club.

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes.

Ms CARTER: And is the person who did it now with the police in Darwin, under arrest?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Yes, he is. He is in gaol.

Ms CARTER: I don't know if you have heard. So you, no I won't ask that question because you don't live here, it was going to be about the night patrol but that doesn't really

affect you. Here, what they have recently done with the night patrol. So I won't ask that question.

Madam CHAIR: George, a lot of the communities we have travelled around, and when we talk to people, you know a lot of people have been saying that gunbang, and I take it gunbang is alcohol, is bad for Bininj. And that there should be more restrictions. You know, that we should pull back gunbang from Bininj people. Do you think that should happen, or do you think that we have got to get education going with a lot of our own people?

Mr DJANDOMERR: I think you need to talk to the elders and not drinkers because they are the ones, they look so many violence in there, in the community, like accident, young people coming in and not paying their respect, get more involved with old people and talk about this problem; and that would, you know, we would, what the problem is in the community. Then go to the club or whatever, to the licensee, and try to sort the things out and put it back, as you say.

Madam CHAIR: So when you went to this licensee down here to talk to him when your daughter died, that they wouldn't listen to you?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No. Not to listen.

Madam CHAIR: You went to the police, you talked to the police?

Mr DJANDOMERR: No. I wasn't here, that night.

Rev WHITTAKER: George is actually talking about the actual incident when the death occurred, when the girl died. When someone - it happened outside the club, out the back, but someone went in saying something was happening, and staff and it got kind of, I don't know, I think they went, looked, didn't see anything.

Madam CHAIR: Went back in.

Rev WHITTAKER: Went back in and did nothing. Until too late. There was some strong feelings about that.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want to add any more Dean?

Rev WHITTAKER: I think there is a number of other points that George had in the paper.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want to go through those?

Rev WHITTAKER: The other thing that George did many years ago, I think, it must have been in 1999, George? Pat sat down with George and talked a bit about how the Gunbang Action Group could actually get up and do things that were useful, and George recorded some stuff from then as well, that sort of might be worth tabling and putting in too.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Rev WHITTAKER: So there would be that and there would be the notes I made with George yesterday, but that basically covers what you want to say, doesn't it?

Mr DJANDOMERR: Mmm.

Mr McADAM: Can I just ask George, just a couple of questions, George? Because you were sort of saying out on your homeland, like, you have got the school going, and the family is strong, the family is together, the family is just strong, you know, as a small group. And then you were saying that when people are in town, like people don't respect law or family group or the clan, when they are in town here, town people. All those people in town, you know I am talking about maybe the young people who are just drinking and that and causing trouble, and not respecting old people and not listening to old people; and it is very hard for, I don't know, I might be wrong, but it seemed very hard for the young people to listen to the old people when they are in town. Is there any other way that somehow we can get some of these young people together? I am talking about young people in town who are drinking and smoking gunja and you know, bashing their wives or causing trouble or not respecting law, not respecting whitefella law, two ways. So have you got any ideas in terms of how we can try to talk to these young people, these groups of people in town? Maybe that's too long a question.

Mr DJANDOMERR: Well, I think if the young people go to the outstation or somewhere, sharing with the older people, especially through the ceremony, I mean that might come as a good respect, going through the ceremony.

Mr McADAM: So, like, if someone gets into trouble in town, you know, just causing too much trouble like drinking or I don't know, you think that maybe something could happen in town where they could say to that person look, I am sorry, you've been here in town. I am not talking about committing an offence here, I mean, some sort of community panel, some sort of community process. They can say to that person, look, you've been in town, you're drinking, you're causing trouble, you've done this, you've done that, now you've got to go. I know we're talking about that could happen but there needs to be a process, that's in my view anyway, there needs to be a process outside our law, for that to happen; that's married into the whitefella law, if you know what I mean. Without having to commit an offence. Because I am just sort of saying whether that's worth looking at, that's all.

Mr CARRICK: You might find in George's earlier submission it will come to you, he detailed that process. He has detailed a process in the submission.

Mr McADAM: Okay, that is good.

Madam CHAIR: Pat, do you and Leon want to come up to the table now or do you want to stay.

Mr CARRICK: I don't mind. If I'm not interrupting the process.

Madam CHAIR: This one here, that's the one that George.

Mr CARRICK: That's the old one, they're both from George but one's yesterday and one's today's.

Madam CHAIR: I want to read it. I am not going to take it, don't worry.

Rev WHITTAKER: Would that be okay if I just read what Elonda wrote the other day? "Drunken people come and disturb everyone, looking for food, waking people up, arguing.

Especially when drunken people smoke gundalk, they finish our groceries, sometimes we run out - no food left for kids. Sometimes there are ten kids in this house to feed but if gundalk people eat it we have laark (nothing) nothing for those kids.

Mainly night times, on money days - Thursdays, Fridays, and especially on royalty days, some visitors bringing gumbang here, or people drink too much at the club. They come back here and start yelling, arguing and fighting.

They have drunk fights against each other. Because they are angry, they sometimes attack their wives with their fists, even with broken glass. A family member from another home here in Mudginberri who is a heavy drinker comes here looking for his wife who has run away because he is drunk and violent. He comes and yells and causes trouble, trying to find his wife.

Sometimes drunken men who drink all the time start being angry, and picking on sober women and kids.

We want djamun, (police) to patrol the community more, day and night. Drunk people break dry area rule all the time and nothing happens. Police should do something to make that rule strong.

Sometimes the people from Oenpelli come here carrying grog. The drinkers here they give money for that truck to go and pick up gunbang from Bark Hut, Corroboree Park, sometimes even back to Humpty Doo.

The Club and Croc are causing a lot of trouble and the Club needs to be shut down.

Some drunken people make me sad when they drink too much all the time.

On royalty day, people drive around Mudginberri fast and leave lots of skid marks.

The Club and Croc should close business each day at the same time.

The public phone at Mudginberri is not working a lot of the time. What are people supposed to do, especially women, when there is trouble at night?

Ms CARTER: You have said that the police should do more to address the trouble makers and should make the law stronger. What should the police do? Because the options of police are often quite limited. The inference from that statement might be that you would not be adverse to having people taken away, who are trouble makers, and put in gaol. Would that be alright, to put trouble makers in gaol?

Rev WHITTAKER: I think the comments that different ones have made as we have talked about this... that having the police coming to patrol regularly would be a good thing.

Ms CARTER: So there is a dry area now?

Rev WHITTAKER: There are dry areas. There is a dry area sign, there at Mudginberri. Mudginberri is supposed to be a dry area. But very, very regularly, not complied with. The burden of that non compliance falls on the women and children, in terms of the suffering they experience. My understanding is that these people are saying that on one hand, a police presence may actually help or it would happen without anything else having to happen.

Ms CARTER: What happens if the police come, the men are drunk, the men abuse the police, threaten the police, throw things at the police, possibly injure the police; is the community comfortable, then, with the person being arrested and taken away? Because if you put police into a community, there is a chance that people might get arrested; and then it becomes the big hoojaa that we have got too many Aboriginal people in custody.

Madam CHAIR: Well, it is not hoojaa, it is fact. I think what seems to be happening is that there is a lack of enforcement. As I understand it, these dry areas actually have a sign posted. Do some of these men actually take grog into the areas. Alright, so if there is no enforcement and they are taking grog into these areas and it is supposed to be dry, they should actually be charged for taking alcohol onto a restricted area. Those areas should be free from grog. That is the problem. If we have got no enforcement, and people are taking grog into areas which are restricted, the police have to enforce that.

Ms CARTER: Which brings me back to my point that was not answered; which was that there is a lot of pressure on police to enforce, but on the other hand, there is a lot of pressure now that people have got to go to gaol. So communities and society have to make a decision as to what do they want. How do you enforce if you are not actually going to do anything?

Mr McADAM: Well, I do not want to answer for you, but it just comes back to the point that I talked about and perhaps what George has raised in his previous submission which I have not read. I am just sort of putting this up. I mean, we have seen certain approaches and certain models on different communities. All communities are different; they all have their own different problems; and they sit down and they work out a strategy which they believe is going to give some comfort and some degree of acceptability, normality, in regards to the communities' aspirations, the views of a community.

Like Maningrida; they sat down and the police have played a very important role with the community, to develop the strategy. In Tennant Creek, the police and the community play a very, very important role, working together trying to resolve some of the sorts of issues that happen all the time. Because they are bad things. It is not good.

What I am saying is, sometimes we only see, like this; we do not see out here, we just look straight ahead. What I am saying is that people have got a view of what the police should do and of what customary law, old people, should do; but in the case of you know, where you have got somebody who comes into your place, at Mudginberri is it, and he might be your husband or he might be your wife's brother and that sort of stuff, and he causes trouble; brings in grog and gives his wife a hiding and that sort of stuff. The normal expectation is either the police will deal with that, and then some people say no, that is Aboriginal stuff, that is their business, you know. So what I am saying is that, I will just give an example. The policeman at Maningrida said that all night patrol should become a closer relationship with

the police. So all the anti-social behaviour type of stuff can be dealt with two ways, you know; Aboriginal way, whitefella way. And there is a mix.

But the other thing that interests me too is that, I mean, I would like to see JPs, I think you have a magistrate that comes out here every month. So if someone gets into trouble, they have to go to court; sorry, they go to the police station, and they get bailed or whatever, they get bailed out, I think it is; and they have to wait for a month or sometimes they have to wait for another two months. Well, why can't we sit down whitefella law blackfella law way, and try and work out where maybe a JP, an Aboriginal JP or a non-indigenous JP, it does not matter, but someone who has an understanding who can deal with those sort of matters. So you are dealing with them locally in the community. I know you probably do not have a lot of back up resources, but I just use that as an example of one way to go. We should not just think the police can solve it, or we can solve it, because it is too big for that now. I am sorry, I am just starting another question.

Mr PETHICK: I will just make one point about the police. While there are six police here, that is the establishment, they also do relieving work, out to Wadeye, Oenpelli, stuff like that, so quite often, as now, we are down to four, and one member on leave, and we are down to three. So it makes it a a very big area to be patrolling.

Madam CHAIR: So it is not just Kakadu; they then have to go away and do relief.

Mr PETHICK: Yes, they go actually Point Stewart, and the park and to the river, and back to Bark Hut.

Ms CARTER: Vicki, I was wondering, do you think men who cause trouble, for instance, hit people, break things, scream and stuff like that because they are drunk, and do it a lot; do you think that if they are really bad they should go to gaol? And one of the reasons you would say that would be to give you a rest from it, in your community; to make the place a bit quieter for a while?

Ms WOOD: Mmm.

Rev WHITTAKER: Vicki has her own words her. Is it worth me reading that?

Madam CHAIR: Yes

Ms WOOD: Yes, I live at Mudginberri. When they drink gunbang, they cause trouble and lots of arguments and fighting.

We are always worrying and trying to stop them drinking. Sometimes drinkers have hit me.

They late at night really drunk and knock on the door causing trouble to sober person. Every night or day there is some sort of trouble.

When we go to bed some people they yelling. One drinker in our house always gets mad when he is very drunk. He always yells and argues and smashes the door with a bar. Sometimes he smashes switches (light and fan) with a hammer or bar. Some drunken people breaking all the houses and windows in Mudginberri houses. We try to stop our family drinking but they keep on drinking on and on, all the time. We feel very sad.

All the kids when they go to bed, the drunken people come and slam the door, making noise, start yelling. That is why we don't go to bed earlier. We always go to bed about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. It makes everyone tired.

It is hard trying to stop them, very hard.

When people come back, Bark Hut, Cooinda, Corroboree Park, or drinking in Jabiru, they start yelling, arguing or fighting. Sometimes from Bark Hut, Cooinda and Cooroboree Park they bring beer back with them. Over ten carton, or twenty carton, even maybe thirty cartons. When they get royalty money, people bring in big mobs of grog get flagons.

They don't spend money on food. They always race in gunbang and gundalk. The kids don't get food, they just spend all the money at the Club. The daluks (women) with babies, who are drinking too much, they don't be good mothers. No one looks after their kids. They don't buy food for the kids. The kids go hungry and no one cares. They just buy gunbang at the Club, or cartons of beer and flagons too from people who bring grog here. It is very important to us and we are trying to stop them. We tell them about God's word but they don't believe us. We worry all the time for them.

Ms CARTER: Vicki, whereabouts do you live?

Ms WOOD: I live at Mudginberri.

Ms CARTER: Thank you.

Rev WHITTAKER: There was another, Jimmy Wok Wok that we were expecting to turn up. I don't know what's happened to Jimmy. Would it be useful to read that.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Rev WHITTAKER: Okay. We get a lot of trouble all the time with gunbang business. People are frightened. Gunbang coming in from Bark Hut, Cooinda.

Drunken people come late at night to my kured (home). Knock! Knock! Yell! Yell! Knock! Knock! Ask about my car key. Always wanting to take my car. Drunken people got no vehicle, they keep asking me for vehicle. Sometimes I take my vehicle to the minister's house in Jabiru and leave it there all night when people are drunk, so they don't humbug me and argue me about my vehicle. Sometimes two or three nights a week I have to take my car away.

Drunken people sometimes have a vehicle, they drive around Mudginberri very fast with lots of people in the vehicle. They might have accident. Kill someone maybe. All the time they drive around and race up and down and slide their cars. Very dangerous.

Drunken people wake us up playing loud music all night right up to daylight, and arguing and fighting all the time, when they are drunk. They come, knock, knock, yell, ask for baccy, tucker, kunkanj (meat), sugar, tea, beef, all the time; midnight, one am, two am, three am, all the time to daylight. We can't sleep properly.

Sometimes before, I have been hit by drunken people trying to get food or money or kunkanj from us; "Give me money, give me money for a Club!" They get angry if I don't give it.

Sometimes drunken men get angry and jealous with their wives. Big argument. Sometimes sisters argue and get angry. People hit each other with fists and sticks.

Too much problem in gunbang at the club or from Bark Hut. A daluk (woman) died from husband beating her at back of Club. They had been drinking at Club. Another sister died from husband beating her down near town camp after going to Club. Gunbang too bad. Causing our people to fight and die.

That club should close down for a month or maybe for good. That Club is right in the middle of everything. Maybe it should be a long way away but not in the middle, not so close. Young people dying, getting too drunk all the time, sick, fighting, no good. Should close that Club.

Mudginberri has a sign to dry area but not real dry area. Not working proper way. Put a big sign up. Somehow stop them. Sign say not to bring gunbang but they bring it. We can't stop them. Djamun (police) don't stop them.

My wife Laura and me, we are sober ones. Laura has two girls and three boys that all drink too much. Two other children died; three grandson and three grand daughters drinking all the time now too. One son in Berrimah, for drinking and doing wrong thing. Another grandson in Darwin drinking badly. It is very sad for them drinking and in trouble. Not a good life for them and make us worry, worry. Worry all the time.

Laura has a bad leg, can't walk too good. That's why I have to keep vehicle for her, not lose it to other people who use it wrong way.

Gundalk no good. Where that gundalk come from? Gundalk no good. Killim brains, heart and liver. We have lots of problems with gundalk people and gunbang people. Always humbug, always wanting money, always yelling and trouble.

Patrolling car wasn't working right way, bringing drunken people back for trouble at home. Better they didn't. They are drunken people, stay away and not cause trouble to sober people.

Maybe 20 people are drinkers in Mudginberri. When there is money around, even not sometimes, they at night want car and money, and they are loud, and arguing, and fighting, and driving bad way. Not good. Sometimes I just want to go away from there to stay somewhere quiet, but I live in Mudginberri.

There is another paper here that I worked on talking with some people about dry areas and how they were or weren't working. It may be useful to table that because that identifies a lot of issues that people saw. It's a bit hard to explain all of this. It's kind of partly a conversation between me and a number of Bininj; and it's partly kind of about trying to understand what dry areas are; partly trying to understand what the issues are. But it may be useful, in terms of that.

I don't know if you, Bininj, want to say anything more for these people.

Rev WHITTAKER: I've got a few other comments I'd like to make, if that's okay, I don't know how we are going timewise.

Madam CHAIR: If you just want to make a few comments.

Rev WHITTAKER: It just seems it's easy for me, it seems easy from my perspective, for some people to seem blind to the immense degree of hurt and destruction and death that gunbang seems to be causing here at Kakadu. I can't speak for other places. Australians associate Kakadu with really positive images of the environment and Aboriginal culture. It seems to me there is too many local people who are suffering too much because of alcohol and drugs; and it does seem to me that there is a degree where it seems to have become almost normal or unremarkable, the level of sadness and so on and suffering and sickness that families and individuals are experiencing in this region as a result of uncontrolled drunkenness, chronic drinking and drug abuse. It seems to me that the burden, the burden of the suffering, the burden of cost, seems to end up on women and children in ways that are very difficult for them, and also for a lot of people who in many cases are not able to stand up to some of the pressures that are put on them. So my view would be that finding ways to actually address these issues, where the wider community carries some of the cost of the burden, rather than it being kind of focussed on kids and women and less powerful people in the community is important. So from my perspective, if there are ways of spreading that load of how the cost is carried, how the burden is carried, it is important. Issues like restrictions, issues like actually making places like the Club and the Croc more responsible in their serving practices. They would claim they are very responsible but I just see too many times, too many drunk people in the vicinity, basically within the vicinity of these properties, that it seems to me that it is not working.

Madam CHAIR: Do a lot of the Bininj, in the region though, Dean, and whilst I am not sticking up for either, in terms of, at some stage we have to take responsibility as individuals, alright. We, and when I say we, I mean I, have to take responsibility for my own actions. That is something that is missing here.

Rev WHITTAKER: There is a real issue. I mean, I think if one looks at the support services and the structures that are in place around the Bininj community, trying to address some of these issues, there is a lot of stuff in place that I think is good. But there also is the requirement within the Bininj community and individuals themselves I guess, to take up the challenge, to make some strong decisions for themselves. But I guess my concern, it still comes back to the fact that often the failure to do that plays itself out and affects little kids, women and others, and so I guess I am saying that.

Just a couple of comments about Bininj and drinking that I observe is that, there are some Bininj that drink heavily every day, and somehow seem to find money for it every day. But then there are others who only drink when there is money around. Gunbang is particularly a problem on royalty days. When Roman was talking about what happened in February that was when there was a big release of royalty money and all hell broke loose for a while. There can be a great lump of money hit this town or this region....

Madam CHAIR: Is it just certain families that get that royalty.

Rev WHITTAKER: Well, normally it's limited to, there might be 100 people or 220 people, depending on which association and what kind of nature of the royalty money is.

Madam CHAIR: So it's distributed to individuals.

Rev WHITTAKER: It goes to individuals, but I mean, the reality is, it goes into family constellations, I guess; and in many cases, huge proportions of that money go very quickly in drinking, like, in bingeing.

Ms CARTER: What would be an average payment? Are we talking hundreds, or thousands?

Rev WHITTAKER: I can't speak absolutely, surely but certainly, I think the January amount was something like \$4 000 that came out.

Ms CARTER: Per person?

Rev WHITTAKER: Per person who received it, yes.

Ms CARTER: \$4 000 you said?

Rev WHITTAKER: Yes. So \$4 000, that is the major park royalty that came out in about January.

Ms CARTER: And how many roughly, would have received that?

Rev WHITTAKER: It's all the traditional owners within the park. The royalties go differently to different sources, so I think that money goes to about 100. I think the mining money goes to about 220. I think Vicki mentioned, or Elonda mentioned, that Thursdays and Fridays, the CDEP and other moneys coming through, are also pretty regularly times where there is problems. At the news of the death of someone or around a funeral there is usually a lot of drinking. Bininj say to me oh we have got to – they use the word celebrate, although I am not sure that is what they mean, but we have got to celebrate, we have got to remember is what they really mean.. But it just seems as though it has almost become a tradition to drink as a

Ms CARTER: Like a wake?

Rev WHITTAKER: Yes, I was going to say, it is almost like that wake that you have in Irish culture. The other way it's expressed is that I've got bad sad feelings and I've just got to do something to drown my sorrows. And even to the extent that a person who might not have anything to do with gunbang normally, will sometimes purchase significant amounts of gunbang and give it to their relatives as a kind of sign of condolence or whatever, you know. So around deaths, there is a lot of drinking as well. And another one of those times, I suppose, is before court days; if someone is really nervous that they are going to court and might be going to gaol, and they will get themselves really drunk and sometimes they get so drunk and anti social that another offence happens the night before they are going to court. And I guess much of the social and economic costs impact on the community and on government spending. I mean, every time someone ends up going to gaol, it's what, \$100 000, \$150 000 a year, that you get in gaol. How much?

Mr PETHICK: It's \$60 000.

Rev WHITTAKER: \$60 000. Oh, it's cheaper up here.

Mr PETHICK: It's about \$56 000 to keep somebody in prison, eh?

Rev WHITTAKER: But I mean, my observation, as I have Attended Jabiru court, because a number of the people I deal with are in courts regularly. I have been trying to attend regularly on court days. Those who might say that is probably 95% of people that come here for court are Bininj people with alcohol related issues.

Mr PETHICK: Most would be alcohol related and we would probably have three quarters from the Aboriginal community.

Rev WHITTAKER: Sometimes people say to me, "oh, you haven't been here in the Territory long", or whatever, when I make this comment; but I mean, it seems to me that the high level of offences, disorder, the violence, the damage, seem to have become accepted here as being just how it is for Aboriginal people. What's the matter with you, you know, why do you even think it's worth commenting on, kind of thing. And yet, it wouldn't be accepted in a predominantly balanda suburb or community.

Mr McADAM: That's the point I was going to make. Because if Mudginberri was in Darwin, next door to Nightcliff, and you had a bunch of hooligans, drunks, you know, abusing their wives and anti-social behaviour, there would be a strategic response put in place to deal with that. And I would say that the same sort of responses can be put in place where there are small homelands or communities that are being impacted on by these sorts of people. And it is not a big exercise. It's the same as driving a motorcar. You drive a motorcar down the main street, and you know that at night time you are required to put your lights on, or you are not to drive with bald tyres. But a lot of people ignore that because you know why? It's not enforced. It becomes as you say, part of the culture; it becomes institutionalised racism.

Rev WHITTAKER: And the other thing is that, your responsibility, as Sue said, a lot of the time, I think just having a police presence, or having a police visibility, actually has an impact, without even necessarily going to that stage of arrest or whatever. I think there probably, there are situations certainly that require more action than that; but just to have more police visibility. I know for me even, if I see a policeman or something, I mean, I'm more careful about my driving, you know.

Madam CHAIR: And you make sure you've got your seatbelt on.

Rev WHITTAKER: And all that kind of stuff. And I just think some of that stuff helps as well. I'm not,

Mr McADAM: I just think it's true.

Rev WHITTAKER: The other comment I want to make is that I think it is possible to look around the Territory and probably see worse situations, and say, oh well, it's not so bad here, you've got this or you've got that; but I personally think you've got to resist the

downward comparisons and actually say, hey, people, and this is probably where Dave Lindner and I would differ, not to say that I think it's a right, but I think it's important, that people have a level of safety, a level of certainty, a level of control over their lives; they are allowed to live well.

And it seems to me that sometimes people seem to imply that somehow I'm naïve or foolish to expect that Aboriginal people's lives should have that level of security and a sense of dignity and value that I would have thought should be there for everyone. And that there seems to be a willingness to tolerate situations that would not be tolerated elsewhere. And there is a hard issue there, I acknowledge, in terms of if it does require police intervention or whatever and arrests, and things like that, there are some hard questions around that; but I just think that somehow there is a desperate need to say, hey, it matters as much that these things happen to Bininj people, as it does if it happens with the rest of the balanda community. At the same time, Bininj need to have the confidence and hope to stand up strong and firm, for surviving, for protection, for respect, in the face of obstacles that they will see from alcohol affected other Bininj. There are things that Bininj have to do that no one else can do for them. Balanda can't come in and solve everything, and we have a tendency to think sometimes that we can; but Bininj do have to take up the initiative on some things.

But unless the internal cultural strength and the resources within Bininj are actually activated, then no amount of external support is actually going to hold things together; and so for them to do as a functional community, I certainly, my feeling is that, and George has expressed it very well, that there needs to be respect and understanding and communication, and work together on these kinds of issues, and I think that maybe just for me, sitting here and listening, it has been, but hey, are there other ways we can actually build that, doing some of this stuff. I have probably said enough. What I think, I say there is a concern, is it seems to me when I look at a lot of the kids, I have quite a lot of youth that I involve with through the church, and I kind of have a real worry in terms of what pathways they have actually got that don't lead straight to the club. It's almost as though, for the young boys particularly, all their role models, all their kind of close family....

Madam CHAIR: It's a path to the club.

Rev WHITTAKER: Straight to the club, and I guess one thing I've tried to do with the church is provide one little alternative, where there is a sober, safe kind of community. But I have to say that more women participate in that than men. But whatever we do, I think we've got to try to multiply alternatives for young people to move into that, that actually are safe, healthy, and turn them from just that drinking culture and dominance by the club. You know, dominance by gunbang. I'll probably leave it at that.

Madam CHAIR: Any questions? Thank you Dean, thank you George, very much, for talking to the committee, and to Vicki, thank you Vicki, for sharing those thoughts and certainly for tabling all the papers. We will make sure that they go in as part of the report. Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE COMMITTEE

Membership:

Ms M Scrymgour MLA (Chairperson)

Ms S J Carter MLA

Dr R S H Lim MLA

Mr E McAdam MLA

Mr G Wood MLA

PUBLIC HEARING

Tape-Checked Verbatim

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

22 October 2002

Jabiru

Mr Pat Carrick

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It is made available under the condition that it is recognised as such.*

Mr CARRICK: Look, my name is Pat Carrick and I'm speaking here today privately.... you realise, I work for ERA and I am not speaking on behalf of ERA. Look, I will just say what I have to say, quite short, because I've seen the committee is short of time. There is nothing I might have heard today, you know, this entire business we are approaching here today, it has got an extremely long history, and we have listened to a lot of the affects of alcohol and alcohol abuse, and substance abuse, today; and we have talked about different measures that can be put in place to address it. I think one of the reasons that we are not, haven't been as effective as we wanted to be in this area, is because of the lack of Aboriginal participation in this process. And I wasn't going to dig too deep into this, but at the Gunbang Action Committee we can see has been fairly ineffective over the years and now it's readdressing all of those issues; as has the great lack of Aboriginal participation.

I think Elliot has just recently touched on the fact that there should be a way for each community to sit down and address these. And there is, and what there needs to do that, is Aboriginal participation, Bininj participation in the process, and some ownership in it. And I think within this community, we should make a way, that gets Aboriginal people to participate more, and in, when I say Aboriginal people I am talking about those people that George has referred to earlier this afternoon here, and that is those senior people out in the communities. George is I think, and he can talk about it some more, trying to tell us that it does still exist in the Aboriginal community, the cultural network that can assist us in addressing this, that we can work together with. And to give an example of that, or read about it in George's submissions. We address problems in the JSSC when an Aboriginal person walks in there and does something wrong.

What Bininj is saying is that if we work together in unison with them, what is left of their cultural network and their senior people, and join forces together; we're not going to and things and that's the problem, we can all use this, the word empowerment, and empower those people in a recognised manner, to take action in their own communities. Like, for instance, we bar a person from coming into the club once he steps inside the club. He could well be barred within his own community by a senior person, if in fact that senior person was empowered to do so; and that would need collaboration between their law and our law, police.

And that's the sort of thing I think that Elliot is pointing to, to nutting that out. And you know, what we have to do here, and I don't say this condemning anyone; but forever in this community, there are so many layers, laminations, bureaucracies, and it doesn't matter whether it's the people that come to help ..., the people that come to help improve health, the people that come to put horticulture in, the mining company that comes to do something. Whoever comes; we come to a table like this with our agenda, what we think is right and will work. And forever, people don't seem to be in there with us. You know, having that ownership. I think we all sometimes need to go back and really search as to what it was, go through history, reflect on it, and put in, and see what created that disempowerment, that whole modern process. I think that's what this alcohol abuse is reflecting to us. It's a measure of that sort of, you know, that long period since

Madam CHAIR: Disempowerment.

Mr CARRICK: And you know that needs to be addressed and when that can be addressed, people who participate, and you know, take ownership of some of these programs,

involve them in it. You could go on forever about the subject but, you know, a lot of this has already said before by many people, even Richard Trudgeon in his last book, you know, expands on that process; that we all do care, we are all trying to do the right thing and address all these things. I agree with just about everything that's been said here today. Enforcement, dry areas, action. The things that the people are calling for. But at the same time, there are those immediate measures that could be put in place, that must continue; there needs to be reflection on what caused this disintegration of this network, this cultural web that used to hold everything together. If we could recognise that perhaps we can build on a way to reinstitute it with what's left. I think it's possible. I believe Aboriginal people here do to as well.

Mr MCADAM: I'm just thinking the same, Pat. That these sorts of approaches are happening in other communities. And I just think, where you've got the problems not only Jabiru, but Borroloola, any number of other places in the Territory; there is no other option, there is no other option but to go down this path.

Mr CARRICK: We're not going to do it, you know, the white society themselves are not going to do it. Like sitting around tables like this, having committees, telling ourselves ourselves what's best for Bininj people. The word I use, we hear the word, "block dysfunction" and what you see is people disassociate themselves from your agenda; don't participate.

Madam CHAIR: Look, I think you have summed it up great in terms of what we were talking about and what we continually talk about. But you're right. It's a subject that has been done to death, the issue of alcohol and looking at different strategies has been done to death. I think, but what I think, that there has to be the will and commitment, I mean, we still can't, even though it's been done to death, I think there is still a responsibility to ensure that. Because I think in the past, whilst we look at the issue of gunja and we look at all the other stuff, I think we have pussyfooted around the issue of alcohol and the abuse of alcohol, for a long time. And not just government and the agencies that should be looking at it, I think even as indigenous people, we pussyfoot around the issue of alcohol. And that is something that we have to confront as a people, and take responsibility for. We can't, - prohibition in terms of alcohol, but it's just not on the cards, I mean, we can't say we are going to prohibit and stop grog from coming into Kakadu. It will come into Kakadu regardless. I mean, the cane toads have found a way of coming into Kakadu and if they can find a way...

Mr McADAM: They are down at Dunmarra way.

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Lead in to Mr Pethick.....

Mr CARRICK: We're not going to do it, you know, the white society themselves are not going to do it. I've seen them like this, having committees, themselves what's best for people; the word I use, we hear the word, "block dysfunction" and what you see is people disassociate themselves from your agenda; don't participate.

Madam CHAIR: Look, I think you have summed it up great in terms of what we were talking about and what we continually talk about. But you're right. It's a subject that has been done to death, the issue of alcohol and looking at different strategies has been done to death. I think, but what I think, that there has to be the will and commitment, I mean, we still can't, even though it's been done to death, I think there is still a responsibility to ensure that. Because I think in the past, whilst we look at the issue of gunja and we look at all the other stuff, I think we have pussyfooted around the issue of alcohol and the abuse of alcohol, for a long time. And not just government and the agencies that should be looking at it, I think even as indigenous people, we pussyfoot around the issue of alcohol. And that is something that we have to confront as a people, and take responsibility for. We can't, prohibition in terms of alcohol, but it's just not on the cards, I mean, we can't say we are going to prohibit and stop grog from coming into Kakadu. It will come into Kakadu regardless. I mean, the cane toads have found a way of coming into Kakadu and if they can find a way.

Mr McADAM: They are down Dunmarra way.

Mr PETHICK: It's how it comes in and how it is distributed. That's the thing. And as you say, Aboriginal people have to take on board the responsibility of drinking and I see that probably as the most difficult task of the lot. Because all the rest of the stuff is, we've got drink and stuff like that, that the majority of people understand and comply with.

Madam CHAIR: The education plays a big role with a lot of this. Education.

Mr PETHICK: That's right. You know, we have had reports of, Leon Pethick is my name. I am currently on leave without pay from Correctional Services, but this is a personal view, nothing from the Department.

Madam CHAIR: But Leon, you have seen Maningrida, and I know we've had chats in the past with Maningrida and the problems that are there. It was quite enlightening to go to Maningrida the other day and actually sit down with the police and also the members of the community, where they have put in place an alcohol management plan.

Mr McADAM: How long have you been up this way.

Mr PETHICK: I've been in the Territory since 65.

Mr McADAM: And out here?

Mr PETHICK: I've been out here 17 years.

Mr McADAM: And the Maningrida situation then and now?

Mr PETHICK: I serviced here, after that near Maningrida, so three major communities.

Mr McADAM: So what is your opinion on that Maningrida exercise where placed in the community.

Mr PETHICK: I've got a couple of views. Like dry areas, is a view that I see as a way of people living in dry areas, abrogating their responsibilities to their people, and most people may drink. Now the genie's out of the bottle. It's never going back.

Madam CHAIR: Only one? We're willing to listen to it all.

Mr PETHICK: It's all out the bottle, it's not going back. So what we had to do is to work out some strategies that will manage that monster. Because we all know it's a monster. And through, and I'm not talking about Jabiru in particular, I'm talking about general, the Territory. So we had dry areas, you know, Hermannsburg, places like that, where they are supposedly dry areas, but they've got drinkers. Now those drinkers are in Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, raising hell because they can't get grog at home, so they come to town and they have become a displaced person. No accommodation, no family support, no inclination to do anything else but just drink and sleep, drink and sleep, fine. So my sentiments are that dry areas just do geographic from the problems. I'm not saying that the Oenpelli Club is a glowing light in the horizon, because I believe that the Oenpelli Club has areas where there can be a lot of improvements made.

But something similar to the Oenpelli Club running in major communities; now bear in mind there is two types of communities. We have a community like Oenpelli, Maningrida, Ramingining, Milingimbi, Lajamanu, those sort of places, where they are by definition of geography, fairly isolated and that environment is reasonably controlled. You know, a place like Jabiru, where it's open to public, traffic and stuff all the time which makes the situation a bit harder. But when you take the geographically isolated communities, if they had a club run along similar lines to the Oenpelli club, then the people who come from those communities, there is a very good chance they may even go home. And we can use that club, and the management and operation of that club, as an education tool, in the way that it is run. And, you know, you could run it on restricted hours, you could run all sorts of sanctions for it, and stuff like that, I know I have used the Oenpelli club and the drinking regimes there to control parolees and stuff who have to stay in Oenpelli by definition of their order, but they want to drink. So if they can't go to the club, they are going to come here and break their order. So it is far better to allow them to go to the club and drink in a controlled environment where someone is watching them, and they are only drinking at a certain regime, like they might only have to leave an hour early, they might go down to about drinking light cans, all that sort of stuff. So it is better to have them there than running amok over here or in Darwin or somewhere where we don't even know where they are.

So I see the dry area situation as partly contributing to the drinking problems that we have in the Territory. I am not talking about outstations, because outstations are just like my home or your home. The major communities like Milingimbi, Ramingining and places like that, they should do a club where there is controlled restricted drinking, where there is also social amenities, you can also see the Oenpelli club runs the band once a month, they have food at the bar, they have a barbecue on Friday night or Saturday night, they have a big video room where the kids watch big videos on the big screen, they have pool tables, they have all sorts of things going. And it is a nice lawned area, and the drinking that go on is quite relaxed and it is very well policed. As we said earlier about policing and enforcement, that really needs

to be tightened up so we don't have people leaving the pubs drunk. They should be going before they're drunk. You know, I have got blokes at the Oenpelli club and I don't, the security people will go up to someone and say, come on, you've had enough, to go; if they get up and just go, they can walk in the gate, finish their drink, put it in the bin, they don't throw cans all over the place, put it in the bin and they go. And they know that by doing that, they can come back tomorrow and have another drink. If they get up and start to argue, the security bloke just takes their beer, throws it in the bin, flings them out the gate, and they can't come back tomorrow night, they are banned for tomorrow night. So they are learning, because they want to drink, they are learning that if someone says you've got to go, just get up and go, because you can come back tomorrow.

And so it can take a long, long, long time to filter this through. It's going to take several generations. To get transient Aboriginal people accepting the responsibility of their drinking, I know someone was saying it is a genetic thing, the drinking, and stuff like that. So what. This is something that we have to learn to live with. We can't change it and we can't change the law, the international laws that say everybody is equal and you should be able to drink what they like. But we have to balance control and patronising and make sure that everyone has a fair go and, I mean, there is not long to go. I also believe that the Liquor Commission is probably the body that could be in charge of something like this and we would also change some of the land right legislation where, get off my land because you won't give me a beer, that has got to stop. So that that manager of the club is hired and fired by the Liquor Commissioner, and that reduces the corruption situation, what have you. You know, that is a big problem, that situation. And even like here, and Tennant Creek, Katherine and stuff, probably have to have some more specific type of regulations and stuff like that probably. If you have those drinking clubs nearly heavy, a lot of people in Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin, Alice, will go home. They'll go back home. Because they can get it so why hang around town?

Madam CHAIR: I have seen it differently in Katherine, and I have lived there for a long time.

Mr PETHICK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Madam CHAIR: And the impact, and look, I think the dry; look, none of us, and I want to make this clear, in terms of this committee; I mean, one of the things in terms of dry area legislation and whether it is a political thing or not a political thing, I don't think that those communities are abrogating, I think that was the word you used, their responsibility to, I mean, I think that legislation should stay there so that if communities want to make their area dry, they have legislation in which to apply. If they don't, I mean, they could always apply to have wet canteens; which most of them are, I mean, a lot of communities are now moving towards either having permits put in place, under an alcohol management plan, or clubs.

The thing in terms of communities, if you are going to say, and this is what we have to weigh up as a committee; if you are going to place over canteen or give people the option of open slather and permits and clubs and everything else, indigenous people, or Aboriginal people, I think, in communities are entitled to have the same level of service; and that is just a service that people in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs have. And I think sometimes, and in the past, it has been convenience for governments to say, well take, you know, because of the itinerant situation and others around Darwin and Katherine, you know, out of sight out of mind, let's get all the blackfellas out of town and let's, if they had a club in

their community, they'll go back. I don't think that is the case. I talked to a number of long grassers in Darwin that have been in Darwin for about 20 years.

Mr McADAM: It's home now.

Madam CHAIR: They've got liquor permits and other things out at Maningrida but they still don't go back and it's for a number of reasons that they don't go back. And I think sometimes people just get lost in this thing that maybe having a pub or a club is the answer and maybe they'll all go back out. I can see some parts where, yes, a lot of them are moving away because it is a dry area and they want to drink; but there are others that...

Mr PETHICK: You are saying that if we have that sort of regime then it has to be the same as everywhere else. But then earlier you said the Aboriginal people had to be more responsible. So okay, that responsibility must be demonstrated. And that's what happened with the Oenpelli club, with the parolees. Once they demonstrated that they could drink and not get into trouble, we changed the regime there. But they had to show by their behaviour that they were worthy of that trust. I've got a bloke out there who is a well known murderer around the place, and he was on, a white can limit, leaving early. He used to humbug me all the time, about green cans. And we managed to control him. Now this is – I don't know how many years he has been on it now, but he chooses now to drink light cans. Because he knows himself, he is an old man, like older than me, he knows in himself that if he drinks any green cans he is going to get into trouble, and he won't be able to go back to the pub. It is a learning process that works.

Madam CHAIR: Yes. And you know, we keep pointing back to education and I think education is quite a key to a number of these things, and education of awareness in terms of people taking responsibility, and that wasn't so much a, that was just a statement from me in terms of the dry area stuff.

Mr PETHICK: But you know, you look at places like Hermannsburg, I know it's going for grog money. It is a dry area. Bininj's choc a block full of grog. And the mayhem that causes, it means that when they arrive they can just sit out of town and drink 20 cartons of beer and 15 casks of wine, three or four bottles of rum, then they go home. Now, doesn't that cause a little bit more problem than having a club and having a few drinks and then going home? I think it does. Plus the danger of the driving on the road.

Madam CHAIR: Yeah. And it is partly that balance, I think.

Mr PETHICK: It's not easy.

Madam CHAIR: That's right.

Mr PETHICK: You know, if it was easy, it would be done.

Mr McADAM: That's why it's not something that you set it concrete; you always redefine, you retune it, according to the community. That is the only way you are going to do it.

Mr PETHICK: It has to be a dynamic growing thing.

Madam CHAIR: I think if a community makes a decision to get a club for whatever reason, I think that they would have to be properly resourced. I mean, I think the days of just saying, okay, we'll give you a license, because you only have to look in Darwin, and the number of liquor, I mean, corner stores, that have liquor permits so it is not just an issue in remote communities, it is an issue in Darwin, and the number of corner stores that have liquor permits.

Mr PETHICK: It's not just there, every supermarket sells grog.

Madam CHAIR: So the accessibility and availability of alcohol for Aboriginal people in Darwin, I mean, they've looked at Katherine, they've looked at Tennant Creek and they've looked at Alice Springs, but no one's bitten the bullet in terms of Darwin and said well, how many liquor licenses have we got in Darwin?

Mr PETHICK: That's right.

Madam CHAIR: You know, the accessibility and availability of alcohol. And sometimes it is convenient to say, well, maybe we need to put these establishments out in remote areas because that will decrease the problem in Darwin. Well, no it's not. I don't think it is, and it's having to find that balance to try and overcome a major problem that's facing not just black Australians, but white Australians as well.

Mr PETHICK: And whitefellers have been drinking a couple of thousand years or more and they've still got trouble with drunks. You know, Maningrida, as you were saying, they have a problem with the strategy, but they will never have a club. They had a club, they had all sorts of problems.

Mr McADAM: With the club.

Mr PETHICK: Well, when the club was there they travelled more AND stealing grog.

Mr McADAM: So what's your view of this little thing that has just happened? You know, a couple of years ago.

Mr PETHICK: What was that?

Mr McADAM: Maningrida?

Madam CHAIR: Are you talking permits?

Mr McADAM: No, I am talking about, you know, you've got the permit system, and from my understanding there is about hundreds of cartons of grog being barged in every fortnight.

Madam CHAIR: No, not now.

Mr McADAM: No, no, that is what I am saying. But people were drinking it hot, that sort of stuff. So now you've got a ration type system, a permit type system, and which the police are involved in, I mean, what's your view on that?

Mr PETHICK: That's been going for a long, long time actually. It's actually changed and evolved.

Mr McADAM: Yes, it's got to do that, to make it work.

Mr PETHICK: It used to be like, you know, the barge would rock up at three o'clock in the morning and everybody would be sitting on the barge landing waiting for their carton of beer. And they were drinking it hot, and by sunrise it had all gone. Now, it has changed now to, it went to Friday, and then of course, people knock off work at lunch time because, you know, to get your beer at five o'clock. But it's the open end of the system where they have it on the Saturday morning. I think...

Madam CHAIR: Yeah, and I think it goes to the police and the police actually distribute it in the back.

Mr PETHICK: It was always going to start, yes, that's right. But it's still binge drinking. And medicine tells us that binge drinking is probably one of the worst ways to drink grog.

Mr McADAM: Yes.

Mr PETHICK: It's far better if they drink that carton of beer, that's four cans a night over six nights, than they drink a carton or two cartons to that.

Mr McADAM: That's true. I believe it also. I'm also told that the quantity of cartons has reduced and in some cases, the police are saying, well look, save a carton till next week. And I did notice some cartons in the cell.

Madam CHAIR: So some of them are just not drinking it all at once, they are leaving it with the police

Mr McADAM: I mean, that is how basic their responses have been, you know what I mean, to attack this problem.

Mr PETHICK: The dynamics of drinking in Maningrida has changed quite a bit in the last five or six years or so, seven years; but you know, I still believe all that money is going elsewhere and could be kept in the community and used in some development in the community, rather than seeing it all go off to, I'm sure it ends up in Melbourne, but initially a big heap goes to stores and shops and stuff in Darwin.

Madam CHAIR: The other thing they're doing at Maningrida with those permits, or where people are ordering, the council has actually imposed, they are putting a levy on it. And the levy that the council is collecting is actually going back into the night patrol program among other things. I mean, it is a small step in the right direction for Aboriginal people, like they say with this, you've got to evolve until you get the right balance in terms of how it is going to

Mr PETHICK: They were using the permits too, if you got into trouble with an alcohol related offence, they can cancel your permit and stuff like that.

Mr McADAM: That's right.

Mr PETHICK: But you've still got that binge drinking. And the police don't want a club because there will be drinking for two or three hours, six nights a week. They would prefer to have the beer come in on the Friday, they hand it out on the Saturday, Monday morning everyone's hangover is finished and they are all back to work. But it's not doing their health any good.

Mr McADAM: That goes on every day in suburbs around Australia. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, back at work on Monday.

Madam CHAIR: Have you got anything else.

Mr PETHICK: No. I know you wouldn't drink your carton of beer, as you sat down with a carton at night, you'd prefer to drink it over a period of time.

Mr McADAM: It might depend who I was with.

Madam CHAIR: It all depends who you are with.

Ms CARTER: Who's got the carton of beer.

Madam CHAIR: We'll have a break and then we'll just quickly get on to Alan. Thank you.

Witness withdrew.

Madam CHAIR: I declare open this meeting of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community and welcome Alan Buckingham, who is the acting CEO of Jabiru Town Council is appearing for the committee to brief it in relation to its terms of reference. If required, copies of the terms of reference can be obtained from the committee secretary. This meeting is open to the public and is being recorded. A transcript will be produced and may eventually be tabled at the Legislative Assembly. Please advise if you want any part of your evidence to be in camera. The decision regarding this will be at the discretion of the committee. You are reminded that evidence given to a committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. And for the purposes of the Hansard record I ask you to state your full name and the capacity in which you speak today.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I am Alan David Buckingham, I am the acting CEO of Jabiru Town Council, and Jabiru also has a service agreement with the Gunbalanya community government, and over the past couple of years I have spent considerable time working with the mining community as well as the Jabiru community. In terms of my observations, I guess having worked fairly closely with the Gunbalanya community in particular, which I would rather speak about because, from what I have seen, the Jabiru community has been fairly well covered today; I would say that substance abuse has a significant impact on virtually everyone within the Gunbalanya community in one way or another. While we have heard about the club and the fact that it is regulated, I can assure this group of people that the impacts of people having drunk and then gone home are often quite negative; that there are

incidents of, domestic violence happens when these people go home, particularly in that community they are going home to quite crowded conditions, there is an average of 12 or 13 people in each house, which I think probably adds to the problem of somewhere to go for recreational purposes.

The two main areas of substance abuse are alcohol but also there is a significant problem with petrol sniffing, mainly of younger people in the community. The impacts of petrol sniffing, substance abuse, is really quite devastating to the individuals who are involved in it but over recent times there have also been a number of incidents where violence has occurred. There is also a high degree in prevalence of these people committing crimes such as breaking into buildings to try and obtain either petrol or food. We have been through a spate last year of quite a concentrated series of break ins where a supermarket was broken into every day, every night, by a group of people. They would usually just break into an area where they had access to food and consume the food. We started to put into place some programs where food was more available to these people and feeding programs and things like that, and also tightened our security, and the problems abated, but were shifted to other areas of town.

Madam CHAIR: Just with the break and enters, Alan, when you say that the store was being broken into and the council implemented a food program, was that breaking and entering done by juveniles.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: By petrol sniffers, yeah. Usually we are talking about people in teenagers to early twenties.

Madam CHAIR: That are petrol sniffing.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yes.

Ms CARTER: How many active sniffers do you think you might have, or there might be, in Oenpelli, at the moment?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I have heard varying numbers. The latest numbers I've heard is something like 30 to 50. Now, I presume that this committee will talk to people over there as well. It is probably better to talk to people who are directly involved in that because my information is coming from second hand sources.

Mr McADAM: What's the population.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: It is about 1200 people. Of those, probably about 1100 of them are Bininj people and the other 100 are balanda workers that are brought into the community to perform tasks.

Madam CHAIR: Most of that 1200, how many would live on the outstations from Gunbalanya?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I'm not sure of that, because that's looked after by (inaudible) so I couldn't tell you the numbers.

Madam CHAIR: Do you think that the club's set up at the moment works reasonably well, or can you think of changes that should be made?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I am really concerned about the social impact. The things that we have heard about of having a picture theatre there and having greater facilities, I am really concerned that the hidden message there is, the only thing to do in town is go where there is alcohol. I would really like to see the picture theatre at a different premise. One of the strategies that I am trying to implement in terms of planning is to give the local community options, so that; my observation of Aboriginal people is that they are very social people, they really enjoy each other's company, sitting around talking to each other. The only real facility in Gunbalanya that is provided is the club. I would like to see them have an area where they could sit around and drink coffee, for example, rather than alcohol. I would like to see areas where there is more ready access to education, in perhaps a rather informal way. I would like to see areas where there are things of cultural significance to them, you know, like a cultural area as well. We've put all that together into a plan of things that we want to achieve by the year 2010 and put that out as a draft paper to the community for comment, and I am looking at ways to get some real feedback from the community as to what they want in their community.

Mr McADAM: Do people access alcohol from places other than the club?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: There are a couple of ways that people can access alcohol. It's really just the balanda people who get liquor permits. The liquor permits are controlled by the Gunbalanya Council, community council, and generally speaking, they give them to only balanda workers and they will not give them to their own people.

Madam CHAIR: Has that been a decision by the community?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah. It might sound racist but it is a decision by their own community to ensure that alcohol is only available through the club.

Madam CHAIR: And why do you think they do that? What's in it for them? The money goes to the club?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: From my understanding, it is to try to control the drinking of alcohol to a more contained area. I think there are not a lot of incidents of Bininj people bringing in illicit alcohol, but it does happen from time to time. But when I hear reports of fights within households, it is nearly always as a result of some sort of substance abuse, and quite often alcohol.

Ms CARTER: Does the club have takeaways?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No.

Ms CARTER: Is there a can limit?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: There is a two can limit and they are open. In other words, it is controlled in such a way that individuals have to consume it on the premises.

Madam CHAIR: So only two cans?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: At a time. They can go back numerous times, but....

Madam CHAIR: What are the hours, the operating hours?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: At present, it opens at lunchtime, 12 o'clock, I think last drinks are served at 1.00pm and the club is closed at 1:30pm; and then it opens again, I think it's at 5.00pm, it goes to 8 o'clock. Now, the impact on those two sessions are quite marked on the way the community operates. The 12 o'clock one makes it very difficult for us to maintain a reliable workforce. It's much easier for us to get Bininj workers to work in the various jobs around town in the morning. There is a number of people that are just not available after that 12 o'clock session. In most communities that I've lived in, 12 o'clock is a busy time, and food areas, takeaways, supermarkets and things. It's very quiet because a lot of people go to the club at lunchtime and it gets busy.

Mr McADAM: Is there food served in the club at lunchtime?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I don't go there very much. I don't think so, at lunchtime. There is, I have seen food served there on special occasions like barbecue and things but I believe that they are trying to get a permit to serve food, to have a cafeteria but they've run into some difficulties there. I also believe that there is an application or a move at the moment to extend the hours of the club.

Mr McADAM: What, the afternoon session or the lunchtime session?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I understand they want to open until 11 o'clock at night. I'm not sure about that because I've only been told that this week. The impact of the 12 o'clock opening, in terms of what we are trying to achieve with the community in having the develop a bit of a work ethic, and training for employment, means that it's very difficult because we have had incidents such as workers using heavy machinery, that will take off at 12 o'clock, drink, and then we can't allow them to work in the afternoon because there is a safety issue there. I think it's fair to say that when we are recruiting people to do other positions like working in the supermarket and whatever, we give preference to non drinkers because we know that they will be around in the afternoon to work. And so for a considerable number of people, that 12 o'clock session wipes them out for the afternoon. For example, when we run council meetings, the council meeting closes at 12 o'clock because the club opens at 12 o'clock. The whole town runs around the timetable of the club. It has a very significant impact on that society. Also, the eight o'clock closing, because when the people are coming out, some of them can be fairly under the influence of alcohol, and can become aggressive, we shut our takeaway at that time, because the club is the other side of town to our supermarket. By the time the drunks wander down, they are the ones that threaten, cause violence, that sort of thing. Our workers are gone. So we time it knowing that if there is going to be any undesirable incidents, they are going to happen about 8:30 – 9.00, or whatever around there. And we get our workers home by that time...

Mr McADAM: So there is another outlet as well?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No, we just run the supermarket with a takeaway, no alcohol.

Madam CHAIR: Takeaway food.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Oh, sorry, yes, takeaway food.

Ms CARTER: How much money do you reckon the average male would spend on alcohol, a week?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: It must be huge. From my knowledge of the turnover of the club, it is something like \$3m or \$4m. There is you know, about 1000 people in the town, roughly. Not all of those are drinkers. So you divide that by the number of people who are of adult age that are drinkers. That is a lot of money that is being spent. To put it into some sort of perspective, we run the supermarket for the community; the club turns over more dollars than the supermarket; so people spend more on alcohol than they do on food.

Ms CARTER: And what sort of money do they spend on rent?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: The housing is supplied through, indigenous housing through the IHANT program, and we charge a rent there per head, which, sorry I can't remember how much it is, but it's...

Mr McADAM: It's based on the house, the ...

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yes, I think something around the \$20 mark but I could get you the exact figure on that.

Ms CARTER: And does that include electricity?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No. They buy electricity cards.

Ms CARTER: It does get put from time to time that one of the causes of such large quantities of alcohol being purchased is that the people have a relatively, I use that term carefully, high disposable income because of the fact that many of the overheads that people; for example, I live in the centre city of Darwin, I have a large block of housing commission units there, where people pay probably on average about \$40 a week on rent then they have to pay power on top of that, so even though they might not be on social security income, they are still having to pay out maybe \$50 a week in housing, and then an amount of food,, whatever that might be so their disposable income is arguably less because of those sort of factors. Do you want to make a comment on that?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I mean this is a personal point of view because I haven't really done any research. But the sort of figures you are quoting I think are quite on the mark, and I believe it's a combination of available finance through unemployment benefits or other social security payments, plus nothing else to do with time. And I think that's one of the reasons that we need to have programs where, of job creation, so that it gives people meaningful employment, it gives them better self esteem, because I think that's one of the things that leads people to drink, is nothing else to do. But also it gives another focus to their lives.

They may get a more disposable income but I also think that you know, there is a lot of people in town that sit around waiting for that club to open. And that is the focus, their lives run around a focus of when that club opens, that's what they are waiting for.

Madam CHAIR: You said before, Alan, that there could be 12 to 13 people in a house. And just picking up on Sue's question with rent. Do you remove or does council deduct from every single one of those 12 or 13 people, I mean in terms of rent payments.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: The ones that are old enough to either work or...

Ms CARTER: Well, any, over 13, say 10, would get some sort of income.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah. We attempt to. Some people are quite difficult to track down. Even people on Unemployment Benefits we get them to sign a form to allow us to deduct it from their employment benefits. So we do try and collect rent from everyone, let's say every adult member in the house. We do not have a lot of control over that because if someone signs a form this week and then goes to Social Security and signs a form to have the payment stopped there is nothing we can do except chase that person again, and there are some people who have learnt the system fairly well and they are fairly itinerant too, so they move around. It is our aim to try and collect rent from every adult member. The proceeds of that rent go onto our budget for maintenance of the housing.

Madam CHAIR: And what about service fees? Does the Council also remove service fee charges, I mean in terms of sanitation, garbage, essential services?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah, for indigenous people there is a single fee that covers the whole lot. There are service fees

Madam CHAIR: What is that figure?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I think, I am not quite sure of the figures at the moment, I think it is something like \$20 or \$30 per head that covers everything, rent and services.

Mr McADAM: Per person.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Per person, and that is regardless of how many people live in the house. It is different of course for businesses and balandas who are working in the town.

Madam CHAIR: How is that different?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Well, it depends on the sort of housing there is. If they are in employee housing, it depends on the contract they signed. There is subsidised rent, but it, for balandas, it is usually done rent per house, and contractors as well are charged a weekly rent.

Ms CARTER: For that fee that you charge Aboriginal people, does that include power?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No it doesn't.

Ms CARTER: So the house gets a separate bill for that/

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No, they buy power cards and put them into the meter.

Mr MCADAM: And the power card rates are significantly higher per whatever it is unit than you will get in Darwin or Alice Springs. In other words you are paying more for less.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah probably it is more expensive to deliver because say for Gunbalanya, it is from a diesel generator, so what we have to do is ship in all of the diesel at the end of the dry because we have to have enough storage on site because the roads are cut off. So it probably is very expensive.

Mr MCADAM: Oh yeah, I accept that.

Ms CARTER: Gunbalanya is quite a spectacular community geographically, I have not probably been there for about 10 years or so. Is there any tourism activity there nowadays?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: There is a little bit, and we are starting to put together plans to make it you know, it is obviously the most viable industry for creation of income and employment. At this stage the official view of NLC is there is no tourism into Arnhem Land. Really I think there is because there are things, people can get a permit to, if you have been to theArt Gallery and there is alsoHill which is what the gallery is named after. There are tours run through that hill by Aboriginal guides which is an example of employment for Indigenous people. It is showing other people their culture and the people working those sorts of jobs get a great deal of satisfaction and some pretty useful income.

Ms CARTER: So as a result of obviously Aboriginal people's views in Arnhem Land, they have instructed the NLC to have a policy that tourism is not to be encouraged on the Aboriginal land, is that what you are saying?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I am not sure who has instructed who, but

Ms CARTER: I would like to hope that is the case.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I have spoken briefly to a number of the TO's and their attitude is they are in favour of tourism if it creates royalties and jobs to be quite direct about it. I think if we do have tourism here we need to structure in such a way that there is good benefit going back to the indigenous population. Probably to get people in you are going to need to have some professional operators too so there needs to be careful negotiation, so it is profitable enough to entice professional and ethical operators, but there is a reasonable share back to the community as well. I think the best model that we are looking at is by looking for ventures.

Ms CARTER: But at the moment the view allowing ready access to the motoring public to Oenpelli and setting up a lodge or something on the lake facing the escarpment is not on the horizon.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No I think the local community have made it fairly clear that they want their privacy and they do not want tourists wandering around looking in their front yards. That is something we respect. So if I was to be involved in any tourist venture I would probably try and have the accommodation out of town, have the town as a service centre but providing maybe even power if it was close enough, but food is another thing and

also the work force. But I would be reluctant, I would not, put it this way, I would not like to see a Club Med in Gunbalanya just at the moment, even though it is a very beautiful place.

Madam CHAIR: Anything else you wanted to say.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah, just a short thing about petrol sniffing. I believe that it really is starting to get out of hand. We have had an employee recently attacked. My understanding of the people that sniff large amounts is that they basically they go into a state where they are not aware of their own actions. They often become violent, and it is a problem. There are bands of youths wandering around town, they often have weapons, and it is a dangerous situation.

Madam CHAIR: Are any of those sniffers dual users of ganja?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I would not know. I would be surprised if they are not.

Madam CHAIR: I mean what we have seen in some communities, where they can not get access to petrol they then go to ganja, and when they have not got access to, when they have got access to petrol they will leave the ganja alone, so dual users. Oenpelli had managed, or Gunbalanya had managed to eradicate if not overcome petrol sniffing years ago. I mean I think it was quite rife around that community, I would say oh about 10 years ago? About 10 or 12 years ago it was bad and they managed to eradicate if not eliminate or get rid of a lot of the trouble shooters that were there. What seems to have brought this problem back?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: There seems to be a core group of very heavy users who induce younger ones to use it, and in some cases we have had some horrible instances where young girls have been dragged in and tried to be put under the influence of petrol by these older youths and you know there is...

Madam CHAIR: Has this been a recent, I mean in terms of the petrol sniffing has that just been a recent thing that has just come back or. There was evidence given to the Committee, a week or two weeks ago that Yolnu Boy, the video, had actually brought on a spurt of this petrol sniffing and the young fellow who actually starred in this movie was back in his own community. Because of the status with the movie he was leading a group of sniffers out there.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Look, I have only been around about two years and in the time that I have been there.....

Madam CHAIR: But this is stuff that would be discussed at the Council though, I mean does it come to the Council for discussion at the Council?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah, to me it seems to be a problem that is getting worse at the moment. It was certainly a problem last year when we were getting heaps of break-ins. The people who got involved with these youths told me that basically they were neglected children and one of the reasons that they sniff was because they were hungry, so our advice at that stage was to start a feeding program where we targeted those people and it did seem to.....

Madam CHAIR: But isn't that just taking the responsibility of those parent, I mean to do that?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Of course.

Madam CHAIR: Has that reduced the petrol sniffing?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: It did for a while but it seems to have flared up again now. We ran out of funds for our feeding program, and I do not know if they are related, but it does seem to me that there does need to be some organised caring of these youths because I believe it is a result of parental neglect. These kids are left to their own devices. They have not, in a lot of case they have no family to go home to, they can not get themselves fed and they become.....

Madam CHAIR: I think you said the average age of these sniffers was 15. What was there ages, 15 to 20? Up to 20 years?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: The age group I was informed ranges from probably 12/13 up to about 20, so 15 as an average age seems about right to me.

Mr PETHICK: Chris Burns did a big study at Maningrida on petrol sniffing. He wrote a paper in the Medical Journal. That is a few years ago now but it is a very similar thing. Petrol sniffing seems to be cyclic and generational, and what we are probably seeing now is the younger ones from a previous cycle, that once they took the older blokes out of circulation, the young ones dropped off, and now those young ones are old enough to bring some new ones back into it again. So, away it goes again. It seems to be cyclic.

Madam CHAIR: That is a huge number though, 20 to 30, up to 30 or you said up to 30

Mr PETHICK: 30 to 50

Mr BUCKINGHAM: That is the sort of figures I have been told for my newsletter.

Madam CHAIR: Some, most of the communities we have looked at, I think that they would say you have a handful, maybe up to six sniffers that would hold a whole community at ransom. I mean 50.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Well I know that there have been instances when groups of them have basically been wandering around town and making IT not safe to be on the streets.

Mr PETHICK: There is probably a core group of sniffers of about 10 or 12, and the rest would be hangeronners.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah, I think that is probably right. That, where the 50 number is probably occasional sniffers.

Madam CHAIR: You say about 10 core sniffers.

Mr PETHICK: 10 or 12 hard core sniffers.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: The problem with those people is that they try and induce others to take up the same use of petrol they have.

Madam CHAIR: There is quite an effective program at Mount Theo in Central Australia. I do not know whether your workers, have spoken with those workers down there, at the Mount Theo sniffing program, but it might be worth while.

Mr PETHICK: I have also sent boys to Pedford in Queensland.

Madam CHAIR: To where?

Mr PETHICK: To Pedford in Queensland, it is a working cattle station, and they have gone there for petrol sniffing rehabilitation.

Mr MCADAM: How has that worked out?

Mr PETHICK: One boy that springs to mind, 100% successful. He has been home again but it was his family, the thing was to get his family involved in his health and wellbeing and make them in charge of it. We gave them all the assistance. They are the ones who got him to Pedford. He was there for three or four months, maybe more. That was eight or nine years ago probably.

Madam CHAIR: I think in Mount Theo there is a group of dedicated elders. They might not have been the parents but they cared for these kids. I think they were just taking these kids literally out to the outstations to detox.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: I also agree with the previous speaker that for these programs to be successful we have to not only have agreement but really support and cooperation from the general community for them to be viable.

Madam CHAIR: What is, which brings me to the next point in terms of leadership then.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: From the indigenous people?

Madam CHAIR: Well any community leaders.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: The people that I've had most contact with have been councillors, who are I guess the senior people of the community. A number of them are traditional owners, and they certainly can see and are aware of the issues, but we are still working through how we manage this as a community. We certainly haven't got the answers at the moment.

Ms CARTER: Speaking of the leadership, I am thinking of a particular community where the church and the missions were very strong in years gone by and as a result, there are a group of older people now who are very capable and very strong in that community. The community is now very concerned about what the standard is of the potential leaders coming through behind, in that; their skills in English, reading and writing, and in all sorts of other skills, are not as strong. Would Gunbalanya have a similar sort of problem?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah. It's something that really concerns me and something that we have to turn around very quickly, because the people, you know, as an outsider coming in, I've got certain areas within my expertise but I really need to find ways to cooperate with the community and have this cooperation direction. Those people are basically, I would say, educated by missionaries so after that, these things have gone backwards. I'm not a particularly great fan of the methods employed by the missionaries but they certainly did get good results in terms of education and allowing these people to continue their own culture, because I think that's very important as well. I think it's a combination of when the missionaries came in and went out, so unemployment benefits came in, I think that really this concept of, that people like Noel Pearson talk about, where there needs to be reciprocity. I believe that, from what I have observed, I really believe that that's an important factor. Their idea of giving everyone employment benefits for doing nothing, particularly when there's a club in town, that's basically all I can spend their money on. It has it really severely damaged these communities. That's from my own observations and reading the research that I've done since I've been there.

Madam CHAIR: He also advocates prohibition, and the reality is that total prohibition just doesn't work. I mean, even in terms of his people at the Cape....

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No. In my view, on Jabiru say, when we've talked about prohibition at the Club and closing it down. I'm very against prohibition. One only has to look at history and what happened to prohibition in the United States when they tried to bring it in. It failed; it was the start of organised crime. And I believe that prohibition simply does not work. I believe that the tighter we try to make controls in Jabiru, the closer we get to prohibition and the less control we have got over situation., the only answer is some sort of program of working with the community, and having people take responsibility for their own actions. And they're the people that are, you know, appear for substance abusing, they are the people that we need to work with.

Madam CHAIR: In terms of, I mean, we look at education, and education is something that is like the key to the door in terms of, because knowledge is power. One of the things that children, I suppose, in Darwin, and some of the schools and other areas, and I don't know whether and I haven't had a chance to catch up with Esther, who's the principal at Gunbalanya; is the DARE program. Having access to drug and alcohol awareness programs; because at some stage, we've got to stop the cycle. And I think that it's going to be, and I think that somebody said this morning, another generation before we start seeing the impact, but I honestly believe that it's probably going to be another generation or two before we do see.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Well, it's really worth talking about this. Esther and I actually, have had a number of talks about this, with Esther. But in terms of my role at the school, I see it as whole of community problem. The school has got a problem with lack of attendance, particularly once students get to teenage years, it is extremely low. If the figures that I'm quoted are anywhere near right, it is so close to zero that you might as well say that there's no schooling once they get to about teenage years, within the community.

Madam CHAIR: There's no high school though, is there; is there a high school?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: No, I think at a certain age, they get sent out to college but not many students get sent out. But even of the younger kids, attendance is a problem.

Madam CHAIR: Do they have a VET? I think they do have a VET, vocational education training program, adult education, I think there is.

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Yeah, we try and run one. There seems to be a real resistance to Balanda style education and I don't fully understand the reasons for that.

Madam CHAIR: What, that the kids don't want to go? Or the community.....

Mr BUCKINGHAM: Well, I don't know how accurate this is, I've been told by teachers there is a resistance to learning English and things like that. One teacher coined to me, that, teaching students Chinese easier than they could English. They believe that, you know, for perhaps a cultural reason, they didn't want to learn. I'm not an expert in that area but these are the sorts of stories that I'm told. I think that these young people are caught between two different cultures and we need to find a way that honours their own culture and make sure it's not extinguished. But also that they are educated so they can operate in a modern society. It's a difficult balancing act. At the moment, they're getting the worst of both. They're getting a pub culture, if you like, where they are basically, the kids at a young age are being taken into areas where alcohol is consumed in fairly large amounts, and that is the culture that they're seeing. That's why I was talking before about giving them other opportunities so that they can see that there are social activities that can be conducted without alcohol.

Madam CHAIR: You said the word resistance before in terms of, that people don't want to learn and people don't want to do anything. I mean, in terms of the community, and you as the acting CEO that works for this community, do you think that rather than resistance, that there is a community denial that there is a problem?

Mr BUCKINGHAM: It depends who you talk to. I think if you talk to different people within the community, you get different answers. I believe that there's a lot of money associated with alcohol.

END TRANSCRIPT