



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
**COUNCIL OF TERRITORY CO-OPERATION**

**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**MONDAY 13 DECEMBER 2010**

Members:

Mr Gerry Wood, MLA, Member for Nelson – CHAIR  
Ms Lynne Walker, MLA, Member for Nhulunbuy  
Ms Marion Scrymgour, MLA, Member for Arafura

Witnesses:

Office of the Public Guardian, represented by:

Ms Elspeth Crosby, Senior Manager, Northern Territory  
Mr Ian McKinlay, Delegate, Alice Springs  
Ms Penny Fielding, Director, Aged & Disability Services, Department of Health and Families

Engineers Australia Northern Division, represented by:

Mr Len Chappell, President  
Ms Bronwyn Russell, Director

Children's Commissioner for the Northern Territory – Dr Howard Bath

Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), represented by:

Mr John Paterson, Chief Executive Officer  
Mr Chips Mackinolty, Manager, Policy & Strategy

Chief Executive's Child Protection Taskforce, represented by:

Mr Jeffrey Moffet, Chief Executive, Department of Health and Families  
Ms Clare Gardiner-Barnes, Executive Director, NT Families and Children

**MEETING OPENED 9:52AM**

Hearing with the Office of the Public Guardian held *in-camera*.

[MEETING CONVENED 11.12AM]

[MEETING RE-CONVENED 11.22AM]

**CHAIR:** I'll just do the official bit first so we get going, sorry we're a little bit late there. I declare open this public meeting of the Council of Territory Co-operation and welcome Mr Len Chappell and Ms Bronwyn Russell from Engineers Australia Northern Division. Thank you for appearing before us today. Although the Committee does not require you to give evidence under oath these hearings are formal proceedings of the Parliament and consequently they warrant the same respect of proceedings of the House itself.

I remind the witness that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. Whilst this meeting is public witnesses have the right to request to be heard in private session. If you wish to be heard *in camera*, please advise the Committee prior to commencing your answer.

Today's proceedings are being electronically recorded, please state your full name and position before commencing your evidence. As soon as practical following this hearing the transcript of your evidence will be uploaded to the Committee's website but not before you have proofed it.

I would like to welcome and Len and Bronwyn and if you don't know our fellow Members here, Marion Ms Scrymgour, Member for over the road – Arafura ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Probably the best electorate of the Northern Territory, the most scenic.

**CHAIR:** And Lynne Walker from Nhulunbuy, the Member for Nhulunbuy, funnily enough. So we welcome you today and appreciate you giving your time up to tell us about the Engineers' Report on the state of the Northern Territory. So if you'd like to start off then.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** What I'll do is I'll go through the presentation we made at the opening of the thing, I think that gives an overview of the whole thing and where we're coming from and where we're hoping to go. Thank you for giving us this opportunity too.

**CHAIR:** That's alright, yeah.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Since Engineers Australia produced the first infrastructure report card for the Northern Territory in 2005 we've continued to face population, geographic and economic issues that are often unique to our part of the country. The 2010 Report Card we released last month provides a comprehensive overview of what's happened over the past five years and what still needs to be done. A report is an independent overview of facts, trends and recommendations for our collective future.

Before I move onto details I'd like to set out some basics about the ratings we presented. The ratings are based on an assessment of asset condition, asset availability and reliability, asset management and sustainability. An A means very good, that is infrastructure is fit for current and anticipated future purposes; a B is good with minor changes needed to meet current and future needs; a C is adequate but major changes are required; a D is poor with critical changes required and an F is inadequate. To further define the ratings, a plus or a minus has been included. Now that you have some understanding of our rating system, I'll move onto the outcomes.

Of the 13 categories reviewed in the 2010 Report, one has an A rating which is very good, three are within the good B rating range needing minor changes only, eight are within the adequate C ratings but needing major changes and one rates a D which critical change is required. The A rating was given to gas; the B ratings were for national roads, airports and stormwater; a C rating was for roads overall Territory roads, rail, ports, potable water, waste water, electricity and telecommunications. The D rating was for local roads.

Since 2005, marginal improvements have been made in the areas of national roads and stormwater while the major Territory roads have also slowly improved. Other Territory roads and local roads we believe have declined. The ratings for rail ports, airports, potable water, waste water, electricity and gas have also all slipped.

The 2010 Report Card includes the extra categories of roads overall and telecommunications which were not rated in 2005. The overall assessment shows that the Territory's infrastructure requires major improvements, with only a small number of sectors being rated as good.

While improvements are planned or underway in all infrastructure sectors, many of these initiatives are either not funded or not expected to be delivered in the short-term. Population growth, economic growth and improvements in Indigenous communities are the key drivers of infrastructure demand in the Territory.

By 2051 the Territory's population is projected to grow between 20% and 140%. Either scenario will accelerate the demand for transport, energy, water and telecommunication services. The Territory will also continue to be highly influenced by global economic conditions. Just by looking back over the past five years we can see the impact of the substantial investment in the mining and energy construction sectors. The economic growth has and will continue to drive demand for infrastructure services.

Well the Territory has the highest Indigenous population in Australia who already experience considerable disadvantage. Hopefully strategies and programs to address these disadvantages will result in infrastructure that will improve the economic, environment and social amenity for these communities and the Territory overall.

Now I'd like to take a closer look at the various infrastructure sectors we've assessed. When viewed against the standards of the more highly populated and less geographically and climatically challenged States, most of the Territory's transport services and the supporting infrastructure would be considered as inadequate. However, we're all very well aware of the fact that we have significant challenges in providing transport due to our low population density, diverse transport needs, vast areas and wet season impact.

Given this, and the gap between what is required in funding constraints, it's even more important that a strategic approach to providing transport infrastructure occurs as set out in the Territory 2030 Strategic Plan. We must balance the competing interests for road funding, notably from the resource sector, agriculture, tourism and remote and regional communities.

While there have been some improvements in national roads, in major Territory roads overall, there are still major changes that are required. There is considerable disparity between road types and between urban and non-urban areas, the condition of our local roads is poor requiring critical changes.

There's been a significant rating downgrade from 2005 for rail infrastructure; this may be surprising given the relative newness of our line. Whilst it's adequate for current level and type of rail traffic, improvements must include an efficient interface with the Port of Darwin and better track conditions south of Alice Springs. To enable us to significantly increase bulk materials traffic we will need additional passing loops and improvements to the track to cope with heavier laden trains.

While the rating support infrastructure has slipped, the current rating is adequate. This is due to improvements in the Port of Darwin facilities. The vision for the future through the East Arm Wharf Facilities Master Plan 2030 is also encouraging, however, there remains a backlog of maintenance and renewals for some Port of Darwin assets and there is a need for further supporting infrastructure at several barge landings.

The rating for airports recognises that our two major airports in Darwin and Alice Springs are both currently just adequate for existing passenger and freight demand and both have detailed expansion plans. It was highly encouraging that the terminal and apron expansion plan for Darwin Airport got as far as the interim priority list of Infrastructure Australia in 2008, but it was disappointing that it fell off the priority project list in 2009 – maybe it's time to have another go.

Away from the big airports we must equally remain focussed on the critical importance of our regional and remote aerodromes, regardless of their challenging circumstances and needs.

From where we live up here water issues are often just part of a discussion about the pros and cons of the wet and dry seasons or in many parts of the Territory what water. But Darwin's per capita water consumption is the highest in Australia and the water quality in a number of remote areas does not meet acceptable guidelines. Improving access to high quality water in remote communities will require significant infrastructure investment and climate change also has the potential to significantly impact on our water supplies.

Our Report identifies that urban potable water infrastructure has improved in a number of urban and remote communities but there are a few locations where water supplies still do not meet the microbiological water quality guidelines and many locations where they do not meet physical and chemical water quality guidelines.

The ongoing issue of waste water infrastructure remains right up there in the consciousness of the Darwin people while upgrading to improve capacity and performance of the waste water treatment plant, and to extent the East Point outfall is well underway, raw sewerage is still being discharged into Darwin Harbour and that's completely unacceptable. Even when the Larrakeyah outfall is closed, nutrient loadings from treatment facilities may still cause water quality problems.

Elsewhere, the Alice Springs water reuse project to recycle waste water for horticulture and irrigation has now been commissioned and this project actually won this year's Engineering Excellence awards. More attention, however, is needed for improvements in many Indigenous communities. Generally, the overall performance of the stormwater system is good but the rating is buoyed up by the high standards of our new urban areas. In many older areas there is a growing gap between renewals and needs and it's a concern that there is a lack of condition information on stormwater assets in urban areas.

Electricity issues over recent times have drawn a lot of attention through the major power outages in the Darwin/Katherine system due to the lack of maintenance on our aging distribution infrastructure. While there has been an improvement in generation capacity for the Darwin/Katherine region, concerns still exist about the quality of distribution infrastructure and its asset management. It's encouraging that advances have been made in increasing the capacity and security of electricity supply to Indigenous communities but significant drop to an overall C rating ... rating of C minus for the Territory reflects that very major issues remain to be addressed.

Our rating for gas infrastructure is very good, the best outcome in our assessments, and certainly one for the Territory to be comfortable with for now and the immediate future. Existing transmission pipelines are of high quality and there is a reliable supply of gas for the next 25 years. Future challenges include the vulnerability of loss of supply and the very limited reticulated gas supply.

The last sector for comment is telecommunications. Telecommunications infrastructure remains as an easy to identify and therefore usually front of mind issue. Services in our urban areas are generally adequate but broadband black spots still exist. Construction of a fibre optic backhaul link to Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek is providing competitive backhaul between Darwin and the rest of Australia and there has been incremental improvement in providing broadband to remote communities. But substantial gaps in telecommunication services exist across the Territory and there's limited mobile phone coverage along main highways and in remote areas.

Having given you a brief overview of the results and some thoughts about each sector in our Report Card, I'd now like to turn to our recommendations for the future.

To ensure the Territory's infrastructure will meet the needs of business and the community, Engineers Australia recommends the following. We need a coordinated long-term transport infrastructure plan; the development of the plan needs to involve the Australia Government, the Territory Government, Local Governments as well as the private sector.

The recent increase in road maintenance must continue and provision must be made to replace aged road assets. Road, marine and air access to regional and remote communities must be progressively upgraded, Local Governments must build asset management systems for all assets, the maintenance and renewal information from these systems should become a key input into financial allocations to Local Governments.

The Territory Government should play a greater role in facilitating infrastructure expansion. They need to coordinate the demand that comes from multiple commercial activities and Governments with infrastructure providers.

The environmental outcomes of ports needs to improve and the Port of Darwin should implement its forward plans to meet and encourage demand. Darwin Airport must address capacity issues and facilitate airline hobbing and economic growth. The Australian and Territory Governments must keep regional and remote airstrips viable.

Where potable water consumption will exceed supply in the medium to long term, Power and Water Corporation and the Northern Territory Government should implement demand management strategies to reduce consumption. As well, they need to develop water source expansion plans. The water quality health issues for all water supplies needs to be addressed.

The waste water upgrade and expansion works must not be delayed; their completion will allow the long overdue closure of the Larrakeyah outfall that discharges raw sewerage into Darwin Harbour.

The Power and Water Corporation need to implement remedial asset management program and long-term action plans to improve security of service. Electricity and water and waste water tariffs need to be set at a level that will ensure financial sustainability. The Australian and Territory Governments must continue to invest in the development of alternative energy sources.

And finally telecommunication shortfalls must be addressed by rolling out the National Broadband Network across the Territory and eliminating mobile phone blackspots in urban and fringe areas and along heavily trafficked roads.

The adequacy of our infrastructure underpins economic growth, community needs and the overall quality of life for all across the Territory. The adequacy of infrastructure in the future will depend significantly on three key factors. (1) the speed and magnitude of the resource sector's growth; (2) the magnitude and location of population growth; and (3) the ability of the Territory Government and infrastructure owners to access investment funds and invest in anticipation of demand growth.

Engineers Australia offers the latest *Northern Territory Infrastructure Report Card* as our ongoing commitment to driving a well-informed debate around the delivery of key infrastructure in our Territory. Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Thanks Len. That sounded like we need Father Christmas, all those things you have there.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** I think all of Australia need Father Christmas, not just the Territory.

**CHAIR:** Before I open up for questions, can I just ask a general question, could you explain who makes up or who is Engineers Australia and specifically the Northern Territory Division, and who actually goes around and on what basis do they grade all the facilities or infrastructure in the Northern Territory?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** As far as the grading goes, we had an independent consultant investigating ... all the information came from readily available documents, on the web in Government Departments, our independent consultant put this together. We had a committee of reviewers, certain people review with expertise in different fields, reviewed all of the information that was put in front of them and that committee basically rated the infrastructure from the information that was put in front of them.

**CHAIR:** And you've given us a chart for all the States and the Territory ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** That's for all of Australia, that's happened in every State and it happened over all Australia as well down at ...

**CHAIR:** How do we know the analysis is the same? Are you comparing a local road in Queensland using the same basis of the analysis as you would have done for the Northern Territory? So how could I ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Yes, it's the same ... well, it's the same consultant prepared the information for every State in Australia. The different States had different review committees so the importance they placed on all of that information was a State to State thing.

One thing I think we need to ... we've given gas an A minus rating which may be a little bit conflicting with other States because our gas here is only used for commercial purposes, basically, where other States would be rating gas for domestic purposes also.

**CHAIR:** Just to get back to the first part of that question, who are Engineers Australia?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** I'll let Bronwyn answer that, she knows more about Engineers Australia than I do.

**Ms RUSSELL:** Well, just overall, Engineers Australia overall's got about 95,000 members in Australia. In the Northern Territory we've got about 590 and some of those are actually in Indonesia so anybody who has a qualification that makes them a professional engineer, an engineering technologist or an engineering associate are members of Engineers Australia. We have student members as well so the majority of our members are actually in the workforce and working a lot for the private sector but also for the Government.

**CHAIR:** To cover all engineer classifications?

**Ms RUSSELL:** All engineers are included in Engineers Australia, they don't have separate groups for different disciplines. The one group that perhaps is slightly outside that, there is a mining institute. They have their own association but many of those members are actually members of both. Because that doesn't just cover engineering in ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** We do have separate colleges representing in our members, an electrical college, a mechanical college, structural college, that's where the breakdown goes, at college level and it's in those colleges where we try to ... well, individualising and look for continuing professional sort of service.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Just going on from Gerry's question, so the independent consultant that Engineers Australia engaged to audit or to have a look at the infrastructure in the various areas, in terms of the Territory and when you look at regional or remote communities, did they go and do an inspection in terms of some of the roads? How was that analysis done, was it all desktop?

**Ms RUSSELL:** It was a desktop activity and in the full report there's about seven pages of references from all the documents the information came from, and I know ... actually, you all would have received a copy of the full document. But then what happens, the local people have

some general knowledge as well because a lot of the people that are on our committee actually work sort of across the Territory, so some of them are able to say, 'Oh yeah, I can agree with that', and maybe the road to Nhulunbuy's a good example.

**Ms WALKER:** That's a good road to Nhulunbuy, Bronwyn.

**Ms RUSSELL:** Except only six months of the year. [Laughs]

**Ms WALKER:** We're about the spend \$14M on it and keep it open most of the year.

**CHAIR:** You've got to turn it into a public road yet.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Central Arnhem Highway.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** No, we had several engineers reviewing the road sector and electrical engineers reviewing electrical section. It was split up, our committee had members from each college brought in, basically.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** And that'd be the same with barge landings and ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Yes. So it's people that have actually worked in the field and know what the infrastructure looked like and is like in ... well, all over the Territory.

**CHAIR:** I might ask some questions. I don't know whether this came out on the First Report but ...

**Ms RUSSELL:** This has just happened.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** We were waiting for Queensland to finish theirs and Australia to finish theirs.

**CHAIR:** I'm not saying that our Report's super hot either in places but at least when it comes out for public discussion it's fairer to say well, we mightn't be too good but neither is the rest of Australia in some areas. The interesting thing is that overall we were above New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria, we took it overall. That's what the classification is but then when you read the percentage improvement, it doesn't quite match because New South Wales was ... June 32%, is that an increase in ... ?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** That's their spending ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** That's what they spend.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** ... as a percentage of their gross State product and I think we're doing ... we've only just seen this after the Australian one came out too and with the NT spending 1.3% of our gross State product, we're doing quite well. Imagine if we double that and we'd still be one of the lowest spenders on it but imagine what we could do with double what we're spending now.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But per capita, if you have a look at the GSP, that's right, that's substantial, yeah.



**Ms RUSSELL:** Because we actually commented on that, that New South Wales and Victoria, for example ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Can only ... and they're only managing Cs and they're spending 32% of their gross State product on infrastructure.

**CHAIR:** See, you bring out a Report Card and I think I raised it when you launched it, one of the areas that will always be a difficult issue is local roads, low population, large distances, some of them are poor quality roads in the first place Local Government simply does not have the money to maintain those roads. The Northern Territory Government's trying to hand those roads over to Local Government anyway. We haven't got the money we thought that was sort of promised we might get, similar to what the Pitjantjara Lands Agreement occurred with the Commonwealth Government some years ago where they get a lump sum top do those roads within that area, and the only hope is the Commonwealth to give more money for roads because simply the Territory just simply doesn't have the money. Do you have a role as an Engineers' Association in helping Governments lobby the Federal Government to upgrade some of these areas that simply we don't have enough money to do on our own?

**Ms RUSSELL:** This Report is actually part of our lobbying from our policy directorate saying to the Government generally, the Federal Government, you know, it's saying to the local State and Territory Governments too of course, but also saying to the Federal Government, there is a really big issue across Australia with infrastructure and our population's increasing, we're going to have even more pressure on infrastructure and there's been a low spend on infrastructure for quite a long time, and I guess the message is clear that surplus budgets are not very useful if your infrastructure's falling to pieces, we should be spending it to maintain the lifestyle and viability of our State or Territory.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** We'll get you to go and talk to our Treasurer.

**Ms WALKER:** And hence the stimulus package which would have seen the increase in spending across on Australia on this deal.

**Ms RUSSELL:** Yes, and Infrastructure Australia was mooted, in fact, after our last Infrastructure Report Card which was five years ago and so that was an outcome, there was certainly the impact of that contributed to the development of Infrastructure Australia, and I guess that's one of the things that we've said to the Ministers here that this is an opportunity to try and talk to the Government, the Federal Government, about how we might be able to get a better return so that we can put more into our infrastructure.

**CHAIR:** If you've got local roads down as a D plus, most States are down fairly low, in a perfect world, what becomes an A plus on a local road, so can you have a gravel road because I mean, the reality is we're not going to seal all our local roads, so if you had a sealed road does that automatically make you a higher category than an unsealed road?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** That doesn't really because you can have very bad sealed roads. We need roads (a) that are safe, even a gravel road can be safe if it's planned properly and it's maintained, but we've got a lot of roads where they just got washed out in wet season. Now that brings us right down every year; until we can improve that we'll never get up to an A category. But if we can get a gravel road, they pay a lot of attention to road safety and bends, corners, the shoulders of the road, the surface of the road and make sure that's all adequate for driving on, yeah, we've got a good chance of getting up there on local roads.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But therein lies a problem though, Len, and flowing on from what Gerry was saying, 50% of the, I mean, if you look at the land mass across the Northern Territory and the majority of those roads, they're on Aboriginal land, therefore those roads are categorised as private roads so the money that comes from the Commonwealth Grants Commission into the Northern Territory is reduced compared to what other States and Territories would get. Does that get factored in as part of the ... ?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** I'm afraid it doesn't because we don't go onto private roads and private areas, it's purely the local ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** No, no, but it comes into, I mean, it still gets categorised as a local road, like, the Central Arnhem Highway is a local ... it's a public road but it is Aboriginal land so ...

**Ms WALKER:** It's not a gazetted road in the public sense.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** No, so I think that, I mean, that's something that we've certainly been talking about, whether those categories of roads do change so that federally that money can increase rather than the levels that have ...

**Ms RUSSELL:** And one of the things that came out of our Report Card, and I'm sure it'd be the same in Queensland and in Western Australia too, is that how can we actually work with the private sector and I guess a lot of Aboriginal land would come under that heading with the ones that actually have access to some royalties and stuff, how can we work better with the private sector, the pastoral industry, the mining industry, the Aboriginal Corporations and actually factor that into improving and maintaining our roads.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Maintaining those roads, or even putting levies, I notice one of your recommendations looking at the levies on some of those roads because if we move towards the Growth Towns and trying to get economic development, I know just on the Tiwi Islands where they had the forestry project and some of the communities wanted to put a levy on the big trucks that we use in the public access roads but that was knocked back because people thought it would be conducive to economic development but no one was actually putting the money on the table in terms of upgrading and fixing those roads with the traffic that was going on up there.

**CHAIR:** The company probably could have been required to maintain the roads.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Well, they should have been, well ...

**CHAIR:** Instead of paying a levy just said, well, you've got to maintain it.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah, that was put on the table to them too, Gerry, and some of that mindset needs to change because people think ... I mean, Local Government as you know is only given X amount of dollars for the Commonwealth Grants Commission.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** We know it's very difficult for them.

**CHAIR:** I thought you meant a tollway to Nhulunbuy and a tollway you have to pay as you ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Well, that's alright, I'll put a toll bridge on South Alligator, you know, on the Cahill's Crossing.

**CHAIR:** Just on stormwater, it's an interesting area, it doesn't apply to too many places but generally stormwater is a council's responsibility?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Generally, yes.

**Ms WALKER:** It got the highest rating in Australia on that.

**CHAIR:** Yeah, but one of the things you did say was that it was an area that perhaps hasn't had enough attention.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** We haven't got enough information on our older suburbs, and basically new suburbs they're paying a lot of attention to getting rid of water.

**CHAIR:** Well, stormwater, you might say, is the conduit to pollution and in certain areas like in the rivers and creeks and our harbour, when they look at a B minus, do they say, well, how well has that stormwater been designed to reduce the effects of pollution into the natural environment, so is it just simply the pipe is the right size and looks beautiful?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** They have traps in those things where they actually catch most ... the newer ones.

**CHAIR:** But in ... and I'll give you a classic example of some of the designs, I call them the concrete engineered designs in Palmerston where drains went straight into creeks, practically, instead of using what I think is the more appropriate and the more modern design is slowing the water down, allowing nutrients to be dropped, you might say, before they get into a creek, I suppose, using a more natural approach, so if the engineer's consultant went down to Palmerston he might say, 'Beautifully designed concrete drain, the angles are perfect, the slope is fantastic', but if he doesn't rate what effect it had on the creek below ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** But I think up until very recent times we didn't have any environmental protection in Darwin at all, we've got a lot more at the moment.

**CHAIR:** We have beneficial use requirements for the harbour for actually, well, ten years ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** I mean in the belonging game and things, you could get away with just about anything.

**CHAIR:** Yeah, but I think that some of the designs that I've seen in other places, and this is long ago, haven't been taken up by some of the developers or designers. You go to Salisbury, industrial estate, 20 years, I think, probably now, they designed a wetlands, artificial wetlands to take all nutrient from those industrial area, through that, different depth of ponds and became a wetland and a wildlife park, they removed all the nutrients before it went into the sea, so some of the knowledge and the technology has been around quite a while.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** I'm not objecting that, I now it's been around but you get developers and people, they go for [laughs] you know what they're developing for, the lowest fees and the lowest ... so you're ...

**CHAIR:** Are you involved in anything else besides infrastructure, like, five star efficiency rating, the design of buildings, all that sort of thing? Is that part of your ... ?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** It's part of individual firms' climates.

**CHAIR:** But it's not part of Engineers Australia ...

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Engineers Australia ... well, we applaud it and we try to encourage it.

**Ms RUSSELL:** And we actually have quite a lot of members across Australia who are actually involved in a lot of advisory groups and industry engagement groups with various Governments, like here we've got a lot of people, a lot of our members who are actually on those sorts of committees for the Government, and we also have a policy department in Canberra that picks up particular issues as they become, or potential to become national issues and they try and make a contribution to that. For example, the curriculum stuff that's been happening for schools, we've been involved in getting feedback from members and putting in a policy paper on that, so there's a number of those things that happen from time to time.

**CHAIR:** You need maths if you're going to be an engineer and high quality maths.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** We're trying to encourage it, we really are.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I just want to go to water and the tabling of ... and your rating with water. Do you have any ... with the analysis, any information that you could provide? Was part of the low rating and the quality of water in some of the regional and remote communities because of the lack of fluoridation or the systems that were in place in terms of the bores and the infrastructure that was there ...

**CHAIR:** Chlorination.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Chlorination, I'm saying fluoridation.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** I think it encompasses all the ...

**Ms RUSSELL:** And it was rated that way because there are quite a few water supplies, including Tennant Creek, often doesn't meet the world standards that are set ... the standards that are actually set for Australia.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Because of the mineralisation or ... ?

**Ms RUSSELL:** And e-Coli, we've had quite a few outbreaks of e-Coli out in some of the remote areas where people have been told to boil their water for a period of time, and so obviously the systems aren't in place to prevent that from happening sufficiently.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Which means chlorination.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Because it happens, I mean, every year you can almost bank on it happening in Jabiru which was surprising.

**Ms WALKER:** I've got a question around electricity, I guess it flows on from on from Gerry's remarks about five star ratings and recognising that there is a bit of a green element to what you do, particularly noting your comments about Darwin Harbour and waste management around sewerage. With the electricity rating, however, from what I take off the descriptor here, it appears that ratings around electricity are based on generation capacity. I'm asking is there recognition here about alternative energies, so for instance, in the Territory, we have a growing recognition and development of solar energy, wind power as well, there's a commitment for our home lands to move away from diesel power generation to something that's far more cleaner and energy efficient, so does that energy rating recognise that because the descriptor doesn't reflect it?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** We have taken that into account. We know there's a lot of Bushlight starts around the Territory and we're really ... we applaud that and we're very happy with that. There's still so many outstations, communities, regional areas running diesel generators. I know it costs a lot of money to change over but it reflects that as well as power, suburban areas.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** And the Federal Government saw the merits in that program and they cut it.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Yes. You can't explain ...

**Ms RUSSELL:** And I guess Alice Springs with its solar cities approach has been really interesting too, they've got the highest uptake of solar generation privately, I believe, in Australia and of course around the centre where we've got the solar power stations at Hermannsburg and Lajamanu and ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yuendumu.

**Ms RUSSELL:** Yeah, and that's Power and Water Corporation have really been promoting that as well, along as we're getting some Federal Government support.

**CHAIR:** Hasn't been a good year for solar power in Alice Springs this year.

**Ms RUSSELL:** They've had a lot of rain this year.

**CHAIR:** Mmm, green and wet.

**Ms RUSSELL:** The river's flowed 11 times or something in one year.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** But electricity was ... well, on our committee, our rating committee, that was probably the most contentious item, we had people saying we should be giving it an A and other psychologist saying we should be giving it a D for various reasons because there are some good things happening, some very good things happening but that's been countermanded by a lot of bad things, lacks of maintenance and things. And we tried to meet in the middle. But that was really the most contentious issue we had.

**CHAIR:** Well, it will be interesting to see how it goes next year because the amount of money that's been put into infrastructure.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Well, there's a lot of money being pumped into it, you know, but ... and what we're trying to say was this is a snapshot in time of how we see it now and we know

there's been money put ... spent in all areas but until we see the outcome of that we really can't comment. We can applaud the Government for spending the money but until we see outcomes, you really can't rate it very much higher.

**Ms WALKER:** Len, when is the next snapshot due?

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Every five years.

**CHAIR:** Oh, have to wait a while there. [Laughs]

**Ms RUSSELL:** Hopefully we'll see some things happening before then though.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** So you don't do anything in the interim, just to ...

**Ms RUSSELL:** Not a big project like this.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** No, but do you pick ... just say if you picked, like, roads, just the water, I mean, not ... but just monitor, how do you ... do you just get all that analysis at the end of the five years, do you, and then ... ?

**Ms RUSSELL:** Pretty much.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** What we're hoping is that other sectors pick up different sectors of the report card and run with it and ours is a basis for people to start working on upgrading things and different sectors that we need individual companies and ...

**Ms WALKER:** Might generate some, or stimulate some RMD spending in communities.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Be good for Local Government.

**CHAIR:** I've got to give that Report Card to local roads without even this being done.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Then they'd say you were biased.

**CHAIR:** Well, I travel on some of them too. It is difficult. I don't know how councils could ever try and get it up to, you know, much higher because it's hugely expensive.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Well, we realise that too.

**CHAIR:** And I think to some extent we get our means and be realistic, there are times when you just can't travel, you know, the cost of bridging, everything and putting culverts over everything compared to maybe the use by the public mightn't warrant that sort of infrastructure cost. But on the other hand, if you want the Territory to develop, infrastructure is the best way to make it move by improving roads and putting electricity out further and all those sorts of things.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Well, it's roads, it's ... you get some of these communities, they're cut off completely isolated and your airstrip, if you've got one, probably can't ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** The airstrips and the barge landings should be constructed.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** Barge landings, roads and ... If you're locked out in the three ways of getting into them, they're in all sorts of trouble.

**CHAIR:** Well, my personal feeling is if you don't build the infrastructure to the 20 Growth Towns so that the economies can at least start to grow, well then they'll never grow because you simply won't have the ability to do it.

**Mr CHAPPELL:** I agree with you.

**CHAIR:** Alright, have you got any other questions there?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** No, that's good.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for giving us your time to tell us about how semi good we are in some things and not so good in other things.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I did want to, Mr Chair, I would like to just thank Bronwyn and Len and Engineers Australia, the actual reports that came out were fantastic, I received about three of them, and I gave one each to each of the Shires in my Electorate, they were great reports that I thank you for sending those around.

**CHAIR:** Well, thank you very much for coming, and we'll have a little break for a while and we've got some more things this afternoon.

*[MEETING CONVENED 12:06PM]*

*[MEETING RE-CONVENED 1:04PM]*

**CHAIR:** Welcome everyone, I've just got to say the correct opening statement so I declare open this public meeting of the Council of Territory Cooperation and welcome Dr Howard Bath, Children's Commissioner for the Northern Territory and thank you for appearing before us today.

Although the Committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, these hearings are formal proceedings of the Parliament and consequently they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. I remind the witness that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of Parliament.

Whilst this meeting is public witnesses have the right to request to be heard in private session. If you wish to be heard in camera, please advise the Committee prior to commencing your answer.

Today's proceedings are being electronically recorded. Dr Bath, please state your full name and position before commencing your evidence. As soon as practicable following this hearing the transcript of your evidence will be uploaded to the Committee's website but not before you have proofed it. I remind Members that personal opinions should not be sought from public servant appearing in a professional capacity.

Dr Bath, good afternoon, would you just like to state your name and position for the recording?

**Dr BATH:** Okay, Howard Bath and my role is as Children's Commissioner of the Northern Territory.

**CHAIR:** Thank you doctor. Well, it's good to see you have recovered from a fairly large body of work, the enquiry, so I was just going to ask you a fairly broad question, if you could, and I know both Members here have questions they'd like to ask as well. It relates to Recommendation 1, Recommendation 1 was that Northern Territory Families and Children undertake the process of engaging its entire workforce to commit to a strategic plan which clarifies its position and includes the articulation of values and principles under which it will operate. My question really is, how do you change the mindset of a Department if that Department was involved, you might say, in the tsunami that you spoke about ... how do you get to all the people that are going to be involved in child protection to go along together as one group working together to change things?

**Dr BATH:** That's a very good question, I mean, it's a very, very hard issue. Can I just clarify that the tsunami, the tsunami of need was to refer to the context in which the Department is working, you know, it's an overwhelming situation in terms of the sheer level of need in the Northern Territory, particularly in remote communities. And so that's what that analogy was to, in fact, the full quotation was something like it's like a row boat in a tsunami of need, to expect something like a single Department to solve those issues, to address all those issues, we just simply can't do that.

But then to get back to the question, how do you change, I guess, you're talking about the culture of the Department, would that be right?

**CHAIR:** Well, if culture is part of the reason we have the problem, and I wouldn't want to denigrate, there are a lot of good people work in the Department but if there's going to be a major change in what we're going to do with child protection, everyone has, not only just in this Department they're setting up, but everyone has to work together towards that. How do we get that into the minds of, whether it's just a person who's doing the typing or the person that has to go out to an isolated community, how do we get them all working as one to achieve what is a necessary outcome?

**Dr BATH:** Okay. So we're referring not just to the Department but to the broader child protection community that involves NGOs, the communities and other players like the police, schools, health, etc. But starting with NTFC, just because they have the primary role in child protection, what we felt going through the issues and the submissions and looking at the data is that the Department wasn't particularly clear about what its mission was, and that's not unique to the Northern Territory, there are difficulties around Australia in Departments really understanding what their mission is.

Historically people in the Department tell you, when they started work, say, in the eighties and nineties, a lot of the focus was on supporting families and working with communities, that's what we were told, but increasingly it has become focussed on child protection matters, removing children, for instance, ensuring their safety, using the legal interventions and there's always a tension between those two. We felt as a board of enquiry that it was very clear that the Department needed a very clear focus about what it was doing.

For instance, we felt that the Department, the NTFC in particular, should be focussed much more on the statutory end in terms of the services that it offers and that it engages NGOs



and other Departments in the other level of services in terms of supporting families so that Department workers know quite clearly they're really focussed on working with those families where there are difficulties with cooperation which leads to safety concerns for the kids.

In other words, even families who are identified as not being able to provide appropriate care, if they willingly can avail themselves of support why can't an NGO that has those resources support that family. In other words, not all families, we felt, should have to go through the gateway of working with the Statutory Department. But the Statutory Department itself, we felt, should be focussed on providing safety and providing family interventions where there are difficulties in working together with that family and ensuring safety. So we felt that that needed to be a clear focus of the work of the Department.

Now, that's not all the Department does because of course it has contracts with a whole range of NGOs to provide a rich sort of service array to provide support for families where you don't need the law to intervene. Now, because of that we felt it was really important that the Department engage in a process of engaging all its staff in the first instance, in clarifying what their mission is, what are we here for. We're here to ensure the safety of children and to enable families to be able to provide that safety for the children. And in that process they would also clarify the principles that they are going to operate under will be.

In other words, we've talked quite extensively about the principles of co-operation and working together with families rather than just being antagonistic towards the families, of engaging the extended families, for instance, why is it in the Northern Territory we have the lowest rate of placement with kin than any other State or Territory. That doesn't make sense in a community where one-third of the population are Indigenous people with extended family networks. So a commitment to those sorts of basic principles, we felt, was part of this process of setting the course for the future.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Can I just explain, and that goes to the heart of what Gerry was just asking you went to the heart of your Recommendation number 1, I suppose, of your report, but Dr Bath, this was given to the Council this morning, I wasn't in that session but if you look at the Department structure and where you've got families and children, but if you look across and you've got the various silos, I mean, that's part of the ... well, I suppose we're asking in your opinion, is recreating or separating this going to continue the silos within the Department or is it going to ... Because if you look across three parts of that structure, you've got areas that deal with either early intervention or prevention or children at risk that are coming through the varying systems and then one area I suppose of real importance when you look at children at risk and the alcohol and other drugs you've got it sitting right over here rather than within the critical acute areas. In your opinion and your assessment, when you looked across these various systems, is much going to change following through and implementation of your recommendations?

**Dr BATH:** This is ... sorry, I've just been handed a copy of this, so this is for the Department of Health and Families as a whole. I understood that the plan was to separate out the ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Just that bit this ...

**Dr BATH:** ... the Families and Children so that it in itself will be the Department that's providing those services, so I've been operating on that assumption that we are just looking at,

in terms of child protection and family support, for instance, that we are just looking at NT Families and Children, which ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But even if you look at ... sorry, Dr Bath, even if you're looking at Families and Children, there are children at risk in various systems within aged care and disabilities, mental health, alcohol, other drugs, I mean, all of those areas which will sit separate. I've tried to, I mean, are those silos going to continue or do you think that, you know, with the separation of child protection and that statutory function that that would make those roles a lot better, and the flags of say early intervention into those areas will be better?

**Dr BATH:** Yes, look, this is where it's difficult because every Government in Australia has these different silos and everyone recognises that they're a major problem. The way we thought that it could be addressed in terms of the report was that to have very robust systems for inter-departmental work with families, so you've got inter-departmental work done on a policy level but also on a practice level, so when it comes to child protection, for example, the key player in this is going to be the team or the unit that, for instance, oversees the reforms because a key aspects of the reforms is how the system works together.

Now they are going to have to drive a powerful process of inter-agency commitment to child protection, and that is developing policy together as well as practice issues of how we work together for children. Everyone recognises it's been very ... in a pretty poor state, even since *Little Children are Sacred Report* which was – what – four years ago now? Getting close to that.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** *State of Denial* before that.

**Dr BATH:** Yes, there have been attempts at getting MOUs, for instance, at all the agencies involved in child protection that hadn't come to anything. You've got an MOU between the police and NTFC but what about education, what about housing, for instance, in terms of how they work together. Now, my understanding is that that committee, that team, should be the one that drives inter-agency reform. They are a critical player. If there isn't a powerful driver, everyone will retreat to their silos. If there isn't a strong imperative to work together, the system will naturally just sort of disintegrate rather than integrate. And I wouldn't have any confidence if that committee was not powerful I wouldn't have confidence that the silos will be broken down.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But you've got four committees, I think there are ...

**CHAIR:** Three. Three committees.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Three or four committees ...

**CHAIR:** You've got the Child Protection Reform Steering Committee, the Chief Executives Child Protection Taskforce and the Strategic Reform and Accountability Team, that's all.

**Dr BATH:** Okay, and I'd need to be clear in my mind, just in terms of exactly what those names ...

**CHAIR:** We're questioning them this afternoon to find that out.

**Dr BATH:** So I understand that there is the team that's driving it or the inter-agency team that's driving the reforms ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Chief Executives I think that is.

**Dr BATH:** No, Chief Executive, I think, is overseeing.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** There's the Child Protection Reform Steering Committee, so they're going to monitor ... they'll monitor the reform process and implementation. So is that the committee you're talking about?

**Dr BATH:** This is the committee that's been developed from people interstate mainly, is that the one, with Professor Vimpani?

**CHAIR:** Yes, that's the one.

**Dr BATH:** That's heading it up? Okay. This is where I have some questions about this committee. I'll tell you what the ... To me, here's where the tension is. I think it's terrific to get a team of experts together, experts in child development, experts in service delivery, for example, to have some role in overseeing the reforms and having input into the reforms. I have a question about it that I will mention in a moment but the calibre of the people that have been chosen, that have been nominated, I don't think is in question. These, for the most part, from what I've seen and the ones I know, could certainly do a good job.

I think though there needs to be clarity about what the role is. Is this committee a steering committee, is it a reference group, is it an expert reference group, is it coordination committee? All of those roles have in them some sort of operational aspect, in other words, affecting the way things are done, steering the way things are done. That is quite different in my view to monitoring and reporting back to the Parliament.

Monitoring, in my view, has to be a completely independent process where people aren't directly involved in steering, in overseeing, in being a reference group, indeed, in using their skills and abilities, because they're chosen because of their particular expertise. Now, if they are then putting their expertise into the role which I think they should be doing, I think they can report but I think you then need an independent reporting person or group ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** To then report on what they're overseeing.

**Dr BATH:** Yes, because that doesn't have any involvement in the operational side of it. They can be completely dispassionate about whether the team is meeting its goals. Now I understand, the people that are actually doing the job will be the, I think it's the inter-ag ... I get mixed up with the names, I think it's the inter-agency team?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Why don't we get a copy for Dr Bath on that?

**CHAIR:** Yeah, we've been given a breakdown of their roles and part of the reason we're talking to Mr Jeffrey Moffet this afternoon is to try and get an understanding of all the things ... We're not sure either. [Laughs]

**Secretary Ms Helen CAMPBELL:** Can I just say, Mr Chair, that this was a status report prepared for the CTC through the Cabinet office from the Department of Health and Families

and it was at a particular point in time because the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November. Julie Nicholson came from the Cabinet office this morning and some of the mechanisms are still being worked through, that's why the documents at the back have all got 'draft' on them.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**Dr BATH:** So we've just been talking about something called the Child Protection Reform Steering Committee – would that be right?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yep, that's it.

**CHAIR:** And that's the one that Professor Vimpani is on.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Vimpani and you've got Charlie King, Sven Silburn, Donna Ah Chee, Frank Hytten, Theresa Neihus and Jackie Reid.

**Dr BATH:** Now, as I said before, I don't have a concern with those people at all and I think it is critical you have that accountability process and they bring their expertise and knowledge to bear on how those reforms are developed and implemented. What I just have some question about is doing that as well as reporting on it, do you know what I mean? So that's my first question that just needs to be clarified is exactly what is their role? If they are just reporting, that's not an issue. If it's just reporting and monitoring, they can do the job, I believe, as well as anyone can do the job. If it's mixing those roles, I think probably you then need independent reporting back to the Parliament.

Now, the second thing, second concern I have is that the recommendations in the *Growing Them Strong Report* are long-term in nature. There are a few that are immediate but in fact the main job, we're talking about things like setting up a suite, developing a suite of preventive services. It takes three years to actually develop good preventive services. Negotiating with the communities, with the NGOs, going through the process of doing the research about what works, then developing the program, recruiting the staff, getting it into operation, that takes time.

We suggested that to develop a suite of them you're going to be starting in three years getting them on the ground, and it is going to be three, four, five years before you've got a really powerful set of preventive programs. My concern is that most expert committees last about 18 months to two years and there's rapid turnover on these committees. I would say in three years is when you want the most energy and input into the process, you don't want it slipping off because that's when the rubber hits the road, when we really want the reforms to start biting. So the longevity of the group is of some concern as well. I don't know how long they've signed up for but there will need to be a process of making sure there is a robust committee with good corporate memory that can be there in at least five years time, to monitor those reforms, because that's when a lot of them are going to come to fruition.

**CHAIR:** We can raise that today with the Chief Executive Officer. Can I just ask, again it's a fairly general question, but in relation to parenting, and Lesley Taylor isn't available at the present time but I know she spoke to me some time ago. There's only one Recommendation regarding parenting and she believes, and so do I, that good parenting is part of the way to go to reducing child abuse and a lot of other issues like going to prison and all the other social issues that we sometimes have. Why is there only one Recommendation about parenting or is it such a great Recommendation it doesn't need anymore?

**Dr BATH:** Gerry, can I say this, if you look at the Recommendation, which I think is one of the central recommendations, and it will be in, I think, it's Chapter 6 toward the end of ... it's six point something. I can't remember all the hundred points there is. When we talk about developing this very substantial suite of preventive services, we specifically have parenting programs in that. In other words, that's going to be a critical part of that suite of preventive services.

So it's not just one, we expect there to be, in fact we talked about it quite widely through Chapter 6 of the report, and have suggested that parenting has to be a critical part of that suite of services that we've asked, you know, we've suggested that the spend on these services, which largely don't exist, should match the amount of money that's been put into child protection and out of home care services, between them, and we've said, for instance, they should include maternal and child services, there's a listing there, and they should include parenting services, and that is critical. Family support, family preservation, therapeutic services. The exact mix of it will have to be developed in consultation with the different groups and look, I've got to say, we were particularly concerned about the issue of parenting because the people brought that up with us. It's mentioned numerous times through Chapter 6 in particular and I'm sorry if it's perceived like that because we perceive that as a central part of the suite of services that has to be developed.

**CHAIR:** Well, that's good, I mean, I agree with you, I think early intervention has other advantages, because I know you're only looking at one aspect – child protection – but would it be fair to say that good parenting is going to help reduce a lot of the other problems we have, especially people going to prison?

**Dr BATH:** The whole piece in Chapter 6, the intent of that, was to say unless we focus on these broader issues of family functioning, for instance, of safety, of education, of health, basic health issues, you're not going to be able to address child protection.

**CHAIR:** And the same with housing?

**Dr BATH:** Sorry, housing is critical, absolutely. Unless you address those, you'll never catch up, because they're the issues that are generating the child protection concerns down the track, and that's why we felt unless you're putting as much deliberately into that end, the upstream factors that are causing child protection, you're just never going to catch up. Child protection will always be chasing its tail.

**CHAIR:** And you know how difficult it is to catch up with Aboriginal Housing and we know that ...

**Dr BATH:** Well, we actually had a whole section there on housing, it's hard to ... there's a lot of people addressing that issue or at least talking about that issue and I think there is definitely a statement in there because I remember we discussed it, that the housing situation, you know, the basic issues around neglect and abuse won't actually go away while you've got significant problems in housing.

As you know, some of those communities are going down from – with the SIHIP in some communities – they're going down from average of 19 to average of 13, whatever. I don't believe you can safely and appropriately care for your kids when there's just that many people coming and going, it's hard to monitor, isn't it, it's hard to keep clean, it's hard to provide

appropriate food and certainly supervision, when you've got that many people in the house coming and going. So we feel very strongly that housing is a critical part of this whole picture.

**CHAIR:** Chapter 6 is probably one of the most important chapters because it's the bit that says if you want to change things that's where you've got to start. I just have a couple of other questions. One also related to ... these might go around and around a little bit. There was some talk, a member of the Department of Health got into trouble for speaking out. Are you satisfied that anyone that spoke to your enquiry did so freely and there was no retribution afterwards?

**Dr BATH:** We went to extraordinary lengths to try and protect people. We asked them up front whether they wanted their evidence to be in camera or to be open, we asked them to send that in to us by email at the front, we checked with them, and then one of the reasons we were delayed at the end is because we decided to check with every single contributor again, and some of that was difficult because some of them had moved on from where they were, and in fact, in the last few days, I had to go through with the people assisting us deleting some of the quotes because we could not track down a couple of the people, that we did not want to put stuff in there and cite names where people ... where we couldn't check back to see that people were comfortable with that.

Now, I haven't heard ... I can't guarantee that because I'm not the person there but I haven't heard of that and I would be very surprised because we went to great lengths to try and protect people that were, you know, people obviously were concerned that there would be some sort of adverse treatment, especially people in the government, you know, for giving evidence, and people were concerned about that. I guess what I'm saying is we went to great lengths to prevent that and I haven't heard that it's happened to anybody. I'd be very, very concerned if I did.

**CHAIR:** So no one came back to you and said, because of my evidence I've now been picked on or I've ...

**Dr BATH:** No one at all.

**CHAIR:** Another area you raised was I think you were comparing how staff in the Department were looked after, and I think what people are saying is that if you're a policeman or policewoman you get a house and you get a bonus and all this sort of thing. Do you think that they're the sort of areas that should be looked at for staff in this area of child protection, and regard them, as those people working there as just as important as police or teachers?

**Dr BATH:** Absolutely, and we made that point again in the Chapter on workforce where we talked about the need for looking at incentive schemes, was part of an overall workforce picture. We don't think it's a solution, it's just part of a package of options. I understand that there has been movement on that front and various decisions made by the Public Service Commissioner to look at an incentive scheme within NTFC. Now, I can't speak to where that is exactly in terms of the process but I do understand that's a process that's well underway now.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Is that just for workers that have been brought into the Territory or would that include workers that are Territory based?

**Dr BATH:** We said in that Chapter that whatever schemes are brought in have to be equitable and can't discriminate. If the person doing the job happens to be living at Borroloola

or wherever, they should be eligible for whatever incentive schemes are there for that particular level of job, that there should not be any discrimination.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But you have that discrimination within the education system, you have it across the police system, you have it across various systems of the Northern Territory public service, what's going to make this any different? Are they looking at that, are they?

**Dr BATH:** All I can say is we made a Recommendation in that area, and then I understand it is the role of the Public Service Commissioner to be the one that ensures, you know, that has the call on how those schemes are rolled out. And certainly of they're not equitable schemes they're going to generate hostility and resentment.

**Ms WALKER:** Dr Bath, if I could just ask you in broad terms, there's been 147 recommendations and those recommendations across three categories in terms of importance and I think in category one – urgent – which requires action immediate to less than six months there were 34 of those recommendations. Could you nominate what would be, say, the top three of those recommendations that need to be acted on, and have they been, are you satisfied with progress?

**Dr BATH:** Can I say, one of the difficulties is I don't have a formal role in monitoring this report. As Children's Commissioner, it's not part of my job description to do that so ...

**Ms WALKER:** Do you think you should?

**Dr BATH:** I think I should have some ... well, you would understand that when the *Little Children are Sacred Report* was completed, the Children's Commissioner was given a role as a independent monitor of the ... not the recommendations but the government response to those recommendations, so once the government announced its response, took it to Parliament, then the Children's Commissioner was asked to report and do an independent monitoring on that role, so we've done that now for two years, since the office has been opened.

We don't have a similar role here. We made recommendations about that that it seemed logical that the Children's Commissioner would also have a role in monitoring government responses to this. Now, my understanding is that this council, the Child Protection Reform Steering Committee will largely assume that role. Now my personal view of that is that I believe if you get people of quality and the appropriate calibre, they can do that job.

I'm not saying the Children's Commissioner can't do the job necessarily better than other people, in fact, there's a whole bunch of eminent people there that should be able to do the job. As I said before, my main concern is that you want a system that's going to be there in the long-term, to be able to report dispassionately and objectively back through the Minister to the Assembly.

My only concern, really, apart from what I mentioned to you about mixing roles between operational monitoring is the longevity of the arrangements that are put in place. I understand that the government is talking about other roles a Children's Commissioner might play and that can also be explored, like, for instance, looking at a complaint process, in other words, if people aren't happy with how they've been treated under the reforms that they can appeal to the Children's Commissioner. So I understand that that's in discussion.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Just following on from your ... sorry, Lynne, are you finished?

**Ms WALKER:** No, I was just going to ask you also what, amongst those priority recommendations what would be the top few? Probably like clearing the backlog of cases.

**Dr BATH:** Most certainly because that's the pointy end of child protection. When you've got a thousand kids, and we picked that number out of the air because in fact it probably was like 1,500, could even be as close to 2,000, because of the way the system had been dealing with kids who were nominated at being at risk, in other words, a phone call is not a child protection investigation and we know that that sort of thing had been happening for quite a long time. So there's a lot of kids that professionals had called in and said, 'I'm very concerned about this kid', but no investigation had occurred.

That has to be the most immediate issue that needs to be addressed by the Department, and my only concern with that is that in the past and in other States, when that has been identified, suddenly all the money has gone into new child protection workers, not into family support and family intervention workers, and we didn't want to fall into that trap that all the response just went into child protection. So unfortunately it had to be the first cab off the rank in terms of the work, and I do understand that government has actually been putting in quite a lot of effort into recruiting those workers and making sure there are far sufficient workers to actually do the job of protecting children. So that has to be the first and main concern.

The workforce stuff, it is a critical issue. They need to get into that straight away. I do understand that there's been quite a lot of movement in that area but unless you've got sufficient staff, the morale will be bad, people will be coming and going and you just won't be able to get the Department moving. So addressing those workforce issues is another critical issue.

At the same time as actually starting a process of working on developing Indigenous responses to child protection, we've talked about developing the ACCAs; I'm pleased that that process also is underway through negotiations with AMSANT and to get a peak body underway to actually oversee and nurture the process of developing Indigenous child protection, really more child well-being agencies first that can take on a child protection role.

**CHAIR:** We're talking to them today as well. Marion, you had a question?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah, Dr Bath, just with the legislation and following on from what Lynne was saying, recently there was some legislation that attempted to go into Parliament and it had to do with the Children's Commissioner and self-referencing powers, did you have a look at that?

**Dr BATH:** Yes, I did.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Is that something that you would be interested in, in terms of the self-referencing?

**Dr BATH:** The self-motion?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah.

**Dr BATH:** Yes, people have been calling that for a little while, I would say that the opposition would put out statements, I remember Jodeen Carney had made comment about it,



the Ombudsman had made comment about the need for the Children's Commissioner to have that, so that wasn't a surprise and we also felt that that was important, and I personally, as Children's Commissioner, think it's important because across my desk every week I'll hear about kids in need but do not have specific powers to investigate their matters, unless someone specifically complains to me about what's happening with this kid so I can be sympathetic. And indeed, at times, I've picked up the phone and called the Department and said, 'Look, there's an issue here', but I don't have powers to do that, to investigate those matters.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But that would be something that would ... if you had those self-referencing powers ...

**CHAIR:** One of the recommendations.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** ... that would ... well, stop trying to jump the gun.

**CHAIR:** No, but it is one of the recommendations that Dr Bath had already said. Have you heard anything from the government intending to bring those changes in, because I mean ...

**Dr BATH:** I have heard that they are moving quite quickly to try and clarify the legislative role of the Children's Commissioner and I'm aware that they're looking at trying to do that in the first session of Parliament next year.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** So in every other State and Territory the Children's Commissioner in those States and Territories have self-referencing powers? Is that right?

**Dr BATH:** No, in about half of the States they have that.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Okay, which States have ... ?

**Dr BATH:** South Australia, just off the top of my head, Western Australia, Tasmania, now they're different in every State because the role of the Commissioner is a bit different in every State and I believe Queensland but I'm not sure of that. I just saw a table of to just recently but I don't have that table with me. But about half of the States, but you see, in New South Wales, those powers, those sort of powers are given to the Child Guardian because being a bigger State they've got these different statutory offices so my role here is more similar to the Children's Guardian than it is, in some ways, to some of the other Children's Commissioners.

And that being the case, like, for instance, in South Australia where they don't have a Children's Commissioner but they do have a Children's Guardian who can investigate matters to do with children more broadly on their own motion, but I don't have that here. So there's been a number of matters that have come up and, as I said, I've been able to get on the phone and say, 'You need to look into this matter as a matter of urgency', but I don't have any specific authority to do that. Nor can I call for the files for instance, to check what's happening, unless I have that authority.

**CHAIR:** So would that legislation or position that was put in for giving you that power?

**Dr BATH:** It would have, the difficulty with that is that there are other matters that need to be considered as well. For instance, the one we've just been talking about is what would the Children's Commissioner's role be, vis á vis, this new enquiry. And that's something that the

government ultimately is in their ball park, they need to make that call on that. We said these things should be considered but the government does actually need to do a review of the legislation and work out what are they going to suggest.

One thing to consider, say, with the Children's Commissioners' legislation is that it says that the role is 'to ensure the well-being of protected children'. That's the key object.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah, so that's only children that have come into the system, it doesn't deal with children outside of the system.

**Dr BATH:** That's right, nor does it deal with a young person, 15 year old who's on detention, for instance, where there might be a problem or a complaint. I don't have any authority there. Or a child in, say, disabled child who's in care but not for child protection purposes, so someone can't complaint to me about that nor can I investigate.

**CHAIR:** So children of Don Dale don't come under your jurisdiction?

**Dr BATH:** No.

**CHAIR:** That's a bit unusual.

**Dr BATH:** Ah, yes, because some of the other Children's Commissioners have specific role in being able to investigate complaints about children under State care.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But I think that certainly your position has evolved and expanded and I think it certainly has come some way when I think self-referencing powers are probably needed as we go into the Territory but that's something that we could recommend.

**CHAIR:** Could I ask another question, this is partly a quote from you in March this year, Dr Bath, you said that, you were talking about the cumulative effect of child abuse and the role of the courts and you said, 'In other words you have to see bruises and you have to have evidence of sexual abuse before any action is taken whatsoever. The workers tell me what is the point of writing a Recommendation for intervention when you know the courts are going to reject it'. Was there any recommendations in your report that would actually sort of attempt to get that changed so the courts looked at the cumulative effect rather than just what they saw at the one hearing?

**Dr BATH:** Yeah, it's a good point. There is considerable discussion about the whole issue of what was known as cumulative harm and the build-up of harm to a child over a period of time by the accumulation of incidents, for instance, seeing mum and dad fighting day after day but mum and dad fighting is not abusing a child, that wouldn't stand up in court. But developmentally we know how much it's impacting those children in terms of depression, despair, suicide, those sorts of issues that come from living in an environment like that. Each one of those incidents doesn't lead to courts involvement ... is not sufficient in itself so that the issue is of the accumulation of those incidents.

Now the problem is it's not going to be solved by the courts because you're going to have to have – how can I say – very compelling evidence for the court to accept a statutory intervention in this family. What we have suggested is that the Department's instrumentation in how they assess families specifically looks at cumulative harm, the issue of cumulative harm. Just because the research evidence is overwhelming that these children in some ways are more

harmed, can be more harmed than a child, for instance, who is subject to some physical abuse from time to time. If a child, from a young age, is continually exposed to psychological harm, it can affect, seriously, their ongoing development, but it doesn't present firm evidence for the courts.

So what we've suggested is the child protection system needs to be particularly alert and have the proper assessment tools to be able to detect when cumulative harm is occurring, and to ensure that assistance is provided for that child. Now that includes NGOs doing the work, not just the courts being involved at that level. But it also does involve educating the whole community across the process, like for instance, in the magistracy too, about the harm to children that can develop because of exposure over a period of time.

We have tried to deal with it on several fronts. Can I just give you an example? We came across children who were in some communities that were being looked after. They would have ... they had food but they weren't really part of any particular family and in one particular case the professional was concerned about a child and went back to visit the family who was looking after him and saw that a whole bunch of the kids were sleeping in the rooms and when they asked where little Johnny was sleeping, well he was sleeping in the veranda, and he'd been there for years sleeping out in the veranda. Now, we might call that cumulative harm because he wasn't being provided with appropriate parenting but nor were there services, appropriate care services for this particular child. We want the Department to be able to pick up on cumulative harm so that they can meet the needs of some of these kids.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Dr Bath, and just going on that cumulative harm and the courts and others don't recognise it but if we use the scenario of a family, you know, violence so a mother, you know, domestic violence is an ongoing issue in that household and I suppose this is where people often child protection should be intervening, and now that mandatory reporting has moved across in terms of domestic violence, should that flag or that alert in terms of ... if the woman, if the police have been called more than three times or twice to a household, that the system from the police to child protection in terms of those children being at risk from that violence that's within that family, that's where I suppose those systems do fall down and then that cumulative, I suppose, harm on those children is just exacerbated and ongoing.

**Dr BATH:** One of the difficulties is that if we change the instrumentation which has actually already happened in the Department, they've got a new way of assessing notifications come in called structured decision making – SDM they call it – and they've got questions in there about cumulative harm, so it's quite possible that since July, they've been picking up some more of these kids in the child protection intake, it's quite possible.

I'm concerned, first of all, I want them to be able to pick up more of these kids. Secondly, I'm still concerned about the whole list of names going into a black hole because that's what's been happening. They get notified but who's doing the work, who's doing the assessments of the kids? We've got to make sure that someone really is doing a proper assessment of those kids and making sure they get the services because if you've got 1,000 of these kids and they're not getting services, you might have 800 of them just sitting not being served. We need to make sure we've got the services that can actually intervene with these families, and that, we pointed out, is a bigger problem than the intake problem of NTFC. It's a much bigger problem when you've got 1,000 kids sitting here, at risk, but no one's doing any work with them.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But beyond the statutory responsibility and once it goes through the intake and through that statutory responsibility is that where the non-government organisations and other areas should be then responding to ... ?

**Dr BATH:** Absolutely, because I believe at that point not many families willingly or want to be involved with the government, with legal services. They'd rather avail themselves of a non-government service if it had the means to be able to do it. The problem is these days, last year in the Department, we looked at their numbers, last year in the Department how many ... of the 6,000 families that came through, how many could we suggest might need a family support service? I would say maybe at least half of that group. The Department ended up referring one case to an NGO last year for family support.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** For case management in family support.

**Dr BATH:** One case.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Out of ... how many was that?

**Dr BATH:** Depends what baseline you're using but there were about 6,500 notifications.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** And one got referred?

**Dr BATH:** Yeah. Now, remember the Department does have some family support workers internally in its own case work load but not many of them are doing what is ... most of them are doing really practical stuff like driving a family to a contact meeting and things like that. Not many of them are actually doing therapeutic family support, and we pointed that out in the report. But you would have thought, we would have thought, the Department would be calling on NGOs to provide assistance. That isn't happening or it hasn't been happening. That really has to change, and that's why we felt really strongly that there has to be a suite of these services so that the Department knows, yes, there's someone there, there's someone in that suburb, that remote community, where you can send this family for help.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I suppose we go back then to Recommendation 1, Dr Bath, where we're saying how do we get that culture shifted within these Departments in terms of, you know, both workforce, but also that perception in the broader community that child protection is everybody's business and we all need to work together to try and deal with this. That's probably the most important Recommendation is trying to get that happening.

**Dr BATH:** It's a hard one, and we've made quite a lot of suggestions about that. I have to say, I have been heartened by the energy that I've seen in the government so far, in the government services, the CEO of NTFC is relatively new, you've got quite a lot of new senior executives there and I've seen thus far a lot of energy and a lot of passion and a lot of commitment to change. And I think that's the first criteria, you know, unless you've got ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** We want to see this change on the ground, Dr Bath.

**Dr BATH:** Look, I absolutely agree, they've got a huge task in front of them. I also am aware that in the NGO sector also there seems to be a lot of enthusiasm and they seem to be somewhat encouraged about what they're seeing so far. That's the informal stuff that I've heard back. Those are all promising, they're necessary but not sufficient and I'm really hoping that the energy will stay and that we'll really start seeing results on the ground.

But we are hearing that there are more and more staff coming in now, there are staff coming we know from New Zealand, from other States and from overseas. Now that's just temporary, that's a temporary fix, that's not a long-term fix. But it's still heartening to hear that these staff are arriving and I'm hoping that we're going to be able to sit down in a year's time and see that the morale and the culture has significantly changed in that Department.

I think the Department itself feels good about the fact that if there are ... that they can send services ... sorry, link families with services because at the moment that really can't happen. If a family's coming and needing support they really can't do very much, they just don't have the resources. That should help improve morale for staff to know that something can be done for families. At the moment there are very, very few options for the Department.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Dr Bath, with the recommendations with the *Growing Them Strong Report* and we were talking about, I suppose, legislation, under the care and protection of young people, you're able to monitor the Government's responses to the *Little Children are Sacred Report*. You also conducted the high risk audit and now the *Growing Them Strong*. Are you also able to ... do you have the powers to monitor or have you looked at the Government's responses or implementation of the high risk report that you did?

**Dr BATH:** I have looked at them because they had a document to outline where the recommendations were and what the Department has actually done. I never had a formal role because as you would understand I was a consultant in those days when I did that and I didn't have a formal ongoing monitoring role of that. I've only picked that up again from the incidental work that I've done in monitoring the administration of the Act – does that make sense? It's not been a formal role of mine to do it so I had been interested to see what actually was done in response to the high risk audit.

**CHAIR:** Can I mention a question on the high risk audit ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Well, I was just going to ask you, Mr Chair, because we had some of that in session, are we able to ask some questions ...

**CHAIR:** Well, can I ask a general question, it's only a general question. In relation to the secure care centres, we know that there's one being built near a prison and there's been some talk, it was even spoken about, I think, in Bees Creek, that there was going to be a co-location of children next to the adults. Were those issues that you looked at or do you feel that that's an appropriate design for a secure care centre?

**Dr BATH:** We have looked at it in a report and we did talk about it. I have not had any personal involvement in that process since I made that Recommendation, and I have to say, I didn't have that in mind ... when I first made that Recommendation in the audit I didn't have anything like what's been planned in mind. I'd simply mentioned that there were a couple of young people - a sprinkling through the year, we are talking in those days, it might have been two or three, we're not talking big numbers - that might need some form of secure care as they provide in Victoria and in Western Australia.

In other words, when a kid is being acutely self-destructive and the courts do not want to know about it and the mental health don't really want to know because they're not psychotic, there's often no options for those kids, so we wanted a therapeutic option where they could get

support for a short period of time, assessment, intervention to try and break that downward cycle with the kids.

I understand in the meantime that the government has developed a process that's mental health flavoured, where they have different stages of intervention. The acute stage is to do with in-patient psychiatric wards and then there's a step down, I think they call it tier 2 option, and it's in those tier 2 options that I've got to say I did have some reservations about how those are going to operate because it seems like you can have young people as well as adults.

I am assured, I was assured by them when we questioned them that there would no physical contact at all, that it was to do with the synergies in terms of staffing but they were assuring us that it was nothing to do with adults mixing with the children. Now, I haven't had a role in overseeing that. I would like to be assured that there was no possibility of, you know, children being influenced inappropriately by any adults that were in the same sort of facilities. So it wasn't what I had in mind when the Recommendation was made.

I understand in the Northern Territory with a small population, sometimes you have to have more multi-service options, I understand that, as long as the needs of those kids are really seen as paramount in that planning process, and like I say, I don't have anything to do with it but that would be my reservation that those kids are not only physically but psychologically safe in those facilities.

**Ms WALKER:** Can I ask a question? There's no doubt this is a really extensive and exhaustive report and the investigation undertaken over many months and I've heard Rob Roseby talk about how initially, I think he'd applied for five days leave from his job and Muriel Blambett, a similar story. I guess at the end of the day are you satisfied with what you've produced, with hindsight are there things you would have done differently or you're feeling satisfied that you've done the best you could within the resources and time that you had?

I'll just make one observation, it was a surprise to me that you actually required invitations to communities and I think there were 15 communities invited the Board of Enquiry in so there's many communities. People still had the opportunity to provide written or oral submissions. Is there anything that you'd want to share with us in hindsight that you might have done differently?

**Dr BATH:** *The Little Children are Sacred Report* looked at one form of abused kids in one population. We were asked to review the whole child protection system, I forget what the exact numbers are but you're looking at about 10% of kids, 9 or 10% are referred because of involvement in suspected sexual abuse, so you're looking at another 90% of children subject to all sorts of neglect and abuse. All the historic issues, all the systemic issues, the interface with the police, education, all the other departments. It was just a mammoth task. We could have opened up doors in just about every area and gone further and my only regret is that the realities of the political process was such that we couldn't have gone on for another six months because there was so many other things we would have like to have looked at and reviewed ...

**Ms WALKER:** For instance, what, Dr Bath?

**Dr BATH:** Well, if I just want to pluck something out of the air, what about the role of adoptions in some areas adopting kids is seen as a poor child protection option for those kids that are in long-term care. I would have liked to have explored, for instance, what are the longer term care options that perhaps could be explored in the Northern Territory. Victoria, for instance,

has something called long-term care orders or what they call a permanent care order which is a defacto sort of adoption because adoption often requires parental sign over and a lot of parents are reluctant to do that but them some of them are more open to signing off for permanent care so they still retain some rights.

So there were some areas that I would have liked to have explored in more detail, we've mentioned it but we haven't had the time to explore it in great depth. I would have liked to have gone to more communities, we went to 15 and we spoke to representatives from quite a number of others that we gathered together for meetings to talk about child protection issues. Again, hugely time consuming and ... do you know what I mean, just the sheer amount of time that we had to do it and it's a reality. I know we couldn't have gone much longer but I would have liked to have explored ... there were actually quite a number of areas where we might have gone into great depth.

Toward the end of our time, for instance, we got information that there were some difficulties in some of the residential programs that were being operated by the Department. I would have liked to have been able to explore those ourselves. What we've done is make recommendations to the Department to urgently review the operations of some of those centres.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Just the safe houses and ... safe houses?

**Dr BATH:** Well, we got information about those too but I'm talking about ....

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** We don't normally chat to Howard about those.

**Dr BATH:** ... the residential care units so we didn't have time to actually physically go and assess so we ended up just making a Recommendation that those issues needed to be explored urgently.

**CHAIR:** Maybe the CTC might be of some assistance in those areas to say to the government perhaps there needs to be more work done as you're obviously saying that there does need to be more work done.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I think that that, Mr Chair, that's right but I wouldn't mind if we have another session with Dr Bath. That high risk audit, I mean we were hearing ... I mean, when you hear statistics like 55% in the high risk category, 55% in the Top End, 90% at risk in Central Australia that fall within that high risk area. And then you look at the high risk audit report, what's happened, you know, if that area's growing what percentage, what I could have asked and I might ask the Department this afternoon is what percentage within that 90%, particularly in Central Australia, are children below the age of 16 that fall within that category.

**Dr BATH:** That is one of the issues that in some of the communities, we heard from numerous professionals. In some of the communities, and certainly not all of them because there was huge variation, but in some of the communities, people were saying, it's not a matter of a minority, it's a matter of a majority of the kids here being at risk. It's quite confronting some of the situations of some of those kids.

**CHAIR:** We've just about run out of time. Can I say that the CTC has got to look at its role, it has changed in number but we still, I said to many people, we do hope the opposition will come back, not we hope a permanent thing, but we do see our role still being important, and one of those areas would be following up on not only people like yourself but these three bodies

that the government has set up, so I'm hoping we can also, as a sort of a neutral body that's open to the public, continue to monitor and ask questions about where things are at.

So would you also, I know you're a very busy man and but would you also be happy to attend on a reasonably regular basis to see how you think things are going, because we're certainly going to be hoping to ask all these other three groups on a continual basis to see that they are doing what they're meant to be doing. I don't know whether we're the sort of people that are going to dig down into the depths of the report but if the government is spending this much money on people to do that job the CTC may have a role in monitoring them to make sure it's actually happening. So hopefully that's what one of our roles will be for this year, and as you said, I think, this'll be a very long ongoing report so none of us can resign here because three years, five years, this thing will be going on for a long time.

So Dr Bath, thank you very much, and should I say thank you for all the hard work, I know you had two other people working on that report, but I think on behalf of the CTC we know you're a very passionate man about children, looking after children and congratulations is probably not the right word for a report which is about a terrible thing but I think we all appreciate the amount of work you've done to try and help children in the Northern Territory. Thank you very much.

**Dr BATH:** I appreciate that.

**CHAIR:** We'll have a five minute break please for a cup of coffee and a few bickies.

*[MEETING CONVENED 2:05PM]*

*[MEETING RE-CONVENED 2:16PM]*

**CHAIR:** Well, good afternoon everyone, I've got to read the usual gump. Just before I do that, does everyone know people on my left and right – Marion Scrymgour and Lynne Walker? Alright, read the technical bits.

I declare open this public meeting of the Council of Territory Cooperation and welcome Mr John Paterson and Mr Chips Mackinolty from AMSANT. Thank you for appearing before us today. Although the Committee does not require you to give evidence under oath these hearings are formal proceedings of the Parliament and consequently they warrant the same respect of proceedings of the House itself.

I remind the witness that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. Whilst this meeting is public witnesses have the right to request to be heard in private session. If you wish to be heard in camera, please advise the Committee prior to commencing your answer.

Today's proceedings are being electronically recorded, please state your full name and position before commencing your evidence. As soon as practical following this hearing the transcript of your evidence will be uploaded to the Committee's website but not before you have proofed it.



Thank you John and Chips for coming today. Before we ask you any questions perhaps you could just give us a rundown of AMSANT is, just a quick rundown so we know where you're coming from and then we might have some sort of general questions.

I would say that we're also, because the idea of a peak body is new, we'll be sort of probing you to find out how you think it all should work. So perhaps you could give us a rundown of what AMSANT is and who makes it up ... who makes up AMSANT.

**Mr PATERSON:** Thanks, Gerry. John Paterson, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory. AMSANT is a peak body for Aboriginal community controlled health services providing comprehensive primary health care to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Let me say there, predominantly it's Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory making decisions about primary health care service delivery. With the huge reform that's going on in the Northern Territory, we have a couple of existing regional Aboriginal community controlled health services that are currently providing primary health care services to non-Aboriginal people, and I make reference to Katherine West Health Board who are providing health care to pastoralists and other residents within that particular region that are in need of primary health care.

Same could be said on Sunrise Health Service which is the eastern side of Katherine who also provide comprehensive primary health care to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents who reside in that region.

We're trying to replicate that sort of structure for regional Aboriginal community controlled health services throughout the Northern Territory. You might have seen other references to health service delivery areas in which Commonwealth government has named but we're wanting to achieve ... it's a title that they're using but it's a ... the outcome that we're wanting to achieve regional Aboriginal community controlled health services in the Northern Territory and at this point in time we're estimating to have around about 14, 15 maybe quite flexible in the numbers, we don't see that we should be tied down in terms of coming up with a specific number at this point in time, given the negotiations and flexibility, I think, we need to have around when we start to look at geographical areas in the Northern Territory to ensure that we're listening to community, listening to Aboriginal people about what regions and what communities they want as part of their regional health services delivery area.

Currently AMSANT has 28 members.... We've just had our constitution amended, which the membership endorsed ... a new category in the AMSANT membership called the Affiliate Members, and that's a category that's flexible enough to allow non-services or services that are not providing primary health care such as your alcohol and rehabilitation centres in CAAPS and the other new affiliate members, the Balunu Foundation, and that foundations, role and responsibility is to provide services to kids in need of care, or youth at risk and they do excellent work ...

**CHAIR:** Where are they based?

**Mr PATERSON:** In Darwin.

**CHAIR:** There was another group getting ....

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Chips Mackinolty, AMSANT. They've done some programs in Maningrida but thus far mostly in the Darwin area.

**CHAIR:** Sorry John.

**Mr PATERSON:** So these community, these modern health providing agencies in the past haven't had a representative for, you know, a peak body to go and advocate on their behalf so the AMSANT membership saw fit to broaden our constitution to enable those service providers to become an affiliate member of AMSANT so that's where the increasing number is.

Our board of directors, we have nine on the board and they comprise of Congress in Alice Springs, Urapuntja Health Service which is north east of Alice Springs, Pintupi Homelands Health Service west of Alice Springs, Anyinginyi Health Service in Tennant Creek, Sunrise Health Service east of Katherine, Wurli Wurlijang takes in and provides the primary health care services in the Katherine township and Katherine West Health Board on the western side of Katherine, Danila Dilba Health Service in the Darwin urban region and Miwatj Health Services in Nhulunbuy.

**CHAIR:** Who funds you?

**Mr PATERSON:** Predominantly it's the Australian Government through the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

**CHAIR:** Does that cause any duplication of services with the Northern Territory Government health service?

**Mr PATERSON:** This is one of the reasons, I guess, Chairman, for progressing and reforming health service delivery in the Northern Territory is to avoid where we've got, in some situations the Northern Territory Health Department and its clinics, and also Community Control Health Service in one location and this is exactly the reason why, like I say, we're looking for this reform is to establish first of all that regional community controlled health service, pools funds, hopefully, we'll get an agreement around the pool funding arrangements and that everybody within that region knows exactly who's providing what services to whom to avoid all this duplication of services in some parts of the Territory we currently see happening.

**CHAIR:** Does that also include Commonwealth departmental people coming from Canberra to help administer your operations? I sat in a plane some months ago and I'm sitting next to this lady and she says, 'I'm from the Commonwealth Department of Health', I said, 'What do you do?', she said, 'We go out to one of these Aboriginal communities and help with the health clinic out there', and I thought, well ... and that's the first I realised that there were two groups operating in some communities.

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Mr Chairman, one of the reasons is to get rid of that so that OATSIH, which is the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, ultimately would have no particular role, certainly not an on ground role in the Northern Territory and that's part of the negotiations and part of the work to get Aboriginal community control such that we don't have DHF and OATSIH people running around chasing each other up on aeroplanes and so on. And so the regionally based health services would run themselves the same as they do in Katherine West or Sunrise and yeah, the ultimate thing is to not have people from Darwin let alone Canberra micro-managing what happens out bush.

**CHAIR:** In relation to your role now in the child protection, you put in a few recommendations, or a number of recommendations, one was 3.6, 3.7, you said agency must

be ready to abandon seize mentality and be prepared to work in partnership with the primary health sector as well the MDOs, government must be more open to working in partnership with political opponents so child protection becomes a bipartisan issue, not politically point scoring. Of those recommendations you put forward, do you think the response you got back was adequate from the enquiry? Did you get the feeling that they'd listened to what you had to say and their recommendations covered some of your concerns?

**Mr PATERSON:** Yes, from our perspective, Mr Chairman, we believe that they did and hence why AMSANT has given a commitment to government to wanting to work in partnership with government and other key stakeholder groups and there are a number of them, particularly child care service providers throughout the Northern Territory, we need to ensure that we're working very, very closely with those groups as well.

As you rightly said, we've put a submission to the enquiry into the child protection system with a number of recommendations and from our perspective, the majority of those have been listened to, government has asked us throughout the process for our opinions and our views. We consistently went back to our members to have further discussions to ensure we were on the right track, we were echoing their concerns and the community concerns that they were picking up.

So overall we're pleased with it, we need to ensure and some of you may have seen an article that ... an opinion piece that put in the NT News prior to the launch of the report that, you know, we needed cool heads here, this wasn't an opportunity, as you say, for political grandstanding or cheap shots being had to one another, this is a very, very serious matter and from AMSANT's membership and the leadership within AMSANT, this is, you know, we need to get on with the business, there's children out there that are hurting, we need to ensure that they're properly being cared for, that parents know what their responsibilities are in parenting and growing kids up and looking after them, making sure they get a good education and, you know, and so on.

That was the interest from AMSANT, hence why we've put up a hand to become, or put an offer to government to be the interim auspicing body and we've just today I've actually signed a service agreement with the Department of Health and Families around some funding to assist AMSANT now to establish the peak body, work with communities and stakeholder groups throughout the Northern Territory to establish an Aboriginal peak body with hopefully an expert advisory panel I think we refer to, to guide the reference group, very much in its infancy, maybe a six to 12 month period, to ensure that we're steering, you know, that the peak body is getting the appropriate and relevant assistance that it requires in the establishment and development and policy, development in other things that they need to do.

**CHAIR:** Marion's got a question, John.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** If I could ask you a question, John, you were saying in your opening paragraph that AMSANT, its membership was 27 member organisations, I suppose if you look at the Northern Territory, most of those health services are in remote Aboriginal communities, you've also got urban based services covering quite large geographical areas. And in a lot of cases those health services are the only service provider on the ground in those communities. What changes, I suppose with all the changes that have been made with the care and protection, you know, for AMSANT, the peak body, what is AMSANT doing in terms of its role with child protection reporting and addressing those issues in communities where you don't, I mean, they are obligated to report so what is, I mean, what work has been done by AMSANT

with its member organisations to make sure that, you know, if it's ultimately about the protection of children what is AMSANT doing to make sure its member services are carrying out that service?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** It's really, really difficult as you know for a remote area health service to be involved, for their staff and so on to be involved in direct reporting because usually it's on a very small community which are often a collection of families rather than a sort of, you know, a suburb like Nightcliff or Alawa or whatever.

Back in May we had a members' meeting in Tennant Creek where there's enormous amount of interest in getting involved in a peak organisation, we had nominees from all regions of the Territory other than probably Daly and Tiwi because we don't have members in those particular areas, in being intimately involved in the peak organisation, but in terms of that whole thing about reporting, one of the reasons why in our recommendations we urged a split in the Department between the investigative forensic side of facts and the people who are providing the support and so on was just to get over that thing where often staff have had to be both ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But this is your staff, I ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** No, I'm talking about departmental staff here, where people have been involved in both. I'd just like to emphasise that it is really difficult, it's a topic of ongoing discussion among our membership and within our members about just how to deal with these issues, especially given the work that our members are doing in general in family support programs and national social wellbeing programs where in many respects child neglect is a symptom of things like alcoholism and symptoms of poverty and the like, they're not things that just sort of come out of the sky or part of, you know, humanity and brutality towards each other, so what we're looking for, and Dorothy Scott, for example, makes it really clear that solving the alcohol problems is going to go a long way to solving child protection issues generally which is why we run very strong lines on AAD issues. And that's why we want and our submission supports the heavy involvement of comprehensive primary health care in the whole child protection matrix that having siloed programs scattered around the countryside without any reference to the comprehensive primary health care is frankly stupid and counterproductive because you're not dealing with things at a whole of family and a whole of community level if you're just dealing with individual atomised episodes of neglect or abuse.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Mmm, I'll get to the grog stuff in a minute because I think that alcohol is certainly a big issue, but I just want to take you back to, let's look at a scenario and we won't name any communities but just say a remote Aboriginal community, the service provider of choice is an AMSANT medical service, it's ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Or a DHF one.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Well it could be a DHF one but in this case I'm questioning you and I'll question the Department when they come in, but in this case it's an AMSANT, it's a community controlled health service, it provides a service, primary health care service or acute service to that community, a family comes in, that child is clearly at risk, what steps and processes are in place by your member organisations to deal with this?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Well obviously to operate within the law. I mean, notification and things like that is mandatory.

**Mr PATERSON:** We don't know the specifics but at most member meetings we encourage the reporting, as you say it's mandatory so we encourage the reporting to continue, if they're unsure to liaise and engage with the appropriate authorities and session within government. I totally agree with Chips in that we've got to be mindful that the health workers, they're health trained and ... you know, you need expert and people that have dealt with these sorts of issues on a regular basis to understand that the process that needs to happen to ensure that kids are, first of all, the investigations are being carried out where the kids are safe and the proper care is being applied, so we encourage – and this is the bottom line – we encourage the members to do the appropriate assessment as far as the health requires them and then make the other reporting requirements as they see fit...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** But as well as that a number of our clinicians have been really browned off by the fact that when they are involved in a notification they don't get told anything afterwards, which given the impact of any reporting on an individual family or a household or a community and also the other staff involved is really quite wrongheaded. Because those clinicians will have an ongoing involvement with that child if the child isn't removed and certainly with their families and so on. So that's one criticism a lot of our clinicians have on the system as it has been operating. Because it is ...

Look, Member of Arafura, there's no two ways about it, it is really, really difficult because you are the monopoly health service. You can't go down the road to another GP or to the hospital or to another health service. So it is extraordinarily difficult for those clinicians and they do a pretty fabulous job. One of the problems is that because there's such a high turnover in FACS staff it's really difficult to – it's been reported to me – to have continuity in dealing with FACS staff who can take a bit of that weight, because as you know, the turnover in FACS staff is horrendously high, and we've made recommendations over those issues.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I suppose when I was questioning you, I wasn't having a go at AMSANT, I was just trying to ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Far be it from you to do that.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** ... and I was just asking for some clarification in terms of your member organisations on the ground, I mean, we talk about government having some role and some responsibility and ultimately it has the responsibility but in the whole scheme of things you've also got non-government organisations that are out there that are also funded and also have a role and a responsibility, so everybody has a responsibility here and people are funded to provide a service to those communities and to those ... ultimately to those children.

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** At the moment though, none of the AMSANT members have got any direct funding with the exception of congress and Wurli from FACS programs with the family support staff. There's a lot of our members who would have the capacity if they had access to that sort of stuff, if they had access to things like the [OLDS?] program. But at the moment a lot of those bits and pieces and money get sprinkled around in silos, and we're quite happy to supply information to the CTC about the ill-advisability of multiple providers. The evidence is that once you get more than about three providers it actually has a worse outcome for people than ... this notion that you can open health care to some kind of economic rationalist sort of competition is nonsense.

**Ms WALKER:** John, you were talking a while ago about that very significant recommendation out of the report about the establishment of a peak NGO body which deals

with Aboriginal child care and the fact that AMSANT have been tasked with auspicing that, can you just give us a quick overview about how that is progressing to date, knowing that time is short?

**Mr PATERSON:** As I said, I've just signed off the Service Agreement today which will go back and trigger hopefully the release of funds from DHF to AMSANT. I also wish to advise the CTC that we've made a recent appointment of Michelle Brown who's currently a senior government official within DHF who's accepted a secondment across because part of the arrangements also and this working together between government and non-government was a ... DHF offered a seconded position to come across to AMSANT to assist us because Chips and I, we've only got two arms and two legs and we need as many resources to assist in this process....

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Come on, you two could have done this standing on your head.

**Mr PATERSON:** [Laughs] We're just struggling for resources at the moment so we're very pleased that Michelle, after an open transparent recruitment process was successful in being the successful applicant to take on the job. We're just waiting on a start date, hopefully that's not too far away but Michelle will work with the senior management team within AMSANT to start the process, get a process in place, to undertake consultation, identify regions that we feel need to be represented on this Northern Territory peak Aboriginal community controlled child care agency – I'm not sure, there was a name being talked about once they got to incorporation, there was a name being talked about, a title for the organisation ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** It'll be an ACCA ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** No, no, it's separate from ACCAs.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Is it?

**Mr PATERSON:** Yeah. We're wanting to establish an Aboriginal peak sort of governing body and then underneath that will underpin to ACCAs, these two ACCAs also, and that's ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Isn't that just adding more bureaucracy in all that?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** The ACCAs will be doing the nuts and bolts of organising – as I understand it – of organising service delivery and so on. The peak body would be much more at the level, not dissimilar to AMSANT of ... certainly not being a service ... a deliverer of services but in terms of policy and research and overall direction. There's a real problem if you've got a peak body like that which is also delivers services because then you get involved in all those sort of potential conflicts of interest and so on which has plagued the sector in previous years, as you would know. But the initial proposal which the government's accepted is I understand from the Bath report is that there initially be a Top End and a Central Australian ACCA; we would probably be looking at breaking that up into a sort of those five traditional regions of the Territory as ACCAs as well. So yeah, separate from the ACCAs.

**Ms WALKER:** How long is the seconded appointment for from DHF, having just taken evidence from Dr Howard Bath before you came in and just talking about delivering and sustainable change and retaining corporate knowledge?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Initially till 30 June.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Next year?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Yep.

**Mr PATERSON:** Hopefully there's, again, some flexibility and openness to further extensions in negotiation, it all depends on how we're travelling against the service agreement....

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Yeah, see, we've made it really clear while there's a lot of urgency there's a real danger in sort of worshipping false deadlines. It's better to get things right than to sort of be saying, well by 30 April we have to do this when it ain't ready ...

**Ms WALKER:** And hence I think the extensions on the very report itself.

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Well, yeah, I mean, like, I'll be frank with you, the media, every time there's an announcement of extension to the report the media are wanting us to get up and sort of slam either Howard Bath or the government for delaying when we knew from our contacts on the grounds the reasons for the delays was there's a lot of work to do. And so this sort of worship of false deadline, I think, and what Patto was saying earlier about people wanting to grandstand and hunt headlines could be a real problem unless it's sort of dealt with. So sure, there is urgency but it's urgency that shouldn't sort of get caught up with meeting deadlines.

**Mr PATERSON:** Try and make sure that the processes has sound procedures and processes, you know.

**CHAIR:** I'm just watching the time ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Are you going to go after this child care ...

**CHAIR:** Yes. We've heard that there's going to be at least three committees, there's going to be a Child Protection Reform Steering Committee, there's going to be the Chief Executive's Child Protection Taskforce and there's going to be the Strategic Reform and Accountability Team. Where will an Aboriginal peak body fit in this? Is this going to be a fourth body out there somewhere, and I take up Marion's point of view to some extent, and it concerns me, are we going to end up with a bureaucracy on top of a bureaucracy if we're not careful. So how do you see the Aboriginal peak body fitting into those ... is it going to work with those three groups or is it separate altogether and run ... be independent?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Chairman, we've put a position to government that in the long-term we'd like to see something operate not dissimilar to the Aboriginal Health Forum which has got the Commonwealth, the Territory and governments and AMSANT and that's looking at the primary health care sector and its funding and all that sort of stuff. The things that's missing out of a lot of this is the discussion where FACSIA falls in which is the sort of major source of Commonwealth money, not just into child protection in a narrow way but also into areas like alcohol and other drugs and so on. So we put a position to the Minister for Health and I think the Chief Minister that that become the sort of peak sort of area of cooperation between government, the Aboriginal sector and the Commonwealth government.

Those other bodies you've spoken about, we did recommend that there should be a senior officers' committee, you know, the level of all relevant departments in terms of child

protection. We also recommended in our submission that child protection issues be one of the tick-off boxes in Cabinet deliberations. I'm assuming that – not knowing any of the working of it – but some of those committees would be relatively short-term. You'd hope so otherwise having three bunches of bureaucrats running out around each other would be a waste of time.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Well, they're going to have three different committees and the number one of these committers you've then got five work teams that will be embedded with the Northern Territory Family and Children ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** We run a very lean machine in AMSANT, we don't know about these things.

**CHAIR:** Marion said Dr Bath believes that some of these need to be long-term because some of the issues that have been looked at in remote communities will probably take three years before they've got up and running and then that's the time you really want some of these bodies working at their best and you don't want to be losing people. But we've got a meeting with the Chief Executive of the Department after yourselves and we'll probably be putting some of those questions to him as well because we don't know and we're learning to see what these processes are about.

Can I just ask one other question, you had a recommendation for an Aboriginal children's Co-Commissioner, is that correct?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Yep.

**CHAIR:** Why did you ask for one of those or is that again, could I say, could that be adding more bureaucracy?

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** It'd be a position inside the current Children's Commission Office, the Children's Commissioner.

**CHAIR:** That's right but you've got an Aboriginal peak body there helping as well.

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** But the role of the Children's Commissioner, my understanding under the Act, is to oversight what government and everyone else is doing under the Act. So the role of Howard Bath doesn't run counter to what AMSANT does or what an Aboriginal peak organisation does. He's like the sort of ... he's the copper on the outside making sure everything's going according to hoyle. The idea of an Aboriginal Co-Commissioner was to assist Howard Bath in his work, it wasn't to add any kind of extra layer.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** So, I mean, he could have more resources rather than have a separate Commissioner and then you won't have a duplication. An expansion of his role.

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Well, however the resources ... we're asking for extra resources into his office.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** He hasn't stopped arguing with me. I will ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** I won't stop until I'm in a box.



**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** [Laughs] John, with this peak service and it was probably a question I should have asked Howard, when they were doing the enquiry, 80% of children in the child protection system were Aboriginal children, and what the percentage of that was between remote and also urban and I think probably a substantial number of that 80% was remote, but I should have got Dr Bath to ... But AMSANT, would you have that breakdown of ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** No. But I would make one ...

**Mr PATERSON:** No, but I'm not surprised.

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** ... but I would make one point in this, Member for Arafura, is that, and I would just come in on the tail end of Howard's stuff to do with fostering and adoptions and so on. There is a significant number of very qualified families out there who would be fantastic as foster carers and long-term carers and so on, but they do not meet the requirements of the Department, and they're reasonable requirements in terms of housing.

So what we would put forward is that under SIHIP and another other housing thing, there should be two priorities: one of them which is self-serving, we want the housing to go to Aboriginal health workers; and the second thing is to have priority housing for foster carers so they can meet those requirements to sort of not have 20 people in the house, so they can do foster caring, and so we get around a lot of the problems to do with Aboriginal child placement principle. And I think that's been lost and you might want to take it up, Chairman, in your discussions about SIHIP about what kind of prioritisation they do have for housing. And I think that's a dead sitter for something that could be relatively easy to do the assignments on that basis.

**CHAIR:** We already know as we mentioned today, Chapter 6 talks about the need to reduce overcrowding and the only way you're going to reduce overcrowding is to have more housing. One of the reasons why we have the problem we've got, so ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** Is because of overcrowding, yeah, it's a vicious circle.

**CHAIR:** It's a big issue. Look, we have gone well over time there. Thank you very much for coming. I just might ask ... well, it might be that we would like to talk to the Aboriginal peak body, are you going to have an interim body, you think, operating before it's up and running?

**Mr PATERSON:** We think so, yes, Mr Chairman, yep.

**CHAIR:** And what the CTC is thinking is whether people would come to a CTC meeting on a regular basis, might be every two months or so, because I think we see our role in this important area as looking at what people are saying they're supposed to be doing and seeing if they are actually doing it.,

**Mr SCRYMGOUR:** Can we get, Mr Chair, before we go, once you get to that point, what AMSANT, I suppose, will work through in terms of its membership and how it's going to be spread and what its governance structures are going to be, I mean, the real danger is that there'll be an urban focus rather than regional or remote or it'll be more regional and remote and we forget about the urban areas, I just wouldn't mind ...

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** We'll keep the CTC in the loop.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** ... knowing what the ... your structure.

**CHAIR:** And tell us if the interim group is up and running. They're probably the group we'll come and talk to in relation to this because they're going to, obviously, lead onto being the Aboriginal peak body.

**Mr MACKINOLTY:** And hopefully next time Michelle Brown can do this job instead of us.  
[Laughs]

**CHAIR:** But you've just got the right face for television there, Chip, so don't worry. Thank you very much for coming, appreciate your time, an onward task we have. Thank you very much. A five minute break there and then we'll talk to the Department. Thank you.

*[MEETING CONVENED 2:52PM]*

*[MEETING RE-CONVENED 2:57PM]*

**CHAIR:** We might call the meeting to order. This is a bit more formal this time. One thing I have been asked can we speak up a bit although people have moved up a bit further forwards so that might solve that. We don't have any microphones on the desk, we only have hearing microphones for the Hansard so that's all we have.

Alright, I'd like to welcome Mr Jeffrey Moffet. You met Marion just then and you met Lynne Walker before. I've just got to do the official bit. I declare open this public meeting of the Council of Territory Co-operation and welcome Mr Jeffrey Moffet, Chief Executive of the Department of Health and Families and thank you for appearing before us today. Although the Committee does not require you to give evidence under oath these hearings are formal proceedings of the Parliament and consequently they warrant the same respect of proceedings of the House itself.

I remind the witness that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. Whilst this meeting is public witnesses have the right to request to be heard in private session. If you wish to be heard in camera, please advise the Committee prior to commencing your answer.

Today's proceedings are being electronically recorded, please state your full name and position before commencing your evidence. As soon as practical following this hearing the transcript of your evidence will be uploaded to the Committee's website but not before you have proofed it.

Good afternoon Jeffrey, would you be able to just give your full name and your position, please?

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes, it's Jeffrey Duncan Moffet, Chief Executive, Department of Health and Families.

**CHAIR:** I just wonder whether we should probably ... you were listening to some of the discussion during the other meeting there ...

**Mr MOFFET:** I caught the last five minutes.

**CHAIR:** Five minutes. I don't know whether you are able to explain it to us simply enough but the three bodies that have been set up, I'm just wondering if you could go through each one and tell us what their roles will be and how they will relate to one another so we get a better understanding of where the processes are heading.

**Mr MOFFET:** Can I just clarify which bodies?

**CHAIR:** The Child Protection Reform Steering Committee, the Chief Executive's Child Protection Taskforce and the Strategic Reform and Accountability Team. So I think you might have got a copy of this paper today, but ... yeah, so I suppose what we're after is an understanding of their roles, how they fit together and perhaps in light of what Dr Bath said this afternoon, the length of time you believe that they'll be operating. He was concerned it might ... if they're short-term or some of these bodies might, you know, may be required to last quite a while, because of the long-term requirements of what's got to happen to bring change.

**Mr MOFFET:** Okay, so perhaps I might just collectively refer to those structures, those committee structures as part of the governance arrangements, so there are a range of governance that have sort of been put in place in response to the *Board of Inquiry Report* and Government's response to that. The first is, I think you referred to it as the Reform Steering Committee, is that right? There is actually in fact a ... it's renamed, it's actually Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee ...

**CHAIR:** Ah, because there was a clash of names somewhere else. So it's got a new name? It's called ... ?

**Mr MOFFET:** Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee, and this is in fact intended to deal with and clarify an aspect of their operations which is that they are about monitoring and reporting and not managing the response at all.

**CHAIR:** I think that was a concern of Dr Bath that you couldn't be steering and then reporting and ...

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes, I believe so.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** No, no, monitoring and ... monitoring and then reporting. So, I mean, this committee, the concern is that this committee was monitoring the government's responses to the *Growing them Strong Report* or the Department's implementation and then would be then responding ... reporting to the Parliament, so whether there'd be a conflict in that role.

**Mr MOFFET:** Okay. I don't see a conflict, they report twice, or the intention is that the committee will report twice yearly and its role is in fact that monitoring of the implementation of the reforms so it's very much about monitoring and reporting and being part of the governance apparatus, an assurance that what has been committed to is in fact being delivered. It's not actually about shaping or in any way participating in the management processes around the reforms. Those are the committees that sit further down.

**CHAIR:** Which is the ... steering would be removed to some extent, yeah. To give the impression that they're pushing it along.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes, I mean, steering committee is often used in governance frameworks as well but I think for purposes of clarification, external monitoring and reporting has been the phrase adopted. So as you know, that's chaired by Professor Graham Vimpani and has a very significant membership in terms of its expertise so it's a well placed committee to provide advice to Minister and Government around the effectiveness of the outcomes and the implementation of the reform. I don't know if there's anything else you'd like me to comment on in relation to the committee?

**CHAIR:** So when will that be coming together?

**Mr MOFFET:** Can I ask for Clare Gardiner-Barnes to provide comment on that, because that's been discussed just today.

**CHAIR:** Give us your full name and position, please, Clare.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** Clare Gardiner-Barnes, Executive Director of NT Families and Children, and we have just finished this afternoon the first teleconference with Professor Vimpani to negotiate a meeting date and that has not yet been communicated with committee members but we're looking at very early next year that that committee will meet for the first time.

**CHAIR:** And has all the people that we have here on it, have all accepted to be part of it? There's no ... nobody's pulled out of it or anything? No. That's good. Now, they say they're going to report every six months but will there be interim reports, you know, we're interested in talking to them as often as reasonable but will they be able to give reports more than every six months?

**Mr MOFFET:** As far as I know the Terms of Reference dictates six monthly. Presumably the Minister may have power to seek to alter that, and have more ad hoc reports, but I think there's a reporting ... the reporting at various levels at agency level and then at inter-agency level that could provide more frequent reports on the implementation, so the intent is really this is governance and oversight and so that's why it's of a six monthly duration.

**CHAIR:** I suppose the reason why of course that there are a series of Recommendations with different urgency levels and if the gap is too far apart then you're not sure whether you're getting the last minute fulfilment of those Recommendations because the reports were a long way apart.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes. I certainly can confirm that the Minister's anxious to ensure the 34 priority Recommendations are addressed quickly, so there are other mechanisms around reporting and monitoring on that and that comes to the next level committee which is the Chief Executive Taskforce. That committee is charged really with oversighting at a public sector level, the implementation and ensuring that the inter-agency responses are coordinated as well.

**CHAIR:** Just before we get to that, how is this ... your monitoring and reporting committee, how's it going to operate, is it going to operate on its own in the sense that is it its own being therefore it's not directed by anyone or does it come under somebody?

**Mr MOFFET:** The inter-agency committee?

**CHAIR:** The Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee.

**Mr MOFFET:** I see. That reports to the Minister so it's created under the Minister's powers.

**CHAIR:** So basically it organises its own life?

**Mr MOFFET:** It has Terms of Reference so it needs to operate within its Terms of Reference but fundamentally it doesn't report to the Department, it doesn't report to the public sector, it's completely independent of the implementation and services delivery.

**CHAIR:** Okay, anyone got any other questions on that particular ... ?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah, sorry, that's the committee that's called Child Protection External Reform Committee?

**CHAIR:** Monitoring. Monitoring and Reporting. That's where ... I said that's why they got rid of the word steering.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah, I got rid of steering – Monitoring and Reporting Committee?

**CHAIR:** Yes. It has a new name.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** So where it says it will draw together the necessary partnerships and expertise, the expertise are the people on it, the partnerships are what?

**Mr MOFFET:** You're referring to the Terms of Reference?

**CHAIR:** Yes. No, the responsibilities of it. Are the partnerships working with the Menzies School of Health rather than just the person that's representing them?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** So an example of how that might occur might be if the Menzies School of Health particularly was requested to undertake some evaluation of parts of the reform, then that committee might engage directly with the Menzies School of Health around the outcomes of that evaluation.

**CHAIR:** I've just forgotten something. We've got a lady working at the other end here which we're not used to because it's the first time we've had an expert on our committee and it's Lesley Taylor from NAPCAN so I'd just like to introduce you to Lesley. Lesley can also ask questions or she can comment as well. We're an unusual committee because we have some of the ability to bring other people onto the committee and apologies there, Lesley, it's just something that's so new, this is the first time it's really happened. So I don't know whether Lesley has any questions she would like to ask or comments on what's been gone previously?

**Ms TAYLOR:** I like the new name. I don't think it means anything to me at this point.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Well, welcome anyway, Lesley. So she's going to help out on child protection matters where she can. So if we move onto the second body, the Chief Executive's Child Protection Taskforce. It hasn't got a great acronym, I don't know whether to pronounce that one. But it'll be chaired by the Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister and will identify Cross Government issues ensuring whole of Government co-operation in relation to

reform again so maybe give us a rundown of how ... has that already been developed? So who's on it and. ?

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes, it has. It commenced, in fact the first meeting was within a fortnight of the Government's response, I don't have the exact date in front of me but we've had, I think, four meetings to this point. Essentially the role of that committee initially was to ensure first and foremost that the urgent Recommendations had a set of actions against them so short, medium and longer term priorities around the urgent Recommendations. It has obviously allowed Chief Executives of the specific agencies to actually digest and understand the nature of the *Board of Inquiry Report* and Government's response, so I guess some alignment in terms of vision and direction from Chief Executives. In its early phases it's really been about supporting the key priorities coming forward.

**Ms WALKER:** And are they reporting through to the Chief Minister? Who would they ... reporting through them?

**Mr MOFFET:** Essentially, yes.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Can I ask a question, thank you, Mr Chair. Mr Moffet, you've got ... sorry, Jeff is it?

**CHAIR:** Jeffrey.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Is it better to say Jeffrey or would you prefer Mr Moffet?

**Mr MOFFET:** I'm in trouble Jeffrey.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Jeffrey, or maybe Clare might be able to answer this. With all of these reforms you've got the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee, the Strategic Reform and Accountability Team, you've got the Chief Executive's Child Protection Taskforce which I can understand that and reporting to the Chief Minister and to Cabinet. With all of these layers within the Department and even though one of the committees are external, do you see the need for maybe the Children's Commissioner, that is completely separate from all of these reporting processes, overseeing and monitoring to make sure, I mean, since 2001 you've had a number of reviews, you've had a number of reports, there's been funding quadrupled and yet we continually see one adverse report after another. Then we get to a point where Recommendations are only partially implemented. Do you see a role for the Commissioner to oversee, to make sure that all of the 147 Recommendations in the *Growing Them Strong Report* are implemented?

**Mr MOFFET:** Well, I think there's been a decision in terms of the sort of formal monitoring function, and that is through the externally constituted committee, so the monitoring and reporting committee, so I think that's the formal mechanism for monitoring the 147 Recommendations and the roll-out going forward.

We have had conversations in relation to the role of the Children's Commissioner and I think the Children's Commissioner retains and in fact will probably have a strengthened role, as we know, into the future, particularly around outcomes of the response and of the service level response across the Territory.

I think it's also important to acknowledge that the Child Protection Commissioner is part of the system as well, there is a system in the Territory which includes the Child Protection Commissioner and that delivers outcomes to the community, so to a large extent I think the external committee, the Monitoring and Reporting monitors the overall performance of the system, clearly focussed around the implementation of the board of enquiry Recommendations.

**CHAIR:** Are you saying the Government's thinking of broadening the scope of the Children's Commissioner? That they ... that it does limit him to some extent, his present range ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** At the moment he has a role with children in care, not out of care.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah, there are a range of Recommendations for that to be examined and the Department's currently providing advice around that so it's certainly an issue. It forms part of the Recommendations. Government had accepted those Recommendations and we're certainly working with that as an early priority as well

**CHAIR:** We're thinking the same. You just said that ... sorry ...

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** There is one further role that the Children's Commissioner could take on in relation to the role or the implementation, that is if there are complaints in relation to the Department and how it was going about implementing, then investigating those complaints isn't something that an external committee could take on. That is something certainly the Commissioner could do as part of his role in reviewing or investigating the administration of the Care and Protection Act and how the Department is going about its business.

**CHAIR:** Can I just clarify something? You said, I think, that your taskforce will be looking at whether the Recommendations are being done within timeframe. Is that correct? As distinct from the other group seeing whether the Recommendations are actually carried out? Is that right or ... ?

**Mr MOFFET:** The CE's taskforce is responsible for ensuring that each of their agencies, each of the CE's agencies is supporting the delivery of the *Board of Inquiry* Recommendations, so for the housing sector, clearly there's some Recommendations for the housing sector to facilitate and support. As I came in there was some commentary about the fact that it's hard to deal with foster family options if you didn't have adequate housing. So just as an example the CE of that Department would need to ensure that they did all that they could do to facilitate better outcomes for foster carers and families in terms of having available housing. It's just an example.

**CHAIR:** Questions Lynne?

**Ms WALKER:** I was just going to say the comment is also about housing for people employed to work in the field. I know various housing shortages are across the board so not only doing the housing for overcrowding but also adequate housing for Government employees to be out there at the coalface.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes, look, it is, you know, that's a challenging issue, I think, for Regional Services in many jurisdictions including the Northern Territory. The package that, I guess, was structured and announced recently by the Commissioner for Public Employment was intended, I

guess, to provide more capacity for people to cater for costs of living in remote locations so housing affordability can be part of that so we have deliberately structure some of those payments towards the tougher to recruit areas.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Jeff or Clare might be able to answer this. Going back to the external reporting committee that'll be overseeing the Department's implementation of the Recommendations; can you just give us, I suppose, an outline of how that committee is going to review the performance of the Department's implementation of ... given that some of the Recommendations are long-term but there are some that are immediate that need to be put in. How is an external committee going to be overseeing and reviewing those Recommendations?

**Mr MOFFET:** I'll start and you can finish with a bit more detail.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** Okay.

**Mr MOFFET:** I think what's really important is for a clear plan around the 147 Recommendations focussing first on the 34 priority Recommendations. So the committee would monitor the performance of the agency or agencies in relation to that plan which would have tasks, milestones, indicators around whether things were being done on time and being achieved. The committee would need to have good reporting support and tools available to it to monitor that so dashboard systems and the like, the usual sorts of things you would see around a detailed implementation plan. So the Department's currently preparing a detailed implementation plan but obviously that will take a little longer because we have until February to finalise the detailed Government response so you'll expect to see a detailed plan thereafter.

**CHAIR:** We've been talking about the Chief Executive's Child Protection Taskforce, that Chief Executive, that's the Chief Executive of this new agency?

**Mr MOFFET:** It involves ... it's chaired by the Chief Executive, Department of Chief Minister and includes a range of agencies, in particular, the new agency.

**CHAIR:** Does this have any role in setting up the new agency?

**Mr MOFFET:** To facilitate those arrangements, yes, but not directly, that's really been something that the Chief Minister's Office and my Office have coordinated and that's, I think, largely completed from an administrative perspective, it's fair to say.

**CHAIR:** When do you think the new agency will be up and running?

**Mr MOFFET:** The intention is in early January.

**CHAIR:** And how's it going at the present time? It is sort of ... ?

**Mr MOFFET:** It's progressing well, as far as I know, so I think we're on track, but obviously it needs Executive Council approval and we need to have some internal delegations and mechanisms resolved as well but we are on track to achieve that.

**CHAIR:** If the CTC want to talk to the CEO or whatever of the new Department really, in two months time or something, there should be some structure then in place?



**Mr MOFFET:** Yes. My main concern is the new agency comes into play there will be an acting Chief Executive.

**Ms WALKER:** What's the name of that new agency?

**Mr MOFFET:** I don't know if it's ... has it been decided and announced?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** I don't think it has been.

**Mr MOFFET:** I don't think it's been decided.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** So is the plan with the new agency, I was asking this question this morning of Dr Bath when he came and I think that was the structure that you gave us this morning ...

**Mr MOFFET:** Sorry, I can't see it.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Can't you ... will you get your gla ...

**Mr MOFFET:** It's current, is it?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Is that what was given to us this morning? Yeah. So after Dr Bath ... spoke to him about this structure this morning, is this proposal across the Department of Health and Families as it stands at the moment to integrate or to pull across all of those areas that deal with families and children and have them in one mega department?

**Mr MOFFET:** Ah, so can I just clarify the question? It's which of these functions are going into a new Department?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Well, you've got a separate families and children's area, you've also got areas within aged care and disability, you've got mental health, you've got huge areas that deal with youth and children in terms of alcohol and other drugs, is there any plans to look at integrating those areas within the others parts of the Department that deal with, if you're looking at families and children, pulling those areas across to come up with, I suppose, an elite workforce that's going to deal with child and adolescent health.

**Mr MOFFET:** The current plan is just to transition the existing functions around NTFC which includes women's policy, youth affairs and obviously child protection services into a new agency, so it's really taken the left-hand column, if you like, on that chart that you see, and creating a new agency which incorporates that. So a CE sits above that.

In time, certainly there are plans and it's probably more functional and structural to have child safety and wellbeing teams in the 20 Growth Towns, to strengthen the child protection aspects of our hospital services, so have key child protection teams within those and also have a child protection director's network. So there are things around, I guess, strengthening our expertise around child protection that is an inter-agency level but they're not structural so they would be people from different agencies that would come together as a team rather than shift all those people into NTFC. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** No, I don't think so.

**Ms WALKER:** So is that what would make it ... I'm trying to think, what is it that's going to make things happen differently for this agency, to be separated out as an agency on its own to overcome what we've suffered to date and that's the silo mentality that operates within agency. So what is it that's going to change, that's going to make it more effective and functional, at the end of the day, deliver better outcomes for children?

**Mr MOFFET:** Alright, look, I think there's a range of elements to that. Structural solutions are obviously part of facilitating services or being a barrier to services. I think the big first step from a structural perspective is to get down to a regionalisation structure so at the moment we've got a very centralised structure within DHF generally including family and children's, what's proposed and what has been advertised recently are three regional directors that will essentially manage, coordinate, operate services within their geographic jurisdiction so they'll be based in the Darwin region for the Greater Darwin region, in Katherine for the regional zone, I think, we call it, Katherine and Northern, and in Alice Springs for Central Australia.

So what that does do is it joins up teams at a local level that are currently managed through separate levels, at a site level. I think that's an important structural element to this. In and of itself I don't think structure is the answer, it's a very important enabling function, I think it's an important first step. I think the issues around making sure the CE's taskforce in the first instance, the CE's have accountability for child protection outcomes, each and every one of them. The CE's taskforce, I expect, will be held to account around that so I, as the CE of health in the future will still have accountabilities around child protection outcomes, I expect to see that, and I think it's been a ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What's changed, what will change in any of that because that's what you've got at the moment? I mean, I agree with Lynne, what's going to be any different to what we're going to see in the future to what's there now?

**Mr MOFFET:** Around the agency's operation or inter-agency?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Well, both, I mean ...

**Mr MOFFET:** Okay. I think if you get down to the sort of agency's operations, Clare can provide more comment on this, but it is about much stronger systems, much more reasonable workloads and a way of doing business so that we complete and conduct our business appropriately. Essentially a better practice environment that's better supported with professional supervision, with capacity around dealing with complaints at local level, being more responsive, and I guess wrapping together a range of things that just result in a culture that is owned, operated and managed in a way that's really proactive. But that's at the service level but obviously as you go to inter-agency levels, I think you're going to see a greater level of visibility and transparency around CE's responsibilities as well.

**Ms WALKER:** And what will be the sort of measurable around that, I mean, a lot of ... not a lot but part of what we're talking about here is a workforce culture and I think one of the things I read in the report was – I could be wrong here – no exit interviews, for instance, from people, no, there's been a high turnover in that particular agency, to understand why it is that people go and whilst we now broadly why and certainly the report has brought that out. Is that the sort of thing we're talking about?

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah, I think there's a range of monitoring mechanisms and a range of sort of functions. Exit interviews are a very good example. I guess staff surveys are used often to

target your strategy around culture and response. Having complaints coordinators embedded right at the local level, I think, is a good thing to do to ensure that we respond to a range of complaints in a quick and sort of coordinated fashion. The workforce reform package, I think, fundamentally is aimed at supporting practice in a better way so our front line practitioners are far better supported. But I guess in the same way that we subject ourselves to a bit more rigour and scrutiny around standards as well.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** So your Chief, if I could just ... sorry ...

**CHAIR:** I was going to ask Lesley if she had a question.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Your Chief Executive Officer of the Department, of your new Department will be completely separate, will be a new Chief Executive, I mean, you said that they'd still have to answer through to you.

**Mr MOFFET:** No, no, they're completely ... I'm saying we at the moment because I'm still responsible for the services but once the ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But when this new Department's created ...

**Mr MOFFET:** They report direct to the Minister, yeah, that's right, so I would be the CE of Health then, not Health and Families.

**CHAIR:** Lesley, you have a question?

**Ms TAYLOR:** Just curious to determine, especially around the complaints process, one of the things that has been a difficulty is the Department being accountable to its client pool that complaints were often met with quite adverse reactions to the people who were powerless making those complaints in the first place. So I'm really, really interested in how those complaints processes where people are particularly inarticulate perhaps in terms of describing what's going on for them are going to be managed. And also how the role of the non-government sector who can often advocate on behalf of their clients will fit into that system, so how the non-government sector plays a role within that?

**Mr MOFFET:** I might ask Clare to comment in a bit more detail in a second but I guess just to comment generically, transparency's very important, I think ensuring that we have counting mechanisms for complaints received and the way in which they're dealt with in terms of timeliness. I agree with you, the very vulnerable set of people that are receiving our services or are indirect customers in many ways so it's important that we actually facilitate complaints, don't put too many barriers in the way around certain standards, templates or processes, that we actually, I guess, on face value in a bona fide sense, ensure that complaints are received very well and handled well.

And I guess we need to ensure that if we really do want to change culture that we support staff to respond to them as well, we educate people around the importance of feedback mechanisms so the right for people to complain, the responsibilities as well for staff and for recipients of our services. So I guess try and wrap around a series of education and support functions it means we're less defensive about receiving feedback and perhaps more proactive. I think having complaints officers will assist that, so Clare, you can probably provide more detail.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** One of the key shifts for me is being able to deal with those complaints at a regional level, or at a local level, and with the siloed approach we have had, there has been a lack of leadership at the regional level in how the Department's been structured and so decisions have been driven back into Darwin and so for me it's very important that there is some local ownership of solutions, local ownership of issues and some clear processes that local people can work through with the local office around how to resolve those and do it quickly. And so they're the key messages that we need to give to staff that are part of the cultural change processes that will be expected of them to be fully accountable for their actions and the decisions and be open and transparent about how they're communicated with clients.

**CHAIR:** You mentioned before about people being responsible for the outcomes but with responsibility comes ... if we're not getting any changes what will be the implications to the people who are supposed to be producing these outcomes that we need, I mean, do people get moved out of those positions if they can't achieve, I mean, is there going to be some way that you can actually push people to be up there and making sure that these reforms actually work? Will you get people who just get too comfortable in a job, know that they've got a job forever and a day and we don't achieve the outcomes that you're trying to drive in this case.

**Mr MOFFET:** Okay, I guess at a Chief Executive level, I think it's more than reasonable to expect outcomes are delivered from agencies, and I cert ... I mean, my read in terms of the message from my Minister and the Chief Minister is that they expect a different level of delivery, there's been a significant response from Government in relation to investment and a range of strategies to this and I think there's a strong expectation that Chief Executives deliver on that. That's a very clear message at the CE's taskforce so in a blunt sense, yes, if Chief Executives don't deliver of course they'll be held to account as they should be.

**CHAIR:** We'll be interested to see because, I mean, to me, you know, some of these important policies, if we're not achieving them then we have to ask questions as to why they're not and have an inquiry, setting up a new department and you think everything is looking positive but if things don't happen you wonder whether things haven't moved on at all. And I do feel there's got to be a change in culture and I said before I'm not blaming, there are good people in the Department for sure, but I think if they aren't all working as a team to say we need to have some change in our society then we're always going to have problems.

**Mr MOFFET:** I think, I mean, it's been very challenging for the child protection part of the agency to respond really to the level of demand that's arisen, I suspect demand will continue to rise, it's a trend nationally. I don't see why the trend would be different here. So part of it also is, I think acknowledging that it's been very trying circumstances for staff without necessarily adequate tools and systems at time.

The other thing to acknowledge as well is that we're dealing with at the back end of a whole series of sort of social and economic determinate factors and it's very tough work for staff on the ground to make meaningful difference in people's lives when there's been a decade or two or longer, generations of abuse and neglect that have led to that. It's really challenging to deliver outcomes quickly but it's really important that CE's and their services are lined up and delivering in terms of those service responsibilities.

**Ms WALKER:** Look, I couldn't agree more, that's one of the highlights in the opening of this report is that it's not a blaming exercise, it's not singling anybody out in particular but just recognising it's a system which has been absolutely snowed under and challenged. And it does

actually say as well that we can expect to see an increase in reporting because of the additional resources and the more functional operation.

**CHAIR:** Lesley?

**Ms TAYLOR:** Just in relation to the balance that you see in relation to [inaudible] for the child protection system to be more efficient and more effective and prevention, reducing the risk of families coming into the child protection system in the first place, the Territory's had a very unresourced non-government sector and the prevention programs have been very small and very fragmented. So the commitment to reducing the risk, I'm aware that the Recommendations don't reflect that balance, there are only two Recommendations out of the 147 that have a very strong early intervention prevention focus, that they are critically important for me in terms of achieving that lesser demand on the child protection system itself.

**Mr MOFFET:** So can you just clarify your question?

**Ms TAYLOR:** I suppose that there is a greater balance in terms of early intervention and prevention in the *Little Children are Sacred Report* and I'm unsure how those two actually fit together in terms of the 147 Recommendations but there is still a responsibility I suppose to incorporate some of those key aspects of the *Little Children are Sacred* in that, and they reflect that early intervention progress.

**Mr MOFFET:** I think certainly from a Departmental perspective, there's been a very solid response around ensuring we try and get the front end right, if you know what I mean, so child protection is certainly a response from a statutory perspective, is a response to a, I guess, outcomes that we would rather avoid and not see. I think the response funded by Government, some of which is yet to be announced in terms of detail does demonstrate a commitment to the NGO sector, to more family and prevention services so I think that we've attempted to try and get the balance as right as we can and government's been very supportive around that. Did you want to add any more?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** I think even though there's only two specific Recommendations it's certainly a strong theme of the report and there are a lot of supporting Recommendations that certainly show the need for the Department to work in partnership with the non-government sector, that in order to change things we can't do this on our own and so productive working relationships with the non-government sector and building the sector's capacity to offer a comprehensive secondary service system needs to be part of the solution.

**Mr MOFFET:** I think it was pretty well acknowledged as well by channelling all of our sort of statutory and perhaps below the threshold reports into the one system, we probably missed some opportunities because of its overwhelming demand to direct some of those sort of dual intake or other system, I think it's dual intake that's proposed, to ensure that prevention family services do arrive in a more effective fashion through the NGO sector, so...

**Ms TAYLOR:** And even early intervention within the Government, so using the health model, I suppose, of health promotion, child protection promotion, which was recommended.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Marion?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Just following on from Lesley, I read more than 2 Recommendations [laughs] on early intervention and prevention, which I was going to get to one of my questions in relation to safe houses and therapeutic ... yeah, residential options for mothers, small children, that there's a number of Recommendations in relation to the planning processes in remote areas and Chapter 6, I suppose, Chapter 6 which outlines a lot of this and it has number one in terms of the urgency as the number 1 key priority. There are a number of communities planned that I know where safe houses or family houses have been established and they are a nightmare, not just for the communities but also ... I mean, they're just not being attended by mothers or children so they're going against the purpose that they were supposed to be set up for. It is just a nightmare between the Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth and nobody is taking any responsibility and you've got ...

I know one community in particular in my electorate where you've got 90% of the children in that community are at risk. 90% of children at risk of neglect, and yet you've got these two mega centres operating and because of the dysfunction between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth Government the services just ain't being provided on the ground to the communities. Is the planning processes within the Department looking and reviewing a lot of these services as an urgent priority because we're talking, I mean, if it is number 1, that is an urgent priority and they were children that come into the high risk category.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** I guess my thinking as we move forward in all of the range of Recommendations that have been put forward by the *Board of Inquiry*, particularly where there are linkages across Local Government, Territory Government and the Federal Government that unless we go around the table and work together as a collaborative team around what solutions are right for different communities and look at models that have worked in remote Western Australia, remote Queensland and look at, well, how might they be adapted to the community situation we have here, and look at trialling and piloting some different ways of doing business then we're not going to have real solutions that will respond to the local need.

To commence that we've actually had an officer from FaHCSIA commence work within the reform team this week so that we're ... or last week so that we're working together collaboratively to plan the way forward and instead of the one layer of Government coming up with the solution and telling us how to run the service in the Territory, this needs to be a negotiated process that involves local people, local communities and an ownership at the local level of those solutions. So we have an opportunity here to relook at some of the funding models that have been put in place previously and ensure that we actually get the best bang for the buck. And we've got the best model and we aren't going to throw away good Government investment and put in place solutions that are very family and child focused.

**CHAIR:** Could I just ... we haven't got onto that Child Protection Strategic Reform and Accountability thing, but I've just got one question to go back to that the Chief Executives Child Protection Taskforce, hang on, there is down under on the page ... we've got 3.3, the CECPTF will report to Northern Territory Co-ordination Committee. Is that a fourth body, what is the Northern Territory Co-ordination Committee?

**Mr MOFFET:** So where are you seeing this?

**CHAIR:** I've got it on this doc ... in a draft document.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Draft Processes and Mechanisms, it's point 3.3.

**CHAIR:** Yeah, 3.3.

**Mr MOFFET:** If it's referring to Co-ord. Committee that's the Whole of Government Co-ordination Committee. Essentially the Taskforce does sit under this as a sub-committee that the Taskforce sits under the Social Responsibility Sub-Committee which is Sub-Committee of cohort, which is the Whole of Government Co-ordination of Government Business around public sector perspective. That's really just in alignment to the committee function as opposed to there's no specific function for cohort around it, that's executed through the CE Taskforce.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** And is the DEEWR and FaHCSIA representatives, are they the CEs of DEEWR and FaHCSIA or are these other managers?

**Mr MOFFET:** I don't know that it's been resolved yet, I wouldn't expect that it would be at a national level but I don't know if it's been resolved.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** I was going to invite them tomorrow.

**CHAIR:** Could we perhaps ... Clare mentioned that the Strategic Reform Committee, could you perhaps give us a rundown of what it's role is and who'll be on it and what their job is?

**Mr MOFFET:** I mean, the strategic ... I guess, if you look at both the three committees that you're asking about, you know, one is completely external which we've talked about the Monitoring and Reporting Committee and it reports direct to Parliament through the Minister. We've got one that's the CE Taskforce, which sits at the public sector inter-agency level, and then there's the Strategic Reform Accountability team sits within the agency and very much about driving the internal mechanism to drive the reforms on a day to day basis within the agency. So I don't know if it helps clarify it, so it's internal to the new Department or new agency. In terms of membership perhaps ...

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** It's more of a doing team than a committee, so it's actually the implementation team that will implement the range of elements of a reform. So there'll be a person who'll head up a legislative reform area, there'll be a person that heads up all of the partnership agenda that needs to be done with the NGO sector, with the Aboriginal workforce, with other Government agencies. There'll be someone heading up the internal policy agenda that needs to be changed to ensure that we tighten our procedures and policies and systems processes. There'll be someone who is looking at the regionalisation process, so that we manage that well and ensure that there's a proper accountability mechanisms put in place, and what else?

**Mr MOFFET:** So essentially it's, sorry, structured around the functional responses.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** And the workforce, yeah.

**CHAIR:** The CTC was looking for one of these groups to ask questions about the nitty gritty, this would be the one?

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes, absolutely, yeah.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I'm just conscious of time, Mr Chair, and I just want to get down to ... are we finished with these committees?

**CHAIR:** No. Just got ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** I want to get to staffing.

**CHAIR:** Alright. 2.7 on that responsibility says to report to Cabinet on progress quarterly. Does that mean that you don't go through the Minister, or is this body directly accountable to the Cabinet or is it ...

**Mr MOFFET:** This is the old Terms of References.

**CHAIR:** Is it? They're old Terms of References.

**Secretary Ms Helen CAMPBELL:** These are the ones that were given to us as I mentioned this morning Jeffrey by Julie Nicholson from the Cabinet Office and they're dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November and obviously they're not up to date.

**Mr MOFFET:** So steering, okay.

**CHAIR:** Are we able to get an update on basically what the roles of all these committees are, new names, so we can ...

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes, I'm sorry, those are the new Terms of Reference for that.

**CHAIR:** Okay. If we can get a copy here.

**Mr MOFFET:** My apologies.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** They're all still in draft until the final response, the Government gets approved in February.

**CHAIR:** We do have drafts there, at least it gave us something to sort of ...

**Mr MOFFET:** My apologies if you've got the old document.

**CHAIR:** No, that's okay. Alright.

**Mr MOFFET:** So if you had a question anyway, I'm happy to respond to that.

**CHAIR:** You've also said here there's another advisory council here somewhere, regular update reports through the Northern Territory FC, what's that? Family and Community Services Advisory Council, where'd you find that?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** There is an NTFC Advisory Council that has been supposed ... oh yeah, a Ministerial Advisory Council, and they're very keen to engage in the process of the form and get regular updates and provide advice to the Department around how things might be fast-tracked or improved in its implementation. And it's represented across the board for people from the youth sector, from health providers, from peak organisations and interest groups from outside of government itself, a Northern Territory representative group.



**CHAIR:** Everybody will keep an eye on you. Howard Bath would like to keep an eye on you, we'd like to keep an eye on you, the NTFC Advisory Council would like to keep an eye on you.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Can I ask some questions, Mr Chair?

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What's your total workforce, Clare, in Families and Children?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** It's about 530 full-time equivalent staff at this time in fact.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What equivalent is Statutory Child Protection workers?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** It's about 260.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** And then you have out of home care.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** That would include frontline out of home care.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Okay. So the 260 would move across all of the out of home care, youth services, family and individual.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** The whole.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** So right across the system. And they're based right throughout the Northern Territory in ... are we able to get a sort of org chart on where your staffing are through the rest?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** Yes. The child protection and out of home care teams are the ones that are placed in Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin and Palmerston. Many of the other teams are Katherine and Darwin based, there's not a lot of remote service delivery beyond out of home care in child protection except for the safe houses team and the remote Aboriginal child protection workers. So we've got a lot of workers.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But they don't have statutory responsibility?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** No, no, they don't.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** How many new staff have come on since the review?

**Mr MOFFET:** Since the *Board of Enquiry* review?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah.

**Mr MOFFET:** We did this on analysis of it.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** You can take that on notice, you don't have to answer it straight away, you can take that on notice. How many new staff have commenced in the Department since the *Board of Enquiry*?

**CHAIR:** Is that okay, Helen?

**Secretary Ms Helen CAMPBELL:** Yeah.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thanks.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** You mean operational child protection statutory?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Operational both yeah, statutory and also if we can get a breakdown of how many are in the family. I think there was some Recommendations to have a focus on strengthening families in communities. So family based workers, how many of those staff you've got in the Department that do remote, how many actually do the remote and regional work in this stuff.

**CHAIR:** Can I just get you to make sure we got your request down there, can you simplify that?

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah. She's probably got it covered.

**CHAIR:** Are we okay there?

**Secretary Ms Helen CAMPBELL:** Yeah.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, just checking, thank you.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** She would have been giving me a really confused look if she didn't get it, but I can see she was smiling. If you want me to repeat it, don't ask me to repeat it.

**CHAIR:** We haven't got five minutes. So okay, I'm not ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yes. And if you could, Clare, breakdown how many in regional and remote communities that are Department of Health and Families, thank you.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** So just on that point, we are in the process of working out a new staffing model, so what I give you will be a point in time picture, but post-reform.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** What's the staffing model?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** So you'd be aware that one of the announcements that the Government made was an additional 42 frontline child protection workers, and that was about the introduction of caseload management in the Northern Territory Child Protection workforce, to try and ensure that the caseloads for each of the frontline workers were kept to a manageable size based on national and international standards. So they haven't been in place before, and that allows us to look at the model of service delivery in the Territory so that we can break down the staff that do investigations, who does family support, who does re-unification, who does case management. And so there's the need to relook at the workforce model that we have in place to ensure that we can adequately respond to the different parts of the child protection system.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Can I also get a breakdown Clare, if you're able to and I don't know whether you're able to do this or not, but what component of your staff are Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander staff, in particular the 80% of children in that system and whether ... what your staffing levels are in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff?

**CHAIR:** Another question, no, okay no-one.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** No, Helen's got it.

**CHAIR:** Okay Helen, yeah, it's my job to make sure.

**Secretary Ms Helen CAMPBELL:** Are we up to number 3, Chair?

**CHAIR:** We have been through the pain before of not sure whether we had them or didn't have them. How are you going there Marion, more questions? It's alright.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** You can ask one then if you want or Lynne might have one, I'll keep quiet.

**CHAIR:** No, I'm haven't, no, no, I'm asking you if you've got anymore questions.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** You're only telling me to keep quiet.

**Ms WALKER:** Forgive me if you've already asked this today during one of our sessions, but progress around conditions of employment from employees in the sector in terms of a yeah, a review of conditions and service entitlements especially those out in remote areas the teachers, police, nurses who get rent free of charge, some get free power.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah. So the part of the Government's response was around workforce incentives, targeted workforce incentives. And correct me if I'm wrong here, I think it was \$1M this year, \$2M and \$3M over subsequent years. So there was an escalating package, is that correct?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** Yeah. I have got the package here.

**Mr MOFFET:** Oh, okay. Yeah. So the package is available if you'd like us to table it, so it's really taking some of the feedback and some aspects of the Board of Enquiry report ensuring we're targeting retention, education and location allowances to those places where the evidence demonstrates the hardest to fill. Katherine is a really good case in point, but also the Alice Springs office and then Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy as well. So there's been a range of measures, they were announced by Ken Simpson the week before last I think that will take the available funds over that time and direct them to the areas where the evidence indicates we most need to support, like both retain and actually attract staff.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Does that go to the heart of the, like, I mean, there's always been a policy and Lynne, that's a good point yeah, you did raise it this morning but we said we'd bring it into this part. If you're just, say, I'm a local Indigenous person, I'm a qualified ... well, I am a local Aboriginal person, but just say I live out at Maningrida ... it's not hard to tell I'm black, anyway it's just an illusion. Just say I live out in Maningrida, and I'm a qualified child protection worker, I have all the qualifications, and this creates a whole lot of angst, not just for the Aboriginal staff and Lesley and others who've worked in this field will tell you, it creates angst with the non-Indigenous staff that work with the Aboriginal staff. A non-Indigenous worker can come into that community and work in that community whose entitlements are, you know, they

might have the same qualifications together but because of the local recruit policy within the Office of the Northern Territory Commission of the Public Employment, the Aboriginal staff member is not entitled to the same entitlements as the non-Indigenous person, and this creates problems with ACPOs, with Aboriginal teachers. That's why you can't keep good Aboriginal child protection workers on the ground, there are ... and that's what I was saying this morning, it is that policy has to be reviewed if you're going to get that equity and Aboriginal people taking responsibility for children's services out on the ground in remote communities. I don't know if the Department will look at that at some stage but ...

**Mr MOFFET:** There is a public policy position that pertains to all the Departments, so yeah, we are governed by that policy position.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But it means one Department are championing it.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah. I'm not saying it shouldn't be, I think if I just talk more broadly on behalf of DHF, not just Child Protection, but Indigenous employment is an exceptionally important imperative in order to change outcomes in these communities. So I think it's really important to look at barriers to that, and I agree that provision of accommodation can be a barrier and can be a discriminatory feature in an unintended way between whether it's Indigenous people, but it is traditionally up here, but even if it's non-Indigenous people in a local content that is disadvantageous as well. I think the people trying to (a) further themselves but (b) I guess be stable in their employment.

So what we have done in this package is be sensitive to the fact that there is a public policy environment, and making sure that we do target the response so that it does provide some sort of incentive for Aboriginal staff who are probably over represented in the non-professional stream at the moment. But also over time part of the workforce strategy is to provide pathways through to professional streams. And then the professional streams, their locations have ... we've targeted the remote locations specifically, so there's an \$8,000, what did we call it, is it location allowance, in the remote sector. I think you might have it, so yeah.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** But anyway, because there's a lot of skilled Aboriginal health workers that are outside of that system that could easily be brought back in to deal with that.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah, that's correct. I think that part of the broader workforce reform is pathways from community through employment to, you know, wherever Aboriginal people aspire to be employed, I think it's a much more complex strategy that needs to be pursued. We have with this ... we were very conscious of making sure that all staff delivering clinical or professional frontline services, had some benefits out of this. So I think we've targeted a pretty balanced way. There's no doubt that the professional workers, that the statutory workers do get the lion's share of the benefit, but that was intentional because that's the pointy end of the system at the moment. Yes. So but I absolutely agree with you that we probably need to do things differently in the future than we're currently doing, or if we want to have different outcomes around Aboriginal employment, I'm happy to champion something. How's that for a courageous CEO?

**CHAIR:** Would you be looking at ...

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** You'd get a lot of support.

**CHAIR:** Would you be looking at any changes to remuneration and promotion within the Department? Will it be done any differently, in other words, your outcomes, with outcomes you get rewarded. In other words, if people are achieving there'll be ways of helping people up the line, you might say.

**Mr MOFFET:** It's a complex area for the public sector I think, you know, specifically measuring performance and all of that without fear or favour in the equity issues sometimes come across sort of perhaps private or volume or output incentives that so it's a complex area about rewarding staff for ...

**CHAIR:** I wouldn't want to put it in the terms of how many shoes did you make today.

**Mr MOFFET:** No. Or how many cases are you're sort of going to get today.

**CHAIR:** So if we start to see an overall reduction in problems, you say, well, something's starting to work at last, because, I mean, if you haven't got some outcomes I'm not sure how you're ever going to change things around.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah. Look, I mean, Clare and her team have structured part of the package to provide incentives around training, and I think that it's a beginning point, and it's, I think, the bar's set a reasonable level, wouldn't you say, just to try and encourage training so that people get the reward as a basis of participating in training. So some baby steps, I guess, in terms of that.

**Ms SCRYMGOUR:** Yeah. But engaging the non-government sector in all of this is probably the key, because if the Department, I mean, you know, the Public Service and the Commission, you know, that those rules are pretty well set, whereas the NGO sectors are quite flexible and they could ... if they were funded well and resourced well, they could actually take on some of ... yeah.

**Ms WALKER:** I think it's also about rewarding and retaining people in the field, I hear anecdotally from people who work in the field that the reward is actually getting into an office based policy development area, because the work is so challenging out there at the pointy end. So it's about having those incentives in place that keep and value people with that knowledge and that expertise to keep them there.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah, no, absolutely. I think regionalisation's part of the ... it's not all of the solution there, but there are a range of things I've seen in the public sector around criteria progression or career progression, if you're staying in a clinical or a professional stream. But regionalisation, I think, puts some senior positions out there. We've got practice ... what are the P3 positions?

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** Practice Advisors.

**Mr MOFFET:** Practice Advisors, so more senior positions in that sense as well. So regionalisation will scoop some of the seniority and I guess the career opportunities, if you like, out of the central environment and put it back into a regional environment. Again it's probably just a baby step but it's a step in the right direction.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** And the package itself is targeted for frontline staff who have direct contact with clients, so in fact there will be a disincentive for people to come into the centre because they won't get those incentive packages.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah, that's true.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** They will be much better off.

**Ms WALKER:** There's a similar system in education where you serve in remote regions for X period of time and you score points; after that you would obviously have an entitlement for study leave.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah. I think it's important, I mean, as I said, I was out at Nhulunbuy last week and I was talking to some NTFC staff and, you know, it's heroic work in pretty tough circumstances when you sit down and listen to it. And the more we can support people to do it the better off we'll be as well, I think, as an agency.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** Mmm, for sure.

**CHAIR:** Lesley, final questions or two?

**LESLEY:** And I'm sure that it's probably just quite specific, but in relation to the nature of the work itself, so having a bit of a history myself 20 years ago starting in the child protection system and having been in child protection in Nhulunbuy for many years before mobile phones it was very difficult.

Anyway, the nature of the job has changed from being very much a part of the community and doing child protection investigations, to very adversarial court based investigating. It's so that the absence of the family support functions in that role that certainly for me and my colleagues at that time made it so satisfying, that we're still in contact with many, many clients favourably, which is lovely. Because of the work you did and the balance of the work, I see that over the years there's been a narrowing of the function, and that's something that hasn't really been addressed in the Recommendations since the actual nature of the work itself.

But with the reduction of the workload to more manageable, that's the opportunity to then create that job where workers are on committees, workers are doing group work with young people, are doing camps, those things have disappeared and haven't been in this position for a very long time that connectedness with the families and the communities. So that's something I'm very interested in.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah. I think Clare can again answer in a more informed way than me, but I guess my observation is when systems come under a lot of pressure they do revert to their core statutory functions, and I think that's happened to some extent, there's an overwhelmed system that's had to focus on its core functions and often that's occurred at the end of the spectrum.

I think there's a couple of mechanisms I observed in the response, so the dual intake system I think's a really helpful system. So really scoping out a significant volume of people/clients, and making sure that through the NGO sector and the remote and probably a combination of partnering inside the urban and the larger centres that we actually get to families early and provide some of that support, and also then target the statutory work to a specialist

set of staff that have increased numbers. So I think there's some things in there, I don't know if it goes far enough, but it's a very good start around trying to actually get some of the prevention, the promotion and support functions in place to be honest.

**Ms GARDINER-BARNES:** So at the moment we're in the process of consulting with NGOs around the future role in the child protection systems, so we then funded NTCOSS to employ an officer to undertake those consultations in partnership with us. And part of that will be looking at what should be the statutory role of the child protection system within Government, and what should be the role of the NGO sector, and how do the two interrelate as we define those roles. And they need to be roles that are determined in partnership with each other. And it might look different in different locations depending on the capacity of the service system to respond. So maybe then in some locations the child protection frontline workers are providing intensive family support, but in the other locations like Darwin where it's much easier to establish an NGO to do that business, then they might have a frontline responsibility for that. So we need to be flexible enough to respond where NGOs don't have a capacity to employ and retain staff as well to undertake the functions that are needed.

**CHAIR:** Alright. We might finish off there. I'm just wondering is it possible to get an organisational chart of how the Department worked, say, back in June, and perhaps an organisational chart to how it's going to operate, well, either now or in the future, so we can get a bit of a comparison. And for someone who's never worked in the public service, it always seems a very foreign place to me, to give me an idea of how all these structures fit into being. It's alright for this lady on the left, she's worked in that environment for a long time, but not having worked in the public service, so yeah.

**Secretary Ms Helen CAMPBELL:** Mr Chair, once the administrative arrangements are in place, and I'm sure that whoever the new head of the agency is plus Jeff would be able to give you the new organisational structure for the new agency, one in June and one from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, and I think it's supposed to have that effect.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yes. We got ... so there was the existing structure, there is an interim structure in place to effect the 34 early Recommendations, and part of that's been advertised recently, last weekend and the weekend before. And then I think there will be a final structure that will be finetuned by the new CE. So we're in an interim phase but we can provide the previous and the current structure, and talk through that.

**CHAIR:** Alright, then, yeah, that'd be good, and at least we know where the changes are occurring.

**Mr MOFFET:** Yeah. And it reflects what we've discussed today of the regionalisation, the focus on the strategic reform team and a few other things.

**CHAIR:** Alright. Well, I'd like to thank you very much for giving up your time again, it's been a long day.

**Mr MOFFET:** Oh, thank you.

**CHAIR:** And look, we would probably ask you in a couple of months time to come back and just report on where you're going.

**Mr MOFFET:** Certainly.

**CHAIR:** You might have a better idea of where all the things go, and we might have a better idea of where all the things go. So we thank you very much for your time today.

**Mr MOFFET:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. And I'd just like to thank Lesley for coming as well, thank you Lesley. And anyway we'll have a break between our this meeting and our deliberative meeting, which is on in a little while, aren't you lucky. Yeah. But we'll try and keep that as tight as possible.

**MEETING CLOSED 4:06PM**