

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE COMMITTEE

Membership:

Ms M Scrymgour MLA (Chairperson)
Ms S J Carter MLA
Mr Len Kiely, MLA
Dr R S H Lim MLA
Mr E McAdam MLA
Mr G Wood MLA

COMMITTEE BRIEFING

Tape-Checked Verbatim
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

29 November 2002

Mr P Ryan

Co-ordinator of the Law and Justice Strategy, Department of Community Development,
Sport and Cultural Affairs

*This document is an uncorrected proof of the Committee's hearing.
It is made available under the condition that it is recognised as such.*

Mdm CHAIR: Yes. This the formal part of the meeting, with the Select Committee on Substance Abuse. The Committee will welcome Peter Ryan from the Department of Community Development, Sports and Cultural Affairs. Peter, welcome appearing before the committee to brief in relation to its Terms of Reference. Please advise if you want any part of your evidence to the committee to be in-camera, the decision regarding this will be at the discretion of the committee and you are reminded that evidence given to the committee is protected by Parliamentary privilege.

And just for the purposes of the Hansard record, I ask that you state your full name and the capacity in which you appear today.

Mr RYAN (Department of Community Development, Sports and Cultural Affairs): Peter Ryan, Co-Ordinator of the Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy, Department of Community Development.

Mdm CHAIR: Do you want to just go straight into just giving us a brief background. I think most of us are, for the purpose of Gerry and Len. Elliot.

Mr McADAM: Yes, I was just going to ask Peter, your position of Co-Ordinator of Law and Justice Strategy, is that a new one?

Mr RYAN: It dates back to the inception of the program when OAD at the time were given coverage of it. There was only originally 1 position and it was only after a period of time of lobbying Treasury that we were able to get a second position which was female project officer. So Co-Ordinator in a way, I suppose means co-ordinator of 2 people.

Mr McADAM: I was just going to ask you, because you have been around a long time. If you can just give us a bit of a history of where you started, not to go on but just for 3 or 4 minutes or something, where you are today.

Mr RYAN: In relation to the program?

Mr McADAM: Since you have been working in this... ..

Mr RYAN: Okay, yes. I came up here in the late 60's, 1967 and worked out on Aboriginal communities, and that goes back to the days basically of the old welfare handouts system. In fact in those days of the communities that I was working on, there was essentially a ration system that operated. The schools in those days had kitchens which provided meals for kids attending school and through the community store, we used to shoot a killer on Thursday hang it up Friday and Saturday and then sell Saturday afternoon, that was the only meat available in the community on those days.

Of course, by the same token there was a lot of subsistence, hunting and gathering going on by people to supplement the mission diet. Mission and government settlements both operated basically the same way.

The only income came about in the early 70's, which was called government's training or employment training scheme, and from there government staff were taken out of communities and relocated into town where we became community advisers, or some of us did, we visited communities on sort of a 'needs basis'.

I have remained in Aboriginal Affairs all of that time, moving from one department to another, Local Government being one where I worked for quite some time, but had disagreements with the way that local government was moving, particularly in relation to Aboriginal communities and the community government section of the Act that was being applied at the time.

I worked as a regional manager with community welfare at the time, in Tennant Creek and Katherine. More recently worked with conservation commission when the 'Strehlow' collection came across to the Northern Territory. My involvement with the Strehlow collection was basically that I knew Strehlow quite well, he was actually on one of the communities I worked on and I spent a bit of time with Strehlow and Strehlow's Aboriginal informants, (as the refers to them). But we were so isolated from the community at the time, that we

were camping out a lot and that was a great experience in terms of my understanding, not that it is very great or deep and no non-indigenous person can be, but it has given me some degree of understanding of the way Aboriginal communities and people operate.

Then I went on to what was called a pilot programme for Aboriginal housing, with the Department of Lands and Housing and then finally to this current position, which was advertised I think in about 1995 or 96. Which was to implement an Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy, that was as a result of a cabinet decision which ultimately came out of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Inquiry. The background of detail in those reports, I brought along the report on the actual program and the methodology we used, the -----committee report which is one the Aboriginal committees that we worked, with and the 3^d report is one that you wouldn't have seen, it is the outcomes of a 4-day workshop on the operation of 'safe houses' and methods of dealing with family violence and a whole range of other issues, which Jackie conducted at Ali Curung. I will just apologise, Jackie is unable to attend, she is being relocated to Alice Springs on a temporary transfer and she leaves today or tomorrow morning, but she is uplifting from the office today. Most of our work at the moment is down that way and we are just finding it too difficult to manage time to cover it from Darwin. We will maintain the male female approach which means I will be doing a fair bit of travel down there, but we just can't do the follow-up work that is required at the moment with both of us being here in Darwin.

Dr LIM: Is she going to be based with all -----then?

Mr RYAN: Yes, Community Development in Alice Springs.

Dr LIM: Do you believe that your background in community welfare, community development, the whole Community Development officer role that you have, has provided you with the skills to conduct a successful law and justice strategy?

Mr RYAN: I think it certainly helped. The 60's were a little bit different to today. In those days there were or there appeared to be quite a lot of activity going out on the communities and it wasn't only Strehlow's an anthropologist, but I also spent quite a lot of time working with Eugene Stockton, who was an archaeologist and he was doing excavations in that region. Strehlow actually worked as a linguist at one stage to Stockton, Strehlow's task was to try and interpret the rock carvings that were in this particular area. And to do that of course, he was engaging local people to see if there was an understanding of the rock carvings that were around that area. So there was a whole combination.

Also, I guess in those days you spent a lot more time with community people, it is one of the things I have notice about communities today, it's an 8 o'clock to 4 o'clock to any one job and you can't get the school teachers involved in extra curricula stuff you can't get the help. Back then when school came out, and I was attached to school for a while there, that was just the start of what was going on.

Dr LIM: The current officers, that were the new batch, will not have that ----- that you have. What sort of skills, transfer is occurring to allow a -----

Mr RYAN: At the moment there isn't anything, there is no structured field officer training course to start with and there is no career path through field work these days, which is quite different to when I first started. So there isn't really a transfer skill occurring at all.

In my experience, there have been a couple of watersheds in Aboriginal Affairs, and I am only talking about from the late 60's. One was the impact of award wages on communities and one of the communities I was working on at the time, the population would have doubled or tripled. A lot of people from that particular community were involved in the pastoral industry and had very good reputations, I mean they were working as far away as Mt. Isa, we had people, pastoralists chartering in to pick up stockmen. That collapsed overnight, and the people coming out of the pastoral industry, being relocated from pastoral properties had nowhere to go but back on to the major centres. That happened fairly quickly.

I think another devastating impact on what has happened in Aboriginal Affairs, has been the 1987 statement by the then government, which collapsed the old Department of Community Development and put in place a

method of service delivery to communities, which is known locally as mainstreaming. And the expertise that have been developed over a long period of time, when we were talking about the transfer of skills, has now gone and there is probably only a handful of people from that era left. And I don't really think communities have recovered from that, I think mainstreaming has had a devastating effect on the way government provides services. They are a couple of what I think have been significant factors in the way that services are being provided.

Dr LIM: Do you effectively introduce a law in justice strategy into a community, can you just give a brief outline of the processes that you undertake to achieve community involvement with it.

Mr RYAN: Well first of all I think in this day and age that it is absolutely critical that you have a male female team. Very few government departments are doing this, predominately people out in the field seem to be male. Even where you have male and female officers they don't work together as a team. With this particular program, I might just mention the word, that the law and justice strategy is a bit of a misnomer, the name came down as part of the way the cabinet submission went to cabinet.

In reality we found out fairly quickly that at the time there was a perception around that if you were talking about law and justice, you were talking mainly about policing and the court system. Our research at the community level fairly quickly showed us that this wasn't the case at all, that Aboriginal communities in fact saw law and justice as a much broader thing and this is where this particular inquiry which is looking at substance abuse. Substance abuse really is seen in the context of a much broader theme.'

Using male, female approach we work in tandem, particularly for the first period of consultation with communities, and on a regular basis. From our experience you need to strike the medium between overloading a community with information and appearing so irregularly that it just doesn't matter. And we usually find that a week out on a community, and that is a week we don't operate on a fly-in fly-out basis, you just need to be around and you will find that people will be coming after hours and all sorts of stuff.

But then you need to give the community its own breathing space and the community then puts in place its own system for communicating around and that takes time, so you allow that to happen and then you come back. Now for the one of a better word, in our report we have just referred to this as a 'stage of community awareness' about what the law and justice strategy is, about some of the responsibilities that the community might have to pick up through the process, and about the responsibility that government agencies and departments have, in terms of trying to work with the community. Basically we are looking for some sort of a partnership arrangement.

Dr LIM: What you are really saying is that if you are using the Community Development process to provide capacity building within the community, that enables the community to come to its own ways of dealing with issues within the community. Am I right in summarising it like that?

Mr RYAN: If we look at substance abuse for example, or petrol sniffing or any of the other issues that communities might raise as issues within the context of talking about law and justice concerns. The community can articulate very clearly, what actions need to be taken in order to address certain issues. The difficulty is, that the community often then has trouble implementing that. So you have got to be able to move from the position of the debate about an issue to the action of this.

The government involvement ceases at that level, it is a very superficial level that government is currently dealing with communities at. And anybody can go around to community, sit down and say 'okay identify these issues'. So a community will identify these issues and you might say 'okay how do you want to address petrol sniffing?' and the community will, and quite often they will relate that to things like having respect for elders, or relate that to those traditional system of social control that quite often, I believe, will need to be supported, but they are certainly still there. But by and large, you are being neglected by the mainstream agencies as a mechanism for addressing issues.

So they can articulate that, but the problem is the government then moves away at that level and then leaves the community with the issue of 'how do we actually rule?'

Mdm CHAIR: All in the name of community control.

Mr KIELY: So you would have -----we are looking at a community this way, but you are still looking back at the different departments I suppose, is that right?

Mr RYAN: Well what we do over there, it takes about 18 months to develop a draft law and justice plan with the community.

Mdm CHAIR: Because a lot of that would be consultation, I take it Peter, and relationship building would be a big.... ..

Mr McADAM: You can't -----where Peter is at, and this says that the relationship between ----- and the community trust and respect more and those sorts of things.

Mr KIELY: I was trying to get a handle on it, so much of your time, in percentage odds, would be spent working in the community and how would you break it up with working back towards the bureaucracy?

Mr RYAN: Have we got the overhead?

Mdm CHAIR: Just before you answer that Peter, can I just ask a quite question before you answer Lens? Just quickly, because when you were talking to Richard and you were talking about mainstreaming and how things have changed over time. Do you think, I mean you have been around a long time and you have seen a lot of changes, I am not saying you are old I am just saying a lot of us know you and have seen the work that you are doing.

One of the things that everyone is moving on and the buzz words with governments anywhere, everywhere, is community capacity, and building community capacity. I was having a conversation with Barry Wakelin the head of the House of Reps committee, that is doing this inquiry into community capacity. I said 'is this committee going to be radical and diverting its inquiry to look at the capacity of governments to deal with communities', because no-one questions the capacity or looks at the capacity of it and I think that is what you were, am I right. The capacity of the bureaucracy to work with communities and deal with those issues.

Mr KIELY: -----Richard was leading along that -----training and -----the capacity back within... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Were you talking about the community or were you talking about within government in terms of people like, like someone like Peter, you save you younger ones coming through... ..

Dr LIM: With the likes of Peter and Robert James and all the people I know, Stuart. You guys are a dying breed and there is no process... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Don't tell him that (laughing).

Dr LIM: You are an endangered species.

Mr McADAM: They all a dying breed.

Dr LIM: You are an endangered species and unless something is done to clone you guys, in a few years time we are going to have none of that capacity within the government in Australia to continue the work that, in my opinion, can only be done in this way. I think the modern way has failed, the modern way has failed and nobody has learned from that and said 'look hang on a minute, what you are trying to do today is not working' and we already knew that. Because what happens is the bureaucrats in power are of today and they are not able to because they haven't got expertise to see back to the days when things were working and that is my lament, that things had to happen and its not.

Mdm CHAIR: They call it mainstreaming.

Dr LIM: Well it is not mainstreaming it is more... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Assimilation.

Mr RYAN: I think there needs to be a re-think by government on how it provides services and I know that there is some work going on in that area, but you mentioned a key point a moment ago. Every department has a policy unit, but the policy unit invariably is staffed by people who haven't actually been out in the communities.

Mr McADAM: Sounds familiar.

Mr RYAN: This is where you have the problem of policy being driven by social engineers.

Dr LIM: Correct.

Mdm CHAIR: Well it is true.

Mr RYAN: And Aboriginal Affairs is the absolute classic, where everyone is an expert.

Dr LIM: Fertile ground.

Mr RYAN: Yes for sure. I mean it would be great to have a bi-partisan approach between the parties on this. There needs to be a 50 year commitment to it, now how government does that I am not sure. Certainly one of the ways is by re-investing in its own resources, there has been a lot of out-sourcing going on in recent years. But the trouble with out-sourcing is you have a consultant that comes in, invariable at that superficial level because they were only with the community for a short period of time. They draft a plan but then they take the information with them which still leaves government without its own resources and information.

Mr WOOD: Peter, is there many people, you said you worked out in 1966, I came up here and worked out in Daly River and quite a few people did that, I mean Terry McCarthy was one, there are a number of people that I knew that would have gone over, in my opinion and did the 'hard yakka'. You might say they worked out amongst people and then they moved into policy making. Are you saying that that is basically not ----- anymore?

Mr RYAN: No. There is not very many left, it is an easy trap to fall into, to move from working in the field into administration and policy, and by and large you then become a career public servant and your lost to the system. But there certainly aren't many left, there isn't a career path in terms of people actually working out in the field. The cut off level for field officers is a AO6 and these days experience in Aboriginal affairs is very attractive by public servants to put on their CV, but for no other reasons no commitment to the longer term. So it is very difficult, I mean I have been sitting on an AO7 level because I want to, because it is still related to field work, for the last 15 years I suppose. If I wanted to move into administration or policy, I would need to move right out of that area base.

Dr LIM: Are you going up another level to administration, thereby losing your passion.

Mdm CHAIR: It cuts you off from the community. Elliot.

Mr McADAM: Through the Chair, when you talk about mainstream, and I think we all agree with you to a certain extent, it has not been effective in the bush for all the reasons you have given. I just want to put

something to you, because you have been around a long, long time and I think we might have spoken about this before. Usually, I mean what do you think about the idea, let me-----by saying, that when you want to talk about bush I incorporate non-Aboriginal people as well because of where it is geographically. Is there a need for regional development authorities at that level, and I am referring to perhaps from Alice Springs to Barkly and Katherine. I am not talking about Tennant Creek and Alice Springs I am talking about those communities outside. The regional development authorities with the degrees of autonomy incorporating health, education and all the things that we deliver from Darwin and Alice Springs, that is the first ----- is there any scope for that?

The second question is, maybe you should answer that one first if you can, and then I want to lead into taking you back in regards to the delivery of services into those bush communities.

Mr RYAN: There is a big push at the moment by government to establish regional authorities, regional agreements or whatever.

Mr McADAM: I am not talking about agreements... ..

Mr RYAN: Regional authorities, yes.

Mr McADAM: I think it is about the agreement of regional authorities.

Mr RYAN: Provided they are adequately resourced, I have had a look at the stuff that Noel Pearson has been writing on Cape York but nowhere in there at the moment can I see how it is actually going to be implemented. It seems to be that it is at a level between a regional authority and government.

But as with everything, regardless of what model of service delivery you use, you have actually got to be able to get the stuff out into the communities. You have got to be able to implement that. Now regional authorities are a way to do that provided they are resourced and provided they have the expertise and the skills to do that, that would be the way to go.

I just have a concern about the resources to effectively be able to put them into action.

Mr McADAM: The second question I wanted to ask you was, we know what indigenous people and probably non-indigenous people live outside the major centres, they make up 35%-40% maybe? 45% of the total Territory population or something like that. One of the things that wherever we go people are saying 'they are not providing these services', not sports and recreation, I am talking about alcohol education type programs and a whole lot of others.

In your experience, is this not happening. Now from your experience you would have seen a pull back in terms ------but from your experience now is there any, and be honest, is there any real commitment by governments departments or agencies to effectively provide services in the bush, even though they are funded for it. They have got the money for it, so they say, but they are not doing it.

Mr RYAN: There is a lack of co-ordination between the agencies, that is always a major problem. And the quality of field staff has decreased, in fact I think at the present time it is probably as poor as I have ever seen. I might go through a few slides because I was going to try and show a model which I think was an effective model for government service delivery.

Dr LIM: I suggest that we shift that chair, and move it further back because it is way too small for everyone to see.

Mr RYAN: So how do we do this.

Mr WOOD: In 1966 when you first came to the Territory, they didn't have these!

Mdm CHAIR: You know a lot about these Richard.

Mr WOOD: It still works the same as an overhead, upside down wrong way around.

Dr LIM: That is about as good as we can get, good enough?

Mr RYAN: Yes, that is fine.

Dr LIM: Can you guys see in the back there?

Mr McADAM: You are going to give us copies of this?

Mr RYAN: Yes, there will be copies.

Mr RYAN: This system provided for linkages between infrastructure development and social development which currently doesn't occur. In 1987 that whole system was collapsed and the expertise that was in that field arm, particularly was lost because government at the time made a statement and it said 'we will provide the same or similar services to all Territorians, irrespective of race, colour or creed' basically that was the broad statement. Which in effect meant that all these programs that previously sat here, now went back to T&W or to local government or to community or to ----- facts.

Of course, Hatton when he made that statement did say something else, he qualified by saying 'all of these individual departments will now have to develop skills to enable them to negotiate with the Aboriginal communities, but of course that never happened and that was the major failing of mainstream, and that is the scenario that existed.

The point I am making is that I think this was a better method according to my experience and I think that is why now we lost the experience that was in here and the mainstream departments never picked up until then. And even to today you have still got people who shouldn't be out, there is no need for a lot of the public servants to be out on communities, and on top of that they don't carry the necessary skills.

Mr WOOD: Are you saying basically what happened is, your mainstream people you just regarded them as symbols for every occasion when obviously working on a remote community is certainly not the same as working in Darwin.

Mr RYAN: Yes for sure.

Mdm CHAIR: I mean there are people... ..

Dr LIM: Could we have page 1 of that?

SECRETARY: Yes I can do that. Is this another one here?

Mr McADAM: Once you, have you got, how you see their current, have you got something on that?

Mdm CHAIR: Analysis of the current department.

Mr RYAN: On the current department?

Mr McADAM: Doing an analysis of what currently exists. You describe it in words, have you got something in writing to determine how it happens today?

Mr RYAN: No. The closest we would have would be the model that we use in the Law and Justice Strategy which links together 8 or 10 different department which include the Commonwealth Department and a number of Territory Departments.

Dr LIM: I think what Elliot is really asking for is the departmental structure.

Mr McADAM: More of a comparative analysis.

Mr RYAN: If you have a structure that would be fine, but I think a comparative analysis would... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Because you said before, that the difference between how the Department of Community Development was, this was what 1970 or 80 up to 87?

Mr RYAN: 1987.

Mdm CHAIR: And Jacks department which is Community Development, the difference, I mean you said that it is not the same as what it used to be. So have you done an analysis? It is completely wrong Elliot, but that is what I think you look at, what the analysis is of the different... ..

Mr McADAM: What I am saying hasn't been done, could we ask Jackie that one?

Mr RYAN: Well, yes.

Mr McADAM: I am open, I want a very honest assessment.

Mr RYAN: The Department of Community Development currently doesn't carry the range of functions that the old department had, it has some of them. But the linkages between those departments are yet to yet to be created, and there is another important factor. That model that I showed on the board it was called the Department of Community Development but it also had a community development ethos that was driving the department. Currently you have got departments who are separate who have been pulled together in effect are called the Department of Community Development, but there hasn't been time to build a community development ethos into it at the moment, and I am not too sure how that will happen. But driving that former department was a departmental culture of community development, which was lost with the admin events in 1987, and trying to pull that back together will be difficult.

Mdm CHAIR: Is there people like, the library and people like that came through that same department Peter, Steve Dunham was part of that wasn't he. But I still think what Elliot was saying, the Legal and Constitutional is also looking at that structural stuff, and what you were doing there, is anyone on page 2 in terms of looking at the, just with what you are doing with some of the structure.

Mr McADAM: I would mind still asking the department for a -----structure. I think that might be... ..

Dr LIM: I think the question should not be put to Peter, because we are asking for something well above the responsibility for Peter. The other name I was thinking of was Stuart Philpot in this area, you guys are a endangered species, -----are not reserved. I think, in response not so much answering on behalf of Peter but what Elliot is looking for is, is useful a departmental structure and maybe we should ask the CEO of that Department to explain to us in a similar fashion to what Peter has explained, what happened pre 87 and what it is today and then do our comparison, and then we will see how... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Well do we ask for a briefing from, that CEO to come in and then we can, having gone through this we can... ..

Mr KIELY: Do you want him to be there to see him working on a comparative analysis of the Community Development?

Dr LIM: I think it is a little bit hard because... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Well just brief us on what Community Development, the Department and how they perceive it and what they are doing with communities.

Dr LIM: I think you need to ask CEO for what is there today. If the CEO is not one who has been through this old system it will be very difficult for the CEO himself, or herself to say 'look this is the comparison' I think we have to do the comparison because we have seen this, now we have got to see the new system and then you do the comparison.

Mdm CHAIR: Yes, I realise that but we can't do the comparison until we have him come and we go through and talk to him about what is currently happening within the Department of Community and Development and Cultural Affairs. We have already had this paper and gone through a briefing with Peter in terms of what it used to be... ..

Mr KIELY: Yes, but I can see a distinct difference already, you know look at this, and talk about community development, a lot of it apart from Community and Social Development Division-----it doesn't really, with the Law and Justice program you run now goes more into the social side of things than what was actually ----- in the whole structure. The Community and Social Development Division dealt mainly with children welfare issues and child protection rather than... ..

Mr RYAN: It was general, when you went out there. But the Act applied whether you were Aboriginal or not. It is just a matter of now you interpreted it, it was basically Community Development work when you were working on remote communities. The role of field staff, particularly at the regional level, there was a significant community role.

Mr WOOD: Can I just ask through the Chair, you went up to 1987 and there were changes then, there was also changes with the new government, there was -----of the department. With the changes of certain departments, did that change the post 1987 department, did it get re-structured when it shifted into a bigger department? The Department of Local Government I think, wasn't -----

Mdm CHAIR: Office of Local Government, yes I think it was wasn't it.

Mr WOOD: It was the Department of Local Government, I think-----

Mdm CHAIR: I always thought it was just the Office of Local Government.

Mr WOOD: It had a few name changes, but I didn't know after 1987, there was also a few re-structuring and including this... ..

Mr RYAN: Following 1987 there were some, yes you are right on the Office of Local Government, I think at one stage which might have been a separate department. Corrections, for example were a separate department, now they have moved back into a major department. But the structure of mainstreaming and the philosophy of mainstreaming remained the same from 1987. Basically it was all departments were operating directly with communities and I think that was one of the weaknesses of it.

Mdm CHAIR: Elliot would you like a letter written, let me re-write and just sort of... ..

Mr McADAM: Subject to the historic views... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Why don't we clear the details after we have finished with Peter and we will just re-think in terms of that letter. Is there anything else Peter? Do you want to have a quick break or do you want to make a coffee and stop while we just wrap up. We will just have a 5 minute break.

Mr RYAN: I was just going to summarise on that program, I will get a cup of coffee.

Mr McADAM: Are we having a break?

Mdm CHAIR: 5 minutes.

Dr LIM: Mdm Chair if I am not back in 5 minutes please start.

SECRETARY: Can you put those on, those overheads or just talk through them?

Mr RYAN: In relation to substance abuse, the way that this is being dealt with through our program, it is being dealt with as one of a number of issues of communities need to address, and how we arrive at that and I have to be very quick here.

This model, this example here relates to family violence.

Mr WOOD: I can see a small-----

Mr KIELY: That's your approach to live, isn't it? No, it is more like here is comes!

SECRETARY: We are just warming up. Can we do -----

Mr McADAM: No we can't have this... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Maybe we should, we have got photocopies here so we will go through that.

Mr WOOD: It only cost \$10 500, it obviously a cheap version.

Mdm CHAIR: Lets just go through, everyone has got copies turn to your pages please. Is this the one you are going to work off Peter, the one with the circle?

Mr RYAN: Yes. Basically what we are saying here is that communities identify a lot of law and justice concerns and as you can see here, alcohol and drug related issues... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Is just one of many.

Mr RYAN: Is a very high priority, after family violence. Problems with how to work out solutions at the community level alcohol and other drugs and youth issues, they invariably ----- everywhere is a very high priority for communities to address. But you can identify all of these concerns in the pie-chart there and there is a whole lot more, you just can't get them on to the pie-chart. Getting to a draft plan, with the community probably takes about 18 months, that is a male and female team working with a community on a pretty regular basis. The first 6 to 9 months, is working solely with the community, and we found that that was absolutely critical, because if you involve the government departments too early in the process you don't have a partnership arrangement, the community is overwhelmed by the departmental agendas of various agencies. In Law and Justice you have got about 8 or 10 Territory and Commonwealth departments involved in this, so you really have got to judge when you bring the government agencies into the process. And the community really needs to have a pretty clear idea of what issues and what is to address, and how. Then you try to negotiate the community perception of how to do this stuff and where to go with the agencies.

The 3rd one, and again we are looking here at solve family violence. But the community will throw up all that stuff there in terms of how to address family violence.

And this is the level government currently deals at, once those issues are identified government invariably, and by government I am saying your field staff, your various departments and so on, they will vacate the field at that stage and sometimes they will leave a bucket of money behind sometimes they won't. But at least the community has a plan, it has identified this stuff and it has identified how it wants to deal with it, but there is no further support in actually moving from there to putting actions in place, and there is a whole lot of actions that need to be undertaken for the community to actually get outcomes.

If we look at this, family violence, communities invariably will say 'okay lets have a rest-bite, send out for the women, or a safe area for the women', that just doesn't happen, but that is the stage which invariably we walk away from it. What we have been able to do, is set up joint funding arrangements at Ali Curung and Lajamanu and now Yuendumu between the Commonwealth and the Territory to actually fund that then you have got... ..

Mdm CHAIR: How is the streamlining process with that happening Peter, in terms of reporting, has -----got a joint agreement, has both Commonwealth and Territory agreed on one reporting mechanism that that community has to do?

Mr RYAN: Only through... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Because that is what gets caught, that is what distracts and takes up a lot of time and energy of organisations trying to develop and establish.

Mr RYAN: The only reporting mechanism we have got is the Community Law and Order plan which the community has developed and then government agencies have come in to support that. Every 3 months we have set up a system or tried to 3 or 4 times a year, bring all the agencies Commonwealth and Territory together for a workshop and it is at that stage that you sit down and look at what has happened in the last 3 months and look at where the community wants to go in the next 3 months. We introduced that system mainly to try and keep some accountability there, not from the community but from the government services providers. Otherwise you find the only time they actually go to the community is every 3 months for these meetings, which is a pointless exercise, they are supposed to be assisting the community work through stuff or else, if it is a case of a government department which is supposedly meant to be implementing a strategy, that is supposedly to be actually implementing a strategy. Quarterly meetings, where the government department actually has to report on what it has been doing is pretty affective because the community soon knows, and it has been the case a couple of times, where the community has said 'hang on a minute we haven't seen you in the last 3 months, you haven't done what you said you were supposed to do'.

Mdm CHAIR: With Law and Justice, you were saying that this pooling or sharing of resources, who does the pooling of the money where does that go or end up to be co-ordinated then on the ground?

Mr RYAN: Well the main, the biggest item would be if you were actually constructing a 'safe house' which you are looking at \$180 000, anywhere between \$40 000 which was at Ali Curung which was renovating an old building to Yuendumu. At Yuendumu we found that there were no suitable empty buildings that could be used because of, people had died, which was why the buildings were empty, and if you simply renovated the building some groups would be excluded from being able to use it. That wasn't the case at even Lajamanu, Lajamanu was a health clinic which was fine, that was seen as neutral the old health clinic that was done up, so all of the community could access the health clinic, all of the women and kids, it was similar at Ali Curung, but at Yuendumu it meant a new building so you are looking a couple of hundred grand, nn fact I think \$180 000. So what you need to do then is negotiate with ATSIC if you are using a joint funding arrangement, the Commonwealth and the Territory and so far we haven't had a problem with that. As the building is built it is acquitted, the next big problem is operational funding, well sometimes that comes out of the ATSIC budget, such as at Ali Curung.

Mdm CHAIR: What I am trying to grapple with, I suppose Peter, is the Kurudju Committee is an incorporated body? So they don't receive any funding in their own rights, who does the funding go to?

Mr McADAM: It goes to the respective community council, doesn't it.

Mr RYAN: Yes.

Mdm CHAIR: Oh sorry, and then all the councils then come together with their representatives.

Mr RYAN: The Kurudju Committee is part of the process, but at the community level you have got community Law and Justice committees or tribal council or whatever. But you have got local communities that are dealing with family violence and the safe house alcohol problems and that sort of stuff. And all that happens is the individual communities send representatives which is now called the 'Kurudju Committee'. And that provides support but it also builds on the experiences of the individual communities which is why they document what is working on communities and what is not working, and that is information for other communities and for government agencies but they are not an incorporated body.

Mr WOOD: Can I just ask you a question about that. On the communities that you have community law and justice plan strategy, is there enough there to believe in what is happening. If you haven't got the leaders and if the leaders is part of the problem, this couldn't work you have to have communities where there is a certain leadership that will take on a roll.

Mr RYAN: I think the process could facilitate that, if it is not there. What we found was that the structures communities used previously to address issues and to resolve issues are being overwhelmed by social workers and councillors and police and everybody else. Now, if you can actually through the agreement which is what we do, they are very detailed in terms of the responsibilities of the police involvement with the community and there are protocols on how that happens. If you can actually get police to take 1 step back and you get -----to take a step back and you get the Health Department to take a step back, you then create a situation where the community can actually deal with stuff without being afraid of being jumped on. So it very quickly establishes or creates an environment where the community leadership will then kick-in and take over. But it is a matter of identifying what strategies the community want to use to address things and then allowing it to happen.

Mr WOOD: I suppose, I am listening but-----and that Pearson story, they were talking about alcohol mainly, or alcohol and drugs, that it affected communities but now they seemed to have moved into the leadership and when they have a problem there, getting the leaders to become part of the solution, because they have become part of the problem, and you don't know whether you could work unless you had leader there that were outside the problem you know what I mean, if they were part of it.

Mr McADAM: I think that is the point that Peter is trying to make, with the budgetary process. It doesn't always but it allows an opportunity for the sort of things that you are concerned about to occur, is that what you are saying about the process, I mean it is a white fella thing, the council stuff, I am really talking about leadership.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I wasn't talking about leadership from the local government perspective, but say it was alcohol and drug related issues within the community, but the leaders they had that problem.

Mr McADAM: Ali Curung had that problem.

Mr RYAN: Yes.

Mr McADAM: Do you agree?

Mdm CHAIR: But you would have had leadership from women.

Mr WOOD: That's it!

Mdm CHAIR: I mean, and that is what people tend to focus on sometimes. Just because the men are standing out, they don't see the women who are the movers, and actually doing a lot of the leading.

Mr WOOD: And that gave them a chance, I presume.

Mdm CHAIR: This is where the Ali Curung, I think a lot of the women got involved in that Elliot.

Mr McADAM: The point I am trying to make is, -----process has the capacity to compromise -----you know what I mean, because it is the dynamics within the community, or it allows that to occur.

Mr RYAN: Yes it is broad enough because of the system that the community sets up, which at Lajamanu and Yuendumu are based on a skin group, and the leaders from different skin groups. So if you have, and you will find it in any societies, a leader will fall over but that doesn't destroy the systems that it puts in place because the others will pick up there, and a leader of a clan group or a skin group might fall over for a particular reason recover from that and just joins back in. And the community will just compromise to accept that. I was just saying earlier on, Bill Ivory and Robert Fuller have been doing a fair bit of work at Port Keats. Port Keats is an absolute tinder box at the moment out there.

Mdm CHAIR: They briefed, they came in, were you at that briefing when they came in.

Mr RYAN: Yes. And these so called 'gangs' that exist which are the young kids really, there is now a lot of evidence suggesting that those gangs actually relate to country and clan. The young kids are just adapting a traditional system that has been there for a long time to the 21st century. So really you are still dealing with the same thing, you were trying to draw the linkages between the plans to resolve the problem.

Mdm CHAIR: There is a, and I know I keep talking of the health system, but that is where a lot of my background came from. But there has been some major reforms, and then you say there has been things that haven't happened and when I look at all of this, I think of the health reforms that have happened. And I know there has been a stagnation, you know, things haven't progressed much lately, but since co-ordinated care trials and that is what the whole point of setting up co-ordinated care trials was, to test and to look at developing regional authorities where you could develop an organisation. It was interesting that you said 8 to 9 months here Peter, because it is that long, I remember with----- it actually took me 18 months, but that was over a whole region.

And I remember both Commonwealth and Territory agencies getting very nervous and saying 'look you have got this timeframe, we better hurry up because we have got to fight the Commonwealth for funding'. Because they couldn't understand the concept of that you have got to build the foundations and lay that foundation before you can put a structure in place.

Mr RYAN: Well the 8 to 9 refers to that... ..

Mdm CHAIR: Consultation and relationships.

Mr RYAN: Yes community awareness raising about what the whole thing is. If they are going to enter into some sort of partnership arrangement, they need to have the information and ammunition there. The process of getting to a draft plan which involves both the community and government agencies is anywhere from 18 months to 2 years.

Mdm CHAIR: Yes, well that is what I was saying to Barry Wakelin very quickly the other day. The work that was put in, in terms of taking government documents and what was the Northern Territory Government's plan then or hypothesis and everything else on improving Aboriginal health, what was the Commonwealth's intent on that, bringing both of those together and then disseminating that into not a simple written form, but in picture form, was the biggest challenge that I faced, because every community I went to, the people are saying 'we don't want these works, we want to see it in pictures'.

So the challenge for me was to take the words and paint the picture. And even the valuers, I remember Peter Baggs and Menzies School of Health, they had done the valuation on many research projects and they went to the communities and said 'No, we want to listen to you but we don't want the pieces of paper, we want you to come back in an hours time with the drawings. We want you to draw the picture to us of how you are evaluating our -----'.

That is how you put it, and there was ad hoc leadership around the communities but that whole process that was put in place was to develop and encourage real leadership to come through. And a lot of the men, who previously when I first started wouldn't stand up then all stood up, and took control.

Mr RYAN: Oh yes, it takes a while to kick-in but once it kicks-in it creates its own momentum. But it is interesting, the Kurudju committee have got a series of dot-paintings, mainly by the Ali Curung people to explain how they operate the safe houses and the night patrol and who they involve elders and traditional owners and so on. And it is interesting where previously, you would get public servants in there and bombard the Kurudju committee with documents and information. You have now got to the stage where you have got the last meeting out there, where Marjorie and Gwen and that mob were going through dot-paintings to explain what was happening. You have got the police jumping up saying 'Oh hang on a minute we can't read dot-paintings, what is it you are talking about'.

Mdm CHAIR: The Chair, I shouldn't say my Chair, the ex-Mdm CHAIR of Katherine, was when we used to go to meetings of Commonwealth and Territory, from Canberra they would come up and sit around the table in their suit and both agencies would start talking over the table, then they would ask him a question and his response would be in language, he would respond to them in his language and they would sit there and go, and then they would look at me and I would say 'well the way your talking is foreign to him'.

Mr WOOD: Personally I can understand, on the -----you would try to use diagrams and photos if you were looking at an issue, you dealt with people the way you knew was best for them to understand.

Mdm CHAIR: But that goes back to what you were saying before Peter, the quality of the agency people who have got contact with communities, to be able to have that level of skill in terms of communication with countrymen.

Mr WOOD: PhD's and everything but, I think that, I do feel that they have been brought up with you know 'this is way you do it'.

Mr McADAM: Another point to is that I was called up about 6, 7 years ago. Territory Health was not around it was-----program which was going to apply to each new recruit, namely the Territory law, it didn't happen.

Mdm CHAIR: Oh well, is there anything else. Well thank you for that.