

THREE BORES — Thursday 21 June 1990

PUBLIC MEETING

PRESENT:-

Committee:

Mr Hatton (Chairman)

Mr Ede (Deputy Chairman)

Mr Bailey

Mr Setter

Officers assisting the committee:

Mr R Gray (Executive Officer)

Mr G Nicholson (Legal Advisor)

Ms M.M. Turner (Interpreter)

Appearing before the committee:

Ray Pula

Albert Morton

Banjo Morton

Others Present:

Alison Hunt

Lindsay Turner

Edited transcript

Issued: 9 January 1991

Mr GRAY: As I said yesterday, this is the committee that I work for, and I want to introduce them to you. You know Steve Hatton. He is the chairman of the committee, and this is Brian Ede. I think a lot of you know Brian Ede already. He is the deputy chairman. This is Rick Setter, who is a member from Darwin, and this is John Bailey who is from Darwin also. We have 2 members from the CLP and 2 from the ALP on the committee.

This man is Graham Nicholson. He is a lawyer and he travels with the committee to help us, and I have Ms Margaret Mary Turner with me here to help us by interpreting. Now we are going to talk about what we said yesterday. The committee will talk and, if you have any questions or if there is anything you want to talk about, then you bring it up. I will leave it at that.

Mr HATTON: Thank you, Rick. Many of you will remember that we were here last year when we talked about a constitution. We had a really good meeting, just over there, and we went through a lot of things. We were talking about what we are trying to do and how governments are set up in Australia in the white man's way. Governments can do pretty well anything. They can make all sorts of laws and there are all sorts of different governments. There is the government in

Canberra for all of Australia, and there is a government in Darwin for the Northern Territory, and they mix up different jobs for the same people. It is the same in Queensland, in Western Australia and in South Australia. It is the same everywhere. There is the government for the whole of Australia and then a government for each of the others - the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and so on. Everywhere there are 2 governments, and they mix up the jobs between them.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: I will go through that again a bit more slowly. Last year, when we were here, we were talking about a constitution and about all the different sorts of governments in Australia. For example, in Canberra there is 1 government, for all of Australia and, in Darwin, there is 1 which is just for the Northern Territory.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Each government has a different job and they mix together, so some laws are made by the Canberra government and some laws are made by the Darwin government.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: So you have to work out which laws are made by the Canberra government and which laws are made by the government in Darwin?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: The laws that the Canberra government is allowed to make are written down in a special law and that law belongs to the people.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That special law is called 'the Constitution' for all of Australia.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Each of the states, like Queensland and South Australia, also has a constitution that says what their governments are allowed to do.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: And each of those constitutions gives special power to the government in each state and they say what the states are allowed to do, and the federal Constitution says what the federal government is allowed to do.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: When these constitution laws were written, for the whole of Australia and for each of the states, things were written into those laws, like the rights for people. That might be the right for you to have your own religion, it might be the right to speak out or the right to vote. Those are special rights and these special laws say that the governments are not allowed to touch them.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Those laws were made in Australia because people said that they could not let the government do just anything it wanted to do because some things are too important and too strong and no government should be allowed to change them or to take away certain rights from the people. So, to protect the people from the government, they made this law which is called a constitution.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That is how the people of Australia make sure that the government cannot take away their rights; they protect them in their constitution.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: I would like to tell you about the history of how white man's the governments came together in Australia.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Way back 200 years ago, when the white men first came here, they went to different places in Australia, Sydney in New South Wales, Melbourne in Victoria and to Queensland.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: When they got there, they set up their own governments. In New South Wales, they had their own government, in Victoria, they had their own government, and in Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia they had their own governments.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Because of that, they were like different countries, just as England and France are different countries. They were not together as one country. They were separate.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That would cause a lot of trouble because, if someone wanted to go from Sydney to Melbourne, it would be like travelling from one country to another. They would have to have a passport and they would have to pay taxes and customs duty just to go from one place to another in the same country. It would be crazy.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: They even each had their own army. New South Wales had its own army. Victoria had its own army and Western Australia had its own army. They were all separate.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Finally, they decided that it was silly because they all lived in the same country. So, they started to meet together and talk about how they could come together as one country.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: They held meetings and they talked together over years and years about how they might make one government for all of Australia.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: They did that because they decided that they must meet and talk about making a constitution, this special law to make a government for all of Australia.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: In that constitution, they put down what sort of powers the government should have and the sort of laws it is allowed to make.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: They also worked out that they would have a Senate and a House of Representatives. You know that Warren Snowdon is a member of the House of Representatives and Bob Collins and Grant Tambling are in the Senate.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: They are different, but they are both part of the federal government. Together, the House of Representatives

and the Senate make up the federal parliament.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Those people wrote down all those rules and all those rights in this book and this book is the Australian Constitution. That is a special law and it belongs to the people of Australia. The government cannot change that.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: You will remember that, 2 years ago, the federal government said that it wanted to make some changes to the Australian Constitution. It went to the people and told them to vote yes or no in answer to some questions in a referendum. Do you remember that there was a special vote about 2 years ago?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Do you remember that?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: You were asked to say yes or no.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That was because the federal government wanted to change this Constitution.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: The people said 'No, do not touch it'. So, it stayed the same, because that is a strong law. Only the people can change that law, not the government.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Do you understand what I am saying?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: In that special law, the Constitution, there are some funny words. It talks about the 'citizens of the states'. The states, of course, are Queensland, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. So the citizens of the states are the people from those states.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Each of those states has special rights and special protection in this Constitution. The rights of the people living in those states are protected in the Constitution.

Now, here is a problem. The Northern Territory is not a state and it is not protected by this Constitution. That is a problem for us because we are not citizens of a state and so the people of the Northern Territory do not have their rights protected. Your rights are not protected by this Constitution.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Do you understand that? We are half way there but we are not quite there. We have a government in Darwin, but that government is not protected by this Constitution and the people in the Northern Territory are not protected by the Constitution.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: People like ourselves are asking why the Northern Territory people should not have equal rights like everyone else in Australia.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: We think that Northern Territory people like yourselves should have the same rights as anyone who lives in New South Wales or South Australia.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: We are all Australians and we should be treated the same. We should be equal but, for that to happen, this book - the Constitution - has to include the Northern Territory as a state. That is what we have to make happen and until we do that, we cannot have the same rights.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: The Northern Territory has to be included in that law - the Constitution. But, before we can do that and get those rights, the people of the Northern Territory - and that includes you - have to say how they want this Northern Territory to be run. You have to say how you want this Northern Territory government to be run.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Has anybody ever asked you before what sort of rights the Northern Territory government should protect for the people?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Have you ever been asked that question before?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

People replying.

Ms TURNER: No.

Mr HATTON: No - and did anyone ask you how we should make a government in the Northern Territory, how to go about electing a government? Did anybody ask you what sort of things the government should be allowed to do and, even more importantly, what sort of things the government should not be allowed to do? There are some things that no government should be allowed to touch. There are some rights that governments should not be allowed to take away.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: But we have not got those rules because we do not have a Northern Territory constitution through which the people have made those laws and put a censure on the government.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Our committee is travelling around talking to the people and saying that we want to start working and talking to each other about how we want the Northern Territory to be run in the future, how we want the Northern Territory to go, and we want to talk about the kind of rules you want to make over the government.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: It is really important for you to make sure you have your say in this, and I will tell you another story to explain why it is so important for you to have your say.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: This story is about all those states in Australia when they made their governments and they wrote their constitutions. When they did that, they did not go out and ask the people what they wanted. The lawyers and the politicians just locked themselves in a room and they wrote out those constitutions themselves.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: For instance, no one went and asked the Aboriginal people what was important for them, and they did not put anything in those constitutions to protect some of the rights of Aboriginal people.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: You can see what happened to the Aboriginal people in New South Wales and Queensland. They lost a lot of their law, and they lost a lot of their language and their culture. A lot of it got lost, because there was no protection given to it.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: The law is still strong in the Northern Territory and culture is still strong in the Northern Territory. We think that, in writing up this constitution law, you have to make sure that it will be good for Aboriginal people, for your people. You want to make sure that there is protection for those things that are really important to you.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: We are coming to you to say to you please start looking at this. Do not leave it to the lawyers and the politicians and do not leave it up to those white people in Darwin and Alice Springs. You have to have your say in this too.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: We have all got to work together on this for all the people in the Northern Territory to make a good place for our grandchildren.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That is what we have come here for. We have come to explain that this is so important that you must be part of it. This is so important that you should not leave it for some other mob to do because the other mob will keep working on it. You have to be involved, you have to be there. We need to get something going where people here can sit down, work through it and talk about things and say what you think should go in that constitution law.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Do you agree with that?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Aboriginal people responding in agreement.

Mr HATTON: Good. There is one more thing I must tell you.

Ms TURNER interpreting

Mr HATTON: It is about the way the people of the Northern Territory have to go to make this law, what they have to do.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: It has to be done this way so that you can make sure that your interests will be looked after properly. We must make sure that you understand what is going on and how we will go about making this law.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Right. In the first stage, we are travelling around now, talking to people and explaining what this constitution is about, as I have been doing here today.

Ms TURNER interpreting

Mr HATTON: Then we want to try to encourage the people in your community to meet together and to look at all the questions, because these are important. You need to think through what you want. Some communities have set up a committee to write up people's ideas in a submission. You may want to do that too.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Our committee wants to go around and listen to what the people are saying or to get written submissions on what people are thinking.

Ms TURNER interpreting

Mr HATTON: When we get in those ideas from all over, we will have to sit down and start to write up something that has in it what we think the people are saying. We will call that a draft constitution. That is step 2.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That will have in it just what we think people are saying. We will try very hard with that. We may not get it right, but we will hope that we do. We will be trying.

Ms TURNER interpreting

Mr HATTON: For step 3, we have to form a special committee of representatives of the people from all over the Northern Territory - from Darwin, from here, from all over. That will be a special committee made up of representative people. People who you trust to speak for you.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That committee has a special name too. It is called a 'Constitutional Convention'.

Ms TURNER interpreting

Mr HATTON: That committee's job will be to pick up the draft constitution that my committee writes to see if we have got it right or if it needs to be changed a bit more.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: When those people have done that job and have gone through this draft constitution, then they will say that they think that it says what the people want it to say. Then, as step 4, we will take that back to the people and ask them to vote on it - to say yes, if they want it that way, or to say no if they want it changed. If they say no, then the committee will go back and start work on it again.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: That way we will all make a strong law. It will be a strong law that belongs to the people because it will say what the people are saying. It will be a law that stays like that, that only the people can change, and it will sit over the top of the Northern Territory government.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: In white man's law, that is the closest we come to Aboriginal law. Aboriginal law never changes, and that constitution law is the closest we get to it in white man's law.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

I just said about the grandfathers' law. It is so strong that we cannot change it for someone. And I explained that this is the only thing that the Europeans have which is getting as close as that.

Mr HATTON: All the people agreeing together is the only way it can be changed. The government cannot touch it.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Right. Now, this job will not be an easy one and I reckon that, when the people are working to make this law, they will have a lot of arguments. Do you think those people in Alice Springs will agree with everything you say? You will have to talk it out, though. You will have to keep working and working because, if we get this one right, we will start to get the people moving together down the same road, with respect for each other.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: When we make this law and we get this constitution, then we will begin talking with the Canberra government about perhaps including the Northern Territory in the federal Constitution so that we can have equal rights for everyone, as do other Australians. But we have to do this job first and we have to do the job properly. We must take our time over it and make a good law for the future.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: All right. I have talked enough now. Brian Ede wants to speak to you, but I thank you for listening to me.

Mr EDE: I just got this from the office. It is the Urapuntja Council's constitution. You mob have a constitution now for this area, for how you are working at running the council. The boss for this constitution is inside the councils and associations law, run by the Canberra government. They can tell you about how you can change this constitution and what has to be in it and what cannot be in it. You can ask them, but you are not boss for it. The real boss for it is the federal government, in Canberra.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: Everybody is talking about changing this constitution, perhaps by breaking it up and going in 2 ways, one up that way and another down this way.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: If a lawyer helps you mob to write up another one, so that this constitution goes that way and the new one goes another way, when that is written it has to go to Canberra for the Canberra mob to say if it is all right or not.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: This constitution here says what the Urapuntja Council can do. Written down here are all the things that the council can do.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: It says here that the Urapuntja Council has to help Aboriginal people in communities inside all the area of the council.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: The council has to help people to get some business going so they can get some money. The council has to look after the money and all that sort of thing. Work in the health service, that is another one for the council.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: The council has to work with the Central Land Council to get this land. All those things are in your constitution. Those are all things that the Urapuntja Council can do.

The Northern Territory government has not got a constitution.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: What we are going to do is try to think of all those things that we want the Northern Territory government to be

able to do. Now, we just operate under the law from Canberra.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: This lawyer bloke just gave me copy of it. The Self-Government Act, they call it.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: That law was written by that mob down in Canberra. They sat in an office down there and they wrote that Self-Government Act. They set that up and said that we could have a government up here and do things that Canberra says that we can do, but we cannot do anything that Canberra says we cannot do.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: We do not want to do things that way for this constitution for the Northern Territory. That is why we have come to ask you mob what sort of things you think that we should put in that constitution about the things that the government can do and the things it cannot do.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: You can see the same thing in this. It does not just have a list of all the things that you can do. It tells about what your power is. Perhaps it tells who are the members of the Urapuntja Council.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: The Urapuntja Council constitution says how it can be changed. Those are things that we have to think about for a constitution for the Northern Territory too.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: Do you just want a mob of people to sit down together in Darwin or in Canberra or something and work out how they want this constitution to be or for them to change it how they like? Or, are you you going to say no way, that all the people have to be in on this and then they all have to vote on it?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: You can see that this is like the way you made your own constitution containing the rules of the Urapuntja Council. You got together and worked them up and wrote them down, years and years ago.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: I remember when we started this up. We had meetings under that old shelter over there. We came up and I came out with Neville Perkins and all that mob. We came out and Fred Chaney came and we had a meeting over there.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: Now, some people are talking about changing those rules. Everybody will be talking about it and working on it so you mob can make up your own minds about how you want to change them.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: You will be thinking about what power you will give the new one, if you decide to go ahead with it. What power will it have, what will it be able to do? What can't it do? Is it to be strong or just a little weak one?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: In the same way, when we are talking as we did the last time we were here and now about what we will want in that Northern Territory constitution, we have to think what are the things that we want to put in there, the things that we want to make strong.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: I think I should stop talking now and let everybody else have a talk, ask questions or whatever. Does someone want to speak about something? It would be a good idea though if, when we are talking, they get the microphone so they can talk into it like that, and say their name first. That would be good because we are doing again what we did last time. That lady over there is getting what is being said on the tape. When the committee goes back, that will all be written down so that, later, you can check what was said. We will send them back and people can see what everybody said. The people can talk English or talk language, whatever they like.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

I was just speaking to them about this paper or book on this. They think it is rather hard to understand.

Mr HATTON: Perhaps we may be able to help with that. We have been talking about getting another book printed which will be easier to read than this one. If you want to, we can organise for Rick Gray, perhaps, this man beside me who you were talking to yesterday, to come out here so that you can sit down, take your time and go through it with him, bit by bit. Then he can explain anything you want to have explained, bit by bit.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr EDE: Another thing we are doing is preparing some cassette tapes. I guess a lot of people have tape recorders. Already, we have finished an easy English cassette, but IAD is now working on putting some cassette tapes together in language, so that people can sit down and listen to them and hear what is being said about all this.

Ms TURNER interpreting

Mr EDE: There will be 3 cassettes in this one and they will tell a story about what a constitution is and how the government works. Then it will say about the different things we have to look at in the government, inside the courts and the job for the Administrator. All that sort of thing will be explained on those tapes, in language.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: Then they will be in little questions, not big questions, and you can work through each little question, bit by bit.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: When you put together all the answers to those questions, you can start to think what you want to say.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: With those cassettes too, if you want it, we can still get someone to come back and sit down and talk with you, to explain more.

Ms TURNER speaking Aboriginal language. There is someone who is going to speak. I have told them to speak in language or English.

Mr HATTON: Don't worry. If you want to talk language, that is fine. We can interpret it back so we can talk.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

The other gentleman was saying that they want to have a talk first and then let us know if they want to speak. The men there want to talk together.

Mr HATTON: We will go away for half-an-hour or so and have some lunch whilst you have a talk. Is that all right?

Ms TURNER: Yes, they will go now.

A break in proceedings.

Mr Ray PULA: We have been talking now about how we will try to help make this law, for a constitution. The Northern Territory has some cultures. They have been making the wrong law. They should make this law. That is why the people want it. All the people in this Utopia area and right around Ammaroo they want to make this law now. They want to make this law and we will put up with the constitution. White law with the tribal law and what that is saying is that they got to put up with the one law. We cannot make a change to it. We are not trying to change this one, that is why we are under one law. That is why we want it. This one talking now is Ray Pula (??).

Mr A. MORTON: My name is Albert Morton. I will try to explain what I want to you. There are 15 Aboriginal communities in this area, at Utopia, Ammaroo and all around. We are trying to put the application (indecipherable) constitution (indecipherable) holders will (indecipherable) our culture. But there is no (indecipherable) in Australia (indecipherable) this constitution. They made that without Aborigines. They never came to the Aborigines in the Northern Territory (indecipherable) speaking about it as a constitution. But we want them now and the Northern Territory can have a constitution for our Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. We want a strong law and we want our culture. We have all been frightened for our grandfathers' cultures, and we are still frightened. We want a constitution and that is why I put it in now for me. Right - that is all I can say.

If there is a constitution about the Northern Territory, then I know that Bob Hawke is going to hold this constitution for the whole state in this grandfathers' law. Bob Hawke and we in the Northern Territory can hold this constitution down hard. We have been trying that way to hold it but the Northern Territory has been sleeping all the time. They did not have a constitution. But we want it now. Put it in that way.

Mr HATTON: Okay. Do any of the women there want to talk?

People talking in Aboriginal language.

Ray PULA speaking in Aboriginal language.

Mr A. MORTON: Now, one more I didn't plan. In the Northern Territory state, Canberra can hold this constitution for our grandfathers in the Northern Territory and we will pass that on to Canberra to make a constitution for us. That is all.

Mr HATTON: For the constitution here, the people need to make sure that they say what is in that constitution. Do you want to get some sort of representatives to start to work to put down what you think should be in that law, in that constitution?

Ms TURNER interpreting. I just put in what was said. One of the blokes was talking just now about some of those things, if they have a representative, a person like (speaking in Aboriginal language).

People speaking in Aboriginal language.

Ms TURNER speaking in Aboriginal language. The blokes talk (indecipherable) and that voice can be one.

People speaking in Aboriginal language.

Mr PULA: Well this one here we are talking now, we want to make it with the committee in Darwin now. That is why we want it now.

Mr HATTON: You want this committee now?

Mr PULA: Yes

Mr HATTON: Do you want to say who should be on that committee?

People talking together in Aboriginal language.

Mr PULA: Banjo Morton will be on this committee. I am putting him now, today - Banjo Morton.

Mr HATTON: Banjo Morton?

Mr Banjo MORTON: From Ammaroo (indecipherable). I will be on the committee.

Mr PULA: I am calling that committee now as Roy Loy (??). I will be the one, I think.

People talking in Aboriginal language.

Mr HATTON: Folks, may I talk for a minute? Perhaps we should work out what job this committee will have to do. Do you agree with that? This committee should be here perhaps, and we can get the information to you here and then perhaps get Rick Gray to come here to talk and to work through all that information and make suggestions for the community to talk about. Then the community can say that that is what they think and put that in a submission to the parliament. Would that be all right?

You know that that Pitjantjatjara mob may have different ideas to yours, so you will have to start swapping and switching information and work it up.

Ms TURNER speaking in Aboriginal language. The ladies want to talk about this. They just want to let the gentlemen know.

Ladies talking in Aboriginal language.

Ms TURNER talking in Aboriginal language. They want to really look at this book and decide what is said in it. That is what the ladies say.

Speaking in Aboriginal language.

Mr PULA speaking in Aboriginal language.

Ms TURNER: That is good is what they are saying. They said that they do not really know what is in this book.

Mr HATTON: Please remember that we also have those cassette tapes and they will be coming out to help explain what is in that book.

Ms TURNER speaking in Aboriginal language.

I just said that Josie will probably be doing this translation for the (?) people.

Mr HATTON: Remember as well that this book is just talking about different ideas about the sort of things that go into a constitution. You can think for yourselves what should go in a constitution and how you want to protect your law in it. This is just to help with some ideas of different things to think about.

There is other stuff too. Now, this book is a bigger one, but perhaps someone can come and talk about the sort of things in it and different ideas. It may help to think about it this way or maybe that way, just thinking about different ways, so people can talk about it.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: We have a lot of information that will provide some ideas for people to think about and, as I say, perhaps someone can come here and sit down with your committee and talk about those ideas. Then you can go back to the community and talk about that and find out what you want.

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr HATTON: How many people will we have on this committee?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Person speaking in Aboriginal language.

Ms TURNER: They said 2 persons.

Mr HATTON: 2 persons? On the men's side?

Ms TURNER speaking Aboriginal language. Yes. Speaking in Aboriginal language.

Mr A. MORTON: Now, we'll have government making this constitution (inaudible). Different Aborigines have lost their culture. That is why we are going to make this law. People in South Australia, Western Australia and in Brisbane in Queensland they have (?) lost their culture. That is why we have to make this constitution for the Northern Territory. That is why we want it. It has been pretty hard work so we have been carrying and carrying that law, but now we want to make a constitution. That is all I can say. I am Albert Morton.

Mr EDE: The things that everybody is saying are being taken on the tape there and will be written up so that we have it as a submission, as we call it, from people here. People here are saying what they want, that the most important thing for people here is that the culture law is recognised in that constitution. That it is made strong in that constitution so that cultural recognition is in that. That is what we are putting up from this side.

Now, we will have people coming back to talk about other things apart from culture, about other powers and other things that you might want to have in that constitution as well. They can come back here and talk to the people on the committee. The people on the committee can talk to everybody else and have a meeting here so that people can talk about what they want, and then someone - it might be the fellow over there, Rick Gray - might come out and talk with you and put down those things.

Later on, when it is all written up, it will all come back again and you will have to look and see that you are happy about the cultural recognition ones that are in there. If you are happy with it that way and happy with everything else that is in there, you can say 'yes' to it. If you are not happy, you will say 'No. That other mob, they changed their story up there. They did not put them in right'. Then you say 'no'. Do you understand?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Ms Alison HUNT speaking in Aboriginal language.

People speaking in Aboriginal language

Ms HUNT speaking in Aboriginal language.

I will just explain what I was saying there. I explained in detail how important it is for Aboriginal traditional people to have a say in this constitution. Many times stuff has been written on behalf of Aboriginal people without those Aboriginal people being consulted. Now, we have time and opportunity for Aboriginal people to have a say in what goes in the constitution. Our law does not change every 5 minutes but, while we are talking here, they could be changing the law in Canberra, or wherever it is. But Aboriginal law never changes and it never will change. It just gets handed down.

It is important for governments and everybody to recognise that, and it is important that we have a say in the constitution so that the same law as Aboriginal law is there and is strong there for governments to recognise that law as part of the constitution, written in there by Aboriginal people, not by non-Aboriginal people. Thank you.

Ms TURNER speaking in Aboriginal language.

Mr PULA: Brian Ede, you get happy with this one?

Mr EDE: I am happy that we are taking our first step down that road, but this is still only the first step. We are just starting to walk down that way. We are walking down that right road, but we have got to watch out that we do not get mixed up and go the wrong way as we are going down it. If we go the wrong way, then all our grandchildren and everybody will turn around and rubbish us later on and say: 'You mob, you did not look after it when we asked you to'. We have to keep our eyes open and keep looking for the way we go as we work down this one.

Ms TURNER interpreting

Mr HATTON: Does anyone else want to say anything more?

Ms TURNER interpreting.

Mr PULA: We talk because we are trying to get that airstrip and that clinic over there (Aboriginal language). We were talking about it last year, maybe 2 or 3 years now.

Mr EDE: I will just explain this. You are talking about changing that airstrip, and putting it down near the clinic?

Mr PULA: Yes.

Mr EDE: Yes. That is a big problem. It is really hard where it is because, as everybody knows, it is an hour's drive from the clinic to the airstrip. If someone is sick at the clinic or if there is an accident, the doctor sees them and he rings up and asks that they send the flying doctor. But it takes an hour to drive down on that rough road to the airstrip, and people are really frightened that someone will pass away on the way there.

Mr HATTON: When we finish this meeting about a constitution, I will put my Health Minister's hat on and we will sit down and talk about that airstrip and the clinic? Is that all right? We will do it straight after this meeting.

Does anybody want to talk any more about the constitution. Is there anything more that any people want to say?

Mr PULA: Talking about this one, this constitution, when we are going to make it, we can still talk about this one to it might be a son or a daughter. We can still talk about this one and we can tell them that they have to go with that business with our culture. They have got to see it in this one here and take what they have got to work on and things like that. They can still see it in this law here.

This one here is a European law and still they can see in this our law.

A Person: Two - European and Aboriginal.

Mr HATTON: Yes, two-way. We have to find some way for the European law and Aboriginal law to go side by side. We have to do a lot of talking about that, haven't we?

Right, have we finished talking about this constitution for now?

A Person: Yes.

Mr HATTON: All right, thank you. Now I am the Health Minister and we will talk about this airstrip.

Ms TURNER speaking Aboriginal language.