

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO
REDFERN/WATERLOO

At Sydney on Tuesday 25 May 2004

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. Jan Burnswoods (Chair)

The Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans
The Hon. Kayee Griffin
The Hon. Robyn Parker
The Hon. Ian West
The Hon Greg Pearce

ROBERT WELSH, Chairperson, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council

PAUL COE, Chief Executive Officer, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, and

LINDSAY HARDY, Manager, *Tunggaré News*, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: I acknowledge that we are conducting our business today in the traditional country of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. Do you want to make an opening statement?

Mr COE: On behalf of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council we thank the committee for the opportunity to address this inquiry. We believe there are substantial economic, political and social issues that come before this inquiry in a way, hopefully, the inquiry has the power to address, and we hope that we can be a part of that process in trying to find a suitable solution to some of the problems.

As the independent State of New South Wales has the oldest known record of association and relationship with Aboriginal people, we would ask that sometime in the future you look at the question of whether the issues that we are looking at today are a phenomena which have recently been created or are they longstanding issues that have been around since the Bonjon case going back to 1841 when the issue of Aboriginal sovereignty was first raised by way of the New South Wales Supreme Court. We would be asking that the State of New South Wales look at the question of using the example of the Waitangi treaty to power-share with Aboriginal people in a way that is appropriate between the State of New South Wales and the Aboriginal people of this State.

CHAIR: As you know, our terms of reference constrain our inquiry to some extent but Committee members are aware that our inquiry is much broader than some of the narrower interpretations. Would you advise the Committee of the role of your organisation, particularly as it relates to the Redfern/Waterloo area?

Mr WELSH: The Metropolitan Land Council was set up in 1983 when the Land Rights Act came into place. Its role is basically as custodians of the land and to claim any unused Crown lands. It is an elected body by the community within its boundaries. The council deals with all issues that its members present to it, for example, land issues, the social justice agenda whether it be housing, employment, education or cultural awareness. The council deals with what members present to it at its general meetings which are held on the second Wednesday of every month and any extraordinary meetings. The members could have up to 18-20 meetings a year. The council is guided by its members through the meetings to pursue the business of the land council.

Redfern/Waterloo is within the boundaries of the council. The members are within the boundaries and are the direct people that deal with the issues of the Redfern/Waterloo area. Our boundaries are as wide as the Georges River to the south, Nepean River to the west as far as Parramatta/Homebush and to the Hawkesbury River to the north so they are very broad and cover the North Shore. We are guided by our members at our meetings.

CHAIR: How many employees do you have? What is the source of the funding for the council?

Mr WELSH: We have 12 permanent employees but there is always casual and part-time work that comes in with site surveying and other issues that deal with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests, other authorities and local government areas. We have a vision that with some joint ventures we are entering that employment could jump up to 50 people, of which traineeships will be part. Our employment could jump very high but it depends on our joint ventures go and the development process. Our funding is basically \$110,000 which is provided by the State Land Council which has not been increased since the start of the Land Rights Act 1983. That has not been increased, despite inflation, and we only receive \$120,000. At the moment because of our enterprise dealings and income into the land council besides that funding, we are able to achieve our goals, but other land councils throughout the State really struggle just on the \$110,000 and basically cannot pay telephone bills, et cetera.

CHAIR: Does that money come from the Land Fund that was set aside when the Act was first passed? The money was set aside, accumulated for a while and, in effect, had a ceiling on it?

Mr WELSH: That is right. Yes, it was the land tax structure sunset. Out of that every year, 120 land councils receive \$110,000 to run their land councils. I think the administrator was appointed through the State because they went under the \$500 million mark, so it lowered: it was never supposed to go under that. We are asset rich. We are probably worth \$180 million. It was noted in one of the local newspapers that if our lands were developed our company would probably be worth \$1 billion.

CHAIR: Do you own properties and rent them out to your members? Are a number of those properties in the Redfern/Waterloo area?

Mr WELSH: Yes, I have a list of our 26 housing properties that were given to us by the AHO. They are: one in Eveleigh Street, Redfern/Waterloo, which is being co-ordinated to be developed, two in Alexandria, one in Ashfield, two in Belfield, two in Belmore, one in Canterbury, one in Enfield, one in Erskineville, one in Leichhardt, one in Lewisham, six in Marrickville, one in Mascot, one in North Parramatta, three in Petersham, one in Rosebery and one in Ryde.

We have two other properties that are business structured and they are in George Street, Redfern and Renwick Street, Redfern. We also have a property at St Albans at Wisemans Ferry which, in the past two years, the land council has put in \$350,000 to build a five-bedroom house and upgrade the property for its members and basically for Aboriginal people to go to have a break from the city.

CHAIR: Can you tell us about the two business properties in Redfern?

Mr WELSH: One in George Street and one in Renwick Street, Redfern. The George Street property was leased to CDP, the work-for-the-dole program, at a very minimum rent. Since then CDP have now moved on. We will probably move into that property to save us a few dollars. The property in Renwick Street was one of our first land council offices. We had a motion on the floor to develop that process. That has all gone through and the development application has been applied for. We are looking at building a three-storey unit with a shop front on the ground floor. So we are going through that process. While we were waiting for that to happen, we received a letter from some youth forum established by the Premier's Department. As a result of that forum a committee was established called the Inner City Youth Aboriginals Advisory Body.

They sent a letter to the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council to help them set up their own office and structure. The members of the land council basically said that we should give them the property until we start developing it, and that we assist them with power, telephone, computers and any other necessities to set up the structure and to get the youth group up and running as an independent body that does not have to rely on government funds.

CHAIR: We have given you a series of questions in which we refer specifically to the points that you made in your submission.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I wish to follow up some of the issues that you just raised. What role has the Government played in supervising your funding? I am unclear about that issue.

Mr COE: The Government has a statutory obligation under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has an obligation through the State land council, to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in all the dealings that the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and all other land councils have. If the land councils do not comply and they get a qualified audit, the Minister and the State land council have the power to appoint an investigator. Depending on what that investigator finds, the Minister can then order an administrator to be appointed, as he has done with the State land council at moment.

Two years ago, an investigator wrote a report in relation to Metro's financial report, vis-a-vis the building that we have in Elizabeth Street. Large sums of money were spent on the renovation of that building. As a result, we had qualified audits for the year 2000-01. As I said earlier, the State land council and the Minister appointed an investigator. That is as far as it went. We were able to show it

was a one-off situation. Pending the outcome of the Supreme Court proceedings we were able to recover some, but not all, of the moneys involved.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You said earlier that you had 12 permanent staff. What sort of salaries are they paid?

Mr COE: The salary package ranges from \$60,000 a year to the salary that cleaners are paid, whatever they are paid on the normal contractual rate. The sites officer receives about \$60,000 and the in-house officers would receive about the same. I am probably the highest paid person at the moment on a salary package of about \$78,000.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I assume that included in that package are vehicle expenses, things like petrol and that sort of thing?

Mr COE: Yes, that is a standard component. I think we have four vehicles at the moment.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How are people reimbursed for petrol and things like that?

Mr COE: The petrol is not reimbursed. We have a petrol card, so that card is used for the purchasing of petrol at the time. That then goes against their fringe benefit component.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Would the chief executive officer [CEO] supervise that?

Mr COE: The supervision primarily is done by the accountant. The CEO would become involved if problems arose or there were disputes between employees and the accountant. Primarily, financial responsibility for that rests with the accountant, who is very competent.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You said earlier that your membership was elected. When you want to have a say about what activities should be targeted and what properties you should become involved in, do your elected members have an input?

Mr COE: All the policies that are implemented by Metro office workers and by me are policies that are agreed to by our members at our annual meetings. They are given delegated powers at our meetings by the executive. The executive can also delegate power and give directions in relation to the ongoing day-to-day business of Metro, for example, whether it should get into joint ventures, embark on commercial activities, become involved in purchasing housing, negotiate some kind of arrangement with maritime services or the National Parks and Wildlife Service to identify sites of significance, or go down the path of training young Aboriginal men and women to become cultural sites officers.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I refer to the terms of reference and ask the land council representatives what are their thoughts about the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project?

Mr COE: That would probably vary between the three of us.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I ask all three representatives: What are your views?

Mr COE: I have had one discussion with the person who is running the program. I did not find that process very helpful. I was told quite adamantly that the resources were primarily for Russian immigrants in the area and that they were not for Aboriginal people. So I did not find that meeting to be very successful.

The Hon. IAN WEST: With whom did you have that meeting?

Mr COE: The person who runs the program is Michael Ramsey.

Mr WELSH: We had early consultations when the Redfern-Waterloo project was first structured. I attended quite a lot of the early meetings and basically point blank denied any response. I felt that we were not being given respect, as the main core of the community. After the first couple of meetings we were basically ignored by the whole process. We just stepped back and let him take

control. We let him conduct it like he wanted to conduct it. He had his own agenda. Basically he did not want to deal with the issues that we were concerned about, which led up to the riot.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Mr Hardy, is it appropriate for you to comment on this issue?

Mr HARDY: I think there was a lack of consultation all the way through the process. In the initial stages a lot of meetings were happening with the partnership group, but I think in the end a lot of the funding that went specifically to Aboriginal organisations was limited. It was one-off funding and there was no guarantee of long-term funding. A lot of that funding was provided to a few of the mainstream organisations, which was really in competition with the community organisations that existed. I will not go any further. There was lack of thorough community consultation to a large extent.

Mr WELSH: Hopefully we will touch on that issue later today.

CHAIR: I said earlier that we sent you specific questions about your submission, such as the Jumbunna Traineeship Program. Mr West, do you want to ask any questions about that issue?

The Hon. IAN WEST: Are you able to tell the Committee about the traineeship program that is mentioned in your submission?

Mr WELSH: Basically it is an Aboriginal sites officer course. Over the past five years Metro land council has had a few of its members going through that process. Last year we decided that we should actually target our youth and increase the numbers. The problem was that the course was run by Ryde TAFE and a lot of our youth struggled to get out there. Basically we decided to run the program at the Eora centre, an Aboriginal TAFE program in Abercrombie Street, Redfern. We decided that that course should be run in Redfern so that it was a lot easier for our youth to access it. Over the last couple of months we have gone through the process to get that course up and running. Hopefully it will be running in the next couple of months.

We targeted five men and five women. We are targeting young women because we have Aboriginal women's sites within our boundaries and within our jurisdictions and we do have any Aboriginal women sites officers. Basically we need them to go out and maintain their sites. As they are women's sites we cannot be a part of that. So we have targeted five women. We actually had a great response to that. If there are more than five girls we will increase that number; we will not limit the number. We will use many as we can and encourage all our youth to go out. I am looking at doing that course as well to try to support our youth.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Are there any barriers, other than the question of access, to progressing through those traineeships?

Mr WELSH: It is difficult. I suppose that it depends on the individuals. If we have the right support—it is all about the right support and encouragement—they will get out and participate in the course on a regular basis. It is about how we support our youth.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do those support mechanisms include transport and follow-up issues?

Mr WELSH: All those things are structured within the course. With the follow-ups we send people out there to see how things are going. We have to understand the social issues within our community. In a lot of the programs at universities and educational institutions, if you miss a couple of days you are likely to fail the course. We structure it up and we continue with our support. We support them in different avenues. So we have follow-up people visiting. Employment involves a wages package. We have to ensure that money goes to our youth to ensure that they can do all those social things.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do you keep qualitative records of success stories?

Mr WELSH: At the moment we have quite a few. Young Adam Madden came from one of the courses. He is now controlling repatriation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. So he is a

great example of a success story. We do not actually record all the success stories. We see all our kids as successes.

Mr COE: I would like to take that question a bit further. Sydney is the commercial and cultural capital of Australia. There is no reason why Aboriginal Australians cannot tap into that. We see an enormous potential for tourism in this area for Aboriginal people. There is no reason why Metro cannot be at the forefront of that, including being involved in the ownership of motels, car rentals, as well as taking people to sites of significance and having young people trained and working in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

There is an unlimited potential for employment if we go about it the right way, if we do not alienate the kids, and it could change the kids' perspective of themselves. We think it is very important how we treat this.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Could you give us some more information about the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning?

Mr HARDY: It is part of the University of Technology in Broadway. They provide different training courses. It is a university education, but it is just an indigenous unit as part of that University of Technology. There are a number of courses and they are specifically for Aboriginal people. They also do a lot of lectures, Aboriginal studies, for non-Aboriginal people.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I want to go back to the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project and ask you to expand on what you understood the project to be all about, where it fitted into Government priorities and how it is going to impact particularly on the Aboriginal community.

Mr COE: My understanding of the Redfern-Waterloo program, and it might have been my misconception, was that it was to involve Aboriginal people from the outset in terms of the planning and also in the development of the program. The RED scheme had the potential to employ a lot of Aboriginal people in the rezoning and also the redevelopment around the Redfern railway station. It has the potential, I believe, to involve a lot of Aboriginal people in construction in the construction industry and, in the long term, probably train people to work in the retail industry. And it had the potential, I believe, if you look at what metro was trying to do, to possibly develop an Aboriginal economy, a cash economy of its own. There has never been an Aboriginal economy that is sustainable. It had the potential to do that, to break the cycle of welfarism and despondency. But I do not think it has done that, and that is my personal view.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You met with Mr Ramsey?

Mr COE: Yes, I met with him only once, unfortunately.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That was the occasion when he said that the resources were available for the Russian immigrants?

Mr COE: I asked him a particular question in relation to funding for children's services and he said the money was primarily being spent for Russian immigrants in the area. The money was not earmarked specifically for Aboriginal people, or words to that effect. That is a year or so ago. I do not want it to be taken out of context, but that is about what he said to me.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you know the program is supposed to have a \$7 million budget over three years?

Mr COE: I know that it is supposed to have \$7 million, yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you know whether it made any progress in better co-ordination of the services that were already available?

Mr COE: I know, unfortunately, that some organisations have actually been set up in opposition to Aboriginal organisations. I really have to doubt whether or not there has been better co-ordination when long-term serving organisations that have been there for 30-odd years delivering a

service to the community, you would think that the Aboriginal Children's Service finding themselves competing for the dollar, something like \$400,000 that is going to a new group coming into and being funded by the Redfern-Waterloo program, called Barnardos. I really question as to whether or not there has been effective communication and effective co-ordination.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you know about the advertisement at the Mundine fight? What was the basis for that?

Mr WELSH: Yes, I will answer that one myself.

CHAIR: I doubt very much whether that story is within our terms of reference. But if you think you can relate it to our terms of reference—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I think it is.

CHAIR:—and if our witnesses are prepared. But we have very definite terms of reference relating to issues in Redfern and Waterloo. As I said, I doubt very much whether that line of questioning is within the terms of reference.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is a question as to the benefit to the community and the use of resources in the community.

CHAIR: We, as always with a social issues inquiry—we do many, as you would know, over the 60 years I have been Chair we have probably averaged two, three or four a year—hope they are all for the benefit of the community. But nevertheless each of them is precise and specific. But if you can relate your question to the terms of reference—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Perhaps if you read the terms of reference you might see that No. 1 (c) specifically refers to service provision in the Redfern-Waterloo areas.

CHAIR: Yes, I am aware of that, but I do not know that that has much to do with boxing.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I think Mr Welsh is happy to answer it.

CHAIR: Mr Welsh, if you want to comment?

Mr WELSH: I have no problems answering that question. What happened with the Choc Mundine fight was a promotional thing we put to members and it was voted unanimously that we promote ourselves around the world. And that was a great opportunity for metro land council to get itself put around the world through the promotion of having our name put on the canvas. We have also tried other avenues of promotion within the New South Wales region, whether it be through the New South Wales Aboriginal hand-out, which goes into local schools and which metro land council puts close to \$1,000 annually into it just to have our name in that booklet also as a promotional experience. There is another one, such as occupational health and safety, in which we promote our name, metro land council, because we need to get it out there that the Aboriginal people are out, are still here in Australia and in New South Wales and are still battling our fight, basically, our struggle.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I can understand the \$1,000 ad, but what did that advertisement at the Mundine fight cost?

Mr WELSH: It was worth \$20,000. It was a promotion that got us international coverage. For the \$20,000 we also got tickets for the rest of the Aboriginal community, basically so that the rest of the community could go and watch the fight and which they would not have been able to afford to go and watch anyway. I think it was 1,400 tickets.

The Hon. IAN WEST: This is completely outside our terms of reference, so if you do not wish to answer these questions—

Mr WELSH: I have no problem.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Is Mr West taking over as Chair?

CHAIR: I think he is making a comment.

Mr WELSH: That is no problems.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Can I go back to the role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women play in the community? What did you think of the way the Aboriginal women, elders, were treated on the night of the riot?

Mr WELSH: On the night of the riot? Well, I was not there on the night of the riot. But at the following meeting that Mr Ramsey put on with the community leaders, two elder ladies that were there were also at the meeting and they expressed their concerns, which they thought that they were not ever put at risk. There was one incident, I think, that we all seen on the *4 Corners* program which, I think, one person did abuse. But the youth within the riot showed respect to the women. It is hard to say, I suppose. But yes, unfortunately, the women had to be called in by the police to try to do their job.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You said there was a meeting with Mr Ramsey and the two women?

Mr WELSH: Yes, they were present at the community meeting, probably at the emergency community meeting, the following Monday. And, yes, they were present at that meeting to let the rest of the community know what happened.

Mr HARDY: Also, that there was Superintendent Dennis Smith.

Mr WELSH: Superintendent Dennis Smith also, yes. That was an emergency meeting with the police, Michael Ramsey and other community leaders in the area.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What was the general mood at that meeting?

Mr WELSH: From the Aboriginal people there was general concern about the police denying chasing young TJ; that was a major concern. That was about very much a large part of why the riot happened, I think, the denial and the lies not only told to the Aboriginal people and the community but basically to the rest of Australia as well. The Australians as a whole were lied to.

Mr COE: I was also at that meeting and I would like to put my comments in, for what they are worth. One of the things that I noticed at that meeting was a lack of effective intelligence on the part of the police. There was also lack of effective response on the part of the Aboriginal community, so in a sense we both were to blame. The incident of TJ, anyone with any ounce of sense would have known there would have been a response. Both the Aboriginal community and the police should have been prepared for it so that we could have developed strategies that had been learned over the years to try to minimise property damage or injury to persons. I do not think, in this particular instance, that the Aboriginal community were involved sufficiently to try to talk to some of these younger people and try to say, "There's another way of doing this." But I think that the relationship between Aboriginal people and police broke down at a critical point in time.

The riot that occurred that night will come again. There have been plenty of other riots in the past and there will be more in the future. There has to be a strategy in place whereby both the police and the Aboriginal community can deal with it effectively so that property damage and the risk to persons is minimised, but also that the strategy of policing is looked at and looked at in a way that is effective because if you look at the strategy of policing in some of the other Commonwealth countries around the world, it just does not mean moving in in brute strength and trying to intimidate another person because, for a start, you do not credit the other people with having any worthwhile point of view. You do not give them any respect. And that just, in my opinion, highlights the passion and it tends to then blow out of all proportion. But if there are people on both sides who knew each other who could talk to each other and both sides could see this happening, I think the heat in the situation would go out of it very quickly. That is my personal opinion.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Your submission on pages 11 and 12 calls for the establishment of an Aboriginal youth service. Could you explain, and some of the things that have already been discussed probably lead into this question, why the service is needed and outline the types of services that you believe are needed through that youth service?

Mr COE: If I could just give an overview, whilst the youth have been serviced through all the facilities that we have, like the ALS, the medical service, the teaching facilities and through various technical courses and universities, there has never been a specific youth forum as such for youth to identify their needs and articulate their needs. One of the problems that we have had to deal with is the problem of youth suicide. Unfortunately, the older generation of Aboriginal people, we have the same problem that the average Australian older generation has: our younger kids do not communicate as effectively with the older generation as they do amongst themselves. There is this alienation by the youth from the older people feeling that they do not have the answers and the younger kids themselves are looking for an alternative answer.

Mr WELSH: Basically, like I said, we have received a letter after forum that was put on by Premiers, run by the Aboriginal Dance Theatre in Redfern. From that forum there was a youth advisory body selected, and they touched on a lot of the issues, such as youth issues and concerns, social justice for youth, cultural protocol and cultural awareness, police harassment, youth suicide as Paul [Coe] talked about, support and prevention, training and educational programs for youth, youth and law for example, health—youth health issues—substance abuse and also youth and violence. They were some of the concerns that, basically, they thought they needed to deal with within themselves and they needed to get guidance from within.

Within the Redfern and Waterloo community there are a lot of services that provide stuff for youth, but is not actually Aboriginally run and culturally run or driven by the youth. Those services are out there and they do a good job. There is no denying that. But we believe that there should be an Aboriginal youth-run program, basically to target the youth and the issues of the Aboriginal youth. My input there through the land council would be pushing a lot more for the cultural issues and also language issues, but targeting every other issue that they wanted to throw up. We are also looking at supporting and dealing with these youth services because they deal with the main core of our members and our members' children. It is something they have put towards us. We do plan on dealing with these issues and trying to set up and structure it ourselves.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So basically at the moment there is not a continuous body of young people who can actually feed the information back into the services about what you see are the problems they are facing as opposed to perhaps other people saying these are the problems that are happening?

Mr WELSH: The services are providing those kinds of aspects but they believe, and it comes in our documents, that they are actually not being pushed to the whole youth in the area in the sense that they will only target the Waterloo kids, whereas if this was set up in Waterloo it will not target the Redfern kids, they will not go down to the Block; or if they are targeting things at the Block and in the settlement they will not push it up into the youth. So they are not sharing and networking them services, where if we had it through an Aboriginal structure we would be able to share that with all the services. So we are looking for a core with the Aboriginal issues, basically so we can provide a share with the other services.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So really a young person's network that links into all the services that are available at the moment?

Mr WELSH: Most definitely, and that is the way they want to structure it, and we want to support them in that avenue.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Have you looked at any sort of models that would provide this youth forum?

Mr COE: The ideas that we have got at the moment are actually being driven by the youth. All I can do is go back to my own youth as I can relate that when I first came to Sydney the only place for Aboriginal kids to gather was the old Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in Redfern. That was very

useful because it used to have a dance hall, it used to have an old pool table, and kids could congregate there and play and meet and talk and discuss things. Unfortunately, that type of approach has gone out the window, whereby the youths do not have the forums or the places where they can gather and work out what they want to do within an Aboriginal context.

It might be that in terms of culture, dance, song, they might have a different approach in terms of political leadership and they might want to be involved in the new generation that runs organisations, which is their right. But one of the problems that we have is lack of facilities and just, I believe, lack of direction in relation to youth is causing a major problem. One of the things that we are addressing in our five-year plan with Metro is that we are trying to, if we can, revitalise Aboriginal culture to the extent that it should be. The youth can take advantage of this by identifying themselves in such a way as to make them aware that having a job is not necessarily non-Aboriginal. The definition of an Aborigine is not a person who has to go through the criminal justice system. My generation came through a situation—what is commonly referred to as the "stolen generation"—whereby the system of initiation became that you had to go through the criminal justice system. We want to try to get away from that because all it does is create a victim and you create a victim mentality.

But the kids today have got opportunities if they can be capitalised on because there is enough goodwill around with people and organisations to give people the freedom of choice so that they can redefine themselves as Aboriginal people in their own right.

Mr WELSH: Just to add to that, within our five-year plan we talked about setting up a culture centre but, as we are aware, land within the inner-city, within the areas we need to target, are hard to come by or very expensive to obtain. So basically we wanted to try and target within our youth, our culture centre and to deal with all these issues. But, as we are saying, land in the area of the inner-city in which we need to have that area—we have quite a lot of land over on the North Shore but not in the inner-city where we can actually set up programs. We probably need to go to local councils and try to approach them for parklands or something like that where we can set up our own culture centre and tap into these services for the youth and build a core for their business basically.

Mr COE: Can I just take that a step further and point out that 20 years ago we actually did have funds for what is known as the Black Theatre site to develop a dance hall, a community centre, areas whereby there was commercial space to be rented so that all the Aboriginal organisations in the area could rent space, and it would have been open for non-Aboriginal people to move in and to open up stores and hopefully to train Aboriginal people. Now that was knocked on the head by Sydney Council in an application for development. That would have been a 15-storey building which we have money from the then Aboriginal Development Corporation and if we would have set it up we would have employed something like 100 to 200, maybe 300 Aboriginal people. We would have beaten the concept of the program at Broadway whereby they would have had theatres and commercial shopping centres; the same out at Eastgardens, that was one of the first programs that if we would have been able to develop it we could have provided sustainable employment for the last 20 years. So that you would have had a positive income for generations, for at least two generations of people. But, unfortunately, in Aboriginal affairs the money is designed around emergencies and there is no long-term planning.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You said that the police needed a different strategy and that in other countries there were different strategies. Could you enlarge a little on what those strategies were and what you think should be done differently?

Mr COE: In my time as the chairman of the Aboriginal Legal Service [ALS] in a number of demonstrations going back to the anti-war demonstrations, the Springboks, when the special branch were all powerful in New South Wales under the Askin government, the bully-boy tactics were the go; certain people would be selected out and given a flogging, and I was one of those people. I looked at the Canadian—and I studied it as part of my university degree—police minority relationship and also the UK; it became an important part of what I was interested in as part of the ALS that our deal will improve relations with a group of people that essentially are not interested in our perspective. It cannot create respect or respect does not exist because the laws of the land, and in particular the State of New South Wales, were moved by non-Aboriginal people, were enforced by non-Aboriginal people, the judiciary, the correctional services were controlled or run by non-Aboriginal people, so

essentially no laws were made for the benefit of Aboriginal people. So that we had to live under the laws that were made by other people and yet we are supposed to conform to.

There was no concept of social protection or this idea of social contract whereby if you obey the laws of the land you get protection from the police. Now that has not been my experience. I think that there have been individual police officers tried to change that, and I could name them if I had to, but the police culture in itself during the eighties, the nineties and the seventies I think is still the same today, and that is a culture based upon intimidation and fear. You do not challenge police or you cannot even ask questions of police; if you do you are in the can very quickly. But in relation to the strategies in relation to dealing with riots, I was not there on the night but I have been in other riots and by the police having a person who was senior to the local commander and giving directions or becoming involved, and if he knew the Aboriginal people, there would tend to be a cooling down process. It is very much a macho type thing whereby two groups are confronting each other, it is just that one group has got the authority from the State, because they are the police, to impose their law; but the other group do not have the authority and they are defying that other group. It is a question of how you want to define it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can you be more specific about the strategy? Presumably you think rather than coming in with a water cannon on the night they should have done something different and let things cool down?

Mr COE: Well, I believe that the policy of containment in that situation could have been more effectively used. There could have been a process of negotiation and the process of negotiation could have been used and could have been seen by both sides so it was visible. I believe it would have had a dampening effect.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the long-term strategies you said the less confrontational culture and so on, is there literature on this or can you expand on that?

Mr COE: Yes, the internet is flooded with it. Just about every university puts out stuff on this nowadays. Retired people do their PhDs on it. So there is not insufficient material around but one has to ask the question, what type of information and what type of training are our young police officers receiving at the police college, when they are not being taught to respect Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture. We are here to stay and we are not going to go away. I mean the fact that you fly the Aboriginal flag outside the front of Parliament in my mind is a great recognition of Aboriginal people and you bestow a great credit on yourself by doing that, but you also bestow a great credit upon us by doing it as well. But that act in itself is not sufficient; it must permeate down through all institutions of government, and that includes the police.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the mentoring program for Aboriginal youth, which I gather the police are trying to do, what is the success of that?

Mr WELSH: Could I just get that question again?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I was asking about the mentoring of Aboriginal youth, which I understand the police are doing, and it has been suggested that the Aborigines should find other people and role models to do that, would you comment?

Mr WELSH: I will go back a couple of years, I will go back about four years to start off with. Myself, and with the police—the head of the police then I think was Peter Parsons—we basically set up and had a community meeting after there were a few issues happening within the community then. He put it to the Aboriginal community: set up a forum basically, and out of that they elected an elders group and also set up two-monthly community meetings basically to try and get out how the community and we are going to deal with the issues that are going to happen, like leading up to the riot. With that I was the chairperson of the elders group that actually met with police on a two-monthly basis and tried to talk about strategies, about how we set up mentors and programs and all that kind of stuff.

The problem with us and the police was that as we started to get things rolling he then was moved off to Cabramatta and then another officer become in charge of Redfern police; then again it

went backwards, then we started to structure to get this up again, then after that I think David—I cannot even think of his name—retired. So the problem that we have, and that I had with trying to set up and structure mentor programs and that kind of stuff, is that the on-rolling, how they move in and out of the Redfern police station, as they get to know the community they are then pushed off and moved along. So you can set up and structure mentors but you are going to have to do it on an annual basis basically because the police are just rolling in and just moving on: bringing them into Redfern to train off their cadetships, give them the quick, fast-learning experience of dealing with the Aboriginal people in Redfern and then pushing them off to somewhere else.

So the mentor process through the police I think is going to be very difficult to maintain, unless you keep a main structural police then for a number of years, or you target five or 10 years where they are going to be there, so the youth know that face, and get more familiar with that officer, with that face, and build up their trust with the police. Unfortunately, that is still a bit of a breakdown. A great example is through the Redfern-Waterloo project, we have one independent body on that so we do have two workers from the Metro land council basically dealing in the Redfern street team. We have targeted two of the youth who basically know the whole community. Their insight into the community is probably valuable to the whole Redfern street team, I believe that. A great example is one of our workers who actually was conducting a barbecue for the youth through the street team. She was basically working with the youth and all the youth that were in the area. Six police actually walked across and started to question some of them because there was a crime that happened some hours ago. But all these youths were with the workers and with the whole street team and she tried to explain to the police that, "These kids have all been here. They haven't been anywhere so they couldn't have been a part of the incident". The police then turned on our worker and started questioning her and putting her down in front of the youths.

So with the breakdown between the police and the street team, I am pretty sure—with the meeting I had the other day with the body of the street team, the directors—that we make sure that the police are very much aware of who our workers are, and identification cards, since that incident, have been issued to all our staff. Actually, one of our staff was almost arrested because she was hindering police when all she was trying to do was to say that these kids had nothing to do with any crime that happened an hour ago. So there is always that breakdown and misunderstanding between our youth and the police, and that is only one example.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think there should be alternative mentoring?

Mr WELSH: I think we need to get the mentoring from our people, from our organisations and our structures first before we start putting that back on to police.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Have there been moves to do that?

Mr WELSH: Yes, there certainly is, whether it be through the local school or through other organisations. South Sydney Youth Service is providing services, the factory provides them services and the mentor program is being structured and we need to probably push that a lot more quickly. If Metro has its way and becomes more enterprising and has more money we will be pushing it, as well as cultural awareness and other programs, out to other communities and other organisations.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I have an interest in the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the community. It is very evident that they have played and could play a greater role. I note in your submission you talk about the need for greater support and protection to those women. What you mean by that? What greater support and protection is needed for women in performing their role?

Mr WELSH: A great example is that in Redfern it has been identified that Aboriginal women do play a major role in our community. The role of women is also the protector of our youth and children. From that there was structured and set up an Aboriginal women's organisation called Mudgingal and that was structured, as Paul touched on before about Aboriginal services that are a major provider to our community—and we want to express our view that our women need to be supported a lot more—basically to run their organisations they only get something like \$78,000 that is guaranteed and out of that they have to pay employees as well as running the programs, support

networks and the referral process. Even DOCS contact these people to deal with the issues on the Block and the youth on the Block So these are of major importance to our community.

They are run on basically a shoestring budget and this is only one Aboriginal organisation. We could talk about a lot of them but this is a major one where there are issues of what they deal with in the community and also the issues they deal with on the Block are so important. Funding—basically the Metro east region was given a car by DOCS. They never had a vehicle to get around to do their family support and the roles they achieve. Basically, the organisation is underfunded. They could achieve a lot more. When they are given funding it is targeted and it is targeted for specific reasons. We talked about how Barnardo's was brought in basically to overcut the Aboriginal Children's Service, which had already been set up and structured and is there to provide services for Aboriginal children that are culturally appropriate and yet they bring in another service and give them \$400,000 to deal with the same issues. That money could be put into the Aboriginal Children's Service and say, "What else could you provide as well as the service you already provide?"

That is the same thing with Mudgingal, they could provide a far greater service to the community if they basically walked in and said, "If we give you more money, what goals can you achieve out of this, if you have a target of what you want to achieve?" They can then spread their wings a bit further and achieve a lot more goals. They know what needs to be done within the community. We know what is wrong with our community. We are living in it every day. We are never ever asked or never ever consulted to say, "How can we deal with your issues in the community."

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You mentioned DOCS briefly. Can you comment on how effective DOCS have been in performing their role in Redfern and Waterloo?

Mr COE: I assume that the Aboriginal Children's Service will make a submission to you and they deal with children in care. They are one of the primary Aboriginal organisations that would be actually interfacing with DOCS on a daily basis. They become the custodian of children in care and they then have to work with DOCS when the matters are brought before a local magistrate in determining whether the child should stay in care or whether he should go back to the natural parents or be adopted out.

The impression one gets about DOCS is that they are a well meaning organisation but the ability to deliver the people on the ground or the skills on the ground appears to be lacking. They are not based on the principle of an Aboriginal community-based organisation being open 24 hours, seven days a week and being reachable on that basis. They are a government agency. Their lines of communication seem to differ from that of community-based organisations. DOCS has got a secure income and knows it will be there for a number of years. It can plan ahead, it can offer employees long-term employment whereas community-based organisations cannot and do not have the luxury of doing that because the funding is from year to year and you cannot plan beyond one year to the next.

Most Aboriginal organisations are crisis ridden or are driven by emergencies, so all your orientation is towards dealing with a crisis after a crisis. Metro is trying to break that cycle with its five-year plan and go down the road as to how we can become commercially viable so that we can deliver goods and services to our community and to establish an Aboriginal economy. That would, in turn, limit the role of DOCS in the Aboriginal community. Now, I do not want to see another 100 years of Aboriginal people being taken away from their families and fostered out and put into institutions. I do not think anyone in this room would like to see that because all you get is a situation later on in life of problems with drugs and the revolving-door situation of kids going through gaol and coming back to the Aboriginal families—the Aboriginal network, trying to establish who they are, what they are and who their families are.

These young kids, the ones who have been fostered out, there is a lot of problems there, there is a lot of mental illnesses, there is a lot of dysfunctional kids around because they are essentially taken away from their natural environment, from their natural family and from their Aboriginal family. Aboriginalness is not just a word; it is a way of being, it is a way of looking after yourself; it is a way of thinking; it is a way of living. From a non-Aboriginal perspective DOCS does not deliver on that particular aspect.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do they protect children at all then?

Mr COE: DOCS have a statutory obligation to protect children and they do the best that they can. The problem with DOCS is how do you have a crystal ball to see when a child is going to be abused, how do you define what child abuse is? This is a dilemma that DOCS and the Aboriginal Children's Service have. At what time do you intervene to ensure the safety of the child? They are not easy questions to answer and you have to tread very carefully. When you sever the relationship between a child and the natural parent, there are long-term consequences of that and to do that one has to tread very carefully.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: A lot of comment has come to us about issues with women and children of sexual abuse, domestic violence, et cetera. I know that you are not currently with the Aboriginal Legal Service [ALS] but there has been comment, and I am aware of it, about women not feeling comfortable using that service. Do you think that is a fair comment?

Mr COE: Whether it is fair or not, I do not know. That is for those people who make that comment. When I was with ALS, we provided a comprehensive service to all members of our community, but I do recognise that there is a specialised need for Aboriginal women, which is totally different from the Aboriginal community as a whole. There are specialised problems that only a female solicitor could answer the questions, or a female social worker could answer the questions where that Aboriginal person could be comfortable. They would not necessarily be comfortable with males and that has got nothing to do with racist but more to do with gender. I think the same thing applies to Australia as a whole. There are problems that we, as a society, must acknowledge and allow women the right to speak in private when they want to speak in private with their solicitors and social workers of their choice and not to be given into a male-dominated society.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Have you been consulted about the Human Services Review as part of the Redfern-Waterloo partnership project?

Mr COE: Mr West, I understand from the chairman that we have not been consulted.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Can I go to the vision that you have set out on page 2, the last page of your submission, which sets out extremely well the issues of wealth, identity, integrity and community. There are obviously a number of questions on all of those, but in particular in terms of integrity, for many years now many organisations have had great difficulty with the issue of governance, secretariat, if you like, trying to get away from crisis to crisis and getting to the long-term plan. Do you see any value in first dealing with issues of integrity as a base before funding actually is proceeded with? In other words, do you see any value in having perhaps the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, or whoever, being responsible for the machinery of things such as minutes, et cetera, trying to open up your time for more important service delivery issues?

Mr COE: Could I respond along these lines? What you are asking is essentially a question of accountability and transparency, am I right?

The Hon. IAN WEST: I am thinking more along the lines of freeing up your time to enable you to do what you really want to do and not get bogged down in day-to-day crisis machinery issues.

Mr COE: Unfortunately, Mr West, most of the Aboriginal organisations in the inner-city are funded through the Commonwealth and as you are well aware, and as every member in this inquiry would be well aware, ATSIC has undergone a major crisis. As to whether there will be any Commonwealth funding for Aboriginal people in the near future, no-one knows because it has not yet been spelt out. So after 30-odd years of being funded through the Commonwealth and having a certain degree of luxury of being funded through the Commonwealth and having that funding jointly met by the State, there is this uncertainty and anguish around as to where the future will be with the Commonwealth. As to freeing up our workers to be able to do fieldwork and other works, anything that would enable us to do that and put our people in the line of fire where I believe we are most of advantage to the community, that is, on one-to-one negotiation with a member of the community rather than sitting in an office doing office work, would be advantageous.

If we could bring in trained personnel outside the organisation so that this will enable us to have an ongoing structure beyond crisis and meeting another crisis, whether it be financial, whether it

be an emotional brick wall we hit, like the situation with the riot, that we have the infrastructure support so that organisations can be helped over those kinds of barriers, that would be an enormous advantage to the Aboriginal community because then we could concentrate on doing what we do best, that is, working with members of our community and liaising with them, providing a helping hand, providing assistance, providing continuity so that people know that the Aboriginal extended family is alive and well.

You must understand, Mr West and members of the Committee, that Sydney is the United Nations of Aboriginal Australia. There are more than 40 different language-speaking groups throughout the Sydney metropolitan area. That in itself creates a lot of conflict. We have to break down barriers within our own community and we have to try to develop trust within our own community. If we had the ways and means of allowing the organisation to concentrate on that rather than on meeting financial crisis after financial crisis, I think the community as a whole would be much stronger and our children would be much safer.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Thank you for that answer. I should have prefaced my question by saying that committees such as this—leaving aside the funding issues, which are obviously fundamental—could not operate without the good offices of the secretariat. I feel that many organisations in the community suffer from the day-to-day grind—of not being able to get from crisis to crisis. In terms of the strategies needed to which Mr Coe referred regarding communication with the police, have you been involved in, or are invited to attend, local PACT meetings?

Mr WELSH: As Paul said, we are very busy. The land council deals with issues that pop up all the time. There are lots of committees—I could attend probably 10 or 12 committee meetings in our community every week. But there are other issues and other things that we must deal with to keep our land council going forward. So unfortunately we sometimes do not attend all meetings. There have been invitations to the PACT meetings but, unfortunately, through my diary I have been unable to attend. But I am prepared to talk to anyone who wants to set up a time to meet with me.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I have a general question. Do you think that government and non-government services and programs are effective in meeting the needs of the local Aboriginal community in Redfern and Waterloo?

Mr COE: The answer is complicated because it is a yes-and-no answer: in some areas, yes, and in other areas, no. I think liaison and effective co-operation between non-government organisations [NGOs] and government is essential for any community, be it Aboriginal or any other group. It is essential that there be open channels of communication between government through NGOs so that the people being governed know how they are being governed and know what is available to them and the Government then gets feedback as to its service delivery and how its dollars are being spent. It is essential that there be not only lines of communication but actual trust developed between these two front-line working agencies—those who are working on the government side and those who are working on the NGO side. People learn to develop trust over a period of time and that they can be taken at their word. They can then identify and not be secretive with each other and say, "These are the real problems within the community. Let's get down to tackling these problems. Let's not wait until the end of the year and have a slanging match and point the finger at you because you did not do this or we did not do that". To answer your question, yes, it is essential in one area but in the other area it takes a degree of co-operation, and sometimes that co-operation is not there.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: In relation to the no part of your answer, I am trying to get to whether you have any specific examples. Obviously co-operation and more money would improve services.

Mr COE: With all due respect, it is not the money that is the issue; it is how the money is spent that is the issue and the question of accountability. If NGOs were to be a party to government and help to formulate government policy on social reform and social agendas, I think you would find a great deal more outcomes for your dollar. It is not necessarily throwing dollars at a problem that will solve it; it is how you work and how you look at the problem that is very critical. People working inside the problem all the time have a totally different perspective from those sitting outside it. You must look outside the square—if I may use that sort of corny language.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What do you want to get out of this inquiry?

Mr COE: It is not what I want to get out of this inquiry but what the people of New South Wales want to get out of this inquiry—and that is justice for all citizens of New South Wales.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can you be a bit more specific about that? That is a nice abstract concept that we can all agree with but we need to flesh out how we achieve it.

Mr COE: In my opinion, this is the first point of contact with Aboriginal people. I believe the State of New South Wales has an obligation to introduce into its Constitution the recognition of prior ownership by Aboriginal people. It might be a symbolic gesture but symbols are very important. As I said in my opening remarks about the Treaty of Waitangi, I have been asked many times "Why do the Pakeha think differently of the Maori people than the Australians think of Aboriginal people?" It has a lot to do with perception—whether that perception is real or not. You have the notion that the Maori resisted the colonisation of their land and that country and you have the notion in Australia that terra nullius was the law. That is not the case. Martial law was declared at Bathurst and at Parramatta. Pemulwuy resisted and fought the British Redcoats for a long, long time. It is not as if the Aboriginal people lay down and died before the onslaught of colonisation. A telling factor is that diseases such as syphilis, typhoid, whooping cough, influenza and smallpox were introduced, we had no resistance to them and they decimated many of the people before anyone arrived. But the symbolism of the sovereign State of New South Wales recognising in its Constitution that it acknowledges the right of Aboriginal people of being the first people on the land would go a long way towards addressing the imbalance and achieving justice in my view.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think that can be done at a State level and not at a Federal level?

Mr COE: The Commonwealth might follow the lead of the State, but someone must bite the bullet somewhere and take the initiative. The present Commonwealth Government has simply abolished any initiative of Aboriginal self-determination and Aboriginal rights, which had taken 30 or 40 years to reach that stage. You have to go back to the days before the referendum of 1967, and it took a campaign of 10 years leading up to that referendum to amend the Constitution. All that has been thrown out the window.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think we should make a symbolic gesture? What about the smaller things at the level of police policy or Department of Community Services policy? What would you say about things such as that?

Mr COE: They take their lead from government. Every institution takes its lead from government. The perception as to how people are governed comes from the House and nowhere else.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you would argue that a big gesture from us would make a corresponding change down the line.

Mr COE: I believe that a gesture from this House and the lower House would bring about an attitudinal change in terms of how Aboriginal people are perceived.

CHAIR: Mr Hardy, you have not said very much. Do you want to tell us something about *Tungare News*? I understand you also had some suggestions about other people that the Committee might talk to.

Mr HARDY: We talked about Shane Phillips.

CHAIR: We talked to Shane the other day.

Mr HARDY: The Aboriginal Legal Service and Trevor Christian. Many community groups felt too rushed in the sense of trying to get the material together—I know that the time was extended—on an issue such as this that is so great and has been building up over the years. Many

people have expressed the feeling that it was a bit too rushed for them—with the organising, budgets and things.

CHAIR: We recognise that. We have two deadlines: we have an interim report to do by the end of July and our final report is due by the end of November. So we are very open to advice about other ways in which we can receive more written submissions and other different forms of consultation that might be appropriate. We needed to squash things in a bit partly because of the parliamentary sitting timetable, but we then have quite a long period during the parliamentary break when we can make sure that the things that have been rushed, people who were not aware of the inquiry or people who have different ideas about how we can consult people can have some input. We are certainly open to further suggestions about either people who we should talk to or ways in which we might have a forum or whatever.

Mr HARDY: Your involvement in going to the community is also recognised by the people of Redfern. That is a great step for you because I do not think it has ever happened before in this process with you; everyone has come to you.

Mr WELSH: Going to the community was fantastic.

Mr HARDY: That has been commented on. Going to the community is all part of it.

CHAIR: We will be in Redfern again tomorrow and obviously later as well.

Mr COE: I would like to bring up one issue that is in our submission to you and is also part of our five-year plan. That is the problem that we incur with the land rights Act and the 40D process, whereby we have to write off and then the State has to write off to approve the 40D requirements. Under section 40D of the land rights Act before any land can be transferred for joint development the State has to sign off on it. I will hand up this document—I do not know whether you received it as part of the submission. Hopefully it can be distributed amongst members. The 40D requirements were changed earlier this year without notice. Work had been done on joint development applications to be involved in a commercial enterprise. We now find that as we reach the possibility of achieving our goal the goal lines have been changed. If they are going to change 40D, they should do it for all future applications not for applications that are just about completed. I think it is really unfair for organisations like Metro and totally impossible for organisations like the local land councils at Bourke or Wilcannia, which have no possibility of meeting these new requirements.

CHAIR: Rachel tells me that we already have the document so we do not need to move to table it now. That is certainly something that we can look into. The advantage of having a transcript of today's hearing is that we can check up on things that have been mentioned.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr Welsh, what is your understanding of how the riot ended? What transpired to end it? Were people just exhausted or did somebody intervene? Was there better negotiation?

Mr WELSH: I think it was partly the two ladies we talked about who intervened. They walked into the police and were commended from the community. I think it was basically because of them and because they were there. As Paul said, we need to work with the police to sort out and make sure that when these kinds of things happen we have a response to it and that we have people on call who can get there and try to work it out and negotiate what the issue is. That has been discussed. From the first community meeting after the riot, all of the leaders gave their phone numbers to Michael Ramsey and to Dennis Smith so that if there are any issues contact us and we can help try to solve the issues. I do not think it was tiredness. From what I saw on television, they were very emotionally charged and I think they could have gone all night.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr Coe, you said that you thought it was necessary to improve accountability. You probably have a bit more experience in that area than most. What would you do to improve accountability?

Mr COE: One the things I raise is that there will be another one—in time to come there will be many more riots, whether we like it or not unfortunately. I do not like to see those things happen

because people get hurt. One of the things I would like to see is that when the police plan their strategy they should have some Aboriginal community members involved in that strategy so that the officer on site, who might be a junior constable, can recognise the faces of those people and realise that they are not there to hinder police but to help the policing process. The question is how to define the policing process? Is it just about law and order, or about bringing a grievance to an end, so that there is minimal damage to property and minimal damage to persons?

(The witnesses withdrew)

DENNIS BARRY SMITH, Superintendent, Commander, Redfern Local Area Command, NSW Police,

DARREN BENNETT, Detective Inspector, Crime Manager, Redfern, NSW Police, and

GEORGINA OWENS, Senior Constable, Crime Prevention Officer, Redfern, NSW Police, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: You would have received a lengthy list of questions from the Committee.

Mr SMITH: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Committee members will ask you those questions and undoubtedly add other questions. Do you want to make an opening statement?

Mr SMITH: Yes, Madam Chair. I am Superintendent Dennis Smith, the Local Area Commander for Redfern. With me is the Crime Manager, Detective Inspector Darren Bennett, who has been there since October last year. With me also is Senior Constable Georgina Owens, the Crime Prevention Officer, Redfern, who has been there for 14 years. I have been a local area commander for seven years and have had experience in both country and metropolitan police stations. I ran 20 police stations in Griffith, where I gained experience in drugs and valuable experience in dealing with Aboriginal communities. I had 12 police stations at Goulburn, I had three years at Marrickville and have been at Redfern for the past 18 months.

Redfern command covers a fairly large slice of inner-Sydney. We go from Zetland to Rosebery and Erskineville to Chippendale. We have about 55,000 residents in that area, and about 8,000 people live in Redfern and Waterloo. I have a young and enthusiastic group of police, and I am very glad to be their leader. They try very hard under difficult circumstances in a place that can become volatile at any time. It is an unpredictable command, they turn up each day, they have a go, and I can ask no more than that. At Redfern we do our business probably not totally different from other commands. We send police out to do what is expected each day in uniform and in plain clothes. We patrol the streets day and night, both in uniform and in some undercover operations. Our criminal investigators put together quality briefs of evidence through protracted inquiries.

In recent years there has been an emphasis on gaining community partnerships, working side by side with police. I fully support that. Redfern has had the luxury of the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project, of which NSW Police is a major stakeholder. That group meets fortnightly and is committed to the anti-drugs strategy that we currently have in place. We work closely with the Redfern Police Citizens Youth Club, which has the children of Redfern and Waterloo at heart. I have committed two full-time police to youth relations for that command. Some of our strategies involve police youth camps, social days, riding school buses and encouraging kids to have a real sense of community spirit. Some families provide that, and some do not. So we are working alongside groups of people to ensure that we do our bit in keeping kids out of the criminal justice system.

I heard a little about the proceedings and the mention of no-go zones. I want to state my position on that: there are no no-go zones in Redfern. Police will carry out their duties in all areas to the best of their ability. The Block itself has been mentioned; it can become quite a volatile place when police move in to arrest people. There is no question of that and I do not want to down play that at all. However, police will patrol the Block day and night if required. With regard to the riot, the courage, strength and commitment shown by police on the night of the riot was exceptional and they had my full support. Task Force Coburn has been established by the Commissioner of Police to review the riot, how we may have improved things from the riot. I await the findings of that document. In conclusion, as I indicated I have a resourceful, committed and very professional bunch of police officers there. They may be junior in rank but they make up for that by their commitment and I am very proud of them.

CHAIR: Obviously, the Committee has heard a great deal about Redfern and Waterloo. We have heard about the activities that police undertake outside and beyond the area. The Committee recognise that that is their duty. Can you comment on the level of policing resources in the Redfern

and Waterloo areas. You have touched on some of the matters raised, including their youth, the turnover, and so on. Could you give a picture of your level of resources, and do that in comparison with other areas if you can.

Mr SMITH: There is probably not a commander in the State who would say that they could not do with more police. But the reality is they have to come from somewhere. My job as the Local Area Commander of Redfern is to manage with the police and resources I have available to me. We are at full strength. We have 164 officers, and that moves up to 180 if we include our overstrength probationers. Basically that includes our mounted police unit as well. I have the ability to deploy that group throughout the week on intelligence-based reports, and we do that. Beyond the local capacity, I can also approach the region and we have access to a range of resources there from the transit police to the dog squad, the robbery unit, anti-theft and Vikings.

Beyond that we have State resources that I can call on through the State crime command on agreement by the deputy. We have enough police to get the job done. In June last year the deputy granted us eight additional police. Those police form Operation Concertina, which is a high visibility operation in and around Redfern railway station. I have the police; it is my job to ensure they are effectively deployed. I believe we do that. If I need additional resources I can call on them.

CHAIR: What about the high turnover and youthfulness? Last week Deputy Commissioner Madden told the Committee that some of those claims are not correct.

Mr SMITH: I certainly do not have a revolving door of police wanting to get out of Redfern. Police come there; they are committed to their job. About 35 per cent of police are in their first year and probably half have less than five years service. With that youthfulness and enthusiasm comes the sprinkling of experience that I provide. The team leaders are sergeants of police, and they are on every shift. They are available and they go out in the field with the constables. Above that I have a duty officer, who is an inspector of police and who ran police stations seven years ago. The duty officer is there around the clock to provide leadership for junior police in Redfern-Waterloo. We have senior police on duty throughout the day and night, seven days a week, to work with police who may not necessarily have years of service but are still committed to do the job.

CHAIR: In relation to the media comments?

Mr SMITH: There is not a high turnover there.

CHAIR: I ask the overarching factual question about the level and nature of crime in Redfern-Waterloo, and how that compares to other areas.

Mr SMITH: Robbery offences are an issue for Redfern, as is an illegal drug trade in heroin an issue for police in Redfern. The nature of crimes is such that robberies occur mainly in and around the railway station and the Block area at Redfern, and to a lesser extent at Waterloo. Predominantly they can occur by day or night, and they are the bag-snatch type of robbery. Yes, they can be violent on occasions. However, we have police stationed in and around the railway station for 16 hours a day, seven days a week, to try to prevent them. We have a range of other tactics and strategies that perhaps I could talk about in camera, together with our drug issues if that is the wish of the Committee. However, the descriptions of offenders provided to police for robberies are predominantly young Aboriginal males between 15 and 25 years of age.

That is the focus for the command in 2004, as is our increased focus on illegal drug activities. We have had some success in recent months. Darren comes from a background of State crime, and we are using his additional skills in Redfern to remove the illegal drug trade that we have. In comparison, perhaps I could say that Redfern is not overly represented in other jurisdictions across the State. Our other major crimes are not that high. We are having successes. Our police arrest more than 120 people a month. Their outputs and their work ethic are very high. There is a lot of activity within the command that results in a lot of arrests and people placed before the courts.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Superintendent Smith, I add my congratulations to you. You may not be aware that a number of people who have spoken in this inquiry have congratulated you on your approach in Redfern and on the good work that you have done. Those congratulations come from

across the board. The Committee heard from Assistant Commissioner Waites last week. Have you read his transcript?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I have read that transcript.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The Committee was a little surprised by a number of things he said. Effectively he dropped you in it, about the riot, did he not?

Mr SMITH: I will take a step back from that. I read the stories in the transcript. I had a lot of conversations with the assistant commissioner from the Saturday, soon after the unfortunate death of the young Aboriginal person. We were in fairly regular contact across the weekend about a range of issues which lead up to the riot and during the riot. My comment is that I kept the commander briefed as best I could.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: So, you did not mislead him on the night of the riot about the seriousness of the events in your phone calls to him?

Mr SMITH: No. I would have provided the briefing as I saw it concerning the issues that confronted me when I arrived, shortly before 10 o'clock. I provided briefings as to what I was confronted with.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In your view, you certainly briefed him well?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: With the benefit of hindsight how do you think the riot was handled? What are your views on how the riot was handled?

Mr SMITH: A couple of points there. There is a strike force, that is Strike Force Coburn, that is reviewing the riot. It was a very unfortunate incident, because we have made a lot of inroads with the decent Aboriginal people in Redfern and Waterloo. There are many decent families; the majority of Aboriginal people want the place changed for the better and are committed to that. We are working with those groups regularly. The riot occurred. Police tactics on the night are quite defensible. We are very well aware, and it is often overlooked, that there were a lot of Aboriginal children at the forefront of the riot.

The tactics the police deployed on the night were very conscious of that. Yes, it is distressing that police were injured, however, we believe that we were limited in a lot of our activities because of the issues of young children being at the forefront of the riot. There were no Aboriginal children physically injured during that riot. There were some timeliness issues about getting additional police and equipment resources on site, and that will no doubt come from the Coburn report. With emergency management you live and learn: yes, we did our best with the resources we had on the night. There was a small communication issue, and I am sure that would be improved next time. Review and improvement is part of emergency management.

There were also some issues about time outs on the night—it was not just a barrage of attack against police for eight hours. There were time outs. We had a trained negotiator on the scene, and that negotiator met with some Aboriginal ladies, as I did, and for some hours through the night. We attempted negotiation and were part-way successful there, albeit for a couple of Aboriginal leaders who, when the ladies spoke to, were quite angst about what they were trying to do. So there were significant attempts through the night to resolve the issue. Police formed a line. We were not going to let that line be broken and we moved the line forward and back on many occasions during the night to try to break up the riot. As soon as we had sufficient police and equipment on the scene the matter was finished without any great resolve.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You said you briefed Mr Waites as the night went on. Do you know why Mr Waites did not front up until 1.30 a.m.?

Mr SMITH: I probably cannot speak for the region commander.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: He had plenty to say when he appeared before the Committee. Do you have anything to add?

Mr SMITH: Really, I would have provided the briefings as I saw what was evolving in front of me.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Yesterday, did you go to a meeting in respect of your appearance here today?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Who was at that meeting?

Mr SMITH: The police officer who is co-ordinating the police response in terms of organising the papers and so forth, that is, Superintendent Catherine Byrne.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What was the purpose of the meeting?

Mr SMITH: The purpose was just to make sure I had a full copy of the Government's submission for today—and I had, I have got a colour copy of that—and if I needed any other documentation. I had prepared most of it myself, so I did not.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Was a member of court and legal services there?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Did the fact that you were engaged in negotiations with the women at one level, and managed the street police on the other, put you in the position that you were managing two strategies at once?

Mr SMITH: Probably to a point that is true but really in that circumstance we were not to limit our options. We had a range of options that we were working through every 15 minutes in command briefings on the scene. Part of that strategy is negotiation and we were already thinking ahead if that did not work, what our next strategy would be. We did not take the negotiation in isolation. That formed part of a range of strategies. My offside here, Darren Bennett, is a trained negotiator and that was part of his role. While he was doing that the rest of the command team on site were planning additional strategies in case that did not work.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Was it difficult for you to keep your finger on the pulse of what was happening on the street while you were involved in these negotiations—presumably you did the negotiating personally?

Mr SMITH: No, I left that to the trained negotiator, Darren Bennet. My role really was like a chief executive officer, if you like, so I was running a number of agencies and had to really remain aloof from front-line tactics, and make those command decisions. The only time I became tactical was about 2 o'clock when I used the fire hose. The rest of the time I was in a strategic command position, on site, yes, but I had three or four inspectors who were mainly carrying out many of the tactical decisions that we had brought about on scene.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Superintendent Waites said there was concern about the number of riot gear—and he used the acronym OSG?

Mr SMITH: Operational support group [OSG] police who are additional trained police that we have who work throughout the city and country areas. He said he was getting more OSG from across the city, is that right

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Because there was a shortage of that in relation to the ability to advance, is that true?

Mr SMITH: Yes, that is probably true.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In retrospect, do you think you should have got more OSG people and equipment earlier?

Mr SMITH: The logs that we have of the night indicate that quite early on we were calling for additional operational support group police and riot equipment. Some of those, both equipment and police, arrived in a piecemeal fashion. I would suggest that the communication issue is part of the improvement process about having those police and the equipment there earlier next time. The difficulty with the operational support group police is that they are sprinkled through each command—there is no group that is available to call. At 9.30 on a Sunday night, the majority of them would have had to come from home.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Was there a lot of phoning around?

Mr SMITH: Indeed.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Presumably if a peaceful settlement had been made with the Aboriginal women's negotiations everyone would have gone home and you would not have needed the OSG police anyway?

Mr SMITH: No.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you may not have called them up if you were happy that Inspector Bennett was making headway?

Mr SMITH: Yes, that is correct. I think it links back to thinking ahead in case of, and the so what question. So if the negotiations do not work, what is next? Part of that thinking was to get the OSG police there as quickly as we could if things turned sour, and unfortunately they did.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The fact that you were hoping to get a more peaceful outcome, in a sense, means that you were gambling on the relationships within the Aboriginal community?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: And that may have influenced you not to call in more resources earlier, is that right?

Mr SMITH: No. We are on record and on log as requesting resources as early as shortly after 9 o'clock, for operational support group police and protective equipment. So there is evidence of early requests. The communication issues occurred after that, probably between 9.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. about getting those additional resources there quickly.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Superintendent Waites suggested that he discovered there were not resources, and then went to a lot of trouble to get them. He said he felt that he should have gone to the command headquarters rather than to the scene.

Mr SMITH: Yes. I cannot comment on that. The police operations centre is a centre that is run when there is a major incident, so that was available on the night he came to the scene.

CHAIR: Does what you have just said relate to the adequacy and timeliness of equipment as well as police officers?

Mr SMITH: Some equipment arrived as early as 10 o'clock. Twenty sets arrived shortly after 10 o'clock but then there were some issues about getting trained police to use the equipment. As a matter of safety, we actually put that equipment on police who were not trained, as an additional safety measure for them at the time. When additional police came who were trained they were then

provided to the front line, and tactics and strategies evolved as soon as we had the additional operational support group police available.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Presumably Operation Coburn is sorting this out in more detail with more expertise than this Committee?

Mr SMITH: I do not know about more expertise than the Committee, but it is certainly reviewing the incident for possible improvements. This was an unplanned event in a command that is unpredictable and I am sure when we sit back and review it there may be an opportunity to improve. In terms of that, communication issues seem to be the focus.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Prior to the incident was there, and is there now, an overall policing strategy for Redfern?

Mr SMITH: In terms of the whole command we have a business plan, and that business plan cuts across our operations, strategies, finance and resources. That is probably our lead document and that covers the entire command. If we came back to Redfern/Waterloo we have particular operating procedures that revolve around Waterloo which is high in public housing, and we work with housing closely there, and the particular issues at Redfern are different. So we do have a command plan that would focus on the entire area I firstly described. We have smaller operating procedures and tactics for Redfern and Waterloo which would be different to the needs of Alexandria and Rosebery.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Is there a management team that looks at that strategic plan?

Mr SMITH: Yes, every month the management team would meet. Part of the meeting is devoted to strategy and crime, resources and finance. That team would include the duty officers who are there. We have five inspectors. The duty officers are: Emery, Reed, Huxtable, Woolbank, Sullivan and Moore at the present time, some of whom are relieving in those positions, and have relieved for considerable time, as Sergeants relieving into the inspector positions.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Are they part of the management team that meets once a month to talk about strategic planning and policing in Redfern?

Mr SMITH: Yes, as well as our administrative team we have a component of unsworn staff and they also meet with us. So it is one team sworn and unsworn together, but yes that is the managing team.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Has that been the case for the past 18 months while you have been there?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Is the equipment on site regularly checked by officers who are part of the management team?

Mr SMITH: Rather than the management team, there are supervisors who have check lists about equipment that is on the scene and kept at police stations which would include: torches, batons, riot equipment particular to Redfern and a whole range of other resources and assets. The check list is done each day by a team leader at each shift and the crews check their own vehicle for equipment and resources.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do they sign off that the equipment is in working condition?

Mr SMITH: Yes, they sign off the register which is checked and audited as well by duty officers.

The Hon. IAN WEST: If any equipment is not in good working order, can further equipment be accessed from, I assume, the Sydney Police Centre at Surry Hills?

Mr SMITH: Yes, similar to what we talked about before with human resources. If we need any other command resources and equipment it can be accessed from other locations.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do you have an education and training officer at Redfern?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I have two. Because of our youthful police I realised that I want to provide them with additional training. I have two full-time youth officers and I have two full-time youth police as well, so the education has increased for police over the past 18 months.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Who are the two education officers?

Mr SMITH: One is Senior Constable Rebecca Huxtable and the other is Sergeant Trudy Rowell.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Have any specific policing strategies been developed for the Block area at Redfern?

Mr SMITH: Yes, particular operating procedures have been in existence for some years. When I first arrived at Redfern I asked for them to be reviewed and that has been done, and they have been since reviewed. Those operating procedures are really an issue about public and police safety if you go into the Block, more so when you are going to carry out an arrest, repeating it is not a no-go zone and that if people go and run there as a safe haven they will be arrested and placed before the courts.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Are the 180 staff familiar with those procedures?

Mr SMITH: Yes, the operating procedures are on our Intranet site which is accessible to the police 24-hours a day in our police station. We talk about the operating procedures at training days and at normal briefings. The duty officers, in particular—remember they are the inspectors on shift—have the SOPs firmly implanted in their brain and they know if any issues happen there, what procedures they should follow.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Would you provide background information as to how you have been using the Police and Community Accountability Team [PACT] meetings?

Mr SMITH: We have had a couple of PACT meetings since I have been there. Our next one is due in June—we are a little bit behind with this one only because the honourable member for Bligh fitting into a timetable, so it is back a few months, but we understand that. She is very supportive of the PACT. As the Commander I see that group as my report card. I meet with them quarterly and what we do at the PACT is: this is what we have done in the last quarter. How have we gone? These are our strategies for the next quarter. Does this seem reasonable? Are we on the right track in terms of The community? That is really the commander's report card to sign off on the way police are working. Most of the people on our PACT represent large organisations so they are tapping into their own groups.

Beyond the PACT I also go to many community forums. The Redfern-Waterloo project team meets fortnightly or monthly with most of the key players in various agencies. So there is consultation. I am open to any suggestions about how to improve policing. I am very amenable to changing strategies and to working with the community.

The Hon. IAN WEST: How do you pick the Aboriginal indigenous representatives on that committee?

Mr SMITH: We have asked for a number of new committees as well. A youth advisory council is starting and we are waiting for Aboriginal people to get back to us with the names of that group. There will be eight young Aboriginal people on that committee. Similarly, with our senior advisory council, we are asking who the Aboriginal people believe would be the best people to come on the committees rather than leaving that decision to me. Whoever is elected we would like them to come onto the committees.

CHAIR: These are recent initiatives?

Mr SMITH: Yes. I have been to many community meetings in the 18 months that I have been there and I have spoken to many different Aboriginal people about policing processes and about relationships. There is no lack of consultation from me. They can consult with me on any day or night or at any meeting.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: A number of witnesses have said words to the effect that, after the very unfortunate incident with TJ, there would be some sort of trouble on the Block. What sort of intelligence did you get throughout the day? Did you know about the posters that had gone up?

Mr SMITH: Let me backtrack one day. On the Saturday, after the unfortunate incident, I came into the police station and spoke to the police who were involved. We spoke to some Aboriginal people about the incident. We debriefed some of those people one on one. I was then in constant contact with the duty officers throughout Saturday night and on the Sunday morning. We had Mrs Hickey at the police station on Sunday morning. We were facilitating a range of phone calls and needs that she had asked the police to do to assist with the death of her son. We did that for some hours. I had my most experienced duty officer—Inspector Emery—on duty on Sunday. He has been at Redfern for a number of years.

Throughout the day he monitored the situation. There was no intelligence or suggestions that at 9 o'clock that night we would have the riot that we did have. We had Aboriginal liaison officers in the Block on Saturday night talking to Aboriginal people. There was no suggestion of a riot the next night. On Sunday there was mention of these posters by senior police. No police officers have come forward and said that they sighted those posters on the Sunday. The first we really knew of them was when they were quite singed on the Monday morning around the railway station when we took back that ground. In relation to awareness and preparation, I believe that we did the best we could with the information that we had. There was no suggestion at all that a problem would flare up at 9 o'clock.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I would like to clear up the sequences of events as we have had references to different times. You said you went down to the riot at about 10 o'clock?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Before that Inspector Emery was—

Mr SMITH: I had two inspectors at the scene. We also kept back the day shift that day, in preparation and as an awareness measure. We had additional police that we usually kept back. There were a few incidents, but most of the time those incidents were dissipated. The two inspectors made that collective decision on the phone with me.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Where were you at that stage?

Mr SMITH: I was at home at that stage—at about 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock in the evening. We kept back additional police from the day shift to deal with any issue that might arise. Traditionally, that has been sufficient. There is strong evidence to suggest that. As I said, some hours later that was not the case.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You said that the riot commenced, in your mind, at about 9 o'clock?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So you then went down to the riot?

Mr SMITH: I got ready and went to the scene.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Before that any communication that you had with Assistant Commission Waites would have been based on what you were told by officers at the scene?

Mr SMITH: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When you went down to the riot you said that that was also the time when there was a call out for OSG officers?

Mr SMITH: Yes. In fact, there was an earlier call, before I arrived, at about 9.28 for OSG officers and equipment. There was a call before I got there. That call was repeated soon after I got there and I had discussions with the crime manager, who was also at the scene. At that time we realised that we needed additional police.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When did the line of police first form, roughly? Would that have been at 9 o'clock?

Mr SMITH: I made that decision when I got there. I believed that we required a line because some of the people were coming up and throwing missiles and so forth over the heads of police and onto onlookers, so we formed a line. We had enough equipment there at that time to form a line. Basically, we said that that was going to be our ground and that that ground was not going to be passed.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Roughly how many OSG officers would have been there at that stage, and how many would have been in the line?

Mr SMITH: There would probably have been about 20 or 25 at that stage who were trained.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So at some stage after that you would have spoken to Assistant Commissioner Waites. You have now formed the view that the riot started at about 9 o'clock. You formed the view that you had to put up a line of police. You had also called for OSG police and equipment. Would you have told Mr Waites those things?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What happened until about 1.15?

Mr SMITH: Throughout the rest of the night we deployed a range of strategies and tactics, which included negotiation and which included moving the police line up and back on many occasions. The railway station had been set alight, so we needed to move forward to stop that utility from burning down.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you remember roughly at what time that was?

Mr SMITH: That would probably have started at about 11.00 or 11.30. A number of people were lighting fires. Earlier we put out some fires with the fire brigade, but those fires were relit. The railway station was a constant issue throughout the night. There were a lot of moves of the line up and back. It was not always a constant barrage.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When you spoke to Mr Waites at about 11.30 presumably you would have told him about the fires and you would have told him that the line was moving backwards and forwards? Would you have told him about the barrages and so on?

Mr SMITH: Yes. Without recollecting my exact words relating to the incident, I would have provided a briefing as to what we were doing and how I saw the actual incident.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did it get worse after that? From what you are saying you seemed to be playing it out. You were negotiating, the line was moving backwards and forwards, but you basically decided to keep your ground?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did it get worse?

Mr SMITH: There were lulls in the incident. Obviously it did peak later in the evening when we moved forward a bit further past the railway station.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When was that?

Mr SMITH: That would have been just before 2 o'clock—about 1.30 or 1.45. I do not remember the exact times across the night.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was Assistant Commissioner Waites there at that time?

Mr SMITH: I probably cannot comment exactly on that. I would have been just behind that front line making some decisions there. I first saw the region commander after I used the fire hose. That was shortly before 2 o'clock. I went back after that and I then briefed the region commander. That was the first time I saw him.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was it your decision or his to use the fire hose?

Mr SMITH: That was my decision.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I refer for a moment to the PACT committee. What is the membership of that committee?

Mr SMITH: We have a number of business leaders from the Alexandria area. As we have a lot of factory issues, we work with those people. We have Ms Kristina Keneally, the member for Heffron, Ms Clover Moore, the member for Bligh and our Lord Mayor of Sydney, Tony Pooley, who was the mayor of south Sydney. I am still keeping Tony on that committee. We have other members from the chamber of commerce and some community representatives as well. They can fluctuate from meeting to meeting, depending on what are the issues. I might bring in someone from Waterloo if the issue is about Waterloo, or I might bring in someone from Alexandria. There are a couple of local reverends as well from various church and youth groups.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Who specifically represents the Redfern area on that committee, apart from, say, the State member?

Mr SMITH: All the members of the committee represent Redfern and Waterloo—the whole command. Our focus on the PACT can change. As I said, it is partly my report card. So I talk to them about a number of issues. Redfern and Waterloo are at the busier end of town than some of the others. The PACT, as a whole, is responsible for that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So some members of the committee would be called in to committee meetings if there were a specific issue relating to certain areas and so on?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The Government refers on page 21 of its submission to the Waterloo and Redfern bus services and problems that have been experienced with vandalism and rock throwing. Some of those bus services were re-routed. The submission refers also to the fact that, since February, some of those problems have increased. What are your comments in relation to that issue?

Mr SMITH: I will take just one step back. On the PACT committee is Mr Gary Durley who represents the State Transit Authority. Mr Durley is on the PACT committee. In relation to the buses, we were having some issues in relation to them about 18 months ago. We resolved the majority of issues relating to the bus line. I note in the submission that there were one or two incidents and media reports earlier this year. Redfern did get a mention, along with La Perouse and some other eastern suburb jurisdictions. The problem about which I received information from the State Transit Authority related to that area in the eastern suburbs.

They re-routed buses for one hour through Redfern. We quickly put that issue to bed. To my knowledge there have not been any major issues with the bus line in recent times. Last week I rang the State Transit Authority because I had not seen Gary Durley for a while. He indicated that that was the

case and that he would be the first to ring me if there were any problems. We have increased the police patrols along Elizabeth Street where young people were rocking some of those buses. We identified a couple of young people and we have since spoken to them.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: A few statements have been made in some of the submissions that have been made to the inquiry about Aboriginal people in Redfern and Waterloo feeling victimised by the police. It is alleged that some officers have racist attitudes. Would you care to comment on that issue?

Mr SMITH: My position as commander is quite strong. We will not tolerate any issues of racism within the command. I have not had any brought to my attention in the past 18 months. If I do I will take swift action against the police. That is my clear point. Beyond that, I seek additional training about Aboriginal awareness for police in Redfern. New police officers have a four-day induction period, which includes some hours spent talking to Aboriginal community liaison officers [ACLOs] about local Aboriginal issues. Barry Williams, a civilian officer who comes from the academy, trains all people in Redfern about traditional Aboriginal awareness and cultural issues. Half the staff members have gone through that training and the other half will complete their training in June. We are starting a new Aboriginal program with Tranby college in June next year. There is no tolerance for any racism by police officers. Beyond that I encourage as much Aboriginal cultural training as we can get.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Who is the ACLO?

Mr SMITH: At the moment we have two ACLOs— Derek Wilson and Leslie Townsend. A third ACLO position is being advertised this week.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In relation to some of the work that is being done, in particular in those areas where young people are concerned, do you think you need to address the relationship between police and young people in that area?

Mr SMITH: We took that on board when we first got there. There is a real need to enhance relationships with young people. I made a decision to commit to two full-time youth officers. No other police station in this State would have two full-time police officers. There is a need in Redfern. I believe we have made substantial inroads in relation to some of the young people who have been on the mentoring program and in relation to the general interaction between police and young people. We have some way to go. We do not have all the answers and we probably cannot do it alone. That is why we are trying to work in partnership with some Aboriginal leaders, families, community services and the education department. So we are committed. We have had strong evidence over the past 18 months that we have had some achievements in that area. We have some way to go. We will continue to try to improve those relationships.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What sorts of achievements have you seen so far?

Mr SMITH: We had three or four young kids who were not going to school at the Block at all. We worked with the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project and we worked with the education department. From those kids not going to school at all, they are all now in special schools that have special needs and requirements. They are picked up, they are taken to those schools and they are even getting packed lunches.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: People who gave evidence this morning talked about trying to get young people to say how they want to interact with youth services and so on, and what they really need. You said that more work needs to be done. How often would meetings take place with young people in the area to get their points of view and their concerns about crime, drugs and so on?

Mr SMITH: Informally that happens every day because we have two full-time youth officers and other police who come into contact with young people. That would happen, informally, every day. Today, for example, we are mixing a group of young Aboriginal kids from Redfern with some Walgett kids. We are taking them out to some training sessions and talking to them about policing and staff between two towns. Informally each day, formally that would also happen through the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project. A number of agencies meet with that group fortnightly and

monthly. Beyond that, post the riot there have been some new groups that have come together and provided some recommendations. I am just waiting for those recommendations to come to me through the ACLOs. We will sit down with young people and they will be the ones who form the new Youth Advisory Council, which will be about allowing them to have as much to say as they want and as they can to breach any further gaps that we have. I am hopeful that that committee is going to be one where the young people can really sit down and clearly voice their concerns. I think we have gone a way to hearing that, and I think an improvement will be the Youth Advisory Council. As soon as I get those names from the Aboriginal people we are going to set up that first meeting.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I am interested in the drug problem. There is a lot of discussion about the drug problem. Do you think there are currently shooting galleries or drug houses on the Block?

Mr SMITH: The terms probably interchange there, the shooting galleries and the drug houses.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We will take them one at a time. Are there shooting galleries on the Block, or in Redfern-Waterloo generally?

Mr SMITH: I suppose in terms of our definition a shooting gallery would be a house for the purpose where people are going in there and they are shooting up. There were some on the Block. We have recently worked with Aboriginal Housing and demolished those ones that were predominantly used as shooting galleries. In that sense the definition of shooting galleries has gone from the Block. There are small pockets of areas where people are shooting up, including laneways and small alcoves. That is happening. We are moving swiftly with Aboriginal Housing and council to ensure that those places stop becoming areas where people are shooting up. But at the moment it would occur in the open more so than in premises.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: They shoot up in laneways?

Mr SMITH: There is one laneway at the moment, and we are working with council to have that closed.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How significant is the heroin trade and the heroin problem on the Block, in your view?

Mr SMITH: We do have some heroin issues and an illegal drug trade. There is a focus from the command region and State Crime on that particular problem. We have had recent successes with search warrants. The heat is on to remove the drug people from the decent people who live on the Block, the police and other community groups. We will continue with that focus until we substantially decrease that trade. There is an interesting scenario to this. There are about 10 families who are seeking to move out of the Block. Our push will continue until we substantially see a decline.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The needle van has also created a lot of discussion. We understand there is a mutual agreement with the Health Department in terms of policing around the van, effectively making it a hands-off area for police. How does that hamper your ability to deal with the drug trade?

Mr SMITH: Perhaps a couple of points on the needle van. Firstly, police, we are part of a Government agency. We are committed to the harm minimisation program. We understand the issue of sharing dirty needles, and there is a role for an exchange program and the use of clean needles. In terms of the police position and the Government position, which is in the strategy, there is a move to place the van outside the residential area at Hudson Street, which is only a mere 300 metres away from the current location of the Block. A couple of points there, that sends a strong message to the young people who are on the Block who see some of this behaviour that it is not normal, it is not really accepted so we remove it from the residential area. There is a new playground there with a community facility right beside where the van is. Having it in an industrial area, in terms of policing, there is not a memorandum of understanding between Police and Health but there are some guidelines. We adhere to those guidelines. We police not right on the van, but we take those guidelines into

consideration and we have our tactics and strategies. Any further than that I probably could not comment publicly. I would have to talk in camera.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Could you comment on claims that the stationary needle van creates a bit of a honey-pot effect?

Mr SMITH: It would be fair to say that, obviously, it would attract some drug dealers to the location from outside the area.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: From outside the area?

Mr SMITH: Outside Redfern and Waterloo. Our strategies there are we attempt to intercept those people at the railway station. The majority come through on public transport. We have high visibility policing there 16 or 17 hours a day.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You say you do not have a memorandum of understanding with Health?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you say there are guidelines. In a sense you want to have a needle van that hand out needles, but you also want to catch drug dealers. They are two contradictory aims, presumably.

Mr SMITH: Yes, and again I would probably have to limit my answer there to one in camera, if I could.

CHAIR: If you feel that we need to deal with some of these issues, I should have said this earlier, it is much better for everyone if we have a small session at the end of your evidence. It is much less disruptive for the gallery and so on.

Mr SMITH: I understood that. I just thought I would mention it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I think the concept is more important than the details of your unofficial implementation guidelines or official, but secret, implementation guidelines. The Aboriginal Housing Company seems to be concentrating on the area for which it is responsible in getting drug houses out of there. Does that just mean that the drug problem will move a block or two away, and if you then move the bus will that not have the same effect, it will merely move the problem?

Mr SMITH: I think there is a combination of facts there. One thing that I do see some light at the end of the tunnel with the Redfern project team is that they are holding government and non-government agencies to account for their funding and, therefore, probably their charter. In recent times, I am talking about the last year or so, we are seeing the case management of families, some work on drugs, the use of drugs, people getting counselling, so we are starting to see some inroads there. I believe the moving of the van—you do not get 100 per cent displacement—if we move the van out of the Block into an industrial area we could certainly stop some people accessing the van in terms of drug dealing. I think there are some options there that we can pursue.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The fact that drugs exist in relatively depressed areas because of the market and the economics of people getting money from dealing, do you think the legality of drugs is part of the problem?

Mr SMITH: Probably I would not be able to give a personal opinion there. My role as a police commander is to enforce legislation and the Government policy of the day. It is probably not a position for a personal thing. My stated position would be we are there to enforce the law and work on harm minimisation strategies, which is part of the Government's submission.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Submissions to the inquiry have said there is a high incidence of violence against police in Redfern. Can you comment on the level of violence against police? Is it greater than in other areas, and is all the violence against police reported?

Mr SMITH: Perhaps the last one first. I would suggest that most of the violence against police would be reported because police fill out a register of injuries claim in case something later on, with the injury they receive, may turn into a compensation claim so they are quite fastidious about putting in that claim of injury. We rank about the same as other Sydney police jurisdictions in terms of the number of assaults against police. Sometimes the severity of those assaults are quite frightening. However, policing is a contact sport and they turn up every day. We provide additional training as best we can for police in terms of Redfern of OC spray. They have riot training. We have the riot equipment available to them at the police station—we are the only police station in the State to have that additional equipment. In relation to the assaults, one assaults against a police officer doing the job is one too many. We try to review those assaults in our injury review panel each month to try to stop the chance and opportunity of that happening again. Unfortunately, sometimes it will, and probably will continue, but the issues of rocks and bottles and other missiles being thrown at police is also one of concern and that occurs mainly in and around the Block. We have a strong position on that, that we will not allow that to occur and the rest will be made.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Some of the other aspects we have had in the submission is that because particularly young people are getting a lot of cautions not all the crimes are reported in the sense of why put in another caution when 20 cautions have been given already? Do you think that of this is reported?

Mr SMITH: Under the Young Offenders Act we have a range of options available to police. If the incident or the crime or the antisocial behaviour falls in the lower scale then sometimes the caution is warranted. But someone probably would not get 20 cautions. The Young Offenders Act provides an increase in the legal process commensurate with the number of times the person comes under police notice. Police do not want to go around arresting young people all time, and that is why the Young Offenders Act is there so we have a range of options for the police on the ground, depending on the crime or the incident, to retrospect that against a position in the Young Offenders Act. But if cautions were not clearly working in the next level of interaction a legal process would commence. As I said, there is strong evidence of that as well in our records where we have young people who, perhaps, cautions have not worked for would move through to the summons or appearing at local children's court.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We have been given case histories where it would seem that they have had so many cautions and the courts have seen fit to give bail again after repeated offences, and there is lack of reporting of those offenders, if you want to call them that.

Mr SMITH: Again, my position as the commander to the team is strong. Our role is to put people before the court with the best evidence we have available, or the cautioning program to the Department of Community Services or other agencies. But they really cannot become involved emotionally or corporately in bail decisions by the court. That is not our core business. We are there to provide to the courts a brief of evidence and, really, that is when I ask them to put the blinkers on and just do their role and allow other courses of action to occur.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you would argue that they are taking them to the court even if the court is giving them bail more frequently than police would have wanted?

Mr SMITH: Again, I could not speak for each individual officer on that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: There are a number of these cases. Do you review the cases of offenders who have very long records or a lot of cautions?

Mr SMITH: Yes, we work on a targeted management plan. Repeat offenders, and concentrating on repeat offenders, is part of our operating procedures each day.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I would like to ask the same question with regard to DOCS. It has been said from case histories that some of the children at risk who are reported to DOCS—and presumably do not take them from those parents and they go back to their parents—are not reported again when they are at risk.

Mr SMITH: We probably have a recent example of that in that police, being one of the few agencies around 24 hours a day, seven days a week, are often the ones providing mandatory notifications. Some of those notifications are to DOCS about children and we do work with DOCS quite closely in Redfern. Part of our recent notifications have led DOCS to remove five young people from a family within Redfern and in particular the Block. There is evidence there that we are well placed for mandatory notifications of young people and that DOCS will progress those and, if they have evidence, will take action. In this case they have seen fit to remove five young people. The issue that police do not take action down in the Block on young people is certainly not right.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would you say that more accountability is demanded of police? We have also had evidence that if a kid truants from school nobody does much about it; if the family is reported and DOCS do not fix that child nothing happens, but if the child then steals a handbag then the police are held accountable for the fact that crime rises. Would you say in that case the police are held to a higher level of accountability by the community than some other groups?

Mr SMITH: I think that is a fair statement in the sense that police are often the visible end, unfortunately, that we are there sometimes two or three o'clock in the morning, although we have street teams now that are starting to work into the wee hours. But police are there and often see the visible end of a lot of social falls and breakdown and we are there to pick up some of the pieces. But our relationships generally with those other agencies are quite tangible and are on the improve or will continue to improve.

CHAIR: While we are on the subject of children, you gave a very firm answer earlier denying that the Block was a no-go area from the point of view of police but the balance of that question deals with the suggestion some people have made that Aboriginal children in that area may feel that they are somewhat untouchable by police, perhaps because police may feel that an allegation of racism may be made if they go after children. So it is a matter of perception that has been suggested. Can you comment on that?

Mr SMITH: I probably highlighted an extreme case there in the last question with Dr Chesterfield-Evans, and that suggested that there is evidence that the police working with other agencies will take some action. So the statement that they are probably untouchable—

CHAIR: No, I meant that the suggestion is that the children feel that they are untouchable. Not that they genuinely are untouchable or that the police regard them that way, but that the children perhaps have the perception.

Mr SMITH: They are very energetic young kids and I think part of the fact that we have committed two police full-time is that they are down in the Block each day talking to the young kids, and we try to identify the ones that are not going to school and perhaps should be spending time on other activities than perhaps causing some mischief to neighbours. We do not lose sight of the fact that they are kids: that is important. The police interact with them on a daily basis and I believe from what they have seen about some kids being removed and about some action being taken on other young people that there would be a fairly clear perception in their mind that if they did the wrong thing there would be some sort of penalty, albeit maybe at the lower end of that, a caution or through to the legal process, depending on what offence they committed.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Perhaps Superintendent Smith might be able to take this question on notice—I am interested in delving a bit further into the education and development side of things—I think you said you had two full-time officers: Rebecca—

Mr SMITH: Huxtable and Trudy Rowall.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I am interested in how the 180-odd officers get the strategy that is developed by the management team down through those officers. I assume it is through those education and development officers in terms of issues like cultural sensitivities, the training with riot gear, et cetera. Could you give us some information with some written material, perhaps on notice, on how that is done?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I will take that on notice if I may.

GREG PEARCE: I know you said you were at home until about nine o'clock and that other officers were there, roughly how many local area command police officers were actually down at the riot scene at about nine o'clock?

Mr SMITH: Probably around 20, 25 police because we kept both shifts back, and that is probably 14, 15 police.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Were they equipped with the riot equipment that you had at the station at that stage?

Mr SMITH: Yes, there were nine sets and they had to seek other equipment then.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did none of those police hear or know that the locals were collecting rocks and bricks and preparing Molotov cocktails? None of the police had any inkling of any of that?

Mr SMITH: Not that I was briefed on, no, not at that point.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You would have to say that was a bit of a failure of intelligence, was it not?

Mr SMITH: Not necessarily, because at that time they may not have been gathering because in the Block traditionally the clean-up is done by people employed under the Aboriginal Housing Corporation in the Block and we had demolished part of a terrace there with Aboriginal housing and there was a lot of rubble that was around. We tried to get that cleaned up; it could not be cleaned up that weekend, and there were quite readily available some items that could have been used and gathered very quickly, within a matter of five minutes or so. So to suggest there have may have been a long plan of getting wheelie bins and for three or four hours stacking rocks, that never came through in any police intelligence, and it could have been as quickly as five minutes to do that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The OSG police we have been talking about are the ones who are specially trained for riots and they have all the shields and things, but from what has been said it sounds as though those police do not actually have the equipment with them, the equipment has to come from other places. That is why we have the differential evidence about whether you were calling for OSG police or whether you were calling for OSG equipment, is that the understanding of the police?

Mr SMITH: The majority of their stocks would be centrally stored but they do have a personal kit bag that they carry with them at their own police station. So they would bring some equipment with them, but the general stocks of the shields and helmets would come from a central storage.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was it true that a call went out or was supposed to go out for 20 OSG police at one stage and that call did not go out, to your knowledge?

Mr SMITH: There are certainly some communication issues about a call around about 9.28, a call for 20 police and some equipment. We continually called for that equipment for some time after that. So there is certainly an issue of communication there which we could improve on.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: There was also a suggestion that equipment was locked up in a van or some other implement, or whatever, that could not be opened, is that true?

Mr SMITH: There were some issues of storage of some equipment at the police centre in Sydney not being able to be accessed quickly; a lock was broken and that equipment was accessed.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You mentioned that there was a fire at the station, which we all saw. Was the school also attacked? Was there any fire at the school or any other damage to the school on the night?

Mr SMITH: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Why do you have the riot training and the riot equipment at Redfern? You said it was the only station in the State that has it.

Mr SMITH: I think one word kind of sums up the fact that it is an unpredictable command. There are issues of violence that occur and it is an additional safety measure that the police service has taken upon itself to train the police and have this equipment available to staff at Redfern.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: But when the riot actually started your police from Redfern local area command really only had very limited equipment and training to deal with it, did they not?

Mr SMITH: The majority of those police on the scene had been trained and we carry enough equipment for the first response of police—and that is basically the shift that is on—until we get additional resources in. So they had enough equipment there for the first response and we did get some other equipment in reasonably quickly.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you think that the police who were on the line were in any danger?

Mr SMITH: They were in immense danger, but that is part of policing. That is an unfortunate part of policing.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How many were injured on the night?

Mr SMITH: There was a range of injuries. There was probably a total of just under 50 police that recorded some injury. However, there was probably only one serious injury, which is the young fellow who was taken to hospital. The rest of the injuries were cuts and abrasions and the majority of police actually did not even take any time off work; they recorded the injury but did not take any time away either on sick leave or other leave. So most were back ready for duty within 24 hours.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Would you say that is a matter of good luck or good management?

Mr SMITH: I would be saying it is good management.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The Government's submission states that the effectiveness of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer [ACLO] program in Redfern is a matter of concern and is the subject of an ongoing review. What are the concerns and what is the status of the review?

Mr SMITH: Probably the review is that we need to fill all positions there. We have a third ACLO position, which is currently advertised as at today. I just want to make it clear that we support the program; the ACLO program across the State is very important. It is a very difficult job though for Aboriginal people to work alongside police, and sometimes they receive mixed messages from other Aboriginal people. Having said that, we have asked the two ACLOs at Redfern for some increased productivity and we have gone a way to improving their skills in a few areas and we will continue to do that. When a third person comes along—they come under the leadership of Darren Bennet, who is here—basically we will just sit down and work out some productivity and improvements that we think we can achieve in Redfern and Waterloo. So it is probably not working to its capacity, and we can improve it and we will.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Would you care to make a comment on what you see some of those improvements would be in the program?

Mr SMITH: I think I would like to see them interacting more amongst members of the community on a day-to-day basis and certainly providing the police with information about some of the issues that may not be reported directly to the police by Aboriginal people. So in some of the meetings that they attend, Aboriginal forums and so forth, I would like them to come back and just tell me what are the issues out there that may not be spoken to openly about the police that we can improve on, things like that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You would see it as the three positions giving very good coverage in terms of what you are looking for in the command as that liaison?

Mr SMITH: Yes, because I can rotate their shifts and we can have some ACLOs on at the weekends and on night shifts and afternoon shifts. They also provide support and when people do come into custody as well if they are Aboriginal people they will liaise as a support role as well.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So basically one of the issues at the moment is the fact that there are only two people and they really just cannot do all the things that you would like in that position. A third person would actually make it much easier to have the liaison officers doing a range of things that it is just physically impossible to do at the moment?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I think that is certainly a part of the issue.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Is it that the ACLOs become more after the event rather than a preventative? Are you saying that you need a third person to break into that preventative side of things rather than the ACLOs merely looking after people who have already been arrested?

Mr SMITH: I think it is part of our productivity improvement that we are looking at. We have had additional training and some people coming in from the Aboriginal co-ordination team, and we are just trying to focus them on getting in front of events and being more proactive in the community. That is what we are looking for from them, and I am sure we will obtain that. With three that will be much easier.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: It seems to me that you are far and away beyond normal policing and making huge endeavours with this community. You mentioned before DOCS and their role and their intervention with the family. There have been a number of comments made to us about DOCS involvement, and in fact their lack of involvement until their hand is forced. Did the removal of those children occur before or after the riot?

Mr SMITH: That occurred after the riot.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Is it your view that DOCS have been protective in their role?

Mr SMITH: I believe they have. I believe that in relation to those children we had been working with DOCS for about eight months in relation to that particular young family. So those decisions are not taken lightly and they do take time to come to fruition and decisions made. So there are a number of case management studies that we have at the moment with DOCS and I think it is the first time we have sat down with a number of agencies and probably tried to problem-solve some of the issues and provide an individual case plan for particular families—and that is under the lead of the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project. I think that now there is certainly a solid structure and an emphasis and a prioritisation of the needs of particular families and groups, and DOCS being a part of that, I see them as doing their piece.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The other comments made to us have been the numbers of organisations delivering services and the lack of co-ordination. Do you see that being a problem?

Mr SMITH: I had seen it being a problem. I believe there were a few agencies that had not been held to account and I think that one of the issues I would like to see as a recommendation from the Committee is a strong push to keep the partnership program, the Redfern-Waterloo team, because

that group, where we meet as particular agencies, is being kept focused and accountable, and we are linking in to a range of options and programs tailor made for Redfern and Waterloo. That lead group under the Premier's Department is the umbrella group where we can clearly channel our efforts because we all get pulled in a multitude of ways and at least if we can focus on one or two issues and one or two families and take the program from the start to the end, I think that is the way forward.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We have heard from a number of people about the strong role that women in the Redfern area play and continue to play, and certainly played on the night of the riot.

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do you think that there are adequate services and structures in place to assist victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, et cetera?

Mr SMITH: I could probably again only comment on the police aspect of that. There are a number of agencies that take some charter there, but in terms of police, we have been strong in talking to some of the women's groups and women on the Block particularly about coming forward and reporting crime. We did hear of some anecdotal information about sexual abuse and domestic violence occurring and that it may not have been reported. We have spoken to some of the women's groups and we have now instances in recent times of ladies coming forward and reporting sexual abuse and domestic violence and we have taken action on those two instances, which I think again sends a strong message that if you come to the police and report it, we will sit down and take the evidence and we will act if there is a case to be acted upon.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Following up on the aftermath of the riot, can you tell us how many people were charged?

Mr SMITH: Can I leave that to my colleague, who is in charge of that? Darren is in charge of that timepiece operation and will have those exact figures for you.

Mr BENNETT: We have charged 36 people at this stage. A number of others are wanted. Those 36 include the offender [name], who was wanted for the robbery at the railway station, which is linked to the activities on the weekend. There are 35 for the riot but the strike force is 36.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How many are on bail?

Mr BENNETT: All but five.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How many of those are repeat offenders?

Mr BENNETT: Look, pretty well all of them are repeat offenders. I have got a list here, which outlines their antecedents and their details and I am happy to hand that up, but to paraphrase, they are pretty well all constant offenders.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: One of those charged apparently has breached bail on five occasions, is that correct?

Mr BENNETT: I think that person you are referring to is [name], who is one of the main instigators and participants in the riot. He has been charged with breaching his bail four times since he has been bailed from court and then he failed to appear on 29 April at court. There is currently a warrant out for breach of bond.

The Hon. IAN WEST: This is not part of our terms of reference.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We are investigating events subsequent to the riots, so I think that is very clearly part of our terms of reference.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do these names have to be suppressed?

CHAIR: If it is tabled, the Committee would meet to discuss it, given that there are names in that.

Mr SMITH: We would take some legal advice about handing it up.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Could I clarify, Chair, whether those names need to be suppressed in the interests of court hearings?

CHAIR: Certainly, the Committee will discuss that if the document is, indeed, tabled.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No, the ones that have been mentioned already.

CHAIR: Yes I know, but it is for the Committee to discuss, not publicly. It is certainly an issue.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But we would have to inform the media.

CHAIR: No, we do not. The Committee will need to discuss it if the document is tabled. Would you like to go on to your question?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I was going to ask a bit more about ACLOs. Are they hard to get? Do you have difficulty filling the positions?

Mr SMITH: I have not been part of a recruitment process for ACLOS before, but I will be part of this one. We actually have a community team who has some Aboriginal people. It is called the Community Education Program [CEDP] for Aboriginal People. We have three or four of those who have been trained and working with our ACLOs over the last 18 months and we are quite hopeful that some local Aboriginal people from the CEDP in Redfern will apply for the position. Some of those we have exposed to the ACLO role in the last 18 months. They come over for three months on the training program and it is just a way that we can also be doing our bit in terms of local employment, so that I would encourage some of those people to apply.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are the ACLOs who are currently there not from the Redfern area?

Mr SMITH: Not living exactly in Redfern but certainly in Sydney. They are not from out of town.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: They are not from out of town. They are Aboriginals and they are from the Sydney area?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If not the immediate Block area?

Mr SMITH: Yes, that is my understanding.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It has been said that they are too close to the police. Could you comment on that? They are employed by the police, is that correct?

Mr SMITH: They are employed by the police, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So it is difficult for them not to be close to the police?

Mr SMITH: Yes, and they work in the police station and I think I alluded to some difficulties in their role before. It is certainly a challenging role and we need to just work through

some of the issues of those challenges with them. We have been doing that and we have been making some inroads.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do they work mainly with people who are already or are currently being charged?

Mr SMITH: No, we asked them to do a lot of community work and they do go out in the community. We are looking for some more of that, more community interaction, but they do certainly work a fair amount of time in the community.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are moving towards a more preventative role for those ACLOs?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

CHAIR: Inspector Bennett, in relation to the description you gave us earlier about your role in negotiating, particularly with Aboriginal women and the elders, can you give the Committee some insight into that, not only on the night but the ongoing relationship and how you interrelate with those women, in particular?

Mr BENNETT: On the night a number of people came forward, predominantly females, to express that they had some influence over the group that was rioting and indicated that they could take steps to stop it. So I commenced dialogue with them over an extended period about what they would require. They basically said, "If the police go away, we will go away". I informed them that that was not an option and that the people would have to disperse and stop committing offences. There was some toing and froing over a period of time and I was probably approached by half a dozen different people—all but one of them was pretty well intoxicated, I believe, and it did not really make any progress in quelling the activities at all. We have seen the footage of what happened when they went back to the group as far as the people in the group really not listening to what they had to say anyway. But there were a couple of ladies whose names escape me, but I do know them, who were extremely well meaning and made a particularly big attempt to stop what took place.

CHAIR: Were they talking to you because of your ongoing knowledge of them and their knowledge of you?

Mr BENNETT: Yes, we know them. We see them every day, a lot of them, and there are some good people down there and we talk to them constantly, so they know you from seeing you around the place and they know you are in charge of what is going on, so they said they could make an attempt to end it, and there was a concerted and honest attempt to do that by a couple of them.

CHAIR: I suppose the incidents on that night have made the relationship between yourself, the police, and those women, in particular, more difficult or is it something that you have been able to put behind you?

Mr BENNETT: It is not more difficult. We still see them every day and engage them. They still talk to you the way they used to before. There are no more people in the community to lament what happened than the Aboriginal people down there, I am sure of that, and predominantly the ladies down there, who see what goes on and do not like it. We were back down at the Block the next day engaging people in the community like we always do.

CHAIR: Ms Owens, given the length of time, 14 years, that you have been based at Redfern, can you tell us a little bit about what your job of crime prevention officer involves, how you see that task and how you carry it out?

Ms OWENS: All patrols of crime prevention officers are run differently. In Redfern, I see it as working with the community, working with government and non-government agencies, looking to reduce crime, to prevent people becoming victims of crime, working with new strategies and addressing the issues that come to play with the police in regards to crime.

CHAIR: Can you give us more specific examples of things you have done?

Ms OWENS: We do community safety audits where you get the community involved with the police and council. You walk around an area that has been identified as a hot spot area. We will come up with strategies or issues that have come out of that area. The community walk around that area as well and identify things that they are fearful about, things that they do not feel comfortable with. All these kinds of issues come out in the report and then we address the report. In particular, we did an assessment on Lawson Street and the lighting got improved; it was a hot spot area. The footpath was identified as an issue because there is a high volume of pedestrians walking along the footpath, so council came in and fixed the footpath up; and tree cutting along Lawson Street as well. The introduction of more CCTV cameras out the front of the railway station is another one. Upgrading the street lighting and working with the Aboriginal Housing Company and the Aboriginal Corporation with issues around the Block, getting appropriate organisations in to fix issues down there to prevent crime happening and to make it a safe area for people to live there and the community and the police as well. We do a lot of education material as well, documenting local papers, flyers about bag snatch offences and letterbox drops.

CHAIR: The role exists in all commands but your job is to tailor it to the particular needs of the local community and the suburbs in the command area?

Ms OWENS: I work with our intelligence office and we have a look at where crime is being committed. I will go down to that area and have a look at the environment, which is only one tool to use in crime prevention. You have a look in the area and work with different organisations to try to prevent crime happening.

CHAIR: In terms of the community safety perspective, have you been or will you be involved in discussions with the Housing Company about the redevelopment of the Block?

Ms OWENS: Yes, I have been. This has been an ongoing process. I speak to Mick Mundine a lot down at the Block, and Peter Valilis, and work with the Aboriginal Corporation. I have been working in consultation with them a lot down at the Block in regards to police down at the Block and the crime prevention strategies that we do use down there. In the 14 years that I have been there, there have been a lot of changes, especially with the Redfern-Waterloo partnership project coming on board as well. It is a useful tool for me and it is exciting for me in my role because I can actually see tangible things being done and the police are getting that assistance to help them to prevent crime happening down there as well.

CHAIR: We have a couple more minutes left. I do not think, from what has been said so far, that we need an in camera session in relation to drug dealing because I do not see that Committee members have questions that are so specific, would that be the case? Okay, we have another two or three minutes to go and we have one last written question that we gave you. Dr Chesterfield-Evans?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Over the 14 years that you have been in Redfern can you indicate changes in the nature of crime, changes in the nature of the community—relationships with people—and whether things are getting better or worse and, if so, how?

Ms OWENS: That is a huge question.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is a big question, I know, but it would be a shame to have someone who has been there for 14 years and not ask the question.

Ms OWENS: The relationship between police and the local community has improved. I go down the Block by myself three or four times a week. I have never had an issue down there. If a local from outside the area comes into the Block and starts giving me a hard time, the local people will actually tell them to pull their head in because I am the local community liaison officer. When I first got to Redfern there was a lot more alcohol abuse. Alcohol was the main issue there. Now there is alcohol and drug abuse and also with the redevelopment of the area you have got a lot of wealthy people coming into the area, and trying to integrate the wealthy with the old and the people who have not got much money—integration is difficult as well. There is a lot of change throughout the area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think that the community is better off or worse off?

Ms OWENS: I think it is definitely better off. For me, it is so exciting doing the crime prevention role because I can actually see tangible things happening and speaking to the community of a lot of the time, they say, "We have got long-term strategies" and they want to see things happening and now they can see the redevelopment of the Block and abandoned terraces actually being pulled down and that the back of the Aboriginal Housing Company has been blocked up—25 Louis Street has been blocked up. They can see the changes around the area. There are tangible things that they can see. Personally, I think that a lot of the changes are changes for the better.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When Mr Waites arrived what changes occurred in the tactics that the police employed?

Mr SMITH: There were probably not a lot of visible changes, sir, in that we were still waiting for some resources to arrive. When those resources arrived we then moved forward and the riot was finished. There probably were not a great lot of changes in tactics and strategies.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: But you had been moving forward and back prior to that time.

Mr SMITH: Yes, but there were no additional strategies.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you think the tactic of forming a line and basically putting police officers at risk is the best tactic in dealing with a riot of that sort?

Mr SMITH: On the night, sir, they were the resources that we had available to us and that was our option on the night. We stand by that tactic.

CHAIR: We are almost out of time. Finally, what would you like to see come out of our inquiry?

Mr SMITH: There are a couple of points. I think it is clear that, as a policing jurisdiction goes, it is one of the most challenging police jurisdictions in Sydney. There should be a recognition that the police, for the most part, get up and have a go each day in a difficult and unpredictable command. I am very happy to be their leader there. Some nights I get out of bed and go back to Redfern. It is a challenge each day but we will keep going. We can see improvements in Redfern and Waterloo. I think all agencies have a way to go with that, and will continue to do that. From the Committee's point of view, we are seeking recognition that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project is an agent that I would like to see stay. As an umbrella group, it allows agencies to meet, sit down and case-manage particular families.

We are now seeking intervention from the Privacy Commissioner to share information between agencies officially. That is a great step forward. We are all probably working on the same groups but there are a lot of rules about privacy. We understand that but we also see a need to deal with cross-agency matters. We need to share information. That is starting to happen and we look forward to that increasing. We want recognition generally that we are trying our best and will continue to do so. That is it from my point of view, unless my colleagues have anything to add. Georgie is very happy that some things are changing; she has seen that happen. It is good that someone who has been there for 14 years still turns up each day with a smile on her face.

Mr BENNETT: I hope that the scrutiny and the interest continue. We have a good police station down there. We have the right people in the jobs. We have the drug team doing the job. It is very junior but they are second to none in the State in their enthusiasm and skill level. We will just keep going as long as people keep monitoring what happens. There is certainly less heroin now than there was six months ago and there will be less heroin again in six months time. I hope that the interest in the area keeps up because it will change only if people keep monitoring what is going on down there.

Mr SMITH: I think we need the collective support of the decent people in the community—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—for the police. If we get that support the job is a lot easier to do. Give

us the information, talk to us—if we need to do something extra, talk to us about that; if we are doing a good job, let us know. We need greater community interaction.

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee and sharing your views and information with us. We have put one question on notice from Mr West and the secretariat will give you the details of that.

Mr SMITH: Thank you very much for your time. We look forward to the Committee's recommendations.

(The witnesses withdrew)

CHARLES EDWARD RICHARDSON, Co-ordinator, Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: In what capacity are you appearing before the Committee?

Mr RICHARDSON: I am appearing in two capacities: first, as Co-ordinator of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, for which I work and on behalf of which I have made a submission; and I am also wearing the hat of convener of the South Sydney Interagency. I should state that the submission I made on behalf of the South Sydney Interagency arose out of a brainstorming session. I simply put dot points taken down at that session into a more narrative form.

CHAIR: Thank you. As you are aware, our questions relate fundamentally to your capacity as co-ordinator of your agency. But I think it would be sensible for you to make a comment on behalf of the broader interagency group whenever it seems appropriate to do so, regardless of whether we specifically ask you to do that. Most of the questions have a broader aspect.

Mr RICHARDSON: They do. There is no real conflict between the two submissions.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Which organisations make up the inter-agency?

Mr RICHARDSON: About 40-odd, so I will not try to name them from memory. They are the government and non-government organisations within the old South Sydney area, which includes Redfern and Waterloo, of course. The organisations deliver human services in South Sydney. The brainstorming session I referred to encompassed only those services operating in or delivering to Redfern and Waterloo.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Could you provide a list of the organisations?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, I can certainly do that.

CHAIR: Are the agencies listed in your submission?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, they are not. I will provide a list of brainstorming participants.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: That will give the Committee an idea of where the group is coming from.

CHAIR: In effect that is a question on notice, so Committee staff will contact you. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr RICHARDSON: My organisation covers the inner-city and the entire eastern suburbs, and Redfern-Waterloo is only a small part of that. I am not a service deliverer on the ground, we are regional. However, a lot of my activities end up being related to issues arising in the Redfern-Waterloo area, because of the number of social problems there. It is also the location of my office.

CHAIR: Could you give a brief overview of the role of your organisation? If you wish, you could tell the Committee about the inter-agency as well.

Mr RICHARDSON: With a representative from the Redfern Legal Centre I helped convene the South Sydney inter-agency, which will become a City of Sydney inter-agency. I have that role, which obviously has a bearing on Redfern and Waterloo. Also, I convened and chair the Community Services Grants Program Forum, which covers that area. We publish a magazine, called *Inner Voice*, which has carried articles about that area. I included an article from that magazine in my submission, particularly focused on the RED strategy.

CHAIR: The RED strategy, is Redfern-Eveleigh-Darlington?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, but it has grown now to encompass a much bigger area.

CHAIR: Do you want to put anything on the record about the actual role the organisations play? Or, will that become clear during your evidence?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think it will become clear.

CHAIR: Would you give a snapshot of the disadvantage you referred to in your submission that the Redfern-Waterloo area faces?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes. You may be aware that Professor Tony Vinson has carried out a study of disadvantage in various communities. Waterloo, in particular, came up as the most disadvantaged Sydney urban postcode. That has been reaffirmed in a recent work by him. Much of that disadvantage, quite apart from all the disadvantages which apply to Aboriginal people around the Block, is concentrated in the public housing estates of Redfern and Waterloo, which together comprise about a third of all public tenants in the metropolitan area. Although it was done with the best of intentions at the time, the establishment of those estates, which originally had a population that could be called the working poor—people on low incomes—over a period, because more public housing has not been built, partly because of the breakdown or lack of funds flowing through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, very little public housing has been built. The Department of Housing has had to prioritise who is housed.

That has had the unintended effect of creating a ghetto is disability in that area and of other forms of disadvantage. As I wrote in my submission, a community made up of the very old living next door to someone just out of gaol next door to someone that does not have a language in common next door to someone with a physical disability next door to someone with schizophrenia, that does not help make a strong community, as you can imagine. The community does have its strengths and there are a few and a dwindling number of community leaders in the area. But that most applies to the older population, the population which had moved into that area decades ago, and are the residual tenants I mentioned who used to live there: the working poor who are now retired.

In their old age, of course, they have had to cope with an influx of people who, to them, must sometimes appear to come from out of space. In a way it is a tribute to their resilience and tolerance that the community does get on at least as well as it does. So it is an area with multiple disadvantages, not only of poverty but also, as I say, disability and general dislocation from the area. Some areas are worse than others, or more difficult to live in than others, is a better way to put it.

CHAIR: Is the area changing with more affluent people moving in?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, it is and that is a point which needs to be borne in mind when you look at statistical information about the Redfern and Waterloo areas. I have noticed that in some submissions percentages are given, for instance, for level of education and ages at which people leave school, and so on. What needs to be borne in mind is that as well as public tenants there are quite a number of students, people working for tertiary institutions and other people who simply have quite high qualification levels. If you take that into account it paints an even bleaker picture of the educational attainment of people on the estates, for instance. That probably applies to quite a few other spheres as well.

It is becoming a population at one end of which is very disadvantaged while at the other end it is well above the average level of advantage, or even income. It is worth noting that the average mortgage repayment for those people who are paying mortgages in that area is about \$200 a month higher than the Sydney average. So you have both ends, and not much in the middle.

CHAIR: Some of that high degree of difference produces its own tensions?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, and that is one of the concerns about the direction of the RED Strategy. There has not been any discussion of what kind of social mix is sought. We have just got this term "a better social mix", without much exploration apparently being done into what kind of social mix is actually sought or how fine grain or coarse grain that mix would be. I mean by that, whether it is unit by unit, block by block, half a suburb by half a suburb, or what the intention is.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What do you think about the number and nature of services in Redfern and Waterloo? Are there effective organisations? Could they be more effective and, if so, how?

Mr RICHARDSON: There appears to be about 100, but it is very difficult to estimate in the sense that you have to try to include organisations which are based in that area and carry out work in that area, and organisations based in other areas which have a service operating in that area, and so on. It is a bit of a tangled web. It does superficially look like there are a lot of agencies operating in that area, and you could ask why. One thing to understand about the area is that in some respects it is very tribal in the sense that there are groups of people who identify as groups and do not necessarily get on with other groups—that applies particularly to youth. It would not necessarily be helpful, for instance, to lump three of the main youth groups together and expect that that is going to function well if the participants and their activities do not get on with each other.

The same applies to a lesser extent to organisations and services for older people. It interests me that very often people say almost in a rote fashion that it is a very strong community. There are ways in which it is not. It is also riven with divisions. The services which have grown up have grown up around the population, around communities within that broader community. To a degree they are owned by the people, they are its members and they elect its management committee. I think that that sense of ownership is actually a helpful thing because it actually gives people involvement in the running of those organisations which assists them or their neighbours.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How can the organisations be more effective in relation to co-ordination or funding?

Mr RICHARDSON: I certainly do not want to describe the agencies in that area as being resistant to change, for its own sake, but one of the things which is very frustrating is that a lot of these services have a level of funding which appears more to be like a pilot level of funding. They sort of scratch the surface and it is irritating that so often those services are looked at with a pre-supposition that there is something wrong with them because some do not appear to be getting a lot done. The fact is that many of them are funded to employ a worker and pay the basic administration costs of that worker being there, but there are no funds for them to actually do something with.

One case in point is my own organisation that is funded by the Department of Housing under the Housing Communities Assistance Program to supply a community development worker to work on the Redfern/Waterloo estates. That is one worker to cover one-third of the public tenants in the metropolitan area in one of the most highly disadvantaged and varied communities one could imagine. It is extremely difficult for that worker to actually accomplish something. There is a system of neighbourhood advisory boards which are made up of elected precinct representatives and other service providers, and it is as much as you can do to get to each of the meetings of those precincts and those neighbourhood advisory boards and to try to cope with some of the work which derives out of those meetings. It simply is not enough. The funding does not even cover the cost of our employing that worker. There is something like a \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year subsidy that our organisation has to put into that, without charging its share of the rent, so it is woefully underfunded.

I have just given that example of one of the services in the area and it is completely unrealistic to think that person is going to be able to carry out significant community development work by herself. It is extremely taxing. It is a very difficult area in which to work. There are challenging behaviours every day, and I am really glad we can hang on to her, but it is a very tough role that she has got.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In an ideal world how would you resolve the lack of co-ordination and inappropriate funding?

Mr RICHARDSON: It is probably best to carry out an in-depth needs analysis of the area, which I do not believe has been done, and to look at the services which exist, first, before throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Then see which of those services, could, with a small increase in funding, greatly increase their capacity to deliver services. They are funded to the extent that they can exist—they have got a worker, a filing cabinet, a telephone—and additional funding would almost go in to delivery of more service. As I said, one of the comments made in an earlier interagency was

"they starve us with funds and then blame us for being skinny". Even now, with the review of community services being carried out by Morgan Disney, the clear message is there is no more money. There will not be any more money. We have just got to try to squeeze more out of what we have got.

CHAIR: Would it be better to halve the number of services, reduce the overlaps and the administration costs and try to get out of the silos—like your funding coming from the Department of Housing and so on?

Mr RICHARDSON: It would be great to have a discussion with government as a whole because it is taking a whole-of-government approach incorporating all of the services for their input too. We do not find that is happening. For instance, the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project may have called one meeting of service providers in the area to discuss these issues. Unfortunately, nearly everything it does consists of them giving information and not really taking much back at all. The community sector down there should feel it is taking part in a real discussion and could have some real effect on what the future might hold for the area in terms of service provision, not only in service provision but also some of the structural issues.

I do not think that services are necessarily the answer to everything. The place is badly set up, and the suburbs have artificially created communities—I am not blaming those who established the estates who thought they were doing the right thing—and it has evolved into a nightmare. Not everything is answered just by throwing more services at things. I think that the services that are there could contribute to a discussion about that sort of structural stuff too. Unfortunately, there is not a level of trust between the community sector in that area and the partnership project, and that is very unfortunate.

CHAIR: Why is that?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think a lot of us felt quite hopeful about the whole idea at the beginning and we find ourselves very disillusioned by the process so far. As I say, they have called, I think, one meeting of service providers together. They seem to be unwilling to really state what they want to do and to share information. The RED Strategy is a major case in point. When the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project first came on the scene it came with a meeting of the interagency.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: When was that?

Mr RICHARDSON: In 2001. Its officers came to the interagency and told us a couple of things, one was that there would be a review of the human services in the area, and another was a little bit about the Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington [RED], strategy which is now expanded to cover a bigger area than that, and that there would be a lot of consultation and that we have never seen the kind of consultation that we would see. Then we did not see them any more. We have had to seek meetings with them instead. In terms of the review of human services, as I said, that was mentioned in 2001 that that would happen and yet it is not until January of this year that it was begun. It was begun not by the project itself but by consultants from Canberra who seem to be doing the best job they can but they got a very limited time and it was not helped by the fact, I think, that the partnership project was unable to supply them with a list of the services in the area after 2½ years of being there.

In terms of the RED Strategy, we found out in June last year that it had expanded from being about streetscapes and open space around the Block, Redfern Station and along Redfern Street to becoming what appears to be a sales drive to developers to sell off every single piece of public land in Redfern and Waterloo, including all of the public housing. When I say that I am talking about finding a couple of statements at their exhibition.

CHAIR: Are you referring to your submission?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes. I have reproduced in it information that was on one of the boards.

CHAIR: You are referring to the third or fourth page of your submission.

Mr RICHARDSON: It is what I call an exhibition but what was called a consultation at the time. The last dot point under the heading "Existing" states:

The largest landholdings in the area are the former Eveleigh rail yards, the Department of Housing estates and the Sydney University's Darlington campus.

Under the heading "Potential", the second dot point states:

The extensive government landholdings allow extensive redevelopment opportunities.

When I questioned that more fully, I established that it does include the public housing estates. As I said before, that is one-third of all public housing in the metropolitan area. It is downright alarming to find that it had evolved into something absolutely different from what it first appeared to be. There is still no clear message about what kind of redevelopment that might be. I am not given to understand that it means shipping all public tenants out the area and sending them off west as some people believe; but it certainly seems to be about looking at the low-density, low-rise areas of public housing in the area, which is the better form of housing so far as most people are concerned, rather than at the town blocks, taking some of those areas, bulldozing them, rebuilding public housing on half the site and putting a private development on the other half so that both of them become high density. With no clarity about the intent, I am almost surmising because I can see a small or miniature version of that RED strategy occurring in relation to public housing along Elizabeth Street near the Redfern Oval, where that is exactly what is planned.

CHAIR: When you refer to this issue are you talking about rumours that are circulating, or about people who are referring to different things, but nothing specific is accessible to an organisation such as yours?

Mr RICHARDSON: All we have from the partnership project is what is available publicly. Among that is the stuff that was exhibited on 11 June last year, which I have to say looks a lot more like an exhibition for would-be developers to look at and encourage them to buy into the area, rather than consultation with the community about what might be best for the future of the area. All we have is that bald notion that it is up for grabs. As I said, I believe it was a mistake to have built that quantity of public housing all in one place. Some things need to change. I think there is a great danger that the changes will be driven in the end by what developers want to do and where they want to do it, and the capacity of the Department of Housing to re-house people. Of course, if you knock down low-rise dwellings you have fewer people to re-house than if you knocked down high-rise dwellings. If you knock down high-rise dwellings you do not free up much space. So I am not entirely sure whether that will improve matters for public tenants at all.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: When you talk about the social mix, you are referring to high-rise apartments with some land around them and to preferred low-rise units. You would be battling to increase the number of people in such an area. If you built more low-rise dwellings you would reduce the number of people.

Mr RICHARDSON: No, because the intention is to take those low-rise areas, bulldoze them and turn them into high-density public housing on the sites on which low-density public housing once stood.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But there is not that much low-density public housing in that area, is there?

Mr RICHARDSON: There is a fair bit. Not all of it is obvious. Some of it is terraced housing. Others, like the bit along Elizabeth Street, involve two-storey and three-storey buildings on small blocks surrounded by grass.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You could not get much higher density housing than that, could you?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think you could.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We are talking about the problems of high density.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, I know. I see it as a problem. The intention is to increase the population of the area by 50 per cent. Bear in mind, of course, that the current population has the lowest car ownership in the State, and that new people moving into the area are far more likely to have cars. That will have an impact on busy inner city streets. Why a better social mix, as it is called, is seen as desirable is on the vague premise that people will see alternative ways of living as they are growing up and they will see what they might otherwise aspire to.

Upper and middle-class people are perhaps more demanding of services and so on. They have squeakier wheels and they will bring benefits to the area. They might bring employment to the area and other vaguely held ideas. I do not know whether that necessarily would be the case or whether the new people would shop in the same places, use the same facilities, or have friends around there, or whether, for them, it would be a dormitory.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So there is a danger that the poorer people will simply have very rich neighbours who will keep to themselves in mini-gated communities?

Mr RICHARDSON: At the extreme end, yes, that is a concern. It would also cause greater social divisions and jealousies. Even today some people are fearful about going into that area. I can see a likely desire by new residents to have quite high levels of security which, in turn, will build up resentment.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes. We did not get an answer to our question as to whether or not there would be some affluent housing in the Block redevelopment, for example, which surprised me a little. You are saying that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project seems to be real estate driven. It appears to be interfaced with real estate development and the Aboriginal housing company, but not with more community-based organisations?

Mr RICHARDSON: If you want to think of the RED strategy as being a division of the partnership project, that aspect of it is certainly not something on which the partnership project has deeply sought the views of the community sector. Its consultations with the general population have been carried out in such a way that it has only succeeded in making them angry. As I said, on 11 June two consultations were held. However, as I said earlier, they were more like exhibitions; they were not consultations.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: They did not seek an input; they were simply telling you what they were doing.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes. They were not a bunch of people in a room being told things, listening to other people's questions and coalescing around ideas. People were walking around a board at any time between certain times and consultants were speaking to them. No material was given to people to take away to reflect on later or to share with their neighbours. The daytime exhibition was held in a very small park close to the Block, and a lot of people will not go there. The one in the evening was held at the same time as a major State of Origin match, which was televised. When people attend big public meetings there is perhaps 15 or 20 minutes at the end of the meeting when they are able to say something in reply to the information with which they have just been bombarded. A great deal of anger has been expressed at those meetings about the expectation that people are able to comment on such a huge amount of non-information.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think that it is real estate driven? This issue will be cost neutral because of the involvement of the private sector in flogging off some of the land. Is this area not just a real estate development?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do have that concern. I have a more full concern, though, that whatever the intention at the moment, as things roll on there will be a temptation to go for whatever delivers the best return to government and perhaps to friends of government in the development industry. On the one hand you have a somewhat wishy-washy desired social outcome of a better social

mix. On the other hand you have—I did back-of-the-envelope calculation—what looks like \$1.5 billion worth of development. I leave it to you to wonder which of those will mostly drive what occurs.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You referred in your submission to unit costing. Could you define what you mean by Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care [DADAHC] unit costing?

Mr RICHARDSON: Unit costing is an attempt by DADAHC to move from a situation in which it funds organisations to use its best efforts to meet needs, to one in which it purchases services for a stated price per occasion of service. One of the most difficult examples is in things such as community transport where you might attempt to use each passenger trip, for instance, as a unit of service. The problems of doing that are manifold. One is that, obviously, community transport operates across New South Wales. To deliver, say, 10 community transport passenger trips in the Redfern-Waterloo area would be totally different from doing that 70 kilometres west of Bourke, as the logistics are completely different. It does not seem to recognise that there are a great many different types of benefits that go with the provision of a service that is not always necessarily about the service itself.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you might use unit costing as a reality check, but not as a major funding item?

Mr RICHARDSON: Unit costing is really good for the manufacturer of nuts and bolts. I do not think it is something that you can usefully apply to human services, in the sense that every area has its own characteristics, constraints and opportunities. To attempt to bring everything down to whatever number of dollars and cents is the average for the delivery of that service simply is not realistic. I think the department is turning itself inside out trying to work out ways to bring this about when it is actually just not a suitable regimen.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: On page 2 of your submission you refer to the high turnover of police commanders and Aboriginal community liaison officers. Would you comment on the impact of that frequent turnover on police in the Redfern-Waterloo area?

Mr RICHARDSON: I am repeating concerns expressed to me by people in the police service and also by other community members. It seems that when there has been trouble the response has been to say, "Let us change commanders". I actually am quite concerned about the big turnover of police Aboriginal community liaison officers. By its nature that position requires someone to stay in place for a considerable period of time to build up trust. In one year there were four different Aboriginal liaison officers, which obviously gives them an average term of three months.

CHAIR: Currently there are two positions, with a third one having been advertised. So are you saying that there are four people in two positions during the year, or four people in one position?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, I am actually going back two years. I believe at that time there was only one. I could be mistaken about that. There certainly was that level of turnover. It has to be an extremely uncomfortable position to occupy. There is the potential of being seen as a traitor to either side. Also, as I understand it, it is not a position that is anywhere on the ladder of promotion. When you go in there you go sideways, you do not go up. You have to come back into the stream to go up. It is a position that obviously requires quite a degree of sensitivity and assertiveness at the same time. It must be quite difficult to find appropriate officers for that position. Perhaps they need to look at how it is paid, and at the other conditions of that job or something. I do not think that having that level of turnover can possibly be constructive.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Could the same not be said about other local area commands? I am aware of some where they have ethnic liaison officers. There might be a similar problem there.

Mr RICHARDSON: That might well be the case. That is actually outside my experience. I can only talk about what I have observed in Redfern and Waterloo.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: That comment might extend to some of the issues relating to community liaison officers in other areas of policing.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, I would agree with that generally.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Is it an issue about which we need some more information? What is the turnover of those sorts of positions? I refer to the effectiveness of strategies in dealing with local incidents. On page 2 of your submission you referred to the establishment of a body similar to a tactical response group?

Mr RICHARDSON: I have heard of the desirability of that being raised in police circles. Part of my response is actually from personal experience in London where they have a body that is called the Tactical Response Group. At the time that I lived there that group would get around in transit vans, zipping out to what were perceived as problem events, some of which would simply be late-night parties. Once you establish a group like that you have to use it to justify its existence. It takes on the appearance of an occupying army rather than a police force. The people who choose to make up its number are not necessarily a cross-section of police; they are police who see that as a role they would like to carry out.

I do not think that is the answer. It would create almost a paramilitary force to come and whack people when there is trouble. We need a better preparedness for events such as the riot that occurred. But I think that should be done by officers in that local area, plus people from neighbouring areas that they could call in for support. They need to be trained to deal with that kind of situation, and they need to know how to look after themselves, their colleagues and the public in that situation. But the creation of some kind of elite force whose job it is to whack people back into their houses I do not think is the way to go. I think that local police would actually suffer the consequences of that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What is your view of effective policing in the area?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think they need more numbers. They certainly need better premises, as their premises are awful. They require a number of people to do the job properly and those people must stay around and gain the experience and wisdom of working in that area in the long term. If they need incentives to do that, perhaps those incentives should be applied. I was referring earlier to the frustration of local community services. The Government seems to want to do anything but spend some money on the area. I imagine that the police must feel much of that same frustration. We must recognise that it is a troubled area in many ways and it will take a lot to fix it.

To try to fix it in the longer term is partially about undoing the concentration of disadvantage in the area. In the short-term to medium-term we need people who can build up some experience of the area. They should get to know the people; they should get to know who is prominent; and they should get to know who they can talk to in order to stop trouble before it develops too much. They should just do ordinary police work, but with the resources that they need.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What would be your view of the relationship between, say, young people and police in the area?

Mr RICHARDSON: It is usually varied. There are police who engage constructively with that community. There are other police who have been seen driving past concentrations of Aboriginal people holding up their tie, which reflects on the notion that they should hang themselves.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Have you seen that?

Mr RICHARDSON: I have not. However, Reverend John McIntyre, with whom I often work closely, has seen that.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I refer to your comments about police turnover, et cetera. You said earlier that when there is trouble the first reaction seems to be to change commanders. Given that comment, would you support the retention of Superintendent Dennis Smith at Redfern rather than being moved elsewhere?

Mr RICHARDSON: He seems to be highly regarded. I do not have a great deal of personal experience of him. I support the notion that, unless there is a problem with a person doing his or her job, we should keep that person and he or she can build up more knowledge of the area. As I said earlier, I believe that he is well regarded in the area. So, yes, I would support his retention.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You referred earlier to long-term truancy or school absence?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think that the closure of Redfern school made that situation worse?

Mr RICHARDSON: I would say that it has not helped. I do not think that is the major impact of the closure of Redfern Public School. I will refer to that matter in a minute. Let me refer, first, to truancy. According to the 1996 census—I have not actually looked at this aspect in the 2001 census—some 25 per cent of children in that area are not going to school. What that statement means is not that they are taking the day off—they are just not going at all. At the same time as saying that, I think we have to exercise some caution because that seems like an extraordinarily high number and we should look at the figures more closely.

CHAIR: That issue was dealt with at some considerable length by an upper House committee that inquired into the proposal to close the schools. I was a member of that committee. I think it was established fairly definitely that that figure embodied a lot of confusion. Children were going to schools outside the area in which they resided so it related more to census and school boundaries. I forget all the details, but I could clarify that issue. I remember a great deal of highly specific information that suggested that figure was highly misleading.

Mr RICHARDSON: One of the figures about which we should be sceptical is the figure of the Department of Education and Training. It refers to children who are enrolled at the school and who are absent on various days. It does not include statistics relating to children who are not enrolled. You have to watch out for both of those figures. I do not think that the figures of the Department of Education and Training are reliable. There was some thought that perhaps the census figure appeared so high because of misunderstandings. There are a lot of people whose first language is not English and so on in the area. If you compare it with Marrickville, which also has a great many people from a diversity of backgrounds, it is not reflected there. So I think it is something that should be checked out.

CHAIR: This Committee will go through the report and the transcripts of that inquiry. As I said earlier, I remember the issue being dealt with in some detail. A number of statisticians and others spoke to that inquiry. I could not, off the top of my head, go through all those statistics, but it is something on which we can check. We will be talking to people from the Department of Education and Training over the next few weeks.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Bill Crewes works with kids individually. He does a lot of work in that area. Are there similar models to the model that he is using?

Mr RICHARDSON: A number of youth services spend some of their time working one on one with the kids, yes. I believe that the police and citizens youth club is doing a pretty good job. There is also the Factory Youth Centre and South Sydney Youth Services. All three of those organisations are familiar, on an individual basis, with their young clients. I have not seen Bill Crewes' organisation in operation, so I cannot do a comparison for you. As you have seen in my submission, I was not too impressed with his statement that, as there are 80 community welfare agencies in the area, he does not understand why it is in this mess.

I do not think that statement was very helpful. It seems to imply that those 80 organisations have some kind of a brief to stop trouble when, in fact, the majority of them offer services to older people, such as community transport and meals on wheels. I do not know what Meals on Wheels is supposed to do about it. You asked me earlier about the impact of the closure of Redfern Public School. It seems odd to close small, locally based schools when one of the pushes from the New South

Wales Government is for local schools to be used as community centres. It helps a community to be cohesive if parents meet their kids after school on a local basis. I understand that the school that has replaced it—Alexandria Park Community School—is a very good school, but it is very large and it is not local.

I do not think you get that same sense of community among parents when they meet their kids, take them home, or whatever. There are a number of other services in that school building. If it is sold off, which appears to be the plan, the future of those services will become difficult. Real estate in inner Sydney is extremely expensive. Generally there is not a component for rent, given the funding of various organisations. They tend to rely on getting premises at peppercorn rents. The more public property that is sold off, the less there is available for that kind of purpose.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We have also agreed that there will be a 50 per cent increase in housing.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I want to explore some of the general comments that you made in your submission. You said that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project was established following rioting in Waterloo; that this Committee has been established following those riots; and, to quote you, "The Government is not prepared to undertake any initiative in the area until people throw rocks." What lesson does that send to the area? That would seem to suggest that you do not think that governments play an active enough role in that area. Would that be right?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, it is. The problems of Redfern and Waterloo did not begin three years ago, nor did they subside with the establishment of the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project nor would I expect it to in that three years. On any indicator that you care to look at, as I have said, it is one of the most disadvantaged areas you could possibly find. There are drugs, early deaths, assault, and an extremely high concentration of people with psychiatric disabilities. It should have been obvious long ago that the area needs a good looking at. Hopefully that would have taken place with a great deal of consultation rather than the somewhat superficial and spurious consultations we have had. I just do not think it has delivered the goods in that sense.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What way forward would you suggest in terms of the Government's role?

Mr RICHARDSON: In a way I wish that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project could be begun all over again on a fresh footing. It does need a whole-of-government approach. It does need all of the community organisations and the community itself to be part of what occurs. At the same time as saying that, I do recognise that it is an extremely difficult community to consult and to bring into these processes. As I said, it is in many ways a very fractured community. Levels of education are not high. Levels of literacy are not looking that good. A lot of the older community leaders have died over time. Others are simply too old to continue functioning in that same sort of way. They have not been replaced. There are fresh people in the area whose agendas might be totally different from the longer-term population. I am not claiming that it is easy to do, but I think time and resources need to be devoted to it and not just sort of seizing on a few glib answers, "Let's change the social mix. Let's reshape the services." It has to be thought out and explained every step of the way.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What are you hoping we will achieve with this inquiry?

Mr RICHARDSON: I hope that you are able to hear from people who are able to give the other side of the story, the balance, to the Government's own submissions to this inquiry. I think it would be great if this inquiry could make a visit to Redfern and Waterloo again. I know you have been there and spoken to, I believe it was mostly, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people. It would be good to repeat that exercise, I think, with the South Sydney interagency and hear from service providers, and maybe hold a public meeting, too. If that were a possibility I think that would be great. Just give us a couple of weeks to organise that and it would happen.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I think we would be really keen to do that. I do not know about the rest of the Committee, but we will take it on board.

CHAIR: We are planning whatever forums and so on. We have been talking about that since the Committee was established. Our time has elapsed. Councillor Pooley has been sitting there and has heard a lot of what you have said. He may well be able to comment on some of that. Thank you for coming. I hope we have been able to take up the points between the two submissions, your own organisation and the interagency one. But if you feel there is something you need to get back to us on, please feel free to do so. We had one question on notice, which we will be able to give you in precise form.

(The witness withdrew.)

ANTHONY ROBERT POOLEY, affirmed and examined

CHAIR: We need your full name and the capacity or capacities in which you are appearing before us.

Mr POOLEY: I would just seek your guidance a little bit here. I read the submission personally, and did not have a council to run it past. I was going to appear as a private citizen, if that was okay.

CHAIR: We will ask the questions in your private capacity, but we are aware that as Mayor of South Sydney and currently a councillor of the City of Sydney you have had, obviously, a great deal of experience in the programs and so on that operate. We realise that you have changed hats, so to speak, while our processes have been on. Did you want to say anything other than that, or shall we go into the questions?

Mr POOLEY: I think the questions are probably the main thing. Usually you give people the opportunity to wrap up at the end, and I will do that very briefly if you have not covered something I want to say.

CHAIR: Bearing in mind that you are appearing before us in your private capacity, nevertheless it would be helpful if you could give us an overview of your previous responsibilities in relation to Redfern and Waterloo as Mayor of South Sydney and now as a councillor of the city.

Mr POOLEY: I have been lucky to live in Redfern for 14 years. I have been a councillor for four years. I was mayor for 18 months. I am still a councillor on the City of Sydney. I am sure Committee members are aware that we do not have a ward-based system, so councillors are elected across the area. But certainly Redfern, Waterloo, Darlington, that area south of Cleveland Street if I can put it as generally as that, is an area of particular focus to me. I intend it to remain my focus while I am a councillor on the City of Sydney. Council signed up to a memorandum of understanding with the project, with the Aboriginal Housing Company and with Sydney university. The project represents all of the State Government agencies in the area. We were happy to do that. A fairly straightforward memorandum, exchange of information, consult with respective organisations, take decisions and set up a series of subcommittees. I am sure the Committee is aware of that. I am not sure whether I am answering your question. Is that the kind of information you want?

CHAIR: Yes, that is fine.

Mr POOLEY: We were an enthusiastic participant, if I can go that far as to say that. A whole-of-government approach is what is needed in the area, so the project, we felt, gave us an opportunity to do that.

CHAIR: When you say "we", I guess you are speaking about both the councillors and council staff who, for instance, have been involved?

Mr POOLEY: Very much so. Like all of these things it is the staff of not only a council but also organisations that are having the day-to-day meetings. Those of us who flap around at the top just come together.

CHAIR: You probably arrived after we asked Mr Richardson a very similar question about the demographics of the area we are talking about and how you would describe the major areas of social disadvantage. Would you like to expand on that?

Mr POOLEY: It would be easy for you to access the details. Waterloo is between 75 per cent and 85 per cent public housing tenants and approximately one-third of Redfern is. If we have a look at the broader area, I think one of the difficulties that all of us face is that we have a significantly poor section of the population. We have the gentrified section. What we do not have is that group in the middle and that is certainly part of council's focus and I think that is a focus that will be picked up by the City of Sydney as well. Obviously, with those two groups tensions arise. We are not the only suburb that has those tensions. Relatively recent residents come in and now pay \$500,000 for a terrace

and that is starkly different to a significant chunk of the population that is living on less than \$300 a week, and they are overwhelmingly concentrated in public housing.

I will just add one more thing. One of the difficulties that we face, even as the council as an employer, is getting people to fill those jobs, in my view very important jobs, and they range from people in cleansing services to childcare services, those lower-skilled jobs. Many of those people are now coming from outside because, unless you have inherited a house from your parents you cannot afford to live in the area and undertake those jobs. That gets back to an issue about affordable housing. I think it is something, amongst the myriad of issues that the Committee looks at, that needs to be looked at. We are in the what, in my view, is the ridiculous position where we can levy an affordable housing levy in Green Square but we cannot levy one in Redfern. If ever there is an area that required an affordable housing levy, in my view, it is Redfern and Waterloo, and it should be higher than the current—

CHAIR: Why is that? Is it because Green Square is a new large development?

Mr POOLEY: Council is only allowed to levy it in the areas where the State Government has allowed us to. Green Square is a growth area and in order to look at that diversity of housing we are allowed to levy it in Green Square, but that is the only area in the whole of the City of Sydney where we can levy on developers an affordable housing levy. And given that there is redevelopment already under way and it will come to Redfern and Waterloo I think it is very important that we get an affordable housing levy in that area in order to, at least, make some attempt to have that balance of housing.

CHAIR: Some of this would come back to the changes we have already heard and we know of. Whereas the public housing originally catered for a mix of working people on relatively low incomes, et cetera, the people now occupying the public housing, on the whole, are not in the work force and, therefore, are not able to fill the jobs you are describing?

Mr POOLEY: I think that is exactly accurate. The percentage of people who would hold down jobs and remain in public housing, in my view, has not only declined but is now so small as to be not a significant group in the public housing estates.

CHAIR: That is partly because of the level of social disadvantage needed to get a house and also because of the ageing of the people who originally went into it?

Mr POOLEY: Absolutely. A very high percentage of people are above 65 and a correspondingly tiny percentage, comparatively tiny percentage, of young people are between the ages of five and 14. That review that the State Parliament does on electorates, I think if you have a look at the latest Bligh one, I think Bligh has the lowest number of young people between the age of five and 14 of any electorate in New South Wales.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In relation to your comment on the affordable housing levy, is it the same thing as developer contribution or is it on top of developer contribution?

Mr POOLEY: It is on top of that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is it an hypothecated levy?

Mr POOLEY: Yes, an hypothecated levy. Council collect it. It can only be then passed on to a registered provider of affordable housing. So what South Sydney Council did and now City of Sydney does is collect the levy. It then hands it to City West housing, which then builds, maintains and rents out that accommodation.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is a community housing organisation?

Mr POOLEY: Community housing organisation. They have a couple of big ones down near the fish markets, Pyrmont and Ultimo. They have recently purchased a block of land in Green Square,

which they have done, as I understand it, entirely from the contributions made from developers collected through South Sydney Council. They will shortly commence building.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So the developers kind of get the money back in a way if they are selling off land that, presumably, is within the land they were developing?

Mr POOLEY: If your question is does City West have to purchase the land on the open market, my understanding is that that is correct unless a government instrumentality provides it for them.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Presumably, if City West did not do it you would give it back to that developer and say, "You have to build X number of houses that are affordable"?

Mr POOLEY: That would not be my view. If you want to stay on affordable housing for a minute, what the levy allows you to do is either collect the money or for the developer to provide units of housing. In 100 per cent of cases so far developers have provided the money and I think if you want to look at this whole issue—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are not charging enough, are you?

Mr POOLEY: We are limited to it.

CHAIR: We looked at some of these issues in our most recent inquiry into community housing and made some comments about exactly what you are talking about.

Mr POOLEY: I would like to get the houses and I think it provides an opportunity for houses to be within blocks that are specifically public housing or affordable housing blocks.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We just had evidence that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project was perhaps primarily real estate-driven. Is it just a Trojan horse for development with a few furry words put around it?

Mr POOLEY: I have got to tell you that that is not my experience of it. We have not seen the RED scheme, the Redfern-Eveleigh-Darlington scheme, yet, and that is the broad urban planning scheme for the area. My experience with the Redfern partnership project has been in the things that they have done, and that has overwhelmingly been human services based: the creation of the street team; the letting of the contract for the intensive family support service, which ended up going to Barnardos; the Aboriginal Intensive Family Support Service ended up going to Mudgingal. That has been the bulk of the time that I have spent, plus the various committees, the DNA issues, the needle van on the Block and seeking the demolition orders by the Aboriginal Housing Corporation [AHC] for the demolition of houses on the Block. I understand the concern that a number of people have about its real estate basis. My personal view is that was reflected in some fairly poor early communication and some of the initial community forums which Charlie mentioned.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you would have been consulted pretty extensively from your relatively privileged position on the council. I mean anyone who was going to develop real estate would talk to the council, would they not?

Mr POOLEY: Developers walk through the door of council on a daily basis. That does not necessarily mean there is a causal link. Significant developers have bought major tracts of land in Redfern and Waterloo; of that there is no doubt. The immediate move between what they intend to do with that in terms of redevelopment is not obvious. You will recall that when Kimberley Securities bought the two TNT towers all the talk in the paper was they were going to convert them into residential. Now South Sydney Council took one tower, the police are moving into the other one. That has just been my experience.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I meant about the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project itself. I was not reflecting on developers generally. Naturally they go to councils to get approvals.

Mr POOLEY: All I can say is 95 per cent of my engagement with the partnership project has been human services related.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You comment in your submission about the memorial service for the death of the young man and the extensive media attention despite requests for no media. You suggest that many people in the area grow up under constant surveillance. Could you elaborate on that? Do you think that is the way all society is going or do you think that is part of following the Aborigines? Or what do you think?

Mr POOLEY: Look, I am not trying to blame the events of February 15 on the media, that is not my intention. If people start throwing Molotov cocktails around then the media is going to be involved. My concern attending the funeral service three days later was simply a perception that there was an extraordinarily intrusive media presence. I knew, having received a copy of the press release put out by the housing corporation, where they formally requested no media, I think that presence would have been less intrusive had the funeral service been held in St Mary's than on the Block. That is simply the point I am making. I think that is reflective of an area where, when an event happens, it receives saturation media.

A couple of days after the events of February 15 I was down at the Block and I wandered into this group of Japanese press people from, I think it is, NTK. The place just got flooded by media representatives thereafter. If you combine that with the sirens and their adjacent position next to the railway line, that was what I was trying to reflect; it is a highly viewed, observed area, was the point I was trying to make.

CHAIR: There are a number of specific questions we put to you about the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project. Since we have got onto some of those perhaps it might be useful to run through them. You have said that your experience was almost totally in the human services side of it but can you tell us a little bit more about the role of South Sydney Council, and now the city, in the formal role in the project, its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the local communities, and so on?

Mr POOLEY: Our formal involvement was in everything from attempting to secure programs and funding for ongoing services—and we wanted to have a new community centre—extending to the approval of demolition certificates for properties that the AHC wanted to knock down on the Block; it extended to us tarring over an area at the top end of Eveleigh Street, which I am sure you will have seen, because of the issue about the danger that was associated with the stones that had been removed, and that kind of thing. So it was at that practical level of providing a safe environment, and that included not only the area within the Block but it was rubbish clean-up, it was the redevelopment of a couple of the small adjacent parks, the fixing up of the basketball court, which is just down opposite the Redfern Community Centre, and it was council's engagement in the larger human services things such as the intensive family support programs.

They certainly sought our input in relation to the needle van, in relation to needle clean-up, in relation to DNA services generally. That was council, and different facets of council staff were engaged in different projects.

CHAIR: There are two specific criticisms that we have heard that you seem not to be agreeing with, but let us get it on the record: one is about lack of consultation with the community—and I guess you are talking now about a close consultation with the council, but maybe there is a different comment to be made about the community—and slowness of implementation of practical initiatives. Of course you have just run through some practical initiatives but, again, maybe there is a closer relationship with the council than with some other people?

Mr POOLEY: That might have been the case. I think the project came in with a far bigger agenda than was easily able to be developed, and that takes time. I think some of their community consultation was less than adequate at the start. It is my personal view that it has improved. It is a fairly articulate community and I think there was no shortage of people throughout the community of

Redfern and Waterloo that alerted the partnership project in the way they were dealing with people, and I think they have taken that on board. I am not suggesting it is perfect by any stretch of the imagination, all I am doing is contrasting the first 18 months with the second 18 months, and I think there have been noticeable improvements.

CHAIR: So do you think this sort of project can succeed?

Mr POOLEY: I think it can. Once again I will just extend my personal view. I think what the project has learned, particularly over the last two years, I would hate to now see cease because I think they have a much better grasp of the issues involved. That is obviously the personnel and the structures they have got in place, the way they run community consultation; I think it has improved and I think we need to build on that rather than stop and start again, although I acknowledge Charlie's view that if the world was a different place they might have approached it differently at the start. But it did take a long time to get the street team up and running, particularly the second shift; it did take a long time to let the contract for the intensive family support services and for them to subsequently set up their shop front; we are still waiting for the draft options associated with the RED project and, not surprisingly, in their early enthusiasm, it had been suggested that those things would have been resolved earlier.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In regard to paragraphs two and three on page 5, in light of the answer that you have just given, are you still holding to those comments you make in those two paragraphs?

Mr POOLEY: Yes. There is a series of plans that need to be completed. I have referred to a couple of them there and that did take a long time; there are a significant number of services that need to be consulted. I am simply trying to differentiate myself. I think there has been an improvement; I think the things that are in train are important—and I would specifically include the human services review as part of that—and those timelines have taken the project longer than they would have envisaged.

The Hon. IAN WEST: And will Sydney Council be taking a lead role, if you like, for want of a better term, in the human services review?

Mr POOLEY: I can simply suggest this to you: it is early days. My concern about the amalgamation of the councils was that in a much larger council areas of high need can get lost. But I can only suggest my personal experience so far has been both the Lord Mayor and the general manager have been very supportive of the peculiar characteristics of Redfern and Waterloo and have been supportive in terms of continuing programs, providing resources, that kind of thing.

The Hon. IAN WEST: There was a comment made earlier that it would be nice to see the RWPP start again.

Mr POOLEY: I would not mind if they started again as long as they came with all the knowledge that they have gained over the last two and a half years. So I do not think it is practical. I would hate to see it stopped and then go back to square one. It has been a complex process for them and I acknowledge the effort they have made. I think they have now got a much greater appreciation of what is required in the community and I would hate to see that knowledge lost.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Could you just outline briefly the actual programs and services that South Sydney Council were running in Redfern?

Mr POOLEY: We have run a number of childcare facilities—Redfern occasional care, and we own the premises of a couple of other childcare facilities; we also obviously provide Meals On Wheels; there is also a series of recreational programs which council commenced; Driving for Employment—that was an attempt to provide 17-year-olds with licences, because that is quite a costly exercise, so we got a car donated and we actually provided the tuition—you have got to get 50 hours up now before you can get your Ps, all that kind of stuff; Lights, Camera, Action was an attempt to provide local, mainly indigenous, youth with the opportunity to get a portfolio of shots for those that were interested in acting, and that kind of thing, with the hope they could make a break into the arts world, if I can put it like that; we provided supported subsidised accommodation to a number of

community groups; we supported individual projects, the local youth theatre, the local school. That is what springs to mind at the moment.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: No drug-related services?

Mr POOLEY: Council did not provide drug and alcohol services, no.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What has your personal role been in relation to the Redfern-Waterloo project?

Mr POOLEY: I was initially the chair of both the community council and the community forum. The Mayor of South Sydney had that position. I am now making the assumption that that has been assumed by the Lord Mayor, given it was not a personal position but rather a title, when we are talking about those positions. Council also ran its own local council community forums; I was involved, obviously, on the local pact; I attended a number of the subcommittee meetings and then was involved in individual issues, which was meeting with the AHC and the various groups that were in the area.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So we would hardly expect you to be critical of the program?

Mr POOLEY: You will have to make your own assumptions about that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Could you tell the Committee about the aims and objectives of the community safety plan for the area?

Mr POOLEY: The community safety plan—a long-term council project—took us about 18 months. What we were trying to do was get to some of those issues about environment, and they go to things such as planning, such as traffic movement, such as lighting; it is those practical things that you would know yourself that councils are dealing with all the time. It was an attempt to try to pull that together. Obviously those needs and the specifics vary from within even the Redfern-Waterloo area. It was an attempt to access the local neighbourhood advisory boards [NABs] in the public housing; to find out what the particular needs were. It was an attempt to commence things like the liquor accord so the local alcohol dispensing establishments would come to the party on a standard liquor accord, which I am sure you are familiar with. It was simply an attempt to bring together those broader and environmental factors of which council has significant involvement, including the planning of new buildings and identifying those issues which decades of planning in local councils have provided information for.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Issues of safety by design and all those sorts of things?

Mr POOLEY: Exactly.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Which community groups did council speak to and consult with in putting together the safety plans?

Mr POOLEY: I think council would be able to access the full list through John Maynard, whom, I think, you are seeing in a couple of days. He was council's crime and safety officer or community safety officer. He managed the plan. All the obvious ones, which are the major stakeholders such as the major State government agencies, Police, Department of Community Services, Department of Health, the local neighbourhood advisory boards and they certainly spoke to the Redfern Chamber of Commerce. They spoke to all the identifiable groups such as the Aboriginal Housing Company. As well as individuals, we also ran a couple of general forums to which people were invited. It came up as part of council's standard community consultation processes well.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: There was also a consultation process with the police as well on safety issues?

Mr POOLEY: There certainly was. As you would be aware, there are a number of issues. There is the standard safety by design, but also with the police and with the assistance of the Premier's Department. We plainly wanted to upgrade the lighting around Redfern Street. That involved

negotiations with EnergyAustralia because we did not want the standard yellow lights but the high-density white lights. Those kinds of things were incorporated and spun out of some of our consultations associated with the community safety.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Has anything happened to change the community safety plans that were in place when South Sydney Council was an entity or has the city council adopted what has already been there without looking at any changes? Is the council happy with what the process has been up to now?

Mr POOLEY: All I can say is that so far they have been happy. Council never actually had the opportunity to adopt the plan. It was adopted at committee but did not make it to council because we did not exist by the time that came around. It was then rolled up to the commissioners and a plan was adopted then and it therefore became a community safety plan as part of the city of Sydney and certainly the Lord Mayor has not suggested to me that she intends to make any changes to it.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In evidence the Committee took last week in Redfern some concerns were expressed about whether or not the Aboriginal community had been very involved in the development and construction of the community centre. Do you have any comments to make on that?

Mr POOLEY: I would reject that entirely. If I had any criticism of our development of the community centre it was that we took too long. It was three or four years worth of consultation. I am not suggesting that every single Aboriginal person living on the Block was involved in that centre, but we took as comprehensive a consultation strategy as we could to the development of that centre. I could not suggest that we could have done it any more comprehensively than we did. The development of that centre took 10 years. If I was to have an objection, it was that we spent too long on consultation.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Another comment was that there tended to be some sort of correlation between the sorts of events that happened this year and the completion of the centre rather speedily?

Mr POOLEY: An absolute myth, I have to suggest to you. My experience of local government is that you cannot plant a tree without somebody coming forward and saying, "You never consulted me about that tree." I would go further and suggest that my concern about the completion of the centre, which was promised to us by the builder as part of the contract in the last week of February and I can assure you that contract was signed 12 months prior to that. I was very keen for them to stick to that time frame because we were fortunate enough to have the Governor coming to open it and I did not want her coming to open a part-open centre and I certainly undertook every possible mechanism I could to harass council's project development officer and the builder to ensure that it was finished, but it was entirely unrelated to the events of 15 February.

CHAIR: I wish to ask a question about policing strategies. What are your comments on the relationship between police and local communities in Redfern and Waterloo?

Mr POOLEY: Can I just say initially that I do not think the police can win in this arrangement. Members of the Committee will have seen the submission from the Vine-Hugo Street Action Group. The police cannot win because there is a significant demand by local residents, not on the Block but immediately surrounding the Block, for there to be a significant involvement of police. It is important for the police to be at Redfern station because it is a point at which a number of assaults occur. I cannot, in all honesty, suggest to the Committee that I believe the area is overpoliced. That is not to suggest that there are not individuals within the police force who could doubtless behave better, but my personal experience of Commander Dennis Smith was nothing short of excellent.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Your admiration for Dennis Smith is shared by many people. Do you support the view that he should stay on at Redfern and not be shuffled somewhere else?

Mr POOLEY: Absolutely. I was fortunate enough to be on four PACTs. I met a number of local area commanders and I certainly met two of his predecessors. I find that Dennis Smith has made

every effort to engage with all sections of the community. He was regularly down on the Block. People do know him. I found him a very responsive and intelligent police officer.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: And a lot of people share that view. In terms of the drug problem in Redfern and Waterloo, what do you think is the extent of the problem?

Mr POOLEY: Huge. I would also go as far as to say that I think it is less than it probably was a couple of years ago and I base that only on my own assessment of the number of needles around. There are literally hundreds around there on a daily basis but three or four years ago it might have been closer to thousands. A significant drug-heroin interjecting culture exists amongst a number of people living in and around the Block.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We have heard many people's views about harm minimisation and the benefits of needle exchange. What is your view on the needle van that currently operates at Redfern?

Mr POOLEY: My personal view is that I think the van needs to stay because the potential for an HIV epidemic would be significant. I do not think it is ideally located. The Committee would be aware that it moves at three o'clock in the afternoon down to another street, Hudson Street. You would have to speak to the people immediately adjacent to Hudson Street, but it is my view that would be a preferable permanent location.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: It was not in its usual position on the day that we went to Redfern.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It moves on those days too.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do you think that there is a honey-pot effect in relation to that van?

Mr POOLEY: To be honest, I am not sure that I am able to answer that question. I know that is a highly utilised van. Whether those people are residents, whether they are people coming off the train and picking up their needles, I am simply not able to provide that information for you.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What do you think can or should be done in terms of this huge problem? Do you have a view about how we can deal with some of the alcohol and drug user problems?

Mr POOLEY: I think it would be good if there were a local—and when I suggest "local", I am not certain that the Block is the best place for it—but I think we need some additional rehabilitation facilities. It is not just heroin; I have to say that alcohol is a significant problem in that area. Certainly, my contacts would suggest that if you were to move those rehabilitation facilities a significant distance away, as they exist in some other areas, you would be less able to get people from the Block to go there. I think that we probably need additional facilities, they probably should be indigenous-specific and those facilities should be located within the Redfern-Waterloo area, though perhaps not on the Block.

CHAIR: That brings us specifically to questions about the redevelopment of the Block, which are specifically in our terms of reference. Do you have a view about the Aboriginal Housing Company [AHC] and its management of the Block over the years?

Mr POOLEY: I think that there have certainly been problems with the Aboriginal Housing Company and its management. I think they found it exceptionally difficult to collect rents. I think there have certainly been allegations about nepotism in terms of who gets accommodation. That has been around for 10 years. I think there has been some improvement and I think that there is a readiness—this is my personal view—on behalf of the senior management of the AHC to change. I think they recognise that it could not continue the way it has in the past.

I have a personal view that the previous stock that they managed was, as with much of inner-city housing, just completely hopeless—east-west built, tiny lanes running down the back. The idea

that those terraces should be restored and we should go back to rows of east-west running terraces is ridiculous. That is my personal view. They need a brownfield site; it needs to be redeveloped and I think it should be redeveloped as soon as possible and it plainly needs some hostel-type accommodation. It simply needs that because it has a huge transitory population. Whatever anybody suggests, Aboriginal people will continue to come to the Block, in my view, and therefore some decent accommodation and some temporary accommodation are two minimum requirements.

CHAIR: I assume you have seen the plans that they have shown to us?

Mr POOLEY: I have seen the model, sure.

CHAIR: They suggest permanent accommodation on the Block itself and they seem to be talking about a hostel on the land across the road, which is not technically part of the Block but very close by. They are the two wings, if you like, of what you believe should be done as well.

Mr POOLEY: I think they both should be there. I have certainly seen the plans but it has not been through the planning process as such and everything changes, as all Committee members would be aware, through the planning process, but I think those are two integral things. There is a core population of the Aboriginal community that is going to remain on the Block and they should be provided with decent accommodation and they have no less right to expect that, but there also needs to be a mechanism which can accommodate the significant transitory population that arrives at the Block on a daily basis. I do not think you have any alternative.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Who should fund that?

Mr POOLEY: Well, in an ideal world I think all three tiers of government should make a contribution. I will just be quick about local government because it is the one I am most familiar with. In any redevelopment of the Block, I think there will be a requirement for us to hand over a couple of lanes and I think we should do that. There are some outstanding rates and, for instance, that kind of local government levy should be waived. Because it was granted by the Federal Government, I think it needs to be a combined approach between the other two tiers of government in terms of the development of the Block. I am not trying to get into the whole State's rights debate—do not misunderstand me—but there has been long-term Federal Government involvement in that housing project and that should remain. As well, the State Government certainly has a significant responsibility.

CHAIR: We asked you before about the range of services that local government, specifically South Sydney Council, was involved in. We did not actually ask you the subsidiary questions about what you think about the number and nature of services in the area. Some people say there are too many and it is confusing. There have been comments also about co-ordination between services, government and non-government and the three tiers of government.

Mr POOLEY: I think you would be familiar with the recent figure of 200 services. Committee members, I am sure, will have a close look at that because my guess is that council will be nominated as the provider of about 25 of those services and that will include provision of child care, family day care, out-of-school-hours services, a couple of recreation programs, drug-free employment and all those kinds of things. I am sure you will probably find 25 services, so I take the idea that there are too many services with a grain of salt. A number of organisations are providing two different services targeting two different groups.

I think you would be flat out suggesting that the area is overserved. I know some people have that view but that has not been my experience. If you look at the major service providers such as the Redfern Legal Centre and our child care facilities, they all have waiting lists—if you are looking at services in that broad sense. Yes, there are a lot of services. There are a lot of different groups and I think that has grown up over a period of time during which people have attempted to service the needs of particular groups—different age groups and different indigenous and ethnic groups. I think that is an over-inflated figure.

The Hon. IAN WEST: However, in attempting to rationalise some of the different services—which goes to the issue of throwing up your hands and saying that there is too

bureaucracy—in looking at the questions of funding, co-ordination, facilitation, support mechanisms, how you rationalise between local, State and Federal governments and the myriad machinations that community groups and government organisations come up against, is it not important to come up with some mechanism whereby local, State and Federal governments and the various organisations competing for funding receive the appropriate co-ordination, resources and support to enable them to cut through the bureaucracy? We seem to have people with a lot to offer who are not experts in administration. Is there a role for council, for example, in providing that in-kind support mechanism that may allow for funding to go even further?

Mr POOLEY: I certainly think there is. I want to be clear and say that while I do not think the area is overserviced that is not to say that there cannot be some rationalisation or reorganisation of services. I think council found—anyone who works in the area finds this—that it is exceptionally difficult to meet those broad auditing requirements that individual services have, such as bookkeeping, and human resources, information technology and so on. Just as State government departments are now sharing some of those functions I think it is important that the community sector starts to share some of them also so that each individual does not have to duplicate all of those things.

I have been impressed by the way in which the human services review that is currently under way has gone about its task. I think that report will be of interest to Committee members because I think it is looking at exactly that issue. As the services themselves will tell you, if you have one or two workers and one of those workers must spend half their day on bookkeeping, Australian Taxation Office requirements and those kinds of things they will not be working productively. I think council certainly has a role in a range of things, as does the State Government in terms of providing assistance to those organisations in order to allow their funding to go as far as possible.

CHAIR: I think Mr Richardson mentioned—others have said this also—that quite a few non-government services look more like pilot programs than ongoing services. There may be short-term funding and trials but there is a feeling that the funding may stop so there is continual roll-over in some areas. Can you comment on that suggestion?

Mr POOLEY: I think some organisations plainly have a difficulty in that if they are new or relatively new or have had some financial difficulties in the past their prospects of getting triennial funding are very limited. That obviously creates a difficulty. As Charlie advised, a number of those services are also dependent on accommodation. Council provides free or heavily subsidised accommodation to a number of services without which those services could not continue. I do not think that is unreasonable: councils should be directly involved in that; I am not suggesting that it is a problem. But triennial funding is important for services for the simple reason of being able to attract good staff and keep them—to know there is some future beyond the next 30 June drama when the funding winds around again.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Is there not a view that the three-year contract funding is a problem as opposed to yearly recurrent funding?

Mr POOLEY: That may well be a view. I am suggesting—I am not quite sure of the distinction that you are making between contract funding and annual funding—if you have a guarantee of annual funding that is fine because you can provide that certainty. If every year you have to reapply for a grant in order to stay alive then that does not encourage the long-term retention of staff in my experience.

CHAIR: Our last general question is: What would you like to see come out of this inquiry? I think you telegraphed earlier that you might try to round out your evidence with a closing statement.

Mr POOLEY: I extend my personal congratulations to the Committee on holding hearings at the Redfern Community Centre—I know you are off to Redfern Town Hall tomorrow. I think it is very positive for the Committee to be seen in the Redfern area. I would like to see a couple of things come out of this inquiry. I would like to see—should Committee members reach this conclusion—the continuation of the project. I am not suggesting for a moment that the project has not had its faults. It was slow to get started, but I think we have now built up a significant pool of information. They are known in the broader community and I think they can only build on that. I think that is very positive.

I suggest the second thing is that in the short term we need to see commencement of the rebuilding of the Block. For too long the vision of a rebuilt Block has been suggested to the entire community, including residents and the Aboriginal community. I think we are a bit closer to that. I do not underestimate the funding difficulties that that will bring, but it needs to be incorporated. They are the last couple of things I wanted to say. I think I have covered everything else. I mentioned the social mix. I think affordable housing is very important to the broader Redfern community. I am happy to go on record as supporting the local area commander and a number of his staff.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. If there is anything we want to check with you I hope that Committee staff can contact you.

Mr POOLEY: You are very welcome.

(The witness withdrew)

LINDA JEAN BURNEY, Member for Canterbury, appeared before the Committee:

CHAIR: In what capacity are you appearing before the Committee?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In several capacities. Would you like me to speak to that?

CHAIR: If you make some opening statement that might help us a great deal.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is important that I feel that I can have some personal input in this inquiry. I do so wearing a number of hats. The first is obviously as a member of the Government but also as an Aboriginal person who has had a fair bit of involvement with the Redfern community over the years in a number of capacities. I will touch upon those. I do not pretend for one minute to have an association with Redfern that is as deep and as long as that of a number of people whom I know have given evidence to this inquiry.

However, my association stems from the early 1980s, when much of the really important hard work had been done in Redfern by many people, who set up the Aboriginal organisations in Redfern. My youngest child attended Murrawina preschool, which is in Eveleigh Street, and I was a member of the Murrawina board. I was also a member of the board of The Settlement in Edward Street in Redfern for many years. So I had a lot to do with young people in Redfern, particularly during the 1980s. My children also attended primary school at Darlington Public School—I am sure members know where that is. When I was head of an organisation called the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group we did a lot of work with schools and other authorities in Redfern. As Director-General of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs I was certainly involved in working with the Aboriginal Housing Company in an endeavour to develop a business plan for housing.

More than that, I must say that Redfern holds a very special place in the hearts and minds of indigenous people right across the country, and also in the hearts and minds of many non-indigenous people—that is really important to understand. The symbolism of Redfern must be considered in this discussion. People might visit Redfern and the flats in Waterloo and Alexandria and ask, "What's this place worth?" but that is not the point. The point is that that place played an incredibly important part in the history of this country and holds a very important place in the hearts and minds of people who helped to establish the organisations in Redfern. It is an incredibly symbolic place and judgements should have regard to that symbolism and history, not just the social circumstances we see in Redfern today.

The other important issue—it is a pertinent point, particularly in light of the Federal Government's recent decisions about Aboriginal education—is that it is really and truly the birthplace of self-determination for indigenous people in Australia. You cannot ever take that away and you cannot ever underestimate just how important that is. Many national Aboriginal organisations were established first in the Redfern area, such as the Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Housing Company, the provision of child care through an independent Aboriginal preschool and all the other things that I know you are aware of. That was incredibly important in terms of self-determination and the direction that Aboriginal affairs took in Australia.

I cannot speak about this with authority because I was not there but my friend Kay Bellere, who has joined me here today, could tell stories about the street struggle in Redfern in the 1960s and 1970s and the symbolism and importance of that struggle. In Redfern Aboriginal people held the first freehold land title held by indigenous people in Australia. It is also seen as a place where people took a stand. Those issues begin to explain why Redfern is such an important place symbolically. It was the place where people like me came to understand Aboriginal politics and the life experiences and choices that many indigenous people in Australia made. I did not grow up with that experience myself. On a personal level, it holds a very special place in my education and my development as an individual. The historical issues are important and go back beyond the 1960s—I will not talk about that today.

During the Depression, the birth of Redfern All Blacks Football Club and the congregation of people who worked in the factories and so forth played an incredibly important role in Aboriginal

Sydney and Aboriginal Australia. It is with great distress that we have watched social degeneration in Redfern. I remember when my daughter was in pre-school at Eveleigh Street, Redfern, at Murrawina, it was much safer to park a car in Eveleigh Street for the day to come to the city to work, than to park at Redfern railway station. That was not so long ago. That is an example of the sadness, although it might not be a very good analogy. That is the Redfern that people remember and connect to. In the past couple of years I have not had a lot of contact with Redfern, but I hope I have demonstrated my earlier contact. Other things I may want to say will probably come out during questioning. If not, will I have an opportunity to add a statement at the end?

CHAIR: Yes, certainly. You have dealt with the Committee's proposed first two questions. The Committee has a series of specific questions relating to police, the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership project, the housing company, and so on.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The events that lead to this inquiry must make you very sad, the riot and the social fabric, and to know that children as young as 10 are using heroin on the block?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes. It is an absolute tragedy. With my family I watched the TV footage of that Sunday night, and the comment was made in my home that part of what we saw of that Sunday evening was enormous rage and frustration felt by young Aboriginal people in that part of Sydney. And I think that comment was right. I started to put my thoughts down, and the comment I made was that for Koori kids, and for all of our children, we want them to get a good education and aspire to university or TAFE, and a life of choice and opportunity. But for many young people living in the Redfern-Waterloo area, the notion of having a life of opportunity is as remote as the moon. That is not apportioning blame to any young people, it is just saying that to be able to understand the rage and frustration of Aboriginal young people in Australia, in particular in those urban environments, is really important in terms of the outcome of this inquiry.

If you look into the crystal ball of your life and see a poor educational outcome, that will lead to a poor opportunity for decent housing, and that will lead to illness, and that will lead to a poor experience in education. That cycle is an awful spiral for many young people. They look around to the affluence in the area, and each morning they watch thousands of young people walk from Redfern railway station to university, and compare that to what they can look forward to—which could well be gaol or certainly early death. Therefore, you can begin to understand the sort of frustration and rage that they feel. I do not think that there has been proper planning in any sphere for the fact that the demographic of young Aboriginal people is the complete opposite to our policy and planning, that is for an ageing population. I am sure the Committee would have heard that 40 per cent of Aboriginal kids are under the age of 15 and 50 per cent of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 20. They do not have good prospects, nothing to look forward to.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: One submission to the Committee commented that the Government tends to react only when people throw rocks. For example after the riots in Waterloo, the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project was started and now we have this inquiry after the recent Redfern riot. What are your views on that? Is it correct that the Government reacts only when people throw rocks?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, I do not think that that is correct at all. I can say that because of the history of spoke about earlier, and my involvement over the past 20 years in working collaboratively with government and the non-government sector, as well as working as a government official in those three capacities. It strikes me that a top-down approach was never going to work in a place like Redfern. In this broad inquiry it is nonsense to consider young people in Redfern on their own, unless there is an understanding that we really need to take the perspective of young people and the community, not only Redfern and the Block but also the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project and the many families that have been moved from Redfern to the Glebe housing commission area, as well as many of the young people who live in the Woolloomooloo housing commission area. That really is the cohort, in my view, of young people we should be talking about.

I understand that this inquiry is about Redfern, but there needs to be a broader perspective. The kids move between each group and many of them went to school together. It is necessary to understand that many young people go to schools in the inner eastern suburbs as well as in the Redfern area.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The Committee's terms of reference require us to look at the effectiveness of the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project. We have sought comments on the effectiveness of the project in meeting the needs of indigenous communities. What is your view?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am not sure how adequate my answer will be to that question, except to say that when I was at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs obviously I was involved in the community solutions packages and had some involvement in the Cabinet process. I do not mean in Cabinet, I mean the Cabinet office and the consultations that the department and Cabinet had through other government agencies in putting that strategy together. It seems to me that there are some excellent aspects to that strategy, but if you asked me whether it will fix the problems that you have referred to, my answer would be, "Perhaps it never could." I want to stress that.

You cannot look at this and ask whether the Redfern-Waterloo project is working without looking at something else. I know you will ask me about co-ordination across the three spheres of government. My answer is that not only in Redfern, but co-ordination between local, State and Federal governments in Aboriginal affairs, which has been my only experience so I cannot speak about other areas, is not particularly effective in some places. Whether Redfern is one of those places I really am not in a position to answer. My point is you cannot look only at whether the Government's exercises are failing without also looking at the capacity of the social entrepreneurship that is really required in areas such as Redfern to actually move on the agenda, to change the social circumstances of people living in those sorts of environments.

While there are some aspects of the Redfern-Waterloo project that could be improved, more indigenous involvement in the design and implementation of the project is needed. Also, unless there is proper co-ordination across the three tiers of government, and more importantly co-ordination and collaborative approaches between the non-government organisations in that area and government organisations, there will not be very much progress. Unless there is a real partnership, an equal say between the NGOs and the Government, it will be difficult to make one strategy work and think that is the be all and end all. It is naïve to think that that will solve everything.

The Hon. IAN WEST: However, tragically, you are not the first person who has said that. It has been said many times over many decades.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Can you think of a trigger that might assist in achieving that objective?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think it is about people. Unfortunately, politics come into it from many different areas. Of course, there are whole lot of people who feel, as I said, very distressed about the situation in Redfern and very angry about where things have gone in the area, particularly for people who have had enormous involvement over the years in building up the capacity and leadership within the Redfern area. I do not know whether this is a sensible suggestion in the present circumstances, but we should not be restrained by saying what is possible only because of the nature of what we are looking at and the events we have experienced over the past two months. This really is about people and unless there is identification and involvement of really good indigenous leadership and non-indigenous leadership from the area we will find it very difficult to turn the situation around.

I mean that governments have to understand that the answers will not necessarily come from a government strategy or strategy developed by the community; it has to be together. What is needed is the social entrepreneurship that I mentioned earlier, to identify people who can pull communities together and know the community, people who have status and respect within communities. They are some of the keys. Several months ago at a forum I made the point that the senior officers group underpinning some of the projects, or the Redfern-Waterloo project, really do not have as many indigenous people involved as I think it all. That is not anyone's fault, but that is one thing I would look at.

Also, because there are so many agencies, various committees, subcommittees, consultative councils and advisory councils involved, the small group of people that is trying to hold things

together is absolutely washed over with giving advice, after advice, after advice. Their own health and welfare is suffering because there is so much demand on them.

The way I would approach it is, in New South Wales there is an extremely successful model of governance—and at the end of the day that is what we are also talking about—called Community Working Parties that exists in the west and north-west of New South Wales, to a lesser degree a couple on the South Coast and one down in the Murray area that have provided a forum in those rural communities. I cannot see why we would not consider the forum for an urban community that does take away a lot of those small committees but creates a really well-resourced forum that is a representative group of organisations and community members from Redfern and Waterloo. It provides a forum for government to talk to, where school principals, police and other service delivery agencies actually come in and have a consolidated, respected, credible consultative group or a negotiation group to be able to do business with instead of a proliferation of lots and lots of different advisory committees. So that would mean that the NGOs over there would still have their management boards but there would be a group made up of all those NGOs and other people that would be the focus for major planning in the area. They are well tried and tested right across New South Wales.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You have said that there are better models in the regional areas. Even though there are a myriad organisations in Redfern/Waterloo in some cases some of the issues for urban living, particularly for Aboriginal communities, might have been overlooked in the way of trying to address some of the more regional areas? Are there different problems that have not been addressed in urban areas?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes. In rural areas with a high population of Aboriginal people there are very solid kinship structures between families. In many of those areas the relationships are very strong and there is perhaps a cohesiveness that comes out of that. But for urban areas you have Indigenous people who come from not only different tribal nations or communities in New South Wales but actually right across Australia. Redfern has always been, if you like, a beacon for people when they first come to Sydney and has provided enormous support for those people over the years. But what you get is a whole lot of movement that is not as prevalent in the more rural areas. Because of this now there is not the sort of cohesiveness that necessarily exists in other places. Of course, the other thing—I know it has been spoken about at length in this inquiry—is the amount of social destruction that has come about because of drug issues, particularly in the Redfern area. I am happy to talk about that if you would like me to.

The other thing, of course, is that I think that for young kids living in an urban area—I might be wrong and it might be just me as a Mum, I do not know—there is a lot more danger, I am not sure whether that is the right word, or capacity for young people to be drawn into situations that perhaps they would not be drawn into as much in country areas. I am not sure if that answers your questions but there are certainly considerations that are different for urban areas. At the end of the day—and I am not going to recite them here because I know that everyone around this table is very aware of it and I am sure you have heard it from other people giving evidence to this inquiry—the thing that governments need to understand is that the sort of health issues, the life expectancy issues, the issues of housing, the issues of administration of justice are felt just as deeply, and experienced as much, by urban Aboriginal people as in the rural areas. I think sometimes that is an assumption that somehow we have better access in the city to these services, so therefore, those outcomes are going to be better, and it is just not the case.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Because the issues in the urban areas are different, as you just stated, when there are so many government and non-government agencies that provides services, given that Aboriginal people in Redfern and Waterloo do not necessarily have that same sort of kinship as in regional/rural areas, do you have any view on how to gather together this group of people and tie the services together so that there is a better way to deal with people getting access to services and also, I suppose, moving through the cultural problems?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: When we talk about developing capacity, I think quite often we make the assumption that we are talking about developing the capacity in the Indigenous community to deal with its issues, provide good leadership, self-regulate and so forth. But the other side of capacity is the capacity for government agencies, and non-government organisations, to be able to

respond appropriately to the needs and the issues that the people of the Redfern area have. The issue of capacity and being able to respond to the sorts of things that you have raised is perhaps lacking to some degree on both sides. It would seem to me that the issue of leadership is probably one of the most important issues in this whole discussion with this inquiry, and it is leadership on all sides, once again. But unless there is discernable leadership and the recognition and reflection of cultural practices in the way in which the Aboriginal community works, and which is encouraged to work, then you are not going to see too much change. That is a bit of a wishy-washy answer I know, but I am trying to say that it is about capacity on those delivering services and those in receipt of the services but it is also about the leadership and social depth of what exists within communities to be able to bring that community with you.

CHAIR: What do you think of the Aboriginal Housing Company and its management of the Block?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My experience, as I indicated earlier, in terms of the Aboriginal Housing Company was when I was the Deputy Director and then the Director-General of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I have never been a member of the board of the housing company and my involvement has been attempting to work with the housing company in developing a business plan that was funded by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I have to say, that was an extremely frustrating experience and I am not sure that we ever ended up with a business plan with which everyone was completely satisfied. That would have been in 1998-99. I also obviously met on a number of occasions with directors and the leadership of the housing company.

CHAIR: Why was it frustrating?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It was frustrating because the deadlines were not kept in terms of producing a draft and a final business plan. I felt that the working relationship was not a terrific one in the sense that the requirements that the department had for the money that it was investing in the business plan were not necessarily being met. Certainly, over the years I have had lots of contact with members of the housing company who experienced extreme frustration with the sort of provision of service of the housing company. I make no comment on any of the individuals that have been with that organisation for a very long time, except to say that there did not appear to be the capacity of the housing company to define to anyone what its big picture plan was for the area. I reiterate that the slow degeneration of that area, in particular the Block, has been something that has been impossible not to notice.

One would have to ask "What has the housing company done about it?" I cannot answer that, except that one's eyes reveal that the sort of terrible situation that exists now, probably the blame for that lays at the feet of many, and the housing company would have to be one of those organisations that you would have to ask those questions of as well.

CHAIR: Have you seen the model for the redevelopment of the Block that the housing company is proposing?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No. I understand though that it is redevelopment of housing but I really have not seen the new plans at all. I am very pleased there are plans, though.

CHAIR: Do you have any comments about the way the Block should be developed and the type of housing that should be developed there? The Committee has heard criticisms of the housing stock and its inappropriateness in terms of size and orientation to the typical Aboriginal families that were there.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I sincerely say that I cannot image what it must be like for a Mum trying to raise her kids over there. I cannot imagine how difficult that must be, particularly in terms of safety and the sort of expectations that those young people would have of where their life is going to take them. There are some really good people over there. There must never ever be the mistake that just because you live on the Block it means you are hopeless: that is just not true. But I also have seen white middle class, briefcase carrying people get off the train, go down to the Block, score, use and get back on the train and go to work. We should not just be focussing on the point you have made.

That has developed down there is this awful dependency on drugs and it is not a dependency just for drug users, it is actually a dependency that is a vicious cycle in the sense that there are cheap goods that come with drug use because of the stolen goods. And if you are poor and you can get something cheaper, you do not have to be a drug user to participate in what supports the drug trade. I also think that the drug trade over there, I know that is not exactly what we got onto, is pretty well organised. There are bigger questions in terms of policing than just how it is organised. I know that is not necessarily a discussion we are going to have here.

CHAIR: We have not actually asked the question we sent you about police and the relationship between police and indigenous communities.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Can I go back to finishing answering your question properly? I was making the point of just how challenging it must be as a parent raising a family in the circumstances that exist over there now. But many people say about Aboriginal communities, whether it is in Redfern, whether it is in Waterloo or whether it is in Wilcannia, "Why do you stay in the situation?" You have to understand that history, that culture and the connection to that country to begin to understand why kids in Wilcannia do not get out and move to the coast and get a university education, because that is where their family is and that is where their country is and that is where their cultural roots are. I think that that is as strong in the situation as it is in other places in Australia.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project has been criticised this afternoon as a real estate development-driven project. We have heard some evidence that it has good co-ordination with groups that favour development, but not with ones that are more socially oriented. Do you think that is a valid criticism?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: As I said, I was involved in putting the framework of the partnership together. I have not been involved in the implementation of that project. But can I say that it being categorised as real estate driven is probably an unfair categorisation because in putting that project together it was definitely about social justice issues, it was definitely about the lives of people in that area. I know some of the people who have been involved in implementing that project, and they are good people and very much there because of the social justice issues. If there is an element of real estate development, I am not aware of it except to say that we have to understand that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project is not just about Aboriginal people, it is about a very depressed socioeconomic area in the inner city of Sydney and we need to see it in the broader context with, obviously, a particular focus on the indigenous element of it because those are the people who are suffering the most social disadvantage.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You criticised the Aboriginal Housing Company.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I made comments about the housing company.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: They claim that they have improved the collection of rent, some financial discipline shall we say. They have demolished drug houses as the only solution to them and they now have a project for the Block that would give housing, according to a blueprint that they have workshopped very thoroughly, although they have limited themselves to the border of the area for which they are responsible. Would you not say that is a reasonable outcome?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The housing company owns a number of properties throughout Sydney and in the country, as you are probably aware as well, and many of the people who lived in those houses that have been demolished have moved to those alternative houses. The description that you have given to me, what you have told me, I would say, "Yes, that is a good outcome." But getting back to Ms Burnswood's earlier question to me about what is the best mix of type of housing, I have had a lot of involvement in delivering infrastructure projects across New South Wales and, specifically, housing projects. Unless the planning, design, of the houses that are going to be constructed by the community and the people who are going to live within those houses then they will not be the appropriate type of housing that is necessary for families who have a lot of people living in the house, who spend time cooking outside, not necessarily inside. There are some really practical, sensible approaches that need to be adopted in designing appropriate homes for indigenous families, and I would hope that the housing company is considering that approach in terms of building design.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Certainly, they are trying to have a lot of outdoor areas.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is good.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You have not seen the design?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, I have not.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You talked about the drug economy in the people selling goods have to fence those, in a sense. Do you think there is an abnormal relationship between the police and the drug dealers?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I have absolutely no idea, except to say that it is no secret that drugs are really what the economy depends on over there. I just cannot specifically answer your question. I do not know. I think it would be dangerous of me to make an assumption that I do know to something as specific about the relationship between drug dealers and the police. I do not know the drug dealers, and I do not know what the relationship is, except that it has been going on for a long time.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you would say that drugs are a major economic driver for the community?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, I would.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would you then say the illegality of drugs is very important in the price of drugs, and that is relevant for the economy?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Sorry?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That the illegality of drugs, which makes their price higher, has an effect on the economy?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am not sure—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Because drugs are illegal they are much more expensive?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Is that really part of our terms of reference?

CHAIR: He has asked this question of every witness so far.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Run it by me again and I will—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The drugs are illegal, and that makes them expensive?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If there were some decriminalisation and there were not so much money in the drugs do you think that would improve the situation?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Clearly, if there is not so much money in drugs and they are not illegal then you would not have the problem.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Decriminalisation might help the problem?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: If you are saying do I support decriminalisation of drugs per se, the answer is no per se.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Despite the fact that you have just said that the decriminalisation of drugs might ease the situation in Redfern?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: What I am actually saying and the point I was trying to make, and I do not know that it is an issue of how much money drugs cost, is that because of the prevalence of drugs and the poverty of the community, the extraordinary poverty that many of those people living in that area experience every day, then it does not matter who you are, you are going to buy goods for your family that you cannot necessarily afford, but you might buy it if you can get it cheaper. That is what I am saying.

CHAIR: The one area of questions that we really have not got to is about the relationship between police and the local indigenous communities with questions about whether you think there has been a change, positive or negative, since the riot in February and then the broader question about whether the police strategies in dealing with indigenous issues are adequate and effective.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will try to answer those three questions, not necessarily in the order that you have outlined them in. One of the strategies I really strongly advocate, I think it happens to a small degree and perhaps not as systematic as I would like to see it and I hope this is a positive suggestion, is the need for substantial—and when I say substantial I do not mean one or two hours lecture from a couple of indigenous people—cultural awareness and training for officers going into that area in relation to the history in relation to the sorts of social justice issues facing indigenous people in the inner city in relation to the way in which the community operates. I take this from when I was a very young schoolteacher and involved in similar exercises. I say this should happen for Aboriginal police officers as well as non-Aboriginal police officers. It is not just for non-Aboriginal people.

We would send young teachers—we still see it today—out to communities. It is their first year out and they have to either sink or swim. This is probably the first time many of them have been in a room where there are more Koori people than non-Koori people. I would suggest that there needs to be an introduction of substantial training for officers going into the Redfern command on those issues. This is another strategy that was really effective in education, executive staff of schools who were going into schools with high Aboriginal populations we had a thing called special fitness appointments and that is people in leadership positions in those schools actually had to go to interview to make sure that they had the sorts of skills, the sorts of attitudes and the sorts of understanding that they needed to be a good leader in those schools and those communities that had high Aboriginal populations. They are just two strategies that I would suggest that would be important for the police department to consider in a very systemic way for officers working in Redfern. The other thing, of course, is the employment of indigenous staff in the command. I am aware that there are two Aboriginal liaison officers, or the last time I heard there was one person and one position unfilled.

CHAIR: There are two at the moment with a third one being advertised.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I also advocate that there needs to be some very serious thought given to Aboriginal staffing, but not just as liaison offices, I am talking about having Aboriginal staff in significant and important leadership positions. I think even though that would be an enormous challenge it would be something very much worthwhile, considering in a very positive way in relation to the police department. The second point I would make there is that it must be understood that the relationship between indigenous people and police—I will not labour this point because I am sure you have heard it on many occasions over this inquiry and you will hear it again—really has to be understood in the context of the relationship we are seeing today. I am not just talking today about the sort of strategies or lack of, or the approach that police had to people both indigenous and non-indigenous in the movement in the sixties and seventies, which was absolutely appalling as I understand it, but the way in which police were used in the twenties, thirties, forties, fifties and sixties to remove Aboriginal children from their families.

Those sorts of things are in the collective mind and history of indigenous people today. There are those two bits of history that people need to understand in terms of relationships. Just because you

might get a couple of good police or a great commander you cannot take away that history. You cannot take away those experiences. I think there is also an argument for Redfern-Waterloo to get more experienced police officers. I know that recruits have to go somewhere, but whether or not areas that are a challenge are the best place to put a lot of recruits, I guess, is a judgment that I am sure is being discussed.

The final two points are that there is certainly a view from the indigenous community that there is overpolicing of, in particular, the Block. But it must be an extraordinarily difficult situation for the police to be in, knowing that there is often so much need for them to be in that area. You would hope that their conduct does not lead to any unnecessary happenings but, on the other hand—and this has got to be about reciprocity—it will be difficult to be a police officer having rocks hurled at you and at the car. So I am trying to say that there are two sides to it and the only way you are going to get some sort of decent outcome is for people to accept and understand and be sensitive to the history and experiences of the people that are in leadership positions at the hands of the police in the past and that the policing strategies for the Redfern-Waterloo area are not necessarily going to be learned at the academy in Goulburn. Through training and appointment of specific positions you may overcome that.

My experience with some individual officers and the care that they have, particularly towards the number of young people in the Redfern area, and through the Police and Community Youth Clubs [PCYC], is absolutely exemplary, but there is the Yin and Yang of all that; there is some exemplary stuff and there are, obviously, other questions that one might ask.

CHAIR: Our final question, if there are no others from committee members, is what would you like to see come out of our inquiry?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think that this inquiry is running along with, as I understand it, three other different types of inquiries and of course the focus, I would imagine, particularly for T J Hickey's family, will be the coronial inquest that, as I understand it, is taking place in July. Then there are the other two inquiries: I think an integrity commission inquiry and I cannot remember the other one.

CHAIR: The internal police inquiry.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: What is going to be absolutely fundamental is that this inquiry, along with those other three inquiries, will need to have enormous credibility, particularly with the community that we are discussing here today, but also, I think, more broadly with many of the people that have got a connection and an ownership and a very deep regard for the history and where Redfern stands in the story of Australia. What I would hope would come out of this particular inquiry is, in particular, some ideas and some recommendations that are going to be really practical in things like how do you prepare police to be able to operate more effectively in the Redfern area? How do you put in place and what are some of the suggestions that have come through this inquiry in relation to better governance of organisations in the area? Is there a need to have another look—and I am sure that it is happening—at the Redfern-Waterloo project in relation to indigenous involvement and its implementation in light of the outcomes of the inquiry?

I think most importantly what I would like to see come out of the inquiry, apart from those practical things which are so important—perhaps not seen as important by some—is an understanding and for this inquiry to paint a picture of what the daily experience is for people raising families and trying to get on with their lives in the area, and what it must be like for people like school teachers who, at the end of the day, see the pointy end of kids who perhaps have not had a proper sleep, who have not had adequate nutrition—I wanted to talk about that but I think other people probably have and I will not. But there need to be some really practical recommendations that are able to be implemented, that we have the capacity to be able to put into practice, and I think that for the nature of this inquiry—not the others—it is not about apportioning blame, it is about coming forward with better ways to do things; it is like the question that Ms Griffin asked: how can we get three tiers of government to work together better; are there particular issues between urban and rural environments; and to really and truly try and get some good social entrepreneurship happening in that area, so it is the actual community that comes forth with the solutions. No matter how good our intentions are

within government, unless there is that joint approach then we probably will not see very much change over there.

The one thing I have not mentioned that I think is really very, very important is the connection with education and employment. It just seems to me that there is an opportunity for much more work to be done, and it is actually an exciting opportunity for much more work to be done in terms of educational outcomes for young people in the area but, importantly, leading to something other than a stretch in a detention centre. It would seem to me one of the major focuses of that is in fact employment. I know the *Tribal Warrior* is doing some very good work with young people but I think that has ground to a bit of a standstill. But it really is about cadetships; it really is about apprenticeships. You hear that we are so lacking in apprentices: there needs to be some really intense work done and some creative approaches. If a young Aboriginal kid has not got his year 12 certificate then there needs to be, I am not saying dumbing down or special privileges or anything like that, I am saying there needs to be a very pragmatic, creative approach to giving young people and adults employment in that area. I think if that is the case then you will not have young people turning to selling drugs to be able to feed their families; you will not have the sorts of levels of crime that exist, unfortunately, in the area now. It is also about self-esteem and self-worth, and in my view employment is one of the keys to turning things around in Redfern.

I am sure this issue has been covered, but let us not pretend that racism has not played a really critical role. I am not talking about police and I am not talking about government officials, I am just saying pervasive racism in Australia is a major issue that needs to be considered in relation to where this inquiry finishes up. Kids that get kicked out of shops and are not allowed to try clothes on because the assumption is they are black and they are going to steal them, or kids—and my own children have experienced this—being asked to empty their pockets and turn the inside of their trousers out because they are a couple of black kids, is very distressing for those young people. Unfortunately, racism is still a daily experience of indigenous people.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Linda.

(Ms Burney withdrew)

CLOVER MOORE, Member for Bligh and Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney, appeared before the Committee:

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I have brought along to advise me Roy Bishop from the Bligh electorate office, who works on social issues in my offices here, and Monica Barone, who is the director of city living at the city council. They both have been very involved in these issues, as I have, for a number of years.

CHAIR: The Committee has given you questions.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: And I have prepared responses, so perhaps if I go straight to those.

CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement first?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Other than to say that I think this process is vitally important and I really hope that there are some effective outcomes from it. It is an area and an issue where there has been a lot of talk over the years and not nearly enough ongoing and effective action and I know that the community of Redfern and Waterloo is very hopeful that your focus will highlight what the problems are and what the short and long term needs are. We are very optimistic that there will be an effective outcome.

Your first question wanted me to explain my responsibilities in relation to the Redfern-Waterloo area as both the member for Bligh and the Mayor of the City of Sydney. I would like to start off by saying that the Bligh electorate has included Redfern and Darlington since 1999. At that time, after the boundary change and it came into my area, I started lobbying the Premier. I had quite long meetings with him and he actually responded to my calls for action specifically for that area by setting up the Redfern-Waterloo partnership project in 2002, which is funded until only June 2004. Its aim was to co-ordinate responses and implement new strategies. I had been pushing very hard for a place management project for that area since the episode in Caroline Street before the 1999 election highlighted what was tragically occurring there on a daily basis.

In March this year I was elected the Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney and the city includes the former South Sydney area, with Redfern and Waterloo as part of that neighbourhood. Both the city and the former South Sydney Council have undertaken significant initiatives in Redfern and Waterloo and the city is a supportive and active member of the Redfern-Waterloo project. In theory the City of Sydney is an active partner in the Redfern-Waterloo project, although I believe we wish that that was more effective. We also wish that the Redfern-Waterloo—

CHAIR: I am sorry to interrupt. I get the impression that you are actually running us through our questions.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Yes.

CHAIR: We would actually prefer to be able to ask them because very often Committee members will do them in a different order or follow up on a point. Although obviously we have sent them to you and you have prepared your answers, given the right of other Committee members beside myself to follow threads, it would probably be easier if you deal with one area and then we can break off and take up another. Do you want to continue now on those specific three questions?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: There is a lot of information that I need to give you.

CHAIR: We asked three specific questions about the partnership project, so perhaps you should continue and Committee members can ask further questions if they wish. You were talking about the role of the City of Sydney in the Redfern-Waterloo project.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Council is an active partner in the project. It supports the investment of \$7 million by the Premier's Department. The project is a whole-of-government approach to the complex range of issues in the area. In practice, the project has not fully engaged with council or the community, but the partnership approach, we believe, is effective in achieving long-

term and sustainable change for the Redfern-Waterloo communities. A key initiative of the project has been the Redfern-Eveleigh-Darlington-Waterloo [RED] strategy. This was originally established together with South Sydney Council. That strategy aimed, we had hoped, to take a holistic approach to urban renewal, economic revitalisation, transport, conservation and improvements to the urban amenity in those precincts.

We do not really know what that outcome is because it was meant to have brought that strategy down in April and we are still awaiting it. There have been some public forums and some disturbing presentations to people but, really, we have not seen any results of the RED strategy. Urban renewal could bring significant social and economic benefits to an area that has been particularly neglected. A number of task forces have been set up. Council is represented on three of those—the child and family task force; the drug and alcohol task force; and the youth task force. Before the amalgamation, South Sydney Council convened the partnership project as well as a community council and was part of the advisory body, so the features were all set up but we really felt that we did not get enough result.

CHAIR: When you talk about "we", are you talking about the situation since March because I do not assume the city was involved prior to March because it was South Sydney Council?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: It was South Sydney then, and when I say "we", I mean the amalgamated area. Certainly, I was involved throughout as the member for Bligh. I was involved in all those forums. I appreciate the problems that Michael Ramsey has had in setting up the project. It is an incredibly tough and difficult area, with a lot of complex areas, and you have to start somewhere. I guess what frustrated me as the local member is that there was so much talk and I feel frustrated that there was not perhaps enough action. That may very well be because it was a three-year project and I said from the outset that it needed to be much longer than that. Because we are dealing with really tough social environmental issues we need long-term solutions. We need immediate solutions because we have got very real and immediate problems, but we need long-term solutions and it may very well be that now we are moving into that area where we can begin to see the results of those solutions, certainly in the social area, because that is where the most work has been done—the street teams set up, the family support set up, the work the police are doing in terms of mentoring young people—all those are needed.

I said to Michael Ramsey from the outset that these have not to be short term but must be set up and ongoing because these issues are not going to go away. And we still have not seen any physical outcome from the work that should have happened in the Eveleigh Street environs, specifically the Aboriginal Housing Company's plans for the Block. We have seen plans, we have heard talk and we have seen nothing eventuate. I think you probably would agree that must be the bleakest area in terms of the urban environment, not to mention being an area that is extremely so socially disadvantaged. I am here referring specifically to the Block. But when you look at the disadvantaged that also exist in terms of the high-rise Department of Housing groups in both Redfern and Waterloo, you would have to agree that these are people who probably need real support and real compassion from government on an ongoing basis.

CHAIR: You say in your submission that you believe the Government should ensure that the project continues for at least 10 years?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Absolutely. We need to make a long-term local, State and Federal Government commitment to the most socially disadvantaged communities in Sydney, specifically to the Aboriginal community focused on the Block. We have to do that for practical and compassionate reasons. It is a centre, as you have heard from other people making representations to you, of poverty, of disadvantage, of homelessness, of crime, of drug trading and drug using and associated violence, and people coming in and out of prison and young 16-year-old mothers leaving their babies in hospital to detox because the mothers are heroin addicts and the babies cannot go home with them.

That is the reality and it has been the reality for many, many years and the Redfern-Waterloo project three years ago was the first acknowledgment by government that we have very serious issues here and that we have got to get going on them. We are just beginning to get going on them in terms of social support. We have an incredibly long way to go and we have not even started on the impoverished environment.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Are you saying that the Redfern-Waterloo partnership project was really your initiative; it was not the Government's initiative?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I lobbied when the area came into Bligh and if you remember in the pre-1999 State Government election a focus on Eveleigh Street because there was that photograph of the young person shooting up—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I remember.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: And the Government committed to the Drug Summit and we had the Drug Summit and the focus on Eveleigh Street at that time, I was lobbying very hard for place management for the area. I would not be so bold as to say it was a direct result of my representations but I was certainly in there hard lobbying and I did have long sessions with the Premier and I really welcomed the setting up of the project. It is a place management approach and it was desperately needed. It has brought in whole of government, sponsored by Premier's, working with then South Sydney Council, now the city council, and I believe that the Federal Government should be doing much more.

As the newly elected Lord Mayor, I am certainly lobbying the Federal Government now for funding for, specifically, support for the Block redevelopment because that is one of the clearer areas of neglect so far. The plans are there, it has been drawn up and it is not going anywhere because there is inadequate support—I think Michael Ramsey had also hoped for support from the private sector but certainly there has been inadequate support from the Federal Government and I would like to see more support from the State Government for the environmental improvements that we were hoping for out of the RED strategy.

We need the renovation and revitalisation of Redfern railway station. South Sydney Council, now the city council, is certainly contributing to improvements to the public domain in terms of an \$8 million facelift for Redfern Street. If you go down Redfern Street you will see that every shop is shuttered.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yes, we did.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: It is an impoverished environment.

The Hon. IAN WEST: All these issues that you are raising, have they been raised on the PACT committee?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Not so much on PACT. The PACT does not meet publicly. But it has certainly been raised in public forums, meetings and in community discussions over and over again.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Can you advise us what is happening with the local PACT? Are you on that committee?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Our next meeting is in June. The city council has just commenced a series of community forums—we have had two so far and we will have another one in the Redfern-Waterloo area in a week or so. We are having one every week. At those community forums we will get Superintendent Dennis Smith to address the community on PACT-related issues. The PACT is not a public community forum; it is more a small group of people meeting behind closed doors. But the city is seeking to have public forums.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I appreciate that. Can you tell me about the PACT meetings that you have been to and give me your understanding of, involvement in and thoughts on those meetings?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Yes, I can. I will start by giving you my comments about Superintendent Dennis Smith. There was certainly a history of antagonism between the Aboriginal community, in particular, and the police in the Redfern area. I believe that is historic. I have observed that the work of Superintendent Dennis Smith has been very proactive, energetic and certainly non-

racist. He works with all the community, including the Aboriginal community, to overcome years of antagonism and racism. I believe he is very effective and I believe he has very effective officers working with him. I believe they are working very hard to try to establish good relations with that community but they have to deal with very serious issues. So, on the one hand, they have to try to build good relations with the community and, on the other hand, they have to address the very serious drug crime and violence problems we have in the area.

The police must play a very complex and demanding role. I admire Superintendent Smith's approach and that of his officers, especially the approach of Constable Georgie Owens, who regularly walks down the Block. She works in the local community and has been doing so for a number of years. She is a female officer who is very effective. I believe there are good relations overall between that group of people and the majority of people in the area. I think projects such as the mentoring program and the bush retreats are very helpful in trying to build relations with the new generation coming through. The fact that police travel to school with the kids to try to build relations and to try to get those kids to school is very worthwhile. That is done on a day-to-day basis rather than through an official organisation like the PACT. At the PACT the superintendent reports to a small group about the sort of work that he is doing. I think that work is very worthwhile.

I also believe we could have another riot at any time. I think the area is extremely volatile. That is a result not of the people living in the area or of the work of Superintendent Smith but of the transitory community coming in and out of the area. It is a focus for the historic and justifiable anger of the Aboriginal community. Whenever I go to the Block people tell me that they feel they are victims of racism and mistreatment by police, but I do not believe they are the police that I am meeting with in the Redfern command. To sum up, it is a very complex situation. Historically and on a day-to-day basis it is a moving target. When I was pushing hard for place management and talking about what had happened in other communities where issues such as this had been addressed, I was informed that in rural communities that are more settled—Redfern and the city community are more transitory—it was possible for the elders to establish support for those communities and to contain the issues. It is nigh impossible to contain them in Redfern. The generation of elders is breaking down. There is generational change. People are moving in and moving out and they are bringing their problems in and out. It is very hard for us to deal with that.

The Hon. IAN WEST: As a forum for focusing, as a trigger and as some form of the co-ordination of the various things that are happening, is not PACT—

Ms CLOVER MOORE: No, not in Redfern. It is not at all effective. It is effective in Kings Cross because it is a community forum. I think it is a very effective way of meeting the commander and for him to report to me what he is doing but I do not think it is a very effective mechanism for addressing the issues in Redfern.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You, together with any number of other people, have been complimentary of Superintendent Smith and his role. Would you agree that he should be able to continue in that role, with full support, rather than being shifted somewhere else?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I have been the member for Bligh for 16 years and he is the most effective superintendent I have seen in Redfern. I have a number of very demanding commands in my electorate—Kings Cross and Redfern would probably be the most demanding. We need very strong, effective, intelligent, energetic leaders in those commands, and I think Dennis Smith is one of them. I think he is doing very worthwhile, tough work in a very tough, complex command.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You noted in your submission that you have requested to upgrade the classification of inner-city commands. What are the reasons for that request and what response have you received from the Minister for Police?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: When Commissioner Ryan was the Commissioner of Police he downgraded commands like Kings Cross and Redfern without any reference to the local community or to me as the local member. So I followed up by making representations to John Watkins, and I asked that he return to level 1 Kings Cross, Surry Hills and Redfern. That was because all those commands deal with complex social problems that impact on policing and that are not captured in the

mathematical formulae. It was because of the nature of the work they do in those commands and the intensity and complexity. I told John Watkins in August 2003 that the:

Redfern Command has entrenched crime, violence and anti-social behaviour centred on the "Block" and its environs, which also affects surrounding precincts. There are high levels of drug use and drug dealing, youth crime, and large Department of Housing estates in both Redfern and Waterloo subject to high levels of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. There are areas with concentrated social disadvantage, large numbers of sole parents, unemployed people and ageing people who live with drug abuse, mental illness and family crisis.

The Block is the focus for a wider Aboriginal community with symbolic and practical importance. Redfern Command must build positive relationships with Aboriginal leaders, youth, children and parents, and respond effectively and sensitively to policing concerns. This requires specialist staff and additional resources.

This area is home to a significant number of alienated young people, evidenced by high truancy rates, high child protection notifications, and significant anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

The Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project has been established to tackle the serious concerns affecting the community, including high levels of crime and violence. Effective and strategic policing responses are essential to the success of this Project, including a major contribution to the Anti-Drug Strategy now underway. Redevelopment of Green Square and Redfern and Waterloo through the RED Strategy will result in demographic change and population growth in this area. The Redfern Command also has responsibility for management of the Mounted Police, which is a statewide resource unit with different demands.

They are the basic reasons why I asked that Redfern be upgraded. That has not occurred. I know that the Redfern command would like that upgrading to go ahead. When I wrote the letter we still had not been given the undertaking that the station would be upgraded. That is now happening and the police are moving into the TNT tower. It will certainly provide a much better working environment. The working environment up to that move was quite inadequate and very difficult. It was very affected by the hailstorm and, in terms of providing supportive office space, it simply was not doing the job. The police have a really tough job day to day, from early in the morning until late at night, and they need all the support we can give them, including the physical environment.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: It seems to me that government reacts only when people start throwing rocks. It takes a major crisis down there before there is any action. Is that your view?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I think when you have very tough issues it is sometimes easier not to do anything if it is not in the news. One of the problems with this area, as with other difficult areas, is that there is only a response when there is something like the riot. We need to establish long-term solutions so that we avoid future riots. That is why I really welcomed the Redfern-Waterloo project. Whilst it might not have been perfect, especially in terms of communication, it is a really good start to addressing entrenched, complex problems from one of the most disadvantaged communities in Australia.

CHAIR: Can you tell me whether upgrading the Redfern command would mean the automatic transfer of Commander Smith?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I certainly hope not.

CHAIR: I am not sure what the answer is.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Perhaps he could be promoted.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I certainly think we need to encourage him to stay because he has established trust with a lot of people and I think it would be terrible to see him go.

CHAIR: We can check that out.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I think you are right: category 2 reflects lower salaries being paid so it saves money. There was the same thing at Cabramatta before the Cabramatta inquiry.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: He could reapply and I am sure that he would be very successful.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is about saving money.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What is the role of the City of Sydney in the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: The City of Sydney, and formerly South Sydney City Council, is committed to improving the quality of life of people in Redfern and Waterloo. Some of the key initiatives that the council has undertaken in the suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo include the move into the TNT tower, with approximately 100 staff. There is work from the Redfern Neighbourhood Centre, which is adjacent to TNT tower. That is establishing a presence there, which we think is very important not only in terms of allowing the community to access the council but as a stabilising influence. It is also of local economic benefit and will improve safety in the area. As you will know from the submissions you have received, that area is very unsafe for people going in and out of Redfern station.

There is a plan to upgrade Redfern Street. We are spending \$8 million in there and we hope to have that work started this year. It will include public domain improvements. Particularly important is improving lighting and widening footpaths. We hope that that will help local business—you have noted that most businesses must be shuttered at night—create more opportunities for outdoor and evening dining and contribute to community safety. The area is quite deserted at night, which is why it is dangerous and why people simply do not want to go there. We want to improve the visual amenity and make it more pedestrian friendly, enliven retail activity, improve road safety through traffic calming and encourage bicycle usage. We—I include the former South Sydney City Council, which is now City of Sydney—have spent \$3.2 million on the Redfern Community Centre adjacent to the Block, which was opened recently by the Governor. It was developed with community consultation and is an open-access facility, with an emphasis on arts, culture, employment and training.

Currently, it offers a range of programs including after-school and holiday activities for local children; a mobile play bus and three playgroups a week; a weekly aunties afternoon tea; a youth programmer; a recording studio with a musician in residence; a diabetes and nutrition program; a free Pilates class; a Koori women's exercise class; a community barbecue; and market employment and training programs run by work ventures. Council has committed recurrent funding to staff the centre, run the activities and is contracting local Aboriginal groups to support the community. We have provided a Kids Speak, a program combining recreational activities and family support for primary school aged children. We are working with Barnardos and Premiers on providing those services.

Negotiations have commenced with the Department of Housing to refurbish a storeroom on the Waterloo Green as a community facility. There is an indigenous support project operating with council's Redfern Occasional Care Centre. My response goes on for pages, I could table it. The information is in the submission. It is indicative that council is very supportive of the project. The new, much-better resourced council is committed to extending to this area the standard of facilities that it had established in the city area. This is something that the Premier said, when talking about the amalgamation, that the City of Sydney Council is very well resourced. We have just brought down our first budget, and we have a surplus. We are committed to this area. The Committee can take from that that we want to work with the State and Federal governments in providing support for the community. We can certainly make a very valuable contribution in the public domain and support services and facilities.

The Hon. IAN WEST: These issues were discussed at local State and Federal level long before the unfortunate incidents in February.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Absolutely.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Lord Mayor, the amalgamation of the city certainly was not just about getting votes for a certain party, was it?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Sometimes there are unintended consequences, and an unhappy unintended consequence is that the council is very well resourced and a very impressive organisation that is committed to working with the new communities that now make up the city. We have talked about our city of villages, we see the Redfern-Waterloo area as one of those villages of building on that special identity. Of this very special area it seems that this Committee hears only bad news. The media seems to want to report only bad news. I have lived in Redfern, brought up my family in

Redfern, I have been there since 1975, I have represented it at council and State level and now as Lord Mayor. It is an interesting, vital, very strong community that has very serious issues. It needs government support, particularly with public housing, particularly at the Block. It is a very special area with special disadvantages which need special support.

It is absolutely incumbent on government to keep that project going and to work with the city council and the Federal Government to ensure the block is redeveloped and that that community gets adequate support so it does not continue to be an area that is a focus of poverty, crime and drug dealing and of people going in and out of prison and the adjoining community having to suffer appalling rates of crime and violence. That is what goes on there.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Obviously you are in favour of the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project? Do you think it is too dominated by real estate concerns?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: There is concern about an agenda to do with the Redfern-Eveleigh-Darlington [RED] strategy, but we have not really seen the results of the work. We all made submissions to the RED strategy, but we have not seen the results of that work. The revitalisation of Redfern station is vital. It is very important that any redevelopment of the Eveleigh rail yards does not go ahead until the Government has done a public transport blueprint to investigate whether those rail yards will be needed for future transport needs. It is also an opportunity, it should not just be a real estate exercise, to provide for apartment development. There is a real opportunity for employment for neighbouring Aboriginal community in the Block. There are real opportunities in the Eveleigh rail yards redevelopment, but transport and employment needs certainly must be addressed before there is any consideration of apartment development. That is another very important consideration for this Committee.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Could you explain your comment that the Government should ensure that the project continues for at least 10 years?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Because we need not just short-term solutions here. We need long-term commitment, Federal, State and local. We are dealing with decades of impoverishment, injustice and lack of opportunity. We are talking housing, employment and education and we are talking hope instead of despair. That is all it has been for a lot of people in Eveleigh Street and certainly there is very serious social disadvantage in public housing in Redfern and Waterloo. You asked for information about the demographics of the area, which are quite startling. If I cite the demographics there would be no need to do any other work.

CHAIR: The Committee has heard quite a lot of evidence on that. There is a lot of information in the Government submission. Perhaps you could table the material.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: There has been considerable attention given to drug problems in the Redfern-Waterloo area. Do you have any information on the extent of that problem?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I will comment as the local member who is on the receiving end of the complaints of hysterical people who live in the neighbourhood, concerning assault and robbery. We all know that is related to drug use and drug abuse. Many Aboriginal people have also personally reported to me that drugs and alcohol are destroying their community. Some believe that the lack of action is a deliberate strategy on behalf of the white community. That is an indication of how distressed some people are. Current anecdotal evidence is that some social problems have moved to Waterloo, due to the current anti-drug action by Redfern police, focused on Redfern station. Police have tried to prevent people coming into the area, because we know that it is a focus for people coming to the area to deal in drugs.

I have picked up this information from police, both at Redfern and in the other commands; they all work closely together. I get the reports on the raids of drug houses. I get regular reports, both statistically and anecdotally, from the police and the community, that there is a really serious issue here. The results are evidenced by the criminal activities associated with it.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The Committee heard a lot of positive and negative evidence about the needle van. Certainly there has been concern about HIV and having clean needles, and also

comments that having the needle van around the area probably encourages drug dealers. What are your views on the needle van?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I know that is the view of many, and I know that some people think that if you move the van you will move the drug problem. I strongly support a harm minimisation approach. I believe our commitment to needle exchange has been recognised internationally as a key strategy in reducing the incidence of HIV and hep. C. I know people working in that field are very concerned that if the van is removed from Redfern we could see a dramatic increase in those diseases, because of the transitory nature of the drug users coming into and going out of the area. People are using in Redfern from Australia-wide destinations. So, unless we provide harm minimisation measures there could be a dramatic increase in the epidemic.

As much as we do not like the van, and as much as many people do not like the van or the idea of the van, or the idea of what the van does, I do not believe we have any choice as a responsible society but to provide the van, to ensure we do not allow the spread, that we do everything we can to stop the spread of HIV and hep. C. As tough as that is, it is a bit like the medically supervised injecting centre [MSIC] in the Cross, where the evidence shows that it saves lives, it takes injecting off the streets and gets people into treatment. Yet, every public meeting I have people say they do not like the MSIC, even though the evidence is there. These are very tough issues that we have to deal with. Our first responsibility is to ensure we do everything we can to prevent the spread of the deadly disease.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Do you have an opinion of the present location of the van?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Recently I had discussions with the Central Area Health Service and as a result representatives of the needle van operators, council and the Bligh electorate recently did a walk around of the area to try to find a better location. I know mothers with young children are concerned about it being located next to the community centre. I have not had feed back from that walk around yet, but I know that at a community level we are trying to find a more acceptable location, so it is close enough to be used but perhaps minimising the impact on mothers with young children.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What needs to be done in relation to drug and alcohol use through policing strategies and also the drug and alcohol services in the area?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: We need a drying out place, similar to a proclaimed place for Aboriginal people. That facility is needed particularly to address domestic violence related to alcoholism. People need to not go home drunk and beat up their women folk, which is what happens. We need a wet centre, where street drinkers can drink, socialise, and get help with their problems. I talked about this at the Alcohol Summit. Wet centres are working successfully in the United Kingdom. A recent evaluation showed that they improve safety and amenity, they reduce costs for government and business, and they reach homeless people who do not currently use services. Certainly the city council could work with the State Government in looking for appropriate locations for such a centre.

The MSIC has worked in Kings Cross and I know a lot of people working in the field would also like to see one in Redfern. I acknowledge upfront that it is going to be as controversial to find a location and get it set up as it has been in Kings Cross, but it could have the same results; that is, taking injecting off the streets, getting people into treatment and saving lives from overdosing. Currently, that is what people working in the health field have to deal with. A culturally appropriate detoxification and rehabilitation service would also help, for people with both alcohol and drug issues. A strong police enforcement on drug dealing with compassion and practical help for drug users is needed, and we need support for tenants who have alcohol and drug problems in the Redfern and Waterloo Department of Housing estates. They need support and I think we need specialist drug workers for Aboriginal people, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think it would help if hard drugs were decriminalised?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Yes. The community I represent says yes, yes, yes, at every public forum we have. Again, that is a very challenging issue. If you live and work in the city you have to deal with these things, you have to address these issues. For someone with an established drug habit a supervised centre would be very beneficial for the community because of the reduction of crime, and again helping people get appropriate support. It is often said at all the Kings Cross forums, that you are providing a medically supervised injecting centre, you should also provide prescription drugs for people in those centres, under supervision.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Which are the priority government and non-government services you would have? Could you give a priority list?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Yes. Failure of the DOCS to provide effective child protection and a failure of the health system to provide adequate mental health and drug and alcohol services. A particular problem is that government funds are too often problem focussed or given in response to crisis such as riots, not for prevention and community building. I think that is the key problem. Non-government services need to be focussed on increasing community capacity through preventive and general services and programs for everyone, such as programs for children and youth need to be directed into positive recreational sporting activities, which is really important.

We also need intensive support services where people with particular problems can be directed to general services. We need home visiting service for new mothers. We need prevention and intensive support services that have been established by the Redfern/Waterloo project which need to be continued and they need to be refocussed as circumstances change. There is a strong indication for need for recreational sport programs to give kids physical activity. These are inner city kids with very tough problems and very tough home environments. We need to support Darlington Public School remaining open. We need to reopen Redfern Public School—small schools can work very effectively with Aboriginal and other disadvantaged communities who need programs that suit their culture and background. Key to solutions for this area are education and training that effectively give people access to employment and give them long-term hope.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What support does the non-government sector need to help it provide effective services?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: The Redfern/Waterloo project has contracted consultants to carry out a review of human services, as you would know because people have talked to the Committee about it. Some community members are concerned that the review could reduce funding to social services rather than the Government seriously tackling the problems. The response to some non-government organisations to the review demonstrates that it has been seen as a threat to service providers rather than an opportunity to improve service and provide additional help to those in the community the fill gaps. I think it is important the Government ensure that resources for disadvantaged people are maintained and expanded, and the review should not be used as an opportunity to reduce those services. I think it would be tragic if that happens.

Community organisations have previously suggested a range of administrative reforms to help NGOs provide more services. I have raised many of these concerns with government, including: supporting a range of organisations by funding diverse organisations, streamlining accountability for multiple funding sources to reduce paperwork, providing funds over longer periods than one year to allow long-term planning, recognising the value of community building programs and strategies as well as direct service provision, providing funds to cover increasing costs of service provision, including award wages, public liability insurance, WorkCover premiums and rental costs, feedback to funded organisations and community from funding bodies, and funding based on community need rather than program frameworks.

The Government should ensure that its funding processes help rather than hinder the provision of much needed services. NGOs need government to meet its responsibilities, particularly the DOCS, for example, local youth drop-in and after school programs cannot deal with the problems of some youths, yet the lack of action by the DOCS leaves them with that obligation. DOCS has been the real problem for us for many years in this area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Has that improved recently?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I always like to be very positive. Perhaps there is still room for more work.

CHAIR: What do think of the Aboriginal Housing Company and its management of the Block? What are you views on future redevelopment of the Block?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I think the redevelopment is central to long-term improvements. I think we have got to move beyond the Aboriginal Housing Company doing plans on the back of an envelope. I know Chris Johnston, the Government Architect, and Col James have worked with the Aboriginal Housing Company and we really do need to see adequate funding, particularly Federal funding, for that project. I think that redevelopment is essential to improving conditions. We really need to move into the area of action. I think it has got to be driven by government. I think the Redfern/Waterloo project, and people like Chris Johnston, are an excellent way to start this. Certainly I am going to do everything I can as Lord Mayor to try to drive that process as well.

CHAIR: Is it mostly a funding issue now?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I think it has reached that stage. Certainly there has not been enough public consultation about the current plans. I think there is a lot of merit in the current plans, and we really need to move to that master plan, development application consultation stage, make amendments where necessary and move on to construction. I do not know if the Committee has recently walked around the environs but on Saturday there is a Redfern Reconciliation Day and another community day on Sunday. They would be two very good days to see the community in action there.

CHAIR: We have walked around the area. We were there last week and we will be there again tomorrow.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: The weekend might be good, the community will be there and you will see that even though the environment is impoverished that it is quite vital in terms of the community.

CHAIR: Several of us have also been there on weekends since the inquiry started.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Obviously there are the cultural sensitivities of ensuring ownership by the community, but I assume by government-driven you mean government supported?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Support and funding, and also many people are so disillusioned by the inaction that they really want to see something happen and move beyond talk.

The Hon. IAN WEST: But not taken over and leave the local community without a voice and without ownership?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Absolutely.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What did you mean when you said that DOCS was the major problem? Can you provide examples of what you see as being the problem?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: There is a lot of crime and violence in the area. Local residents tell horrific tales of what happens to them on a day-to-day basis—not being able to get out their front door for being stoned, where houses have been dismantled the debris being used to target and terrorise people in their homes. They are horrific stories of residents on a day-to-day basis living in the local area. It sounds as though it is real gang warfare and often it is one or two families. I can think of one family in particular, and it is a DOCS issue of working with that family—that has shocking problems, but addressing this issue because you have really got a community under siege in some cases. It has taken far too long to address this issue.

Often it is just one or two individuals from one or two families that are the focus of significant harm to a whole community, and DOCS has to move in quickly working with Barnados

and the Redfern/Waterloo project to take appropriate action. It has taken far too long. I am not mentioning any names, probably people sitting around this table know what I am talking about. The other point is that 90 per cent of DOCS children from this area end up in prison, and we have got to break that cycle. That is why I am talking about physical activity, education, support, opportunity and turning all that around.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Would you say you regularly have to make submissions to or contact DOCS?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: As the local member, since the project has been going, my office has been in regular contact with street team and with the DOCS.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Before that?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Where did one go before that? DOCS I suppose, but it has been an issue since I have been the member and I think there is hope on the horizon since we have had the project, although there is a long way to go. Specific action is needed once it is identified. I think the street team has been a terrific initiative and the family support, Barnardo's, but I do not think DOCS has quite recovered from what was done to it in the early 1990s.

CHAIR: How many Aboriginal workers are employed or are trainees with the city council?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: The Redfern Aboriginal Corporation has just been engaged to do the cleaning in the area and care taking of the centre. We have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, a Development Officer and two Aboriginal workers in the child care centre.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You have only been Lord Mayor for a nanosecond so I suppose you have not had much of an opportunity to change the employment practices at the council?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I have taken over a council that had policies that it was developing. I have been there for about two months. At the last meeting we resolved to employ RAC in the local area. I think South Sydney was doing some very worthwhile things in this area, and the city can build on that. We will build on that. We are committed to employment policies and to support policies for the local community.

CHAIR: What do you want to come out of this inquiry?

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Specific practical and compassionate strategies to address urban blight, human degradation and criminal activity in the area, and to provide hope for the next generation. Long-standing concerns that have affected the area require long-term proactive and holistic strategies. The Government must commit to a 10-year program to tackle these complex issues and provide resources to adequately tackle this task. I think the Government must also ensure that community services infrastructure and facilities are adequate for current and future needs, and the city is committed to working with the Government on them.

(Ms Moore withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 5.11 p.m.)